



Pewsey Vale u3a

NEWSLETTER

Issue 66

January 2025

Message from the Chair

Dear All,

I wonder what 2025 will bring to us all, hopefully health and happiness, as well as some nice warm weather in the summer and not too many cold winds and snow. We shall see...

Meanwhile have you logged onto the u3a web site, www.u3a.org.uk? It's certainly worth a look, especially when the weather is miserable and the days short, there are online interest groups you can join, fun learning activities such as a weekly maths challenge, puzzles to solve and writing composition ideas, amongst others. Andrew even discovered you can contribute to an air fryer forum!

Today as I was glancing at the u3a Friends newsletter (available on above website) I discovered some very interesting zoom talks on subjects from mindfulness, to various science, art and history topics, there was even one on duplicate bridge. Do look!!

And as January is routinely the time we all look ahead, plan holidays and even start New Year's resolutions, we at Pewsey Vale u3a need to plan ahead too.

When Andrew and I joined the u3a in 2019 as new residents of Pewsey, I never imagined I would be holding the Chair's position, but it's lovely to be able to help Pewsey Vale u3a be so vibrant and friendly. For this to continue, we must plan for continuity.

We really do need some members to join our committee, Jean is off to pastures new and due to the constitution I cannot continue as Chair after this November. Ideally, I would like someone to work with me for a bit and then take over the role in November. Massive support from all of us on the committee of course, we are a team. Please talk to one of the committee or myself about what we do. It's not onerous and we have fun.

Meanwhile take care, keep smiling and please continue to support your interest groups and help their leaders.

Thank you.

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

January 2025	Tuesday 21 st	Social Meeting with Peter Davies The History of Orkney from 3500 BC to today
March 2025	Tuesday 18 th	Social Meeting with Peter Power on the fascinating WW2 story of bank clerk Eric Roberts, aka MI5 Agent Jack
May 2025	Tuesday 20 th	Social Meeting with Lucy Maynard on the work of The Dogs Trust

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.

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.

NEW GROUPS

Our Group Leader Co-ordinator Lynne Batsford says:

Our Pewsey Vale u3a has 438 members today as I write this. As our u3a grows, with new members regularly joining us, there is a need for us to think about creating more interest groups.

This might involve starting new groups following subjects that we don't cater for at the moment, or running parallel groups for popular interest groups that are full and have a waiting list. (That's why we have 3 book circles and 2 creative writing groups, etc.)

The u3a organisation is run **by the members for the members**. Any member of our u3a can run a group. Groups can run for 6 months or forever! You could start a new group. It will take up some of your time but not a lot. There are people on our committee who can help you get started. There are subject support systems within the National u3a: u3a - Subject Advice and we at Pewsey Vale u3a can offer on-going support for you while your group is developing and once it's established.

If you have found that an interest group is full or if you would like to belong to a group on a particular subject but that topic isn't available, please contact me to discuss what is involved in organising a group. You do not need to be an expert because the group will be learning together but you do need to be enthusiastic and willing to give it a go.

I look forward to hearing from you.

WALKING4EXERCISE

Our walks recently have been fairly local with one exception. The exception being a very chilly walk starting near Whitley, Melksham, but which had an unusual cafe at the end. It was a cafe and bike shop in one! Quite unique!

We have enjoyed the local countryside near Honeystreet cafe, Milton Lilbourne, Woodborough Garden Centre, Upavon and Pewsey and we have partaken of refreshments after our walks whenever possible!

Val and John were exceedingly hospitable after our recent Christmas walk, inviting us all for drinks and Christmassy nibbles at their house. Everybody was extremely appreciative.

We are a friendly, sociable group and you are very welcome to join us if you like to walk 4 miles while having a natter.

LEISURE WALKING

Leisure walking group meets on the second Thursday morning of the month, for a leisurely 3 mile walk. Members of the group take turns to plan the walks starting from different locations around the Pewsey Vale.

Very few members have been attending the Leisure Walking group meetings in the last few months. Thanks must go to the people who have taken trouble to plan and lead walks.

There was a lovely autumnal outing in the Savernake Forest where the colours were gorgeous and shone out in the sunlight.

We also saw a marvellous spectacle when we walked above Alton Barnes white horse. We looked down at the sun's rays illuminating the valley below. It was quite a sight.



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567 WALKING GROUP

Members of the 567 Walking group have enjoyed stunning walks in the last few months.

We have visited the perimeter of Stonehenge, starting from Woodhenge, we took the bus and then walked into Salisbury, climbed Martinsell Hill with fabulous sunny views from the top and on our recent pre-Christmas walk we sampled homemade Damson Vodka and Limoncello to keep us warm in the chilly wind! (They were both delicious!)

Pub lunches were at The Antelope, Upavon; Cote Brasserie, Salisbury; The Royal Oak, Wotton Rivers and Tale of Spice, Pewsey. All very welcoming and lovely food.

Get in touch if you would like to join the group for walks on a Thursday morning.

NEW 789 WALKING GROUP

Walking 789 is intended to slot in between and compliment, Walking 567 miles and Walking 7 plus to 12 miles. The aim is to walk for approximately 7-9 miles at a good pace (2.5 - 3 miles per hour). So a reasonable level of walking fitness will be required, along with good walking boots and waterproofs. But we will build up the pace slowly as my own fitness is at a winter lull and I promise not to lose anyone on the hills...

Hoping 2025 will be a good walking year.



Ian Burch

PROPOSED NEW GROUP DANCE AND PLAY (well, play anyway!)

Dust off that musical instrument and come and learn some country dance tunes with us. The plan is to learn and play some country dance/folk tunes together. Don't worry if you cannot read music, we will also learn them by ear.

Over a few months we can gradually build up a repertoire of tunes at dance speed so we can maybe play for dancers. But mostly let's play for fun!

All levels welcome, however these are not instrument specific lessons. But I am sure some help within the group will be available if people get stuck.

If you are interested please contact Peter Bromwich. If there is enough interest I will arrange a first session so we can discuss a way ahead for the group.

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SHORT MAT BOWLS

The last session of our bowls group for this year was Friday 13th December. It finished with a 'bring and share' lunch.

We start the new year on Monday 6th January in Pewsey and Friday 10th in Upavon

Tony Gallagher



WORDSMITHS

Our light-hearted group meets in Upavon on the morning of the third Wednesday of the month (with friendly dog(s), coffee and biscuits present). Recently we have attempted to write our own Christmas carol or other verse. Among planned themes for the early part of the year is a challenge to write a piece not using the letter A.

Here are also some examples of unusual words from the Wordsmith.org site:

- Elsewhen - self explanatory, don't you think? Earliest documented use: 1418.
- Cromulent - valid, acceptable, satisfactory. Coined in the tv series The Simpsons "two schoolteachers discuss the word embiggen they have just heard: Mrs. Krabappel: Embiggens? Hmm, I never heard that word before I moved to Springfield. Ms. Hoover: I don't know why. It's a perfectly cromulent word."
- Lower Slobbovia - A place regarded as isolated, underdeveloped, or unimportant. Coined by Al Capp in the comic strip *Li'l Abner* as the name of a fictional, perpetually snowbound, impoverished, and comically backward country. Earliest documented use: 1946.

Contact Joanna

BOARD GAMES GROUP



The group has a small and loyal membership. There's room for more players if you would like to play some games with friendly folk once a month. Scrabble and Rummikub are regular favourites but other games are available. Second Monday afternoon each month, 2.30pm to 4 at the Heritage Centre room.

Lynne Batsford

ART GROUP



We have had a quiet couple of months following our exhibition in July in Woodborough, which is not to say we haven't been busy working on our own projects.

We had a very enjoyable Christmas meeting in December and despite there being a veritable feast of nibbles supplied by group members, lots of art was done too!

We have been invited to supply some pieces of work to be framed in the waiting room at Pewsey Station in the New Year, following a display of work by local school children. We will of course ensure that our local u3a is well represented. It still surprises us how many people don't know about the u3a!

Bob and Ann Smith



Paintings by Ian, Marie-Jose and Dot

NEEDLEWORK GROUP



We are a small group of ladies who enjoy cross stitch, embroidery and knitting who meet twice a month at my house: we always have a cuppa and a natter. Here are some photos of finished work.

Sue Croudson

FRENCH CONVERSATION GROUP 1



Thanks to Liz Whitebread, we have been enjoying reading "Le Passe Muraille", an amusing story written by Marcel Aymé and published in 1943. There are some passages, for instance when it strays into patois, where we found we could get the gist but it was difficult to translate, so we have been glad to have a copy in English to help us.

The title "Walker through Walls" indicates that it is based on the improbable. Actions that would not normally be possible arouse emotions of fear, audacity, achievement, despondency, and eventually romance. French humour at its best. (We hear there's also been rather a good film made of it. Ed)

We have been pleased to welcome Usha Gupta who has felt the need to have two sessions of French a month so has joined us as well as being a member of group 2.

Having had a long waiting list for some time, the Groups are now in the position of having a few spaces. Group 1 meets on the third Thursday of the month and Group 2 on the second Tuesday.

Charmian Spickernell

DOG WALKING

Walkies group is going well; the numbers have built up again which is great! This is a happy cheery group from both the human and the dogs' point of view.

When we meet each dog greets the others and some get really excited when they see Josh and me. Which is rather sweet even if Josh isn't particularly bothered! On occasion we've had the odd couple having a shouting match, usually because someone invaded someone else's space leaping around in excitement.

I am always amazed by the variety of dogs who come along, all shapes and sizes and all so happy to be out with each other. Some may want to chase a ball and try to get their person's attention, then they settle and off we go. Sniffs are shared, some spending longer than others examining them thoroughly while their person tries to urge them on.



Our walks are around different parts of Pewsey, weather dependent at this time of year - if it's too wet and muddy in the fields then we have an on lead 'nail filing' walk (on pavements and footpaths or quiet roads) though we do try to find safe areas where the dogs can have a play and a good run. Much to my joy I tell the dogs we are going this way (when they are wandering off) and back they all come. But there is always one who has his own ideas! Usually Josh, who decides he's going across the field when everyone else is going round the edge of another. Needless to say I go and retrieve him- the vagaries of being an older dog!

Yes the dog walking group is great fun! The dogs are such characters and we all dote on our companions.

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

Margaret Blacker and Josh

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP - PORTRAIT ARTIST THOMAS LAWRENCE

Our first talk of this quarter was presented by a group member, something I am always keen to promote - and what a joy it was.

Avril joined the group exactly two years ago and quickly became involved in our activities so I was more than delighted when she drew the largest audience we have ever had!



7 Redcross Street Bristol -
birthplace of Thomas Lawrence.
Courtesy of B Pedwell.

On offering to give a talk it was suggested that she might do some research on the portrait artist **Thomas Lawrence**. The result was a most interesting account of his early life starting with his birth in Bristol in 1769. He was the youngest of the five children who survived infancy out of the sixteen born to Thomas snr, a supervisor of excise, and his wife Lucy Read, a clergyman's daughter.

A child prodigy, he began drawing when his parents moved to Devizes where from 1772-1779 his father was innkeeper at the Bear Hotel. Prompted by his father the young Thomas entertained visitors such as lodgers Fanny Burney and David Garrick by reciting Shakespeare and showing his "precocious drawings".

On becoming bankrupt his father moved the family to Bath where for two years Thomas received his only formal education. By the age of ten his fame was spreading and he was now the main breadwinner of the family supporting them with his pastel portraits.

Before his 18th birthday he arrived in London where he set up a studio, bought his parents a house, enrolled as a student at the Royal Academy and exhibited several paintings at the RA's exhibition in 1787.



Queen Charlotte -
in the National Gallery

At the age of 20 he was given his first Royal commission - to paint the portraits of Queen Charlotte and Princess Amelia. His reputation established he moved to a studio in Old Bond Street, becoming a full member of the Royal Academy in 1792. On the death of Sir Joshua Reynolds King George III appointed Thomas "painter-in-ordinary to His Majesty"

Thomas's parents died within a few months of each other in 1797 and he set up his studio in the family home in Greek Street.

After her well-researched and illuminating talk Avril answered questions from the audience and ended with a slide show of selected paintings with a note of where they are currently hung.

"Self taught and a genius as an artist" Thomas died at the age of 60 and was buried in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral. In spite of his fame few in today's audience had heard of him so we hope that Avril will return next year to tell us more about his life.

Wendy Lawrence

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP - THE WOMEN WHO MADE ME

Apart from my frequent attempts to persuade members to explore their own family histories we had not as a group pursued this subject until November. Members Christine & Martin tell you more.

"We have found the 'Local History' meetings to be much more wide ranging than our title suggests. Thanks to Wendy's leadership we have enjoyed diverse speakers, occasional trips away, and many interesting contributions from some of our members.

We were fascinated by the November meeting presentation by Lucy Whitfield, an expert genealogist, who is the founder of "The Women Who Made Me" project.

Lucy explained that the traditional linear "Family Tree" focuses on tracing the surnames of our forbears, and is limited by the fact that most women have traditionally taken their husband's names on marriage.

However, if we follow the Matrilineal line, this enlarges the family tree to include many more ancestors, and can also provide a fascinating social history of the way these women lived their lives despite the restrictions of societal norms.

Lucy is a very good, enthusiastic speaker and we enjoyed participating in the unravelling of newspaper articles and magistrate court reports to learn about the challenges, trials and also achievements of the lives of many women in our local area and beyond."



There was more audience participation when Lucy rummaged in her box of props and handed out items representing the numerous tasks a woman had to undertake when running a home. All items were then held aloft showing the true extent of the work involved and all without the benefit of the electrical aids and supermarkets that we have today.

The photo is of Lucy piling on the hats representing the various roles that Maysie Pender-Chalmers, aka Maysie Burlingham, aka Maysie Forrest undertook during her life. To read her story on-line search for *Maysie's story - The Women Who Made Me*

FREE JIGSAW PUZZLE SWAP

is available in the Bouverie Hall foyer 2pm until 4 on these dates:

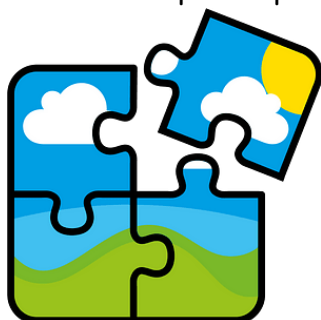
14th, 21st and 28th January,

11th and 25th February,

11th, 18th and 25th March,

8th and 22nd April

Please seal all puzzle pieces in a bag inside the box when donating or returning. Thank you.



Lynne Batsford

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP - A FOCUS ON FAMILY HERITAGE

A very festive meeting was held on Thursday 19th December and what better way to end our programme for 2024 than with a talk presented by a group member.

Jamie Letham's 'A Focus on Family Heritage' was a talk on how an 80 year old photo of his grandfather and father in the West Highlands predated his father's (and his own) international career in Asia, Africa and Europe, showing the impact and importance of one's heritage.

His grandfather was the train driver on the West Highland Line serving the Commando training centre



Jamie's grandfather and father on the West Highland Line, Mallaig Station April 1945

during WW2 (for which he was awarded the British Empire Medal for civilian meritorious service) and which prompted Jamie's father to adventure overseas. It showed how most ordinary people were 'extras' in a number of momentous events in Social History over the past 150 years, and that the story should be passed to current and future generations and not lost.

The journey took us from Mallaig in Scotland to Hong Kong and Dubai, Johannesburg and Amsterdam. Ending in England where we found a local connection to the Keswicks of Oare House.

Along the way an encounter with a member of the Royal family prompted the question "Who is your favourite Royal". After all members had voted 50% were found to have chosen Princess Anne, the very person that Jamie had met and about whom he then told us the anecdote.

Around the world in 80 days? We did it in 60 minutes!

Bucks Fizz, tea/coffee, an assortment of festive nibbles on each table and a bumper raffle made for an excellent end to one of the group's most successful years. One member summed up the morning as "The absolute epitome of the Christmas spirit u3a style!" Such a shame I forgot to take photos!!

Group Leader : Wendy Lawrence

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



MAHJONG FOR BEGINNERS

Since my last update I'm pleased to announce that 5 members have acquired all the skills necessary to play MahJong up to an advanced level. They have been presented with a graduation certificate and have now left this beginner's group.



MahJong for Beginners can therefore accept some new members in 2025.

I provide 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 6 members and we play on the 2nd and 4th Monday of the month at 10.30-12.30 at my home in Burbage.

If you are interested in learning this intriguing and engaging game within a relaxed and friendly environment, then please contact me via the link on our website.

TRAVELLERS TALES

Our now customary Christmas lunch had a full house for our last meeting of 2024 in early December, and was much enjoyed by all the members. We looked back on a series of very enjoyable talks given exclusively by members featuring countries they had visited in the past - thank heavens that Covid is now a distant memory and we can all travel widely once more!

Looking back on the autumn's talks I realise that all three of them were to do with water, either fresh or sea, and all the presenters took some amazing photographs to make the rest of us feel very envious of their destinations. Jean Rickard took us to the Baltic, and Kathleen McBride took us aboard a Hurtigruten vessel to Svalbard in Norway.

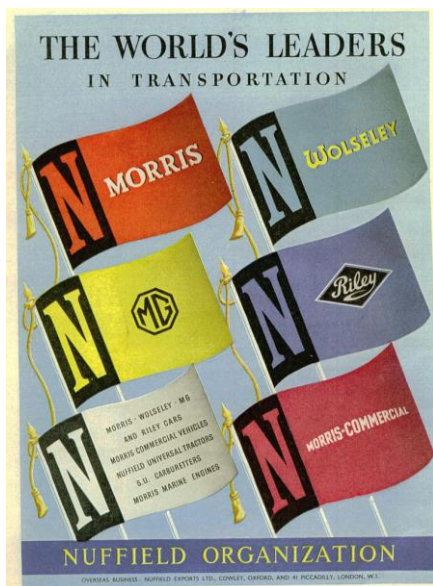


Cedric Hollingsworth completed the trilogy with a fascinating trip around the Great Lakes, and gave us facts and figures which really astounded us. These five lakes (Superior, Huron, Michigan, Erie and Ontario) provide an enormous amount of fresh water for North America and also connection to the Atlantic Ocean through the St. Lawrence River as well as the Mississippi River through the Illinois Waterway. All these facts and figures just back up what we u3a members always say - that we never stop learning, and in some cases learn a great deal more than we did at school!

So if you would like to come and learn a bit more about the world in a very enjoyable environment and convivial company, then come along on the first Tuesday morning of each month to Easton Royal Village Hall.

MILITARY HISTORY

The view of the full car park at Easton Royal Village Hall on the first Monday of each month is testimony to the popularity of this Military History Group. We are very lucky indeed to live in an area awash with people who have either served in the "forces" or have some connection with them, and we continue to attract fine speakers to the Group.



In September we welcomed an ex-Tornado pilot who gave us very graphic accounts of his career in the RAF, and in October we welcomed back Bill King who talked to us about the Nuffield Organisation and the enormously important part it played in preparations for and activities during World War II. Then in December we were a little more up-to-date and learned a lot more about the Suez crisis, which many of us were aware of in our youth, but of which we actually knew very little. It was quite an eye-opener for most of us, who were children in 1956 when the Egyptian government seized control of the Suez Canal and the ramifications that had for relations between the western allies and Middle Eastern countries.

We already have pretty full line-up of speakers for 2025, starting on Monday 6th January with Wing Commander Simon Footer (ret'd) with a presentation on the defining day of 6th June 1944, D-Day and the ensuing Battle of Normandy.

WINE TASTING AND APPRECIATION



Our Christmas meeting took its usual form of each wine being presented by a different member, who also supplied nibbles to match. We had an impressive and delicious array of wines and nobody took the easy way out by picking standard tipplers (except maybe me with Prosecco). Ditto the food, which was excellent.

Now we're back to our usual format of members taking turns to choose and present wines on a specific theme (no food, alas, apart from palate-cleansing crackers). I wonder what's in store for us this year?

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?

Joanna Goulson

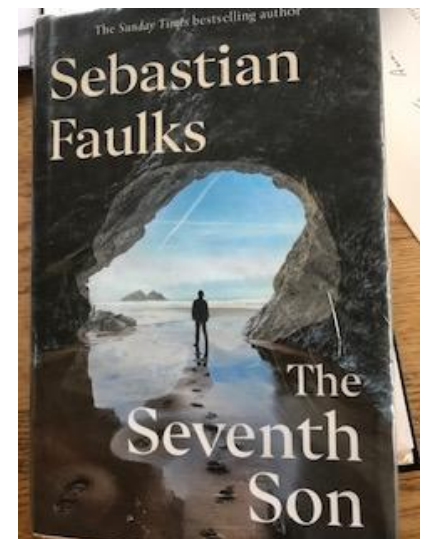
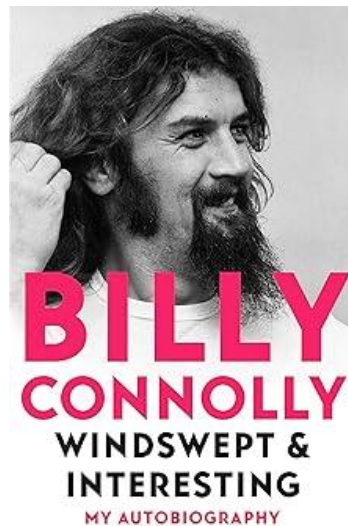
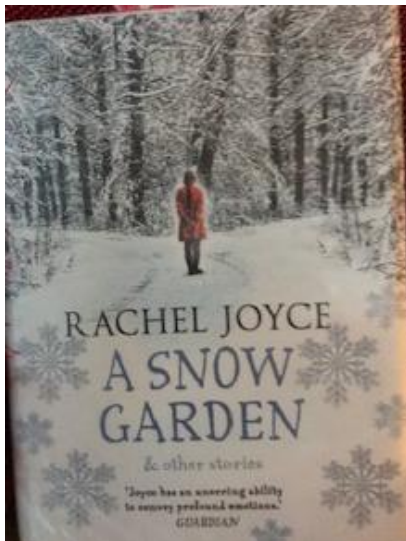
BOOK GROUP 1

I'm sitting here by a roaring fire on a cold miserable day but having had our monthly book club meeting this morning about to dive into this month's book. As Christmas is a matter of days away I chose a book of short stories written by Rachel Joyce. *A Snow Garden* is a set of six tales. We are taking a tale each to review.

October's book was *Windswept and Interesting* by Sir Billy Connolly. This is definitely a laugh out loud book. It's full of his usual humour as well as being deeply upsetting in part. His horrendous childhood and lack of parental love led him to seek solace in comedy. He escaped the dockyards eventually by working the clubs. If you are upset by bad language this book is not for you. If not it is a brilliant read.

November's book was *The Seventh Son* by Sebastian Faulks. A most unusual science fiction in that it is almost not fiction: it could indeed become truth. It is a study in what it means to be human. By unlawfully messing about with DNA, a surrogate mother gives birth to a child who has more Neanderthal DNA than Homo Sapiens DNA. The story of the child to adulthood is fascinating. A book which beautifully written and well worth reading. It tugs at the heartstrings.

Ann Saxton



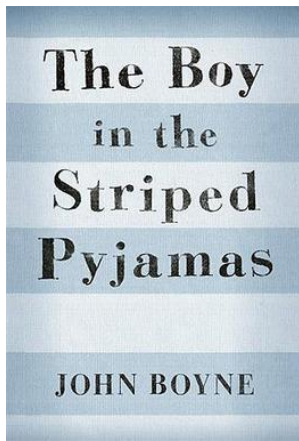
CREATIVE WRITING GROUP 2 (aka WRITING FOR FUN)

We have no examples of our work to show you this time, much of it being too long and/or too Christmassy. As Christmas is over (or, if you're going to the Pantomime, Oh No It Isn't!), we'll give you something new next time. Oddly enough, New is our theme for January.

One aspect of our writing we're currently examining is Show vs Tell in our narrative styles. It's often - but not always - better to show action in the story, to involve the reader more closely. For example, show us James Bond jumping out of a helicopter rather than telling us what a daredevil he is. On the other hand, of course, we might want to set the scene by telling us what went before. Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference!

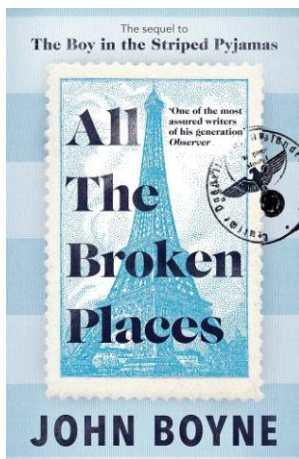
Group Leader Liz Whitebread

BOOK GROUP 2

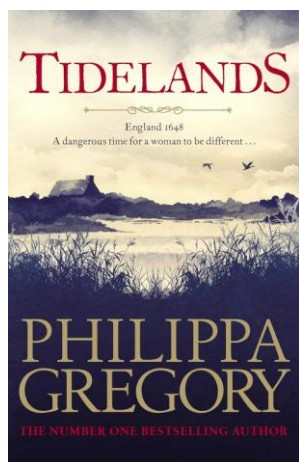


We have enjoyed the Autumn/Winter months of reading this year and have read 3 books. 2 of which have been further stories by John Boyne, who seems to resonate with our group, by his writing style, attention to characters and relationships detail, with very thought provoking and poignant storylines.

We read in succession (thanks to the brilliant organisational skills of Pewsey Library) firstly to read "The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas." A film which was a global success, based on John's book of a micro view of the world in and around the Auschwitz camp.



We followed a month later with the sequel, "All the Broken Places." The continuation of the story and life of the daughter of the Commandant and her life in Paris and London and her internal battles to come to terms with the horror of the events when she was a 16 year old girl. It was an excellent story of Gretel's relationships with her own close family and neighbours, who both helped her to deny and trigger the bitter truths she experienced. John Boyne's fictional license around a well read and explored subject. John Boyne was a guest on Desert Island Discs earlier this year too.



Our November book was Philippa Gregory's "Tidelands", a historical novel set on the south coast of England, where the main female character, Alinor, remained stoic through her poverty and singledom, whilst struggling to actualise her intimate relationship with a priest, as the country underwent great change in the 17th century and the English Civil War. The characters were strong and we both liked and disliked them for their strengths and weaknesses.

These 3 books all showed a theme of endurance, survival and a search for future happiness despite the restrictions and challenges faced.

We wish all Pewsey U3A members a very happy, healthy and fulfilling 2025 !

Jo Turner



LARGE PROJECTION SCREEN GOING FREE

We have a screen approx 6ft x 6ft. Would you like it?

Let me know asap or it will go to the furniture recyclers.

CREATIVE WRITING GROUP 1

We recently had great fun writing about Christmas from the point of view of some of the characters and objects associated with this time of year. You may have already thought what it is like for a reindeer or a turkey but have you ever considered what it feels like to be the sellotape as it approaches the teeth on the dispenser?

In addition to pieces written in response to shared challenges, we encourage each other to work on our own projects. The following is written by Ann Saxton, an artist as well as an enthusiastic member of our group. The accompanying picture is one of her paintings.

Our group, which meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month at 2pm is now full with 8 members. We will create a waiting list for any further interested members.

Wendy Argent

MATILDA by Ann Saxton

That night I dreamed of Matilda. She wore a silken gown of azure blue; a perfect match for her bright eyes. We were running for our lives away from the enemy. Which enemy? I later wondered.

The grass was long, making the going hazardous. I was out of breath; my lids were heavy. Matilda was floating alongside me. Where were we going?

We passed the church at Alton Priors. The moon gave enough light to find the strange little turning gate to the field. I opened it quickly, beckoning Matilda to follow. With fear induced racing heart I ran as fast as my legs would carry me to the pale outline of the 10th century church across the meadow. We fell exhausted into the porch. The old oak door had a large iron ring which yielded to my clammy hand.

Inside was peace. St Mary's church, built way before Alton Barnes, was tiny. The darkness wrapped a security blanket around us. Our fear abated. Here we should be safe.



I woke the next morning to find myself in my own bed. What a strange dream and why were my legs aching as though I had run for miles. Who was Matilda and why am I dreaming of her? What were we running away from?

I went into my studio where small paintings of local churches sat on easels, part of my self-imposed task to paint all 16 in the benefice. St Mary's canvas was half finished, no doubt the reason for the dream although at that point I knew nothing about its history.

Researching the history of the area around the 12th century, I discovered that a bitter civil war known as the Anarchy prevailed. Empress Matilda, being the daughter of Henry the first, had a claim to the throne. She was usurped by Stephen of Bois who took the crown in 1135. In 1139 Matilda, with help from her cousins, went to battle. After her defeat, Stephen eventually captured her in Oxford. She was besieged for 3 months in a castle. She escaped, dressed in white, on a snowy night. My dream had her in azure blue.

Back in my studio I took up my palette knife, spending 2 hours finishing the canvas of St Mary's Saxon church.

(I did a painting of all of the 16 churches in our benefice. I have given them to the churches to raise money.)

GARDENING GROUP

It's been a stormy Autumn for the gardeners in Pewsey Vale. We have all spent most of our time dodging the foul weather and clearing up afterwards. The Gardening Group snatched a few moments of sunshine in Lynne's tidy, beautifully laid out garden in November. Some good autumn colour was to be seen in between the storm clouds. There were still some leaves left on the trees at this time giving autumn colour and the Salvias and Dalias were still putting on a good show as you can see in the pictures.

Most of us have spent the time clearing leaves as you can see from the pictures of my garden. I find its much easier to gather leaves with the lawn mower! Next month, Jan 2025, the group will spend some time planning where we want to go in 2025. Hoping 2025 will be kinder to us and our gardens.

Ian Burch



PRACTICAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP (PPG)

For the benefit of readers who have only recently joined the PVu3a and may not know how the Practical Photography Group (PPG) works, we agree a programme of twelve topics, each one being allocated to a specific month of the year. What we consider our best eight photos are uploaded to the appropriate album on the u3a website and these are reviewed at the next meeting when constructive criticism is given.

And so we started the final quarter of this calendar year with a review of 'A Group of Three'. These were to be photos taken of three *different* items that related to each other.



One of the main intentions of our group is to be more aware of what is around us and this topic proved ideal in that respect, although allowing ourselves to be distracted whenever we saw any group of three identical items resulted in only 50% of the images meeting the criteria. The two examples printed here probably give a better idea of what we were aiming for.

The following month we looked at 71 photos covering a variety of fruit and vegetables in various guises. Of course it was pumpkin season so there were plenty of gourds to be found and almost every other fruit you can think of had its photo taken. Not quite so popular were the vegetables but even they made for a colourful display.



In 2023 we produced a calendar using images of properties, activities and views familiar to anyone who lives in or regularly visits Pewsey, so for this year's exhibition at the u3a Annual General Meeting we thought it would be a good idea to concentrate on other villages in the Vale. Each of us had two or three to visit and photograph resulting in nineteen of them being beautifully represented. The display that afternoon drew a great deal of interest from attendees, especially those who recognised their own village.

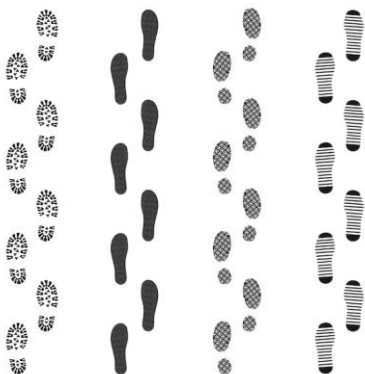


Night photography is a subject we last studied in October 2018 and the selection this time was even more spectacular. Some members took the opportunity to record night scenes (including the Aurora Borealis) when on their travels abroad whilst others took advantage of what places much nearer to home had to offer.



Group Leader: Keith Bew

COUNTRY DANCING



Country Dancing continues to be great fun with lots of laughs and successes. Members all have their dance preferences and we had a "requests" session before Christmas which was very enjoyable. Some of the dancers weren't able to choose a favourite dance because they like so many!

Come along to give it a try. You might enjoy it as much as everyone else does!

Lynne Batsford

STRETCH AND CURL

The Stretch and Curl class has enjoyed a successful year again. It's still only £1 to enjoy a fun and energetic way to keep fit and flexible. We meet at the Bouverie Hall, Pewsey most Mondays. Doors open 10.15am to start at 10.30am for an hour of exercise taught by a retired professional.

BIRDWATCHING GROUP

I'd like to introduce myself, Ian Burch, I'm the new leader of the Bird Watching Group. I'm a keen amateur Bird watcher, I can't pronounce most of the Latin names or recognize very many of the bird songs, but I do like to get out and about and find new places to watch birds and revisit some of my old favourites. I consider myself privileged to have met my predecessor Peter Mander and am grateful for the knowledge he shared on the few occasions I was able to join the group. I hope one day to visit the spots he told me about for Bittern and Nightjar, which we didn't get to do together.

My plan is to start monthly short trips on the 1st Tuesday of the month commencing 7th Jan 2025 at Langford Lakes near Salisbury. The aim initially will be to keep journey times below the hour and aim to visit for 2-3 hours. I also plan to set up a WhatsApp Group to enable sharing of sightings and potential ad hoc visits. Let me know if you would like to join the group.

Also, by way of warning, I'm a keen photographer and so there will be time devoted to getting good photos of birds. I also enjoy walking and regularly walk in Pewsey Vale and the surrounding area. The attached are a few of my recent pictures, a Meadow Pipit near Lower Everleigh, a Kingfisher at Hurly Lake, a Female Kestrel near Southcott and a Great Egret at Langford Lakes.

Ian Burch



PATCHWORK GROUP

The patchwork group has been busy making items to pass onto Project Linus UK (for children of all ages in care). Ellayne our local contact with the organisation asked particularly this time for quilts for newborn/ premature babies and breast pump bags for mums to be able to donate surplus milk. We were happy to be able to give her a quilt and two bags which are shown both on their own and on a table with two bundles of cuddle fleece which she had brought for us to line future quilts with. Ellayne looks at Michiko's baby quilt with Betty.

Our newest member Josie is making a table mat with the tumbling blocks pattern - this is always more challenging as a pattern, trying to create the illusion of blocks tumbling whichever way you view the mat. Once you see how the pattern works it's easy!

Our Christmas party - sadly not all our members were able to be with us which was a shame! Those who came brought a delicious selection of homemade treats to share and enjoy with our tea. Happy and peaceful New Year.

PS The patchwork group has just been given a wonderful selection of "Fat Quarters" by a member of another u3a. She was clearing her stash of fabrics. She stressed that they be used for our Project Linus quilts - these will nicely complement and encourage our group with new themes. I am thrilled with this beautiful gift.

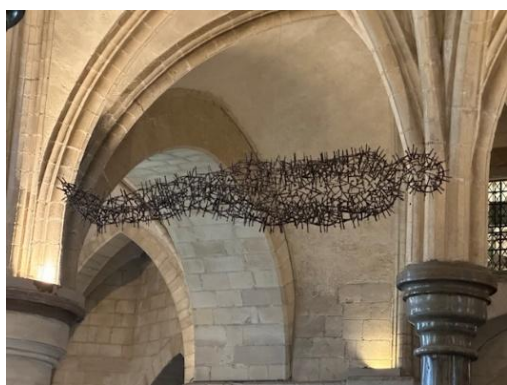
Margaret Blacker



TRAVEL GROUP

Kent - September 2024

Thirty members of the Kennet and Pewsey Travel group (otherwise known as Wing It Tours) had a five day holiday based in the lovely town of Faversham staying at Judds Folly Hotel. Despite pretty awful weather, it amazingly dried up every time we reached one of our destinations. Visits included Leeds Castle; the Operations Tunnels in Dover Castle; The Wright Brother Museum; Dungeness Railway; Canterbury; Isle of Sheppey; and Knoll House.



PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP 2 (PG2)



Since our last newsletter we have been to Westonbirt Arboretum - oh those glowing acers! - and to the Christmas Tree festival at St Thomas's Church in Salisbury - oh that bling! You can see what we did on the web site.

In January we shall be getting together to plan some of our outings for 2025, so you can expect more gorgeous pics from us, though we say it ourselves.

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.

Joanna Goulson

