



Pewsey Vale u3a

NEWSLETTER

Extracts from Issue 68 July 2025

Message from the Chair

Dear All,

July, and we are over half way through the year. I do hope it has been a good one for you all so far.

It's lovely to read about what the various groups have been up to since our last newsletter, and reading this one just emphasises the wide variety of things you do and the amazing talented people who live in the Vale.

The reason we are so successful is because some of our members are willing to take on a little bit of work to organise a group or two. Without them, Pewsey Vale u3a would not exist as it does. However some of our groups are struggling at present as people are reluctant to take on the Group Leader role. Some of the current group leaders are having to take a break due to a variety of reasons. If this is the situation within one of your groups, it would be a pity for that group to close. Maybe you could help? Please talk to Lynne or one of the committee. It's not too much of an arduous role and very fulfilling. We are here to help.

Meanwhile the committee meets bi-monthly and between these meeting often more informally, to discuss issues that crop up, as well as what is going on at the u3a HQ (AKA The u3a Trust). Yes, they have reorganised their hierarchy and hope it will help every u3a be more successful. Apparently they have also been advertising the u3a on BOOM Radio, which I must admit I had never heard of, but have been reliably informed it plays music suitable for our generations, so maybe worth tuning in to it soon.

At our last committee meeting Robin Collins, our Web Manger and general techie, informed us he and his wife Jenny are moving out of the area. This has been on the cards for a bit and we are very happy that they are eventually getting sorted. However it does mean that we are in need of some help with the role(s). Robin does assure us he will not leave us in the lurch and will always be available for us to contact and will help handover the job. I will be e mailing his notes re the job he does to you all soon, please do read and think about whether you could help us. There is no reason why two or more people couldn't share the role. Robin will provide plenty of support.

Looking forward to seeing you at our special August events, details in here and will be coming out via email soon.

Take care and keep smiling.

Fiona

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

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Your diary page

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

July 2025	Tuesday 15 th	Social Meeting with Marcus Ward, Director Wild New Forest Guided Tours, Pine Martens in the New Forest
August 2025	Friday 1 st Thursday 28 th B New Date	Cheese and Wine evening 7-9pm Afternoon Tea 3.30-5.30
October 2025	Tuesday 21 st	Social Meeting with Dr Gale Pettifer on Heart of the Oaks: The 18th Century Naval timber crisis and the New Forest. True or False?
November 2025	Tuesday 18 th	AGM and Alex Leger returns. Cruise Ship Speaker and ex BBC Producer Alex will entertain us with his talk, ' I bet this never happened to you - Extraordinary life Stories '.
December 2025	Friday 5 th	Quiz 6.30-8.30

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.

DID YOU KNOW.....?

Pewsey Vale u3a is a member of HF holidays.



HF holidays run all sorts of holidays: walking, sightseeing, singing, dancing, bridge, drawing, painting.... For between 3 to 7 nights with full board and accommodation in various picturesque locations.

Group holidays can be organised and booked by our members for our members. So you could plan something for your Interest group or for some of your u3a friends.

Here is a link to their website www.hfholidays.co.uk

DARTS GROUP

A small group of us continue to throw the 'arrows' at the Royal Oak's spacious upstairs room. There is much hilarity - particularly when it's my turn, as I have difficulty in hitting the board! The afternoon is good fun, some of us are improving - I'm still waiting for this - and we continue to have



friendly contests between the members. We usually divide into two groups and friendly competition spurs us on.

Do come and join us, even if you have never played, or on the other hand if you are expert, there is time for everyone to practice and play in turn. We have 'u3a' darts so no need for any outlay, apart from buying a drink at the pub to bring up with you.

We meet on the 1st & 3rd Monday afternoons, 2-4 pm upstairs in the Royal Oak, Pewsey

567 WALKING GROUP



There have been fabulous walks recently for the members of the 567 Walking group: amongst the bluebells in West Woods, spotting meadow flowers and canal wildlife near Seend, various meadow and river landscapes south of Amesbury where a fawn joined us for several minutes.

Colin organised the walk on a very hot June day when we caught the bus to Amesbury and walked to the Harvester at Old Sarum. He had thought of everything. We had numerous regular water stops in the shade and he even brought along some small flannels to dip in the river on a long string so that we could use them to cool ourselves. (See the photo). Colin then wore his cool, damp cloth under his hat for the rest of the journey!

Our future walks are planned for Savernake Forest, from Urchfont to Stert and back and around Coate Water near Swindon.

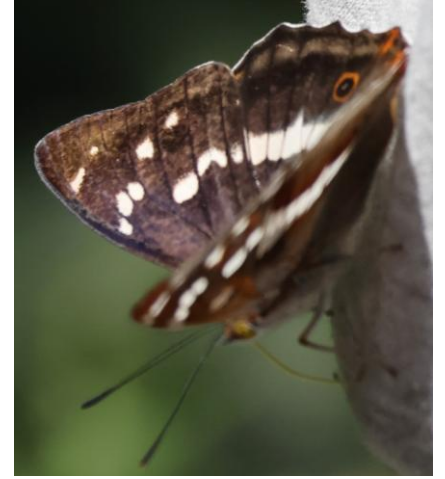
Please get in touch if you would like to come along.

789 WALKING GROUP

In June we enjoyed a visit to Savernake Forest and walked 7.6 miles, much better than my 12.1 mile walk earlier in the week to recce the route. Yes I do get lost from time to time. If you do get a chance



Savernake Forest is well worth a visit for its ancient trees particularly Beech and Oak trees and the associated wildlife in such a long established environment. However, do note that the trees on the Ordnance Survey maps are now rather old and in decline, The King and Queen Oaks being prime examples, where even the replacement Queen Oak is not in her first flush of youth. We were also treated with sightings of Purple Emperor Butterflies, something the Forest is noted for and only out for a few weeks. NB: No Butterflies were harmed in the taking of this picture.



Walking 9+

We have enjoyed some dry walking notably along Wansdyke, but the June walk was so wet that the three hardy souls who turned out unanimously agreed to cut it short and go home...

COUNTRY DANCE MUSIC



Our group is now up to 10 regular players. Our repertoire is growing slowly and we are getting close to playing at dance speed for some of the tunes. Always happy to have more players, so if you have an old fiddle in the loft that you haven't played for years, why not get it out and give it a try!

We now meet twice a month, on the first Friday of the month in the morning at Wilcot Village Hall, and on the third Thursday evening at the Crown pub in Pewsey.

WORDSMITHS

WS

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). We talk about - around - over - a different theme every month, looking at usage, etymology or all or none of the above.

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

Oik: A person perceived as uncouth, unpleasant, and of lower social standing.

Pogonotomy: The cutting of a beard; shaving. Why simply "shave" when you can announce you're off to perform a pogonotomy? Using this word adds a certain gravity to your morning routine. The opposite is pogonotrophy, the growing of a beard.

BOARD GAMES GROUP

The board games group continues to meet each month on the second Monday afternoon. Some members have their favourite games while others vary their choices and welcome new games brought by members.

If you have games to play but no one to play with why not come along? Bring your game or choose one when you arrive.

Please get in touch for further information about the next meeting.

CARD GROUP

Do you make greeting cards at home?

Have you a die cutting machine, embossing folders, stamps, and inks?

Are you reasonably experienced in variety of card making techniques?

Would you like to join our group with like minded people sharing ideas and trying out new ways of making cards?



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



ART GROUP



This has been a busy few months for the art group. As well as having a continuing display of our work in the waiting rooms at Pewsey railway station we have had visits from two local artists.

Jackie Cummins, an artist from Great Bedwyn, spent an afternoon with us in March. Jackie is an artist who has painted in watercolour and taught for many years. Working in watercolour, she demonstrated a painting for us and we had the opportunity to make our own paintings with her support and advice. This proved to be a very fast working afternoon and a real challenge to those of us who work at a more leisurely pace! The concentration in the room was palpable.....



Soon afterwards we had an afternoon of demonstrations of digital art - something **totally** different! - by Dave Cox from Devizes. Dave explained how he created art works using sophisticated computer programmes to create the effects he wanted. Even those members of the group who are not computer literate were fascinated by the way he worked.

Members of the group continue to work in their chosen medium.



The group meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month throughout the year from 2-4pm in Manningford Village Hall.

P.S. A reminder to drop into the MADE Gallery in Pewsey to view the changing exhibitions.

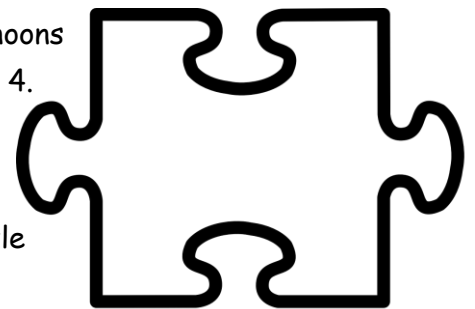
FREE JIGSAW PUZZLE SWAP

This is free for any u3a members.

There will be Jigsaws for swapping at the Bouverie Hall on the afternoons of 8th July, 15th July, 9th September and 23rd September. 2pm until 4.

Nothing in August.

When donating or returning puzzles please make sure the pieces are in a sealed bag inside the box. I've had some disasters lately with loose puzzle pieces escaping from boxes!



Our resident artist

WALKING4EXERCISE

Ginny cleverly found a street with her name when she led the walk for the Walking4exercise group at the beginning of June. So photographic evidence was captured! This was at Burbage.



In addition to Burbage we have also explored countryside near Marden, between Oare and Pewsey after a bus ride and behind Durrington and Bulford. All have been beautiful, interesting and with excellent company.

Future walks planned include Oliver's Castle in Devizes and two bus trips followed by walks. One to Manningford Abbots and back to Pewsey, another to The Silks on the Downs walking on Marlborough Downs and bus back to Pewsey.

Many thanks go to the members who have taken their turn to plan and lead these walks.

Please get in touch if you would like to join us.

WINE TASTING AND APPRECIATION



How is your nose? Your palate? Your taste in wine? We put these and more to the test in our lighthearted meetings. 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?

COUNTRY DANCING

The country dancers have continued to enjoy learning new dances and practising regular favourites. We have added The Physical Snob and China Teapot to our repertoire recently!



New members have fitted in very well but there's always room for more.

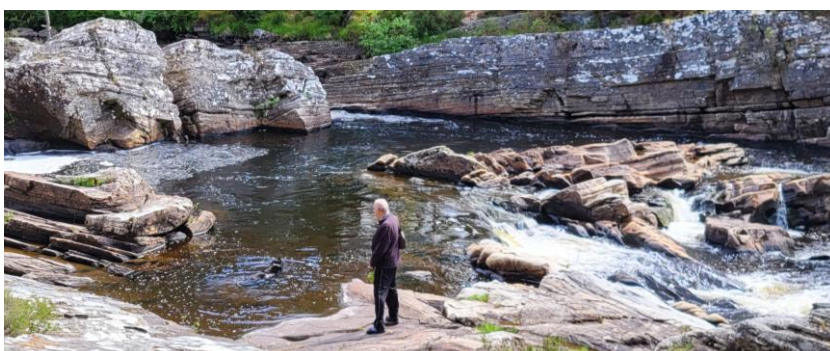
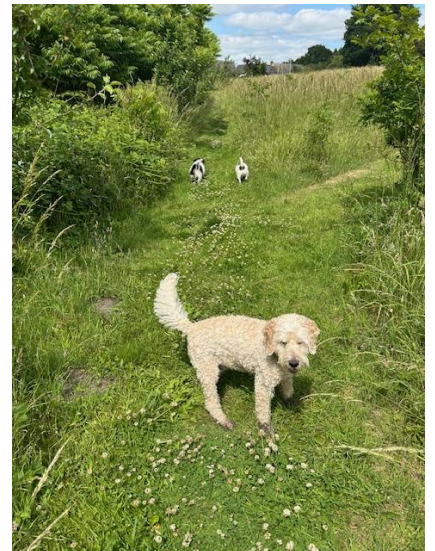
We will be taking a break between the end of July and beginning of September. Then will be raring to go again on September 9th.

DOG WALKING



Here are some pictures from our most recent Walkies. We were a small group and the weather was on the warm side - the four of us enjoyed a mostly shady walk with chances for our dogs to have a paddle and a drink, the highlight was at last being able to cross the foot bridge over Hollybush Lane which has at last been replaced after almost a year and the very sad loss of a dear doggy friend.

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



OK, this isn't
in Pewsey and
it's swimming
not walking.
But it's a dog!

Ed

CREATIVE WRITING GROUP 2

We continue to meet in Pewsey on the 3rd Wednesday afternoon (2-4) and look at the piece from the challenge subject each member has submitted. Although we (usually) have a subject, the stories / poems are all so very different and interesting. Recent themes have been A Difficult Moment; The Artist; and our most recent was a free choice - anything - which threw some of us into confusion.



We have been given some writing magazines (a big thank you to the anonymous donor) which members have been able to take home. We have discussed some of the articles in our group sessions, and this will continue, as well as having very short writing tasks during the afternoon on a variety of themes. Discussions are always interesting.

(Being u3a, tea, cake/biscuits etc are of course served during the session!)

We do have two spaces, so if you think you would enjoy coming to the group do contact me:

BOOK GROUP 1

February We read **Birdcage Walk** by **Helen Dunmore**. This novel took us to Bristol in the time of the French Revolution. The husband of the heroine was a builder with grand ideas outside his means. He started to build a crescent of houses which never became finished. Much enjoyed by most of us with its intricate twists and turns. The relationship between husband and wife was somewhat fraught. The ending was surprising.

March We read **Thirteen Guests** by **J. Jefferson Farjeon**. This murder mystery was set in the 1930s. Not memorable as the plot was too complicated.

April gave us **Miss Benson's Beetle** by **Rachel Joyce**. This extremely well written book was our favourite. A most unusual fantasy, highly imaginative. A young lady goes in search of an undiscovered golden beetle at the ends of the earth. Adventures abound. A book not to be missed.

May **The Romantic** by **William Boyd**. This is also a very good read. The character experiences many lives in many countries as he travels the world. His one true love he leaves, to venture on as a soldier, a farmer, a writer and a felon. Nineteenth century life, romance, poetry, triumphs and tragedies made it an excellent read.



LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Our first meeting this quarter brought together four group members who each gave a talk inspired by an historical event that took place in April.

Virginia told the tale of **Samuel Johnson** (1709-1784) and his dictionary; Laurence chose the second expedition (1772-1775) by **Captain James Cook**; the life, love and marriage of **Eva Braun and Hitler** was explored by Avril and on a lighter note Sandra spoke about the introduction to the UK in 1633 of the **Banana**.

The Wiltshire Lieutenancy

*Appointed in 2018 as a Deputy Lieutenant Judge Simon Cooper explained in May the history and purpose of the **Wiltshire Lieutenancy** about which Linda's account follows.*



The position of Lord Lieutenant was created in 1540, giving the Royal Prerogative to 'call men to arms'. Comprising mostly of Lords, they were assigned 'powers to repress, subdue, slay and put to execution by all ways and means'. They were to raise taxes for the King, previously the role of the local Sheriff.

There have been 34 Lord Lieutenants of Wiltshire, the first being William Herbert in 1551. They are appointed by the King to uphold the dignity of the

crown, and to welcome and support the Royal Family whilst they visit. Dame Sarah Troughton has held the post since 2012.

Hidden in Plain Sight

It was by popular demand that Bob Holman returned to the club in June and Avril's report shows you why.

Did you know there are 27 alleyways in Marlborough? This and many other interesting historical and cultural facts were shared with us during Bob Holman's fascinating presentation of his latest portfolio of black and white photos, entitled '**Hidden in Plain Sight**.'

Despite an annoying technical issue out of his control, Bob entertained us in his inimitable and jovial style, with shots from many familiar places and buildings such as the Town Hall, Merchant's House, and the local churches.



Subjects ranged from the mundane to the beautiful to the downright sinister: A lead pipe in the Town Hall that at one time conveyed steam right up to the alarm bell that was sounded to round up the local fire brigade; a wonderful mosaic in the Methodist church; a door latch etched with a marking to ward off witches; a system of hooks mounted in the walls of the old Salisbury Road railway bridge to suspend a garrote wire across the road in case of Nazi invasion in WWII.

BADMINTON GROUP

Here are the comments from several members of the group. We are 19 players with a 'core' of 15 who turn up regularly to play.



'Our Badminton group is fun, friendly and great exercise, with each game being unique as we share new partners and opponents regularly.'

'For me, the sessions are great fun, no one takes it too seriously. Everyone very friendly and supportive. One of the only activities involving a group of people I do, so it is also a very social time for me.'

'So why do I turn up most weeks? The Badminton group from day one made me feel really welcome and continues to do until this day. When I first joined, I was also inspired by some of the more elderly players, one I believe in their 90's and others with neurological conditions. Hence I readily agreed to support the group. So you get the chance for some much needed exercise coupled with meeting such a friendly and social bunch of u3a members every week.'

'Competitively sociable atmosphere.'

'We enjoy the company, improve our fitness and look forward to the Olympics.'

'There was an old woman from Manton,
Who wanted to make friends and have fun,
She had her own racquet
And though lacking in tactic
She managed to play badminton'

'There's a u3a group down in Pewsey
Who welcome new players like Suzy,
If you're fast or you're slow
Or the rules you don't know
You'll have a great time, they aren't choosy!'

TABLE TENNIS AND PICKLE BALL

Table Tennis follows on from Badminton every Wednesday, it regularly has 12 to 15 participants and all abilities are welcome.

After Table Tennis we have Pickle Ball, from 3.15 to 4.15, which is enjoyed by a smaller but enthusiastic group many of whom also play TT and Badminton.

The cost of the Table Tennis is £1.00 and the Pickle Ball £2.00 per week, as with Badminton if more turn up then extra courts can be booked.

TRAVELLERS TALES

Our good friend Bill King returned to give us a presentation in April and to finish off his Thames Path walk (it has taken several years to achieve all seven parts of the walk!). He and his wife Flora have undertaken this project with great enthusiasm, and they have certainly brought to our attention many of the buildings, statues and places of interest that border the Thames. This stretch was from Richmond to Greenwich, and we were treated to scenes from Richmond Park up to the Thames Barrier, a wonderful feat of engineering.

The Group took a break in May, returning in June for a super talk by Cedric Hollingsworth about his holiday in Tasmania. His photos were a delight and it was quite an eye opener about an island which has always been on my bucket list, but regrettably probably will never visit. So what an opportunity to see what I have physically missed!



For our most recent meeting I am cheating somewhat, as it has just happened - in July - due to Joanna's absence! So I am able to tell you of the excellent presentation given by Dr Dave (Humfress) about his and Lizzie's recent holiday in Sri Lanka, and the abundance of beautiful and very colourful temples and the stunning photos of elephants, monkeys, leopards and even a crocodile! The views of their car and train journeys around the southern half of the island were a delight, even if many of them were taken whilst it was pouring with rain. The beautiful sunsets that followed these downpours were a real joy too.



For several years now we have held a Summer Lunch (bring and share) and this was a great success as ever. We never seem to have a problem in providing enough food, and judging by the noise level and laughter it is always much enjoyed. We now have a summer break until September when we shall venture to the southern part of North America for a cruise which will involve passage through the Panama Canal.

We meet on the first Tuesday of the month at Easton Royal Village Hall, starting first with a coffee and natter and getting underway at 10.30am.

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP 2 (PG2)



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.

We've recently visited the delightful gardens at Chisenbury Priory and are about to go to the new Swindon Balloon Festival.

MILITARY HISTORY



The Military History Group meets on the first Monday of the month, in the Village Hall at Easton Royal, and the car park was full to bursting for the April presentation by Roger Bailey who told us about the DH-88 Comet Racer which won the London to Melbourne race in 1934 and which is still in pride of place at the famous Shuttleworth Collection in Bedfordshire. I have seen it proudly in place there in its stunning red livery and I was able to appreciate it so much more having heard all about the adventures with it back in its pre-war days.

Our May gathering was in fact a visit by about 15 members to the Small Arms Collection at Warminster Camp. We had a superb guide whose knowledge of all of these weapons was unlimited. His tour of 3 hours was really fascinating and we all emerged somewhat shell shocked (no pun intended!) with the information he had given us. It is an amazing collection of weapons covering pre-historic, Roman, medieval and thoroughly ancient instruments up until the present day and I would thoroughly recommend a visit there.

Our June meeting featured something completely different, a talk by Paul Shepherd about an operation that took place within the memory of current members, in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1979/80. A contingent of British soldiers were involved in Operation GILA which certainly made headlines at the time and which still has ramifications to this day.

Our July meeting on Monday 7th July is the last one before we have a summer break, and is an older history of the military, featuring the Seven Years War from 1756 to 1763 fought primarily in Europe and of which most of us know very little, so it will be very interesting indeed to learn something of "old warfare".

BRIDGE BUILDERS

Hundreds of military bridges were constructed before and after the battle of Culloden to help government troops move around the Highlands.

The stone bridge here at Little Garve was built in 1767 on the orders of Major Caulfeild, successor to General Wade, but was soon abandoned by the army and used mainly by local people.

We restored Little Garve bridge in 2007, ready for another 200 years of peaceful crossings.

Follow the trail and cross the Black Water again at Silverbridge (above)

CREATIVE WRITING GROUP 1

AI joins Creative Writing!

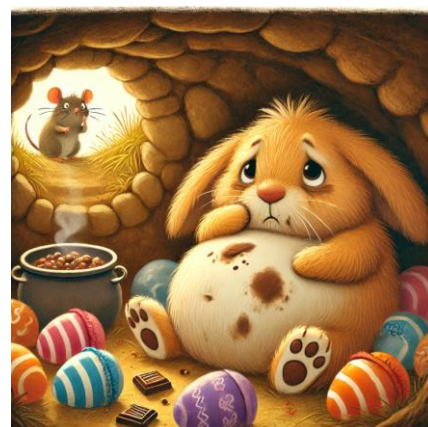
Our members have continued to write imaginative, inspiring and amusing pieces, usually to a set theme or starter. Around Easter the challenge was to write a story entitled The Easter Bunny which resulted in assorted stories for or about children. Our main problem was that these stories really needed illustrations and that is when one of our members embraced Artificial Intelligence to provide the pictures for her story.

A member writes: I've attached the story including illustrations that I created using ChatGPT (the illustrations, not the story). It was fun trying out the different commands to get the illustrations to match the poem, and the response was lightning fast. And definitely a better result than my own drawings! AI is useful for doing the things you don't want to do or can't do, but we like writing in our group so for that task will continue to hold the pen ourselves!

Dylan O'Donnell's a naughty young bunny,
He pulls the cat's tail and thinks that it's funny.
He splashes in mud and gets dirty paws,
Then walks through the house and messes the floors.
He stays outside playing, til it's past time for tea,
His Daddy comes looking, but he hides up a tree.
His Mummy gets cross, and calls him to come,
Naughty Dylan just grins, and sticks out his... tongue.



One bright Easter Day, the young bunnies gather,
For the Easter Egg hunt, but whatever's the matter?
The eggs are all gone, there are none to be found.
Oh no! Where is Dylan? He's gone underground!
He's taken the eggs, every last single one,
And eaten them all, they are all in his tum!



With chocolate smeared whiskers, Dylan feels very ill,
His tummy is achy and he's getting a chill.
He wants to go home, but he's stuck in the burrow,
There he must stay, til his waist gets more narrow.

His Mummy sends down pots of peppermint tea,
"I'm so sorry," he snuffles, "I'll try hard to be,
A good bunny once out of this hole, just you see".
This Easter, at dawn, if you look very close,
Through tulips and daffodils, under the rose...
You might glimpse a tail that's fluffy and white,
As Dylan hops by in the soft morning light.
A basket he carries with eggs bright and sunny—
For Dylan O'Donnell's now the Easter Bunny!



GARDENING GROUP



In May we visited Longstock Gardens with its established planting around the lakes. The Rhododendrons were putting on a fine display. The site is well worth a visit with a Nursery and Coffee shop just a little further down the road.

For June we were invited back to Julia's Garden and treated with tea and cake. Julia has a beautiful, large mature garden with plenty to see. She has a wide range of herbaceous planting, with some interesting varieties and colours, set in lawns and surrounded by neat hedges. Her raised beds of vegetables were also doing very well, and the greenhouse had a good range of future produce. It must take a lot of work to keep it all so tidy, it certainly puts my efforts to shame.



PATCHWORK GROUP

Several of our group members enjoyed a wonderful day out at the Malvern Spring quilt show. We spent the day browsing through the different stalls and products on offer almost 100 traders tempted us with their patchwork quilting and sewing products - we certainly didn't come home empty handed! We rounded off the day by admiring the 200 quilts which were on display - they gave us ideas and inspiration for our future projects.

I should add that not all the quilts were hand sewn but from these pictures I hope you'll all agree they are all absolutely beautiful. I should like to thank Michiko and Katherine for putting this report together.

PRACTICAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP (PPG)

Behind the Scenes

Our first topic this quarter was 'Behind the Scenes'. Although not everyone had managed to submit eight images we still had fifty eight to review.



There was some discussion about a few that did not appear to meet the brief but overall we had produced an excellent selection.

Our rule is that all photos must have been taken within the previous twelve months but we recently agreed that each member could, during the course of the year, include a maximum of three 'historic' photos and in April the first of these, taken two years ago, was submitted.

Alleyways and Passages



On a warm sunny day in May we explored sixty seven 'Alleyways and Passages' that had been photographed by members, fourteen of which were captured in black & white.

We are fortunate to have nearby a number of ancient towns such as Marlborough and Devizes and the city of Salisbury all of which have an abundance of interesting thoroughfares many of which appeared in our review. Even where the same location had been visited by more than one member none of the images were the same.

Other locations included York, Reading, Bath and Launceston but there is seldom a meeting when we do not have a few photographs taken outside the UK and this time Brussels and Perth in Australia filled that slot.

Speed & Action



At our meeting in June Action photos dominated the collection but some excellent images of Speed that had required more patience to capture were also reviewed. A photo taken in 2007 was declared by one member.

While at the meeting members selected twelve new topics which will form our programme for 2025/2036.

BIRDWATCHING



Several of the group wanted to see or at least hear a Bittern. RSPB Ham Wall, Somerset is one of the more established sites with Bitterns regularly Booming in Spring. To maximise our chances we decided to make an afternoon/evening visit and we weren't disappointed.

Lots of Duck (Teal in the photo), resident Marsh Harriers, newly emerged Peacock butterflies And loudly Booming Bitterns from several directions, but we weren't to see one. Just to prove you can see a Bittern, this is my photo from late afternoon from a later visit.



More locally, we visited Coate Water in May with some nice Duck, plenty of Mute Swans, Egrets and the ubiquitous Feral Pigeon and Canada Geese. The sage advice is to go before the kids come out of school in the afternoon, as it's a popular spot. June unfortunately I had to cancel, for July we plan to go to Langford Lakes



More pictures to be found at <https://pewseyu3a.slickpic.com/albums/Bird-Watching-Group/?wallpaper>



CHINES

A CHINES Outing (CHurches, INns, & EStates)

While Joanna was away, we mice played! A group of us headed west, avoiding the summer solstice celebrations around Stonehenge, to Fonthill Bishop, just off the A303. There we had a first class tour of the Witchmark Distillery. The ancient farm buildings have been most sympathetically restored and repurposed - everything was pristine. The water is from deep in the chalk beneath the buildings, and the barley is grown in the estate fields, the only food-miles are to the Malthouse about 10 miles away.



We learnt so much about distilling and were able to sample the three different gins and the vodka (which has won Gold at the World Vodka Awards). Their main aim is to produce an exceptional English whisky and barrels are maturing for the required three years-and-a-day, ready in August 2027 - initial signs are it will be very good. Drivers were given a taster spirit of their choice and a small can of tonic to take home to enjoy.

(We advise visiting the Distillery soon, as they plan to put the price up.)

From there we travelled to Fovant through exceptionally pretty villages and countryside, where we were treated to an excellent lunch at the Greater Good Inn. Our contact in Fovant had arranged for us to have a talk in the pub about the Military Badges that have been cut in the hillside - Pewsey has a white



horse, Fovant has 10 Military Badges! We learnt that early in WW1 there was a huge training camp in the area and the personnel created their badges on the hillside. Three of the 10 are later additions. Each takes up an area about the size of half a football pitch. There is a lay-by on the A30 just east of Fovant where they can be viewed, and there are display boards there with good information. It being a hot afternoon we did not go down the bridleway to get a closer look, something for another day.



SINGING FOR PLEASURE

A lot has happened since the last newsletter. The second volume of songs is now printed and has been in use for the last 3 or 4 sessions, and, so far it seems to be well received.

However the most significant change to our sessions is because Barbara has been out of action due to an eye operation that did not work as hoped. The good news is that Barbara is now definitely on the mend and we hope that she will back at the keyboard in the coming weeks.

During her indisposition, more piano playing Daltons came out of the woodwork to keep us going. First it was Claire (daughter of Haydn and Jennifer) who played at two sessions, and Haydn has also played at two sessions and counting.

But, overall, SFP is in good health with a buoyant (in every sense) membership.

And people keep coming back for more. . .

Some pics, courtesy of Fiona:



Barbara struggling to read the music as Claire looks on..



Morton in full flight