



# Pewsey Vale u3a

## NEWSLETTER

Issue 64

July 2024

### Message from the Chair

Dear All,

As I write this the days are almost the longest they will be and at long last I am beginning to get out of the house! Life is not yet back to normal and will not be for many months. The need to rely on others since breaking by ankle way back in March has re-opened my eyes to how difficult life can be when one is not as mobile as one wishes. I fully appreciate I have a husband who has looked after me very well, but the loss of independence hit me hard and no doubt hits our members equally hard, in similar circumstances.

So please remember that for those in wheelchairs, using walking aids etc. we can't reach the top shelves in the supermarkets, we can't move out of the way quickly and easily, we do need to find the lowered kerbs. Yes I have experienced all this, I even got the wheelchair footrest stuck under the fridges in one supermarket! I will certainly be more understanding in future.

This period has also reminded me of the immense value of the u3a, not just for the socials and events and interest groups but also as a friendship group. We must remember that the u3a is run by members for members and as such we do rely on each other for helping us in Pewsey Vale u3a to be as successful as we are. Please, if you have an interest that is not yet represented by a group, consider starting one. Lynne and the rest of the committee will help, you don't need to be the host or run it on your own, all the group members should be helping as much as they can.

Meanwhile my heartfelt thanks for the friendship and support over these last 3 months.

So many of you have sent messages, or visited; it is so much appreciated.

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

July 2024	Tuesday 16 <sup>th</sup>	Social Meeting with Joanna Dewfall on <b>Mosaics: History and Techniques</b>
August 2024	Friday 9 <sup>th</sup>	Pewsey Vale u3a Olympic Celebrations
October 2024	Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday 29 <sup>th</sup>	Social Meeting with David Lewis of Lewis Law on <b>Wills and Probate</b> Cheese and Wine evening
November 2024	Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup> Friday 29 <sup>th</sup>	AGM and Social Meeting with Alex Leger on the <b>Life of the Licence Fee - challenges and change at the BBC.</b> Quiz evening

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Hello and welcome to those of you who have joined Pewsey Vale u3a in the last three months. We hope we haven't missed anyone out - if we have, please accept our apologies and claim your free grovel from the editor.

Rosalind Spencer

Anne Bottomley

James Letham

Sue Messenger

Josephine Sawyer

Michael Miles

Elizabeth Ponting

Sandra Hawkins

If you're a new member at a Social Meeting or outing, do come and say hello to one of the committee - we're all labelled and easy to find - so that we can introduce you to some friendly faces. At individual groups, this will happen anyway, so you won't feel left out.

## PEWSEY VALE u3a FUN AND GAMES OLYMPICS

You are invited to an evening of fun and games at the Bouverie Hall on the 9<sup>th</sup> August 2024 at 7pm for our version of the Olympics.

There will be something of interest for everyone, including prizes. No need to dress up, just come very casual, sports gear and tennies are fine. Bring a dish to share for the Pot Luck meal. We will supply the plates and napkins and ask you to bring your own utensils, drinks and glasses.

The cost is £5 per person to cover hall costs and other incidentals. Fun and Games start at 7pm when the doors open. Please let Jean Rickard know by 31<sup>st</sup> July if you will be attending.

*We look forward to seeing you all for our Olympic Evening. Your Pewsey Vale u3a  
Committee*



## Where does my £15 membership go? Why do I need to pay to attend a group?

Lots of our members often wonder how we use your annual membership fees. We use them to pay for the following:

- u3a Trust fees, these cover insurance as well as helping pay for The Third Age Trust which supports all u3as nationally, and runs a web site as well as many online courses. They produce the magazine which some of you receive.

It's worth logging on and having a look at what else you can participate in. [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)

- Our Beacon membership service, this is a secure system which holds all our members' info and enable us and group leaders to send out emails to you, amongst other things.
- Expenses, i.e. postage, printing, including paper and ink.
- Equipment purchase and replacement/repair/safety testing etc. (projectors, printer, microphones, sound systems, computer etc.)
- Expenses for socials and subsidising other special events, i.e. Coronation celebrations.
- One off incidental expenses, always approved first by the committee.

Group leaders or group hosts and the committee all **volunteer** their time and services.

So if you are meeting in someone's house please do think about contributing towards their costs, extra heating during the winter, tea/coffee, biscuits etc. Some of you already do this but if not please do offer a contribution.

The u3a is an organisation that is run by members for members and as such group meetings, general socials, trips out, quiz nights etc. need to be self funding. Some groups hire their venue, so need to pay for this too.

**So another plea from my heart. PLEASE, PLEASE let the group leader know if you are not going to make a meeting.** They will more than likely have bought biscuits or if you are lucky baked a cake, reorganised the furniture in a room to allow for extra people, put on the heating in winter etc. So if you are not able to attend it will help them prepare things better.

## OUR MYSTERY DINNER AT THE HORSE AND GROOM IN CHARLTON



## HELP.....NEW GROUP "The Really Useful Group"

I realise that the committee does need some extra help occasionally. This has come to a head especially since my accident which has meant I have not been able to do the jobs I usually do. But it's an ongoing and growing need. **If YOUR u3a is to continue to grow and develop, the need for a group of people to help with a range of tasks will increase.**

Remember the u3a is a group of people set up by the members for the members. Nobody is paid.

SO ..... I am not asking you to join our committee, though we could do with you and if you're interested please talk to me.

This time I am talking about general help for what one might say are odd jobs. Like:-

- Helping set up for a social or an event: getting out the tables, chairs etc.
- Helping with clearing up after, brushing floors, washing tables.
- Helping deliver the newsletter to those who don't get it by email.
- Posting notices around your area.
- Helping in the kitchen.
- Putting up the banner in the village occasionally (and taking it down again).
- Suggesting ideas for an event and helping with the organisation as a one off.
- Researching current ideas and thoughts.
- Taking a turn at manning a stall at an event, such as the PCC Community Open Day held recently (*see photo below*).
- Occasionally meeting as a group for enjoyment!

The list could go on and on and no doubt will develop more.

But it is very apparent to your committee that we do need this type of support. We already have a few people who help, but could do with more.

We appreciate some of us are unable to do the heavy work of lifting tables, but the more people we have who we could send a message out to ask for help with anything, the easier and more efficient we can become. There is a limit to the number of times I can ask the committee to do something like an evening social. They do belong to other groups within the u3a and outside too, just like you.

So what I would like is for anyone who feels they are willing to help...to join this group.

The committee do not envisage the group meeting: it will be more like a virtual group, we could message saying this job needs doing. Can you help? Though an occasional catch up over a glass of wine or a beer is not beyond the possibilities. Please do join us.



## CARD GROUP



This month, Julie kindly taught us some new techniques at card group. Starting with parchment paper, we learnt how to cut to the correct size using a cutting machine and die, how to stamp on the parchment using embossing powder and heat it to create a design and then how to colour it in using watercolour pencil and/or felt tipped pens. Finally, Julie showed us how to back the parchment and sew it on to cardstock so that we could create a card where all the thread and adhesive was hidden.

Huge thanks to Julie for her time and equipment, tea and biscuits and most of all the laughs.

## WORDSMITHS

I have quoted before from Wordsmith.org daily emailings (no relation) who now tell me:

"You joined A.Word.A.Day on Jun 6, 2019. Today marks your five years (a quinquennial) as a member of the Wordsmith.org community. That's more than 1300 words (and THOUGHTs) so far! Thanks for being with us -- we truly appreciate it. Word of mouth is how the word spreads. Could you think of one or two people who would enjoy A.Word.A.Day? It's free to subscribe."



This time they have some glorious words for us such as:

**Dandiprat** - An inconsequential person, a person of small stature or a child.

**Gaberlunzie** - A wandering beggar, especially one who is licensed.

If words are your thing, you may be interested in our light-hearted group which meets in Upavon on the morning of the third Wednesday of the month (with friendly dog(s) present).

### **An idea for possible new groups**

It's been suggested that two new appreciation groups might appeal to members - one for art and one for architecture.

Once again, these would be run by the members for the members - unless any of you are prepared to admit to any specialised knowledge!

Do you remember your styles of church architecture, for example your Gothic from your Norman from your Saxon? Or your Art Deco from your Art Nouveau? And how are you on Impressionism or the Pre-Raphaelites?

Perhaps, as a group, you could pick a subject and research it a little for each meeting?

Do put your hand up if you might be willing to participate in one (or indeed both) of these groups. And of course we need group leaders for them. Lynne would love to hear from you!

## ART GROUP

At the end of April we invited local artist Mini de Kersaint to spend an afternoon with us - working on colour mixing and working with acrylic paints. Mini works from her studio in Pewsey producing pictures not just of the area but many other places too.

Each time we work with visiting artists we gain new ideas, ways of working and we hope it helps us to improve what we do!

During the month of July pieces of work by members of the group will be exhibited at **Woodborough Social Club** in Smithy Lane, Woodborough. The Preview will be held on **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July from 11am - 1 pm - please do come along and support us** - cakes and teas/coffees will be available. (All profits from the morning will be donated to a charity to be chosen by the group.)

We hope to promote not just the Art group but our local u3a - it is still amazing that many people don't know about our u3a and all we have to offer!

The group continues to meet in Manningford hall twice each month



## WINE TASTING AND APPRECIATION



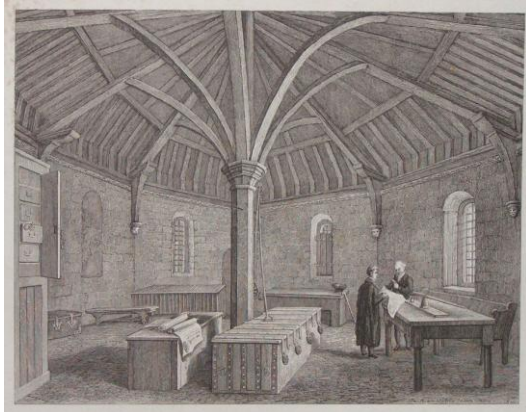
Each time we meet we taste wines (ofcourse!) - generally three whites followed by three reds, chosen by various members in turn - and learn something about them. There is a theme, which can be anything the presenter wants. The commonality is that we taste them, enjoy them (generally) and have a good chat.

The group runs in two consecutive evening sessions in Pewsey on the evening of the third Thursday of each month. We have quite a full list but can accommodate a couple more members if you're prepared to attend regularly. Interested?

## LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

### Our April meeting - Salisbury Cathedral Archives

We were delighted to hear a superb talk about Salisbury Cathedral Archives presented by the very accomplished speaker Emily Naish. Since childhood Emily has had a passion for history and after gaining



her degree undertook voluntary work at the British Library and the Imperial War Museum and a paid post at the V&A. She has been the Cathedral Archivist & Collections Manager for more than 10 years.

Presented in three sections and illustrated by numerous excellent images Emily talked us through the meaning and history of archives and archiving; how records are found, collected and archived in the Cathedral; and showed photographs of some of the ancient artefacts that are kept there.

Probably the best known is the copy of Magna Carta agreed by King John in 1215. Emily recalled how on its 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary it and the other three copies from Lincoln and the British Library were taken to the House of Lords for one day. Each had its own van, followed by a backup van and escorted by police outriders. Traffic was stopped on the journey back to ensure their safe and quick return to their respective homes.

But there are thousands of other ancient and precious documents held in the archive. Minutes dating back to 1329, Royal Charters including King Stephen's on parchment dated 1136 giving freedom to the church and 300 documents relating to cathedral-owned properties in the city. A large chest which would have held finance records and other important documents required seven members of the clergy, each with a key, to unlock it. The archivist is not just looking to the past but is actively gathering and recording as much evidence of 21<sup>st</sup> century activities for future researchers and visitors to enjoy coupled with engaging and educating children.

After the meeting Emily was immediately invited to present her talk to the Pewsey History Society in October; a great opportunity for those of you who missed her this time. The etching shows the Muniment Room built in 1260 now used as the choir practice room.

### Local History Month - Extraordinary Wiltshire Women

In May we welcomed guest speaker Ruth Butler who is the Heritage Education & Digital Engagement officer at the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre. She is also a volunteer at Salisbury Cathedral and is on the editorial board of the excellent annual publication 'Sarum Chronicle'.



The history centre currently has eleven miles of shelving holding 800 years of Wiltshire records and Ruth's talk on 14<sup>th</sup> May drew from each century. Titled '**Extraordinary Wiltshire Women**' it focused on twelve, each having played a significant role during that period. It is impossible to impart here all that we learnt that morning so I would strongly recommend discovering their full stories on the Internet - they are all worth reading.

First of these was *Ela, third Countess of Salisbury (1187- 1281)*, a fabulously wealthy woman who founded Lacock Abbey. We then looked at many notable women, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century through to the 19<sup>th</sup> and last but by no means least the daring and record-breaking *Mildred Mary Bruce (1895-1980)*, thrilled by speed she progressed from motorcycles to cars and then speed boats. She was the first woman to fly alone around the world (sailing across the oceans). Aged 78 she drove the recently launched Ford Capri at 110 mph around Thruxton!

## Walking Tour in Devizes - group member Avril writes:



We couldn't have had a better day weather-wise for our walking tour of the northern side of Devizes. The sun was shining and it was market day which always helps to create a bustling and convivial atmosphere.

The Marketplace itself is situated in what would originally have been the outer bailey of the original wooden motte and bailey Devizes castle which burned down in 1113 and was then rebuilt in stone, ca 1120.

Nick is somewhat of a walking encyclopaedia and to remember all the historic facts that he told us would be totally impossible. However here are a few interesting points that you can use to impress your friends or even inspire you to join the group!

- The name Devizes derives from the Latin 'ad devisas' which means at the boundaries. In fact up until the late 19 Century the town was known as 'The Devizes' similar to some French cities, such as Le Havre.
- The town contains two Grade 1 listed buildings and over 300 Grade 2. Many of the buildings in the centre are constructed of either Bath stone or brick both of which were in plentiful supply locally.
- The marketplace with mainly 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century buildings which were mostly home to professional people, such as doctors and lawyers. One of the buildings pointed out to us boasts a statue of Asclepius the Greek God of Medicine and Healing.
- For centuries Devizes was well-known for its cloth production which fell into decline toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It then became known as a 'beer and baccy' town. Wadworth Brewery is of course well-known to most of us, although the imposing red brick building at 1, Long Street is no longer used as a Brewhouse. From the early 1700s snuff and tobacco were produced in Devizes, traded by W and E Anstie Ltd, which was later bought up by Imperial Tobacco.

The second half of our tour took us along the canal which was a lot more peaceful, being away from the busy traffic. Nick pointed out the old toll house which later became a home for the local lock-keeper. We then came back into the town centre via St Mary's church which is sadly no longer accessible to the public, although the graveyard was peaceful and gave us a good view of the church's architectural features, including a sundial which Nick had never previously noticed.

We continued back towards the Market Place via The Brittox the meaning of which derives from Norman French '*bretasche*' meaning a stockaded pathway between the town and castle.

We completed our tour back at the pleasant Pelican Inn where we had a very warm welcome and an excellent lunch. A small amount of alcohol was consumed but we were mostly well-behaved! Many thanks to Wendy for her organisation and Nick for his inspirational tour.

*We now take a summer break returning in September: why not come and join us? We meet in Pewsey on the third Thursday of each month at the Education Centre.*

## TRAVELLERS TALES



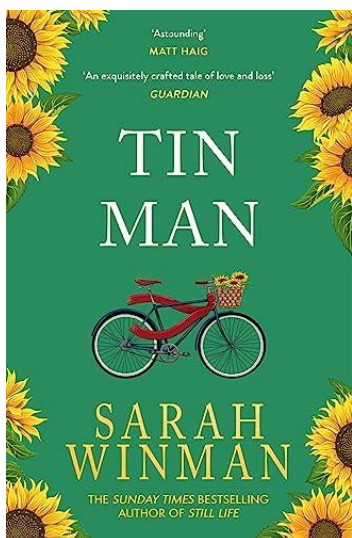
As ever, the Travellers Tales Group goes worldwide without even leaving the confines of Easton Royal Village Hall and this spring has been no exception! We started off the month of April in Burma (or Myanmar as it has been known since 1989) with a really fascinating talk by Mike Hellier - this is a country about which we know so little currently and yet has a very dark history about which Mike was able to tell us more and leave us with a feeling that we hope for so much better for its inhabitants.

In May we had a visit from Philip Neame whom we know quite well from talks he has given to the Military History Group. On this occasion he was talking to us about his amazing mountaineering exploits, and he absolutely knocked us sideways by some of his photographs of ravines, crevasses and mountain tops which he had encountered and climbed - talk about a bird's eye view, these shots were superb and you cannot imagine anyone being able to sleep in a tiny tent on an icy shelf halfway up a snow-covered mountain as he obviously did on many occasions! Base camp of Everest and further up in the Himalayas was one of his adventures, and we all had enormous admiration for his achievements.

Iceland was our destination in June, when Jean Rickard showed us some lovely scenic views of a recent cruise she made there. Luckily there were no scenes of devastation from recent volcano activity, but hot springs looked inviting and the scenery and the sea were just delightful. We look forward to her next trip - to the Baltic - in the autumn when she will show us more of her expertise with the camera!

If you would like to share your memories of a much enjoyed holiday or experience overseas (or even in this country) then come along to this friendly group. We meet on the first Tuesday of each month other than August, meeting at about 10.15 am for a 10.30 start.

## BOOK GROUP 3



The group continues to meet at Jennifer's home on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month. We have a really good chat as well as discussing the book we have been reading, finishing off with coffee and biscuits.

The book we have recently read is **Tin Man** by **Sarah Winman**. It follows the relationship between two Oxford men from their youth as they create their own interests in art, swimming and cycling which eventually materialises into friendship and love.

We select a book we wish to read for our next meeting rather than following a fixed list. Our next book will be *Castle Dor* by Daphne du Maurier.

Due to holidays, our next meeting will be in September.

We would welcome a couple of new members to join the group.

## MILITARY HISTORY

The normal pattern of Military History Group meetings was disrupted this spring by Bank Holidays, so our usual April meeting this year took the form of a visit by about 20 members to RAF Brize Norton. We were warmly welcomed to the base by the Officer Commanding 24 Squadron, which is a Training Squadron, and subsequently taken from the administrative buildings out onto the tarmac where there were quite an array of aircraft including a C17 and an A400M, known as the Atlas, and which has now superseded the well known Hercules in a tactical role as a turbo prop.

We were very fortunate in being able to actually go on board one of these aircraft, see the enormous carrying capacity for men and cargo and learn about how the cargo is secured and released, and its huge capabilities. And what is more, we were invited to climb up onto the flight deck and sit in the pilot's seat! The instruments and gauges were unbelievable and it was a great privilege to have this wonderful experience.

After lunch in the very impressive Officers' Mess we were taken into an area where many men were training to do parachute jumps (a really noisy affair!), and to have a try out in a simulator, again an amazing experience. We were so very lucky to have had such a wide access to an area which most of us know absolutely nothing about! Our thanks to Tim Wells for organising the event.

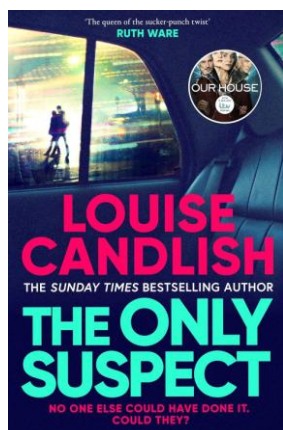
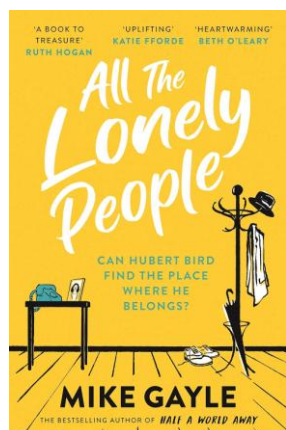
The May meeting also featured aircraft, but this time Bill King gave us a fascinating and pictorial presentation about aircraft production at South Marston during the Second World War, an extremely



interesting morning as we come to expect from Bill. Aircraft also figured in the talk given in June by Wing Commander (ret'd) Paul Shepherd about a wartime operation called Operation Chastise, better known to many of us as the Dam Busters Raid. He shed a lot of light on various aspects of this amazingly dangerous and brave mission and it made us all feel very humble and much in awe of what these airmen did for this country during the war.

As you can see, we have some very fine speakers and lots of different topics at our meetings, so if you think you would like to come and hear more, you would be most welcome. We meet on the first Monday of the month, except during August, at Easton Royal Village Hall from 10.30am onwards (arriving for coffee and a natter beforehand).

## BOOK GROUP 1



**All the Lonely People** by Mike Gayle was a favourite. An interesting study of loneliness set in a fictional story but with many facets in reality. Pathos but also heartwarming and thought provoking.

**The Only Suspect** by Louise Candlish wasn't one of our better reads.

*(If you disagree, do email and tell me your views. Ed)*

## MAHJONG FOR BEGINNERS

I am the proud owner of two MahJong sets since the last newsletter so can now host two tables twice a month. I've also completed a set of training instructions, with illustrations, to help those new to MahJong gain a better understanding and navigate their way through a learning curve.

There are currently 9 members of the group so I am at full capacity, no room at the moment for any member to join us. If anything changes, I'll certainly let you know via a forthcoming newsletter in the future.

We play on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month at 10.30-12.30 at my home in Burbage.

I asked members to explain why they enjoyed coming along to learn MahJong at our sessions; this is what was said:-

- *Great fun with a lively team of players*
- *Addictive*
- *Gentle enough for a complete beginner to feel comfortable and not overwhelmed*
- *Intriguing*
- *Easy to follow instructions*
- *Biscuits are tasty too!!*

Another member said:

*I would also add that the group is welcoming, nurturing and very forgiving! We are serious about learning the game but don't take ourselves too seriously.*

To keep the uninitiated intrigued, here are a few examples of the many MahJong sets available, all beautiful, some very special depending on their age. The old sets are quite different, often made of ivory, bamboo and bone. The more modern sets are now made of vinyl plastic but haven't lost any of their beauty or magic.



## WALKING4EXERCISE



The group has been out and about enjoying the countryside and each others' company.

In Savernake Forest we found five or six of the great old oak trees and measured one by holding hands round the trunk. This added fun to our banana break!

We took the bus to Greatwood much to the disgust of a passenger who said, "Don't know why walkers are getting on the bus! That's not a walk!"

At Greatwood we were greeted by friendly turkeys and peacocks blocking our path. One of the peacocks was determined to come with us but eventually gave up and returned to his base. We climbed over Martinsell Hill with its fabulous views and ambled back to Pewsey along the canal and through Jones' Mill.



## BOARD GAMES GROUP

The Board Games group meets once a month on the second Monday afternoon of the month. We have room for more players so you are welcome to come along to try it out. Bring a game or join in with other friendly members playing Scrabble, Rummikub (numbers or words), Cluedo, cribbage, Bananagrams or anything else that members have brought along. It is relaxed and friendly and not very competitive! We meet in the Heritage Centre room in Pewsey from 2.30 until 4.

## QUIZ GROUP

- ❖ 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

Q. ≡  
A. ≡

## DOG WALKING GROUP

This week's walk was a more country walk than we have enjoyed for sometime owing to the wet spring and coupled with keeping away from areas which might have Alabama Rot; this is an incurable disease of dogs there have been cases both north and south of the Vale - thankfully none here.

Previous walks have been nail filing walks! on dry path and pavements, so it made a lovely change to walk in Jones's Meadows where the dogs had a good run and play or trot along sniffing new and different scents.

We finished our walk feeling well exercised and quite warm!

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



## WHAT ARE YOU READING?

I wasn't going to include the column this time because I hadn't read anything recently I wanted to bring to your notice. Apart from a few aforementioned thrillers or whodunits, nothing I tried appealed to me. It seems to me that book blurbs, instead of being alluring, are rather samey and offputting.

Then this came through my door:



Yes, we know about the LitFest, but have you actually read the booklet? I am struck by how beautifully it is presented, not only visually but the actual text is just detailed enough to tempt you without it ranting on. It's extremely well worded and a superb piece of literary marketing.

If you do go to the festival, do write a piece about it for our next newsletter. We look forward to hearing about it.

## SINGING FOR PLEASURE



**From: Laurence McGowan**

The emphasis on Singing for Pleasure must surely be on the Pleasure. Whilst we all enjoy giving our vocal chords a twice monthly airing, I sometimes wonder if the singing is just an excuse to get together for the enjoyment of friendships, existing and newly made. Anyway whatever the reason, the group continues to thrive and grow with new faces popping up most times. Sometimes there have been up to fifty or so of us gathered together and perhaps the group is unique within Pewsey Vale U3A, in that there is always room for more and never a waiting list to join.

I am a comparative newcomer, having only joined a couple of years ago but I quickly came to appreciate the mental and physical benefits that singing can bring about, not to mention the sheer delight of singing, or at least pretending that I can!

Talking of appreciation, I am sure that all my fellow songsters will join me in thanking the joint organizers and enablers, Andy Vowles, who seems to have some recall of every song ever written, and Barbara Dalton, who is similarly capable of accompanying any melody ever composed. Amazing.

**From: Owen Rhys**

I thought retirement would be quiet and perhaps a little boring. Ha! No peace for the wicked, I suppose. That said, I try very hard to keep the diary clear for 'Singing for Pleasure'. I roll up, belt out some songs (words are provided), pinch all the chocolate biscuits and go away feeling a much better person. My level of endorphins and happy hormones definitely increases after a session, and Andy and Barbara do an excellent job. Thank you both for giving up so much of your time and energy.

**From: Haydn Dalton**

Cast your minds back to the 1950's and 60's when at 9 o'clock on a Saturday morning we tuned into the BBC light programme to listen to Uncle Mac's children's favourites! At Singing for Pleasure we sing some of the songs that we heard on that programme. We also sing from the shows, folk songs, rounds, popular songs and much more. At each meeting we pick the songs we wish to sing from a book of about 100 songs.

Singing for Pleasure is formed from a wide variety of people who like to sing; we see between 35 and 55 people at each session. We don't sing from a music sheet, we just use the words and the tune. We meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of each month for an hour commencing at 10.30 finishing with tea, biscuits and a chat for another half hour.

Singing for Pleasure is fun and sets me in a really good mood for the week ahead.

## CREATIVE WRITING GROUP 2 (aka WRITING FOR FUN)

Our group is now well into our second year and we have just had two new members join us who are making a great contribution to our 'challenges' and to the discussions they all engender. Our latest subjects have been: My Crazy Friend, Waiting, The Mask, Dragon and The Club. It's fascinating to read/hear the different takes our members have made of the topics. (See two examples below.)

Every month we have a theme on which we write whatever the muse dictates. It can be deep and dark, short and silly or anything in between; pensive prose, erudite essays, short stories, poetry or doggerel. We write in the privacy of our own home and then send it to our fellow members before the meeting, at which we discuss our creations. And eat cake and/or biscuits.

We still have one space, so do contact me for further details. We meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month, 2-4 pm in Pewsey.

### **The Dragon**

It was a time before central heating became the norm; days when we kept warm by sitting around an open fire, all draughts hopefully excluded by smothering doors, windows and keyholes. It was a Sunday in early January, the new school term began the next day. David, whose favourite school subject was science, was sitting by the fire wondering about the new teacher starting the following day, as his favourite Mr Jones had retired at Christmas.

The fire was running short of fuel, so David went to place another lump of coal on the grate. For some reason, the coal slipped from his grasp and landed on the hard stone hearth resulting in a thin slate-like slice becoming detached from one end. Picking the lump up, he was astonished to notice a beautiful image portrayed on the smooth face. A large eyed creature with predatory legs and jaws borne on lace-like wings, lay exposed; the fossil of a small dragonfly that had hunted over a Carboniferous swamp some three hundred million years before. Why, he wondered, had someone attempted to degrade such a wonderful creature by calling it a fly?

His mother called from the kitchen, 'I need to discuss something with you'. Putting the coal down gently on the hearth, David went to the kitchen. It was his birthday at the end of the week, and his mother wished to confirm that the usual party fare would suffice - 'Ice cream, cake, jelly, more ice cream and a lot of fizzy drinks?' All agreed, he returned to the living room. His father had arrived during his absence; a kindly man, but with a line of thought completely at odds with David's. He abhorred untidiness and held a strict Black and White view of life in which variation was to be seen as untidiness. Any shell was a snail, any species of worm merely a worm and most insects just bugs.

David went to retrieve his piece of coal from the hearth but could not find it.

'Looking for something?' asked father.

'My piece of coal.'

'Ah! I thought it was you. As I have said so often before, the only place for coal in the house is the scuttle or the fire! That bit is on the fire'.

On the fire, which was now blazing well after his father's use of the poker. From the remains of his piece of coal, a despairing boy began to see, in the ever brightening, wavering flame, the image of a winged beast with sharp claws, forked tongue and tail, and from its nostrils, little flickers of light spurted out with a distinct swishing sound. Then, as it rose above the blaze, this dragon began to morph into a grey-brown cloud of smoke which was lost rapidly in the emptiness of the chimney flue.

'I think you should go and check that you have everything ready for school tomorrow' said his father, 'we don't want a rush in the morning.'

David did not sleep soundly that night. He was troubled by a recurring dream of a shining dragon at the head of an endless line of creatures, large and small, which were processing to cremation on a living room pyre.



I've been standing on this hillside for nigh two thousand year  
With people pointing at my privates and giggling at my gear  
Just because the artist has portrayed me nude  
Means that I've unfairly earned the sobriquet of rude  
Oh how I wish the kind people would re-dub  
Me the Cerne Abbass Giant..... with the giant club.

## CHINES

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



We've been to some fantastic places this year, most recently the amazing Cotswold Sculpture Park of which you will see pictures on <https://pewseyu3a.slickpic.com/albums/CHINES-Cotswold-Sculpture-Park-June-2024> and here are just a few. We've also been to Avebury and Romsey, with plans for several more including Wells, Sherbourne, Sandham Memorial Chapel and Winchester.



## JIGSAW SWAP



Thank you to members who have kindly donated puzzles to the collection. Puzzles are available to borrow on the second and fourth Tuesday afternoons between 2 and 4 at the Bouverie Hall, Pewsey. There's no charge. Just take a puzzle and return it when you have finished with it.

## CREATIVE WRITING GROUP 1

CREATIVE WRITING GROUP (1) members have scribbled so many words, covered numerous pages, filled notebooks and worn out iPads that we are having a break! So no meetings in June while members go on various holidays or put their feet up.

Sometimes we find ourselves writing more than we intend and not keeping to any guidelines as to word count. We offer too much detail, too many characters, maybe unnecessary description. So recently we have tried our hand at Flash Fiction (very short stories). To prepare for this, we did some retelling of familiar fairy tales in 100 or even 50 words. It was great fun and the recipe for success seemed to be to start in the middle!

### **JUST BEING PRETTY DOESN'T CUT IT!**

'What on Earth do you think you are doing, young lady?' He thundered.

'I'm terribly sorry', she replied, shamefaced 'I felt very tired all of a sudden and just fell asleep.'

'You "just fell asleep?" How very dare you! You've broken into our house, helped yourself to our breakfast, and then gone to bed! I've a good mind to call the police.'

She burst into floods of tears, 'Oh no, please don't sir, I never meant any harm, I did knock on the door first.'

'You blessed humans are all the same, take, take, take, and never mind the consequences. Well, you can remake all three beds for a start, then do the washing up and make three fresh bowls of porridge, we're very hungry after our walk. Well, don't just lay there, crack on with it!'

### **THE THREE LITTLE PIGS**

'That's a great little brick house you have there, Pig 3,' said the wolf.

'Yes, I'm pretty pleased with it but I've just had some bad news. My two brothers cut corners, used cheap building materials, and now their properties are not eligible for a mortgage. They want a house-share arrangement here, with me. It's not at all what I had in mind'.

'That's too bad Pig 3! But I think I could probably help you out - make sure that you have the property all to yourself. '

'You could? That would be great!'

We will restart meetings on the second and fourth Wednesday of July, 2-4pm. We have space for one more member.



## BOOK GROUP 2

### January 2024 - Act of Oblivion - Robert Harris

Almost everyone likes Robert Harris and he writes a good yarn. This is set in the 1660s and is about the hunt for the murderers of King Charles I. It's based on a true story but is a re-creation, which takes us across the Atlantic to New England. The group enjoyed this book.

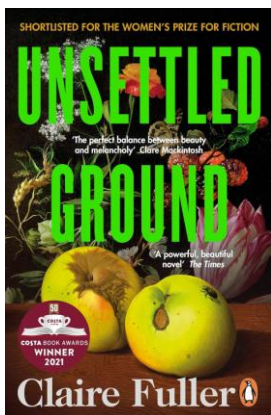
### February 2024 - All The Lonely People - Mike Gayle

Comments were:

- I read most of the book and skim read the last bit. I didn't like the book as I thought it simplistic and cloying. It irritated me that the central character referred to himself constantly in conversation as 'me' which made him sound stupid, which he clearly wasn't. He had had a sad life, losing everyone he loved, so it should have evoked more sympathy for him. It was a happy ever after book so I suppose some people would like that.
- I too was not very inspired by this month's book.
- I enjoyed the book, it was a "nice" book, very recognisable story of life and its ups and downs. The writing and characters were quite simplistic, but clear and quite descriptive at times. I warmed to Hubert more and more as the story developed and enjoyed an array of characters.
- It was interesting how "absent" his son was in his life and this I found very sad, but very true to life, at the same time.
- I didn't enjoy the repetitive use of the word "me" to continuously authenticate Hubert's Jamaican character, I feel that less of the "me" and more varied Jamaican Patois language would have been more interesting and offered more depth to his personality.

### March 2024 - Unsettled Ground - Claire Fuller

Comments from the group:

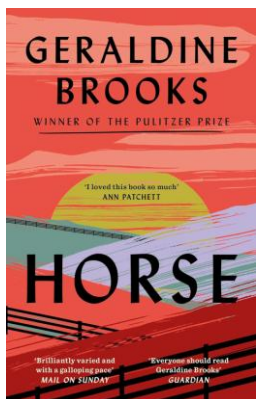


- I thoroughly enjoyed this book, from start to finish. An unusual story, showing the lives of people who live from hand to mouth and are stubbornly choosing to remain disconnected from the mainstream.
- The local locations and areas made it even richer, as I had a vision of the landscapes around Ham, Coombe Gibbet, Froxfield, Hungerford, Devizes.
- I really enjoyed Claire Fuller's writing style, her detailed descriptions of scenes, environments, human responses... an excellent author, I want to read more of her books!
- The characters were clearly defined and I very quickly got the measure of both Julius and Jeanie... twins caught up in the repressed secrets of their mother (which came out towards the end).
- The mood was evocative, very dreary, "Victorian"... quite a strange story, as it felt as if it was written in Dickensian times, not the current day with mobiles, computers.... it really showed their disconnect, particularly Jeanie's.
- The theme of being self sufficient, private, almost hostile to outsiders, was strong, but as the story developed, starting with Mother's death, slowly they both started to make connections with others around them, eventually leading to Jeanie being able to accept help and support from others when Julius was critically ill.
- It was a story about vulnerability and strength... clearly expressed.
- Psychologically, the family dynamic was dysfunctional - Mother appeared to have control over her children, keeping them close to her, for her own needs. Also having an affair, for her own

needs. Quite selfish. As the story ended, I felt little love for the Mother. It explored the parent/child dynamic very well. Dependency and independency. Co-dependency. Secrets thrived.

- Both Jeanie and Julius seemed quite uneducated and non self aware. Jeanie in particular was very passive and seemed to go along with whatever happened to her, without challenging it. Her realisation at the end was profound, what had she missed out on ... her career, family life, motherhood, etc. Both children were literally living from the land and each day to the next.
- Mother's death, her burial in the garden, went unchallenged by authorities... I thought it would come back to haunt them, but it didn't and in some ways showed how they were able to reject the societal system and do things their own way.
- Jeanie's illiteracy was powerful too, eventually she was able to share it with others... and the world opened up to her. Shame was a strong theme in this book. Her lack of questioning much, sometimes frustrated me, but I realised the author was remaining true to her character. Human kindness prevailed, friends, doctor, etc. rallied and provided for them, including Rawson.
- I enjoyed the side story of Julius's encounters with Shelley Swift, quite an opposing couple, but there was a connection of need and lust on both sides, which drew out the contrast of Jeanie's very buttoned up, non sexual, non passionate character.
- I found it interesting how the objects and "stuff" they owned, though old and dilapidated... seemed to be a significant part of their lives, especially Jeanie's, her way of holding on the past.... her Dad's death, never fully understood till later...
- Lots of holding on, stuckness, stubbornness, resistance to change.... Their family scripts seemed to define their lives, as if set in stone.. I know and believe that there are many people out there, just like this, stuck in their own ways of living and surviving, which work for them.... I wondered if people who are constantly living in survival mode do shut off from being too overly emotional/dramatic... i.e. when Maude went missing for days/weeks.
- I liked the writing style and felt the characters believable.

#### April 2024 - Horse - Geraldine Brooks



Brooks is brilliant! Even when the synopsis of her book doesn't seem interesting, she proves the reader wrong, time and time again. Combining the story of a legendary race horse in the past with the racial injustice that was rampant then, with the racial injustice that is still present now, is masterful. At first I was much more invested in the past story but by book's end I was thoroughly invested in both. Heartbreakingly so!

An unforgettable story, and yes Lexington the horse was very real, much of this story is factual in one way or another. A stirring story about the ongoing struggle for racial equality and the tragedy of a hate that continues to this day.

#### May 2024 - The Promise - Damon Galgut

The Promise charts the crash and burn of a white South African family, living on a farm outside Pretoria. The Swarts are gathering for Ma's funeral. The younger generation, Anton and Amor, detest everything the family stand for - not least the failed promise to the Black woman who has worked for them her whole life. After years of service, Salome was promised her own house, her own land... yet somehow, as each decade passes, that promise remains unfulfilled.

In this story of a diminished family, sharp and tender emotional truths hit home. Confident, deft and quietly powerful.

One comment: I really couldn't connect with the style of writing at all.

## PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP 2 (PG2)

Once upon a time (on my last birthday, to be exact) we were driving in the Tisbury area and suddenly came across an ancient barn with statues in front of it. What is this? we cried, and stopped to investigate. It turned out to be Messums (West), an art centre which hosts various exhibitions, of painting, sculpture, ceramic and other art forms. It's fabulous, it's free, it has a delightful little restaurant, and it's even dog friendly. Have a look at <https://www.messums.org/>

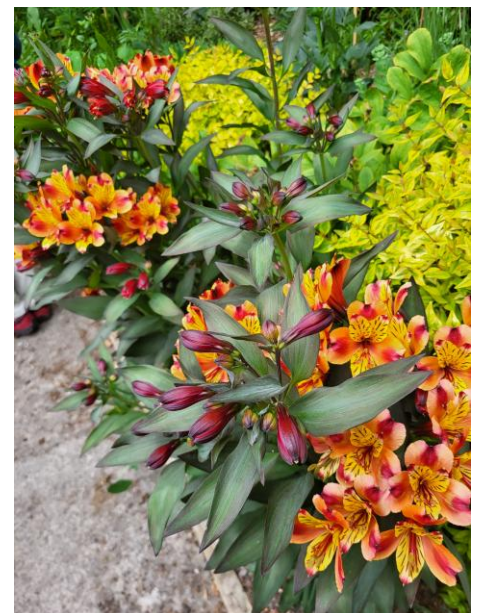
Photography 2 Group went there and you can see some of our work on

<https://pewseyu3a.slickpic.com/albums/PG2-Messums-Gallery-Tisbury/?wallpaper>



By the time you read this, we will also have visited Beggars Knoll Chinese garden near Westbury and our photographs from there will also be on the web site. Beggars Knoll participates in the National Gardens Scheme and you can see more information about them on the NGS site. (*Sneak preview of our photos below.*)

We are a small group of friends who like to visit interesting places, take photographs (several of us just use phones or automatic cameras) and have lunch. Let me know if you're interested in joining us.



## GARDENING GROUP

### Our trip to Mottisfont Abbey to see the National Collection of Old English Roses on June 11<sup>th</sup>

There was originally a much larger group due to visit Mottisfont Abbey to enjoy the National Collection of Old English Roses, but we ended up with a 'sub-group' of 4 making the trip.

We aimed to be at the National Trust house and gardens before mid-day to be able to do a tour of the



Rose Garden, have a bite of lunch, and a sit down, then go around again to see the bits we missed due to the crowds.

The weather was bright and warm in the sunshine, but with a cold breeze, however, once inside the walled garden it was very pleasant and with so many people down every pathway it took a while to work out how best to go about seeing the fabulous displays of Old English Roses and all the accompanying planting.

The heady perfume from the roses and fragrant plants filled the air, the sheer variety of colours of the roses and other plants were an assault on the senses and we spent almost 3 hours enjoying the flowers, the architectural features, talking to the various gardeners engaged in tidying and working the flower borders, and trying to identify the many plants which we either had, used to have or would like to have in our own gardens.

We did stop for a sandwich and a drink, but did not even need to leave the walled garden as there was a



little café right there. After a short break we resumed our tour, taking in as much as we could and enjoying the beautiful surroundings.

Once home in Pewsey we took the opportunity to do a little more garden-related stuff. We stopped at Nigel's to have a look at how well his wild flower garden had flourished this year, then we stopped off at Pam's to walk her garden and have a well-earned cup of tea and a biscuit.

All of us had a most enjoyable day out at Mottisfont and we can whole-heartedly recommend anyone to visit the house and gardens, take in the spectacle of the estate and marvel at how much work it must take to keep it looking as awesome as it does.



Thank you to Sarah Davis and Pam Tuxford for joining me and my wife Jean Talbott on our amazing day out, and for Ian Burch, the Gardening Group Leader for suggesting the trip in the first place.



## PRACTICAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP (PPG)

It was pleasing to note that members had kept the March topic in mind even when holidaying in faraway places such as New Zealand and Singapore and not so far away Skye. Wiltshire cities, towns and villages



also produced interesting images of 'Negative Space' as did those taken indoors due to the appalling weather we were experiencing at that time.

The majority of these 62 photos reviewed in April received constructive criticism mainly due to them not wholly meeting the criteria. However, many were of lovely scenic views and admiring comments from fellow photographers were greatly appreciated.

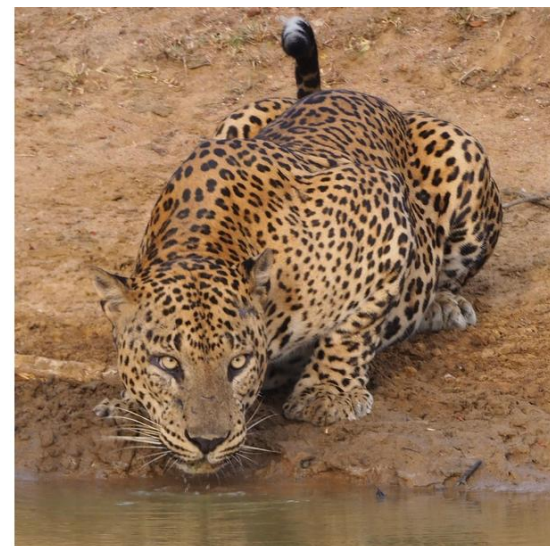
In May we reviewed 'Moss & Lichen'. Of the 71 photographs submitted the vast majority featured stonework such as gravestones, statues and garden ornaments, closely followed by trees including



stumps, branches and twigs. Growth on rooftops, walls and fences plus one of a seat and two on the ground completed the collection.

An image of moss showing a dark void in the centre of it prompted members to speculate what might be within. The suggestion that it was occupied by fairies caused much amusement and started a thread that ran through the rest of the meeting giving it the honour of being by far the silliest ever held by the group. Such fun though!

Surrounded as we are by nature in all its forms it was easy to wonder whether anyone could capture something really different for our next topic 'Patterns in Nature'.



According to Wikipedia natural patterns include 'symmetries, trees, spirals, meanders, waves, foams, tessellations, cracks and stripes. Early Greek philosophers studied pattern, with Plato, Pythagoras and Empedocles attempting to explain order in nature.' But would all the photos we were about to review be of flowers?

The answer was 'certainly not'. Yes, there were plenty of flowers but they sat alongside animals, insects, water, sand, leaves, trees, clouds, birds, vegetables and if you look closely even that elusive fairy made an appearance this month!

The group does not take a break so we will be back in the next Newsletter with a full report of our activities during the

summer months. In the meantime you can view all our photos on [Pewsey Vale u3a's Gallery](#).

We meet on the second Friday morning of each month to review photos and give constructive criticism but are currently unable to accept new members. You are welcome to add your name to our waiting list or perhaps join our sister group (see PG2 report above) or why not consider forming a third group? We are always willing to help.

## COUNTRY DANCING

After months, even years, of practice we have perfected Alabama Jubilee! There have been one or two occasions recently when NOBODY has gone wrong. So congratulations to all the dancers for persevering with this tricky series of steps.



Our next new challenge is Redwing with involves lots of ducking and diving and knowing who to dance with next! Remembering to "dive in" is key to avoid bumping heads! So far we can manage the steps slowly but the music is very quick and the tempo is causing difficulties but I'm sure we will achieve something resembling a dance in time!

There are plenty of dances we know and love so two hours flies by and everyone goes home with a smile on their face.

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

### **Proprioception**

Noun, meaning the awareness of the location of parts of one's body.

I wonder what the opposite is?

*Editor with two left feet!*

## PATCHWORK GROUP



Here is a machine made patchwork that I thought I would bring you. This was made by Glynis in haste (as the baby was due any moment) so she opted to machine rather than hand stitch. The edge she finished with Broderie Anglaise- sweetly pretty.

We are also thinking about making lap quilts to give to the Linus project for young people of all ages in care or about to leave care - I shall say more next time. I would like to encourage my ladies to work on something as a group, this seems a possibility.



## 8+ TO 12 MILE WALKING GROUP

In May we did an 11 mile circular walk, from Ogbourne St Andrew to Barbury Castle and back. We parked at St Andrew's Norman church, which hosts a Bronze Age barrow in the cemetery.

We headed north towards Ogbourne St George, then west towards Barbury Castle, skirting Smeathe's Ridge on the way. The walk followed various sections of The Ridgeway, from which spectacular views of Wiltshire are possible. But we had heavy mist, not a drop of the forecast rain!

Barbury Castle sits 860 feet up on The Ridgeway, but it's more of a hill-fort than a castle. All that remains is a huge double ring of embankments, roughly three quarters of a mile in circumference, raised by Stone Age workers using antlers and pointy sticks for tools.

Then sharp left towards Hackpen Hill and its White Horse. Finally back towards Ogbourne in a SE direction, passing Man's Head, Michael's Lynth, Rockley Manor, and many Gallops. The predicted rain did come when we got home - perfect timing!



In June we walked 12 miles from Bottlesford. Up to and along the canal to Wilcot. Then north, climbing steadily to the Pewsey Vale ridge. Sharp left along the ridge, heavily populated with sheep baking in their thick winter coats. The skylarks were seen leaving their nests and hovering much lower than usual.

After a lunch break, downhill to the Knap Hill car park, then we made the climb to the top of Walkers Hill and Adam's Grave for the view. Downhill now to Alton Barnes, where we detoured along the brick paths in the meadows to the church. It has a visitors' book with entries from all around the world, and hosts concerts. In the cemetery are two spectacular hollowed-out trees. Finally a stop at the Honey Street cafe for refreshments and cake, before the final stretch back to Bottlesford..

We walk on the first Thursday of the month, and would welcome more members.

## SHORT MAT BOWLS

Short mat bowls finished in Upavon on 31st May, and continues in Pewsey until the end of June. Recently we had a friendly game at Enford, the result was a draw.

We start again in early September. In September we have an invitation to play at Durrington, which should be interesting because they have some very good players.

*(We understand that during the summer months Julian Mumford leads an informal petanque group at the Woodbridge Inn on Fridays.)*

## 567 WALKING GROUP



We never know what we might see on our walks!

Starting from the Stonehenge Inn, our route round the back of Larkhill and past military bases on Salisbury Plain led to an encounter with some impressive new army equipment followed by a field of about ten hares chasing about and boxing with each other.

From Knap Hill there were marvellous views, stunning wild flowers and numerous lambs, some of which we enjoyed twice because we got a bit lost and had to retrace our steps!



The avenue of stones at Avebury was stunning amid so many brilliant buttercups. However this walk had a very soggy finale with one of our group almost sliding from the muddy bank into a deeply flooded track. Fortunately, two other members made a spectacular save by grabbing an arm each.



You are welcome to come along and join in the excitement. Just get in touch.

