



Pewsey Vale u3a

NEWSLETTER

Extracts from Issue 70

January 2026

Message from the Chair

Dear Pewsey Vale u3a members,

I would like to introduce myself, having taken on the role of Pewsey Vale u3a Chair in November.

My wife Amanda and I moved to Pewsey in 2009. I'm a retired Chartered Engineer with a Mechanical and Systems Engineering background and a broad interest in Science and Engineering.

I have enjoyed a number of the u3a groups over the last few years, and am a keen walker, photographer, gardener and also enjoy painting in watercolour, not forgetting Wine Tasting and Appreciation, or CHINES. For the u3a, I run a Birdwatching Group, Gardening Group and two Walking Groups for those who enjoy a longer walk. As some of you will know I'm also keen on classic cars; maybe in 2026 I will finally get my Jaguar back on the road. For the u3a I have been the Speaker Secretary, and so it's currently my choice of speaker for our Social Meetings.

I would like to thank Fiona and the Committee members for all their hard work consolidating our Charity status with policies and procedures which now puts us on a firm footing for the future.

We are always looking for new ideas for groups and activities, so please come forward if you know of something else we could do, and better still, if it's something you can support.

Please do remember that these activities are for PV u3a members only. We aren't able to include family and friends, as this would not be covered by our insurance.

Best wishes for 2026.

Ian Burch

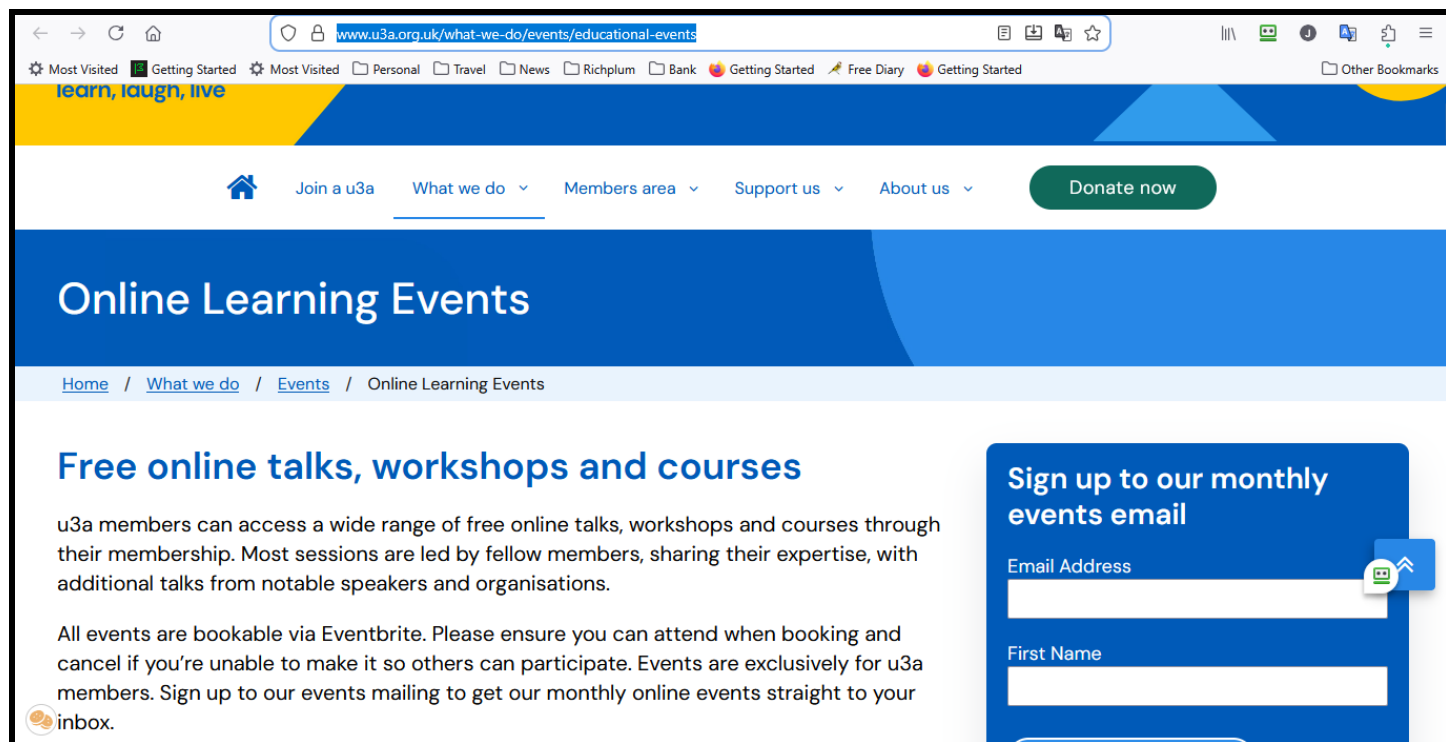


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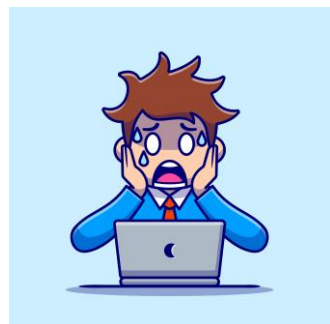
U3A COURSES AND RESOURCES

Do have a look at what's available to us through the u3a. As they say, Learn, Laugh, Live.



The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the u3a website. The address bar shows 'www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/educational-events'. The page features a blue and yellow header with the slogan 'learn, laugh, live'. A navigation menu includes 'Join a u3a', 'What we do', 'Members area', 'Support us', and 'About us', along with a 'Donate now' button. The main content area is titled 'Online Learning Events' and includes a breadcrumb trail: 'Home / What we do / Events / Online Learning Events'. Below this, there is a section for 'Free online talks, workshops and courses' with a brief description and a sign-up form for a 'monthly events email' with fields for 'Email Address' and 'First Name'.

PASSKEYS - WHAT NEXT!

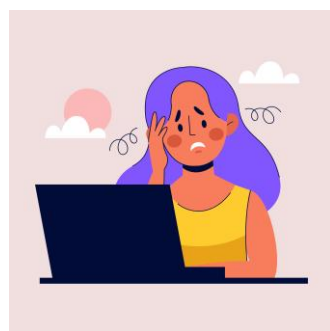


We are now all in the technological age of the internet whether we like it or not. Smart phones, desktop computers, laptops, tablets and many other devices are a part of our every day existence.

We are expected to know and understand these devices and related terminology without anyone explaining it to us. We are now entering the new age of **password-less** logins. You may well ask "How can that be possible?" **NO passwords!!**

In 2012 a few very clever people, working in 8 well known companies, got together to form the **FIDO alliance** with the aim to reduce the world's reliance on passwords. The FIDO alliance now consists of over 300 companies and is continuing to grow. Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, Google, PayPal and many others.

So what is this FIDO all about? Well, not that it really matters but the FIDO acronym stands for **Fast Identity Online**. When you visit a FIDO-enabled website, you'll typically see an option to set up a password-less login, often referred to as a "**passkey**".



These passkeys are generated from the way you log on to your device. This could be a PIN number, a biometric (e.g. finger print, facial recognition, etc) or the old password you created. It is hard to imagine but the pass key that is generated contains 2 parts. One part is stored on your device, the other on the website. **Your device holds the secret** — this part never leaves your device. It's like a super-secure password that only your device knows. **The website holds the other part** — it is a kind of lock that only your device's part can open. Combined these 2 parts form your new generated secure password so

now you don't have to create one which could be compromised; exposed to unauthorised individuals.

So for your own security I would advise that you always accept the invitation to generate a passkey.

BOARD GAMES GROUP

Members of the Board Games group have been meeting monthly at Pewsey Leisure Centre. It has been a very successful change of venue and means that the group is free of charge now.

New members are very welcome to join us, especially if you have a new game that you would like to play. Maybe a Christmas present?

We meet on the second Monday of the month between 2.30 and 4 pm.

CARD GROUP



Wishing all u3a members a Happy New Year from the card group.

We have a spare place in the card group for someone that has experience in card making. It is essential that this person has the equipment to join us. A Die cutting machine, dies, embossing tools, stencils, stamps etc. We would love this person to join us, meeting the 1st Monday in the month. For more details:

567 WALKING GROUP



I have included a photo of a sculpture on the Coastal Path in North Yorkshire. The metal circle includes items that have some significance to this section of the coast. Some of the walking group went on a short break with HF Holidays walking in the North Yorkshire Moors at the end of October. (Pewsey Vale u3a has a membership with HF who organise all sorts of walking and special interest holidays. It is worth looking at!)

The group's regular walks recently have all started in Pewsey and headed off in a different direction. We are very lucky to have so many footpaths, bridleways and tracks all around us.

Unfortunately our pre Christmas walk was cancelled due to heavy rain and high winds, with a weather warning issued. However, we met up for lunch as planned and enjoyed eating it wearing dry clothes rather than being soaked to the skin!

We won't miss out on that walk because it will be first on our list for January 15th.

Please let me know if you would like to come along.

❖ QUIZ GROUP

- ❖ 2nd Monday of the month 4:30-6pm
- ❖ Pewsey Heritage Centre Whatley 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



COUNTRY DANCE MUSIC

" a band rehearsal in front of an audience"

We are now at a dozen players as we had another fiddle player and a recorder player joined us



recently. We still have room for more, so dust off that musical instrument and come along. We have a list of tunes we are rehearsing, both sheet music and play along tracks available, so you don't need to be a music reader to join us.

We had our first play out in public in November, at a Christmas Fair in the Bouverie Hall. We did not have a full team as some of us, me included, had other commitments, but the event went very well. If you have an event that needs some background music please contact me and we will see what we can do.

There is no commitment to play in public, you can just play at the rehearsals if you wish. It's all about getting together and having some fun playing tunes together.

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.

Our December meeting, not surprisingly, was about seasonal matters. Some of us had written our own pieces while others read out favourite winter or Christmas prose or verse. In January we plan to Insult each other - hold your dirty tongue, you gobmouthed omathaun!

ART GROUP



The Art Group continues to meet twice a month in Manningford Village Hall, which is perfect for the group, a modern airy room with lots of natural light.

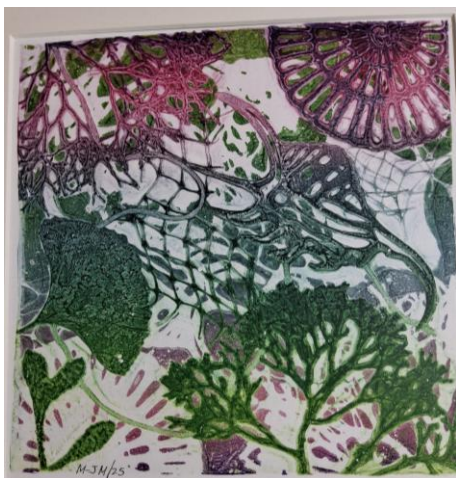
This 'term' has been a quiet term with several members away on their holidays, although we managed to meet on our usual schedule, except for one meeting.

Individual members have continued to share their expertise - as an example Marie-Jose and Dot attended a day course on gelli printing and talked the group through the process when they got back. They produced some very attractive work using pressed seaweed, botanical materials and beachcombing finds - (see their pictures here). The resulting prints could easily be used on paper or fabric. Dot says:

"The *Coastal Impressions Workshop* was held at Treetops in Newbury and the tutor was Sarah Gordon. We were shown how to "...create layered, textural prints using pressed seaweeds, beach-combing treasures and other botanical materials... It was extremely enjoyable and we all came away with a beautiful collection of prints. We also learnt new printing techniques to inspire our own artistic practice."



We are planning visits from a couple of local artists in the near future on both art with coloured crayons and water colour painting.



CREATIVE WRITING 1

Our group continues to thrive in spite of the various hospital appointments that threatened our regular meetings. Thank goodness for emails which allow us to share our writing when we can't meet. As leader I am grateful to the members who took over hosting and leadership when my own appointments and a family crisis prevented my usual focus on planning and dreaming up writing exercises and themes. In fact in my absence, the group had a session on editing and proof reading which was something I had been meaning to do for a while.

Recently we had a short story competition on the seasonal/ Christmas theme and asked the leader of the other creative writing group to choose the winner (see below). For our last get together we wrote letters to and from Father Christmas and discovered that Santa may not be the jolly chap we thought he was as he bemoans the fact that children rarely write a decent letter, preferring social media to communicate their wishes, some of which suggest a level of greed not present in 'the good old days'.

We are hoping to welcome a new member in January which will keep our numbers at the usual seven.

In the New Year, we will be producing a new collection of stories in both digital and paper form entitled Tales for All Seasons and we hope that u3a members enjoy them.

Away In a Manger

Undaunted by horizontal rain, Christmas Eve shoppers thronged the High Street. Amongst them I was just another harassed mum struggling through the crowds; in her pink anorak and sparkly wellies, four-year-old Esmé splashed happily in the puddles.

'Esmé, stop that, you're soaking me! Come on, we've got to hurry.' I attempted to pull my hood further over dripping hair, although my thin jacket was already waterlogged. Wet jeans clung like chilly bandages, excess water running into my squelching shoes.



'Why?'

Esmé's new favourite word. 'Because we must catch the bus.'

'Why?'

'It's the last one. Come on, Es, let's get out of this rain.'

Anyone who's ever tried to hurry a small child will know it's easier to move mountains - especially a small child at Christmas.

'Mummy - look - Father Christmas!' A forlorn-looking Santa hung damply from a lamppost. 'Mummy, why can't we have a Christmas tree? Mummy, I know this song - listen. Away in a manger...'

Her little voice joined in as the carol wafted from a shop doorway. I caught my breath. She was so innocent, so vulnerable...

Raindrops glistened in passing headlights, behind which the cars were invisible. I kept close to the shelter of the buildings.

'There's the bus, let's run!'

'I want to sit upstairs!' Esmé skipped to the front of the top deck, and placing her hands on the glass, stared out of the huge window. I sank into the seat and immediately realised my mistake. We would be clearly visible on the brightly-lit bus.

'Sit down, Esmé,' I snapped. Her lip wobbled. 'Sorry, sweetie, but you might fall if the bus stops suddenly. Let's have a snuggle.' I pulled her close, unzipping my jacket so she could creep inside, hiding her from view while I sank lower into my seat, looking anxiously at the passing traffic - watching for a Range Rover with blacked out windows.

I held my breath at each stop as the bus crawled through the town. Then we were bouncing along country roads, each bump a fresh jolt of agony. Esmé snoozed, a damp bundle against my shaking body.

Two hours later, another town and back in the rain, I squinted at directions already committed to memory: turn right, left - large house set back from the street.

'Come in, what awful weather. You must be Gemma? And Esmé - that's a pretty name. I'm Kate.' A cheerful young woman, dark curls escaping a scrunchie, ushered us inside.

'Sorry you've had to come so far tonight, but unfortunately it's our busiest time of year.'

'It gets even worse at Christmas...' I mumbled.

Within minutes we had dry clothes, hot drinks and Esmé was gazing at the Christmas tree, where a stocking already hung bearing her name.

'Away in a manger...' carols were playing softly, and Esmé began singing. The words suddenly felt very apt. My abiding memories of that first night in the refuge were warmth and safety - basics I'd once taken for granted, but never would again.

TRAVELLERS TALES

As usual, we finished off our Group's year with a traditional "bring and share" Christmas lunch, always a success and much enjoyed, which was preceded by a talk by our members' fascinating talk about their recent trip to Japan to see the cherry blossom. The blossom season was just a bit later than usual but didn't dim their enjoyment of the country and we were well entertained with facts and photos of Japan - the inevitable photo of Mount Fuji with its symmetrical snow-covered cone which was truly delightful.



The month before, in October, Simon Ellis, who many Pewsey people know from his humanitarian exploits and adventures to and in Ukraine, gave us a talk all about his trips which moved us all quite deeply and certainly brought home to us the horrors and conflicts in that war-torn area. He laid out for us to see many examples of equipment and militaria that he has amassed, just amazing.

We have further visits to other countries lined up for the New Year, including a holiday in Namibia and another visit to the USA. If you would like to come and hear some of these Tales, please contact

PEWSEY VALE U3A GOES BACK TO SCHOOL

On Wednesday 10th December, twenty four u3a members went to help some Year 10 (14/15 year olds) Health and Social Care students from Pewsey Vale High school with their first official assessment of their GCSE's. A daunting experience for them never mind us, although we were made very welcome.

The exam board had set a task for the students to plan an activity for a 45 year old homeless person, which had to last about an hour. Yes, some of us were almost twice that age, but it didn't matter, the purpose was to assess their social interactions. So 4/5 students and 5 u3a members worked together for an hour, on the activity the student had planned. These included painting on canvas, painting jars, making pom-poms, bracelets and playing games. What fun we had, you could see how the students nerves gradually disappeared and their confidence grew. The buzz of conversations got louder and louder. Both the students and our members thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and the teachers were appreciative of our help.

Some of the comments I received from our members after were...

" I had a lovely time! Always happy to be a guinea pig."

" I really enjoyed it and the young lady who I was partnered with was lovely."

"Count me in if there is another time! The young girl that I worked with was really pleasant and put up with times when I did not quite get things correct! But we got there in the end! I was making crochet hearts!"

"The student was lovely. I hope our feedback has helped with her assessment. She was a credit to the school and her family."

And from the school..

"Thank you so much for organising your wonderful members to come in yesterday. We are very grateful for them giving up their time to enable the students of Pewsey Vale to showcase their skills. The students are still buzzing from the experience today. It was a lovely day and lovely to see so many of my more introverted students, raise their game and build such a wonderful rapport with members of the u3a. I was so inspired by meeting them personally that I have told my own father to find a group near him in Minehead."

Thanks to all our members who responded to my plea for help.

BIRDWATCHING

We made visits to Grants Firs, Enford, the Cotswold Lakes and Blashford Lakes, Ringwood over the last few months. Looking back at my photos, Grants Firs was a grey day, a little too early in the season, or late in the day for any really exciting sightings on this occasion, but always worth a look.

The Cotswold Lakes are now an interesting location as the reed beds continue to mature, Marsh Harriers are now a relatively common sighting. Blashford Lakes in early December was our most productive day. There were a lot of Duck and Geese gathering, including Pintails and Widgeon plus some Goldeneyes, posing Cormorant and a very photogenic Kingfisher. But I'm still looking for a White Tailed Eagle.



WALKING 789



In October a member gave us an interesting tour of Devizes encompassing views of the Castle and walking along Caen Hill Locks amongst other sights. Somewhat to our dismay, our return to the booked pub for lunch was greeted with 'We are closed - no Water', but an alternative venue was soon found.

For November I led a hardy group up Pewsey Hill on a 7.5 mile loop. Which while cool, was a lot more pleasant than the previous summer walk.

WALKING 7+ TO 12

For October I led a walk from Pewsey, heading North to Oare Hill and across the ridge and down to Huish before returning to Pewsey. Roughly 9 miles which we did comfortably in just over three hours.

In November we embarked on a trilogy of walks. Colin has proposed walking the Pewsey Avon Trail, PAT, in three parts to complete the 28 miles. The first leg being Pewsey to Enford, returning by bus. We will pick up the remaining parts in 2026, next leg Enford to Amesbury. Then down to Salisbury.



WALKING4EXERCISE

The walkers have made the most of the glorious autumn colours this year. Our walk in West Woods at the beginning of November was spectacular from beginning to end as you can see from the photograph.



We have also walked along the canal in various places where there has been an abundance of berries and fruits plus a number of kingfishers and herons seen by observant walkers! (Some people missed them all!)

There has been conversation, laughter and mud guaranteed on every outing.

Please get in touch if you would like to walk with us on Monday afternoons twice a month.

WINE TASTING AND APPRECIATION



The group runs in two consecutive evening sessions in Pewsey on the evening of the third Thursday of each month. We (generally) taste three white wines followed by three red, with the topic chosen and presented by one of the members.

Our December meeting celebrated Christmas as a group, with wines chosen by various members and associated and delicious nibbles to go with them. And then we shall go back to tasting and trying to analyse our wines and what we do - or don't like about them - which is a real test of our palates.

We do have a few vacancies in the group so if you'd like to come and try it, do let me know. You don't have to be an expert in any way, just enjoy tasting a variety of wines in good company.

COUNTRY DANCING

The Country Dancing group has continued to meet on Tuesday afternoons twice a month. We have learnt six new dances this year to add to our repertoire and we are improving our capability with the new dances as we practise them over time. The faster dances are proving to be tricky in that we can't keep up with the music! But we will persevere.



Numbers attending each session have been low recently which has meant that we are not covering our costs of hall hire and refreshments. In the new year there will be a new variable payment arrangement so that we don't go into the red on our accounts. (That would mean that I have to pay the difference from my own pocket! Not popular with me!)

If you would like to give Country Dancing a try please email me.

BADMINTON AND PICKLE BALL

We're continuing to enjoy friendly games each Wednesday. We joined the table tennis and pickle ball groups for a combined Christmas lunch at Honey Street Mill Cafe on 17th December - 21 of us, so a good turnout I think.

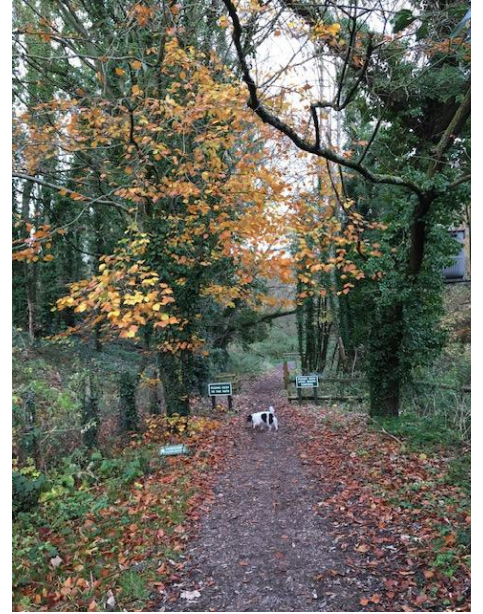
Best wishes to you all for the New Year.

DOG WALKING



The dog walking group numbers fluctuate according to and depending on members' other commitments and inevitably some leaving. I am delighted to say we have two former members potentially returning with new younger dogs which is very heartening!

Our last walk at the end of November there were four plus our four dogs.



The day was a perfect late Autumn afternoon after several very wet days we walked along past the football ground to Kings Corner keeping to the hard surfaces rather than crossing the fields- always a shame.

Generally both the dogs and their people have a great time and we all look forward to our next ...walkies.

DARTS GROUP



The Darts Group is enjoying a winter break. We are planning to restart in March (2nd) so please contact me if you would like to join us and don't already receive the Group emails. (We meet on 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month 2.00-4.00pm upstairs in The Royal Oak, Pewsey).

Happy New Year

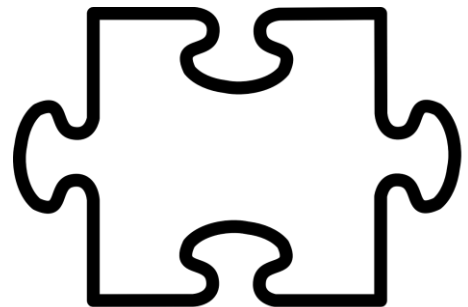
FREE JIGSAW PUZZLE SWAP

Jigsaw swap..... It's free, you know!

The Jigsaws will be available in the foyer of The Bouverie Hall between 2 and 4pm on:

- January 13th and 20th,
- February 10th and 24th
- March 10th, 17th and 24th
- April 14th and 28th

Please make sure all the pieces are in a sealed bag inside the box. Thank you



CREATIVE WRITING GROUP 2

Our meetings (3rd Thursday, 2-4pm in Pewsey) continue to be interesting and fun. We each send in a story on the chosen theme the weekend before the meeting which we discuss for around half of the time. After our tea/coffee break we then do a short challenge on a completely unprepared subject - last time we each brought along something which meant a great deal, and one of the group wrote about it. We have had a variety of subjects for our main story / poem this autumn: Ceremony, Chain Reaction (see below). In September we listened to the music of Desert Island Discs and wrote a story on what that conjured up for us.

For want of a nail

'For God's sake man, what's the holdup?'

The farrier dropped the grey charger's hoof and stood up, pressing his fist into the small of his back for relief. 'Half the army's been in this morning Captain, what with the Frenchies so close. Just doing the last one now.' He reached for a mug of small beer which was balanced atop his mobile forge; it was thirsty work.

The action seemed to irritate the captain further. 'Hurry up man!'

The farrier shouldered the horse's leg, and it raised its hoof obediently. He cast an insolent glance at the cavalryman; always trouble that one, probably drank himself stupid last night and missed his morning call. Bloody toff. He removed the old shoe which didn't really need replacement, cleaned the area diligently, after all it wasn't the horse's fault that its rider was a bastard. He started to fix the new shoe, but suddenly a bugle sounded and the camp erupted into a frenzy of activity.

The captain rushed forward and prodded the farrier in the ribs with his riding crop. 'That'll do man!'

The farrier turned on him, half inclined to snatch the crop out of his hand but thought better of it. 'The shoe is only half fixed, you can't take him yet!'

'Put one more nail in and have done with it!'

'That still isn't enough, I won't be held responsible.'

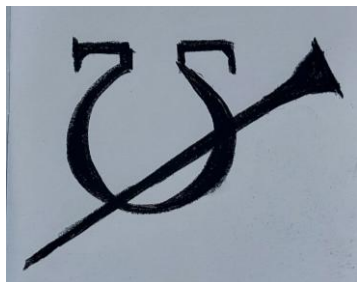
'Just do it, I tell you!'

The farrier did as he was bidden and the captain rode out.

The French had indeed arrived in force, but the action was slow to begin with. However, the cavalry was eventually called for, and they dealt a heavy blow to the enemy flank, then answered to the recall. But the French were not finished yet because, successful though the British charge had been, their horses were spent and seeing the weakness, a regiment of lancers were dispatched to intercept them. The captain wasn't overly concerned though, for he was confident he could reach the protective line of redcoat infantry spread out along the ridge, long before those lances could reach him.

His horse stumbled and dropped to its knees. He frantically urged it up and the faithful beast did his best, shaking the loose shoe free that had caused the fall. The captain could see his comrades surging ahead, intent on their own salvation, and could hear the approaching thunder from behind. He thrust back viciously with his spurs and his horse leapt forward.

But it was too late. He felt a hammer-blow to his back and watched in dumb surprise as the blade emerged from his chest.



BOOK GROUP 1

For a Halloween read *The Greatcoat* ticked all the boxes. Helen Dunmore as usual didn't disappoint. An unusual but fascinating tale

Night Swimmers by Roisin Maguire. A beautifully written story of personal trauma set in a small seaside village in Northern Ireland. A book with the feel good factor.

BOOK GROUP 2

We have enjoyed another few months of varied book titles.

In September, we read the latest Robert Harris book "Precipice".

The story, romantic and quite unbelievable of the relationship between the MP H.H. Asquith and his obsessive love affair with Venetia Stanley, a young socialite. As per usual with Harris, a well researched book regarding the historical content, with fictional license concerning the characters and their motivations. We were astonished at the lack of security and monitoring of such high level, important figures at the heart of the UK parliament during WW1 operations and planning. It prompted further reading on the subject, "My darling Mr Asquith" which describes Venetia Stanley's life in the world of high society.

"When the Lights Go Out" by Mary Kubica - a modern story with topical subjects, such as climate change anxiety and complex family dynamics and relationships. Most members felt unable to connect with this story and didn't find it offered enough depth to be remembered for long.

"The Women" by Kristin Hannah. This book has been a highlight this year, as most of the Group really enjoyed Kristin Hannah's work. We felt that the story was strong, different and meaningful. Her writing style flowed well and kept the reader engaged all the way through, with several arcs throughout. The characters were strong and believable, with depth in terms of their relationships. The main character, Frankie McGrath, served in the Vietnam War in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps. Her many personal experiences were the thread through this story, explaining her struggles due to the undiagnosed and unspoken PTSD that she and other women suffered in their roles, which were ignored and sometimes denied by Americans during this brutal conflict. A story of strength, hope and love. An excellent read, in so many ways.

... interestingly, we had chosen 2 books relating to the subject of Wars and how the protagonists function - almost complete opposites, the "ivory tower" and the "front line"... such vastly different places and experiences.

We continue to ride the ebbs and flows of the reading material we randomly choose from our excellent Wiltshire Library Service.

MILITARY HISTORY

This ever popular group certainly went out with a bang in 2025! We have had record numbers of members in monthly attendance (as witnessed by the congestion in the car park!) and we seemed to have found ideal speakers with presentations of great interest to us all.



October saw us all having a sing-song with Glenn Miller when Bill King re-told his story about the great war-time band leader and his unexplained disappearance over the Channel just before Christmas in 1944, and then in November we changed the tempo and period completely when David du Croz told us about the various battles that took place around Ypres in the 1914-18 War.

We rounded off the year with a bright and light-hearted synopsis of Nicola's military career with the Kings Troop and Royal Horse Artillery as an equine vet. She not only worked with horses but with military dogs as well and had some wonderful anecdotes and experiences to tell us. We saw photos of her riding down the Mall in full Army regalia for the King's Coronation and she was a big hit with all the members that day!



We have good presentations lined up for 2026, starting with the January meeting when we shall hear about the amazing organization and detailed ceremony that went into the planning of the late Queen's Funeral. If you would like to join us on the first Monday morning of each month at Easton Royal Village Hall, you would be most welcome and please

PATCHWORK GROUP



Here are a few recent pictures from our Christmas tea party and some of the Christmas decorations that we've made along with three more Quilts of different sizes which will go off to project Linus UK sometime in the new year when we have a few more quilts to join these.

Our feast in the second half of the afternoon was a bring & share and very delicious!



LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

The Greek Vase Mania

We started the quarter with an extremely interesting and full account of Greek 'urns' which, with regard to the forms and the artistry of the illustrations they carried, were far in advance of other pottery produced previously. Made from the local iron red earthenware clay they were first made with the figures painted in black against the natural red clay background. Later, this arrangement was reversed i.e. red figures reserved against a painted black background. Greek pottery is never glazed.

The 'Greek urns' were most commonly found in Etruscan tombs. The number found has led to their production being described as 'on an industrial scale'. Slaves were used for nearly all manual work' but the care, skill and finesse with which most of them were made doesn't seem to indicate reluctant, unsophisticated forced labour.

They also seem to have been adopted for use as grave markers; those of men signalled with a krater (wine mixing vessel) or an amphora for a female burial.

'Some Executions at Fisherton' presented by a guest speaker in November attracted a lively and enthusiastic audience but nothing like the thousands who would have gathered to witness the public executions in Fisherton (Salisbury,) taking their children, and picnics, with them in anticipation of a good day out! *An estimated crowd of 15,000 watched the hanging of Robert Watkins for murder in 1819.*

Fisherton Anger, was a village at least 150 years before the city of New Sarum was first laid out in the 13th century. Its first gaol was built on Fisherton Bridge and a later one built on land where St Paul's roundabout is now. Hangings took place in front of the prison, and later above the main gate.

Ruby told four stories of hangings which took place between 1828 and 1832. Robert Brown, a 45 year old farm labourer evicted with his wife and 9 children who stabbed two men; Charles Giles, 21, was hanged on 14 March 1831 for killing his illegitimate baby; 25 year old, Henry Wilkins was executed for demanding money with threats from rich farmers during the Swing Riots and three poor agricultural labourers who had been haymaking and decided to rape a soldier's wife after drinking their wages. Ruby touched also on the charismatic Prison Chaplain, who accompanied each of the men onto the scaffold.



Fisherton Street clock tower cuffs –
photo by Wendy

Original Fisherton Gaol by Wendy Lawrence.

On 18 December, the PV u3a local history group welcomed, Andrea, to present her paper, *The Grand Forest of Savernake, of the Queens of Henry VIII*. Savernake Forest was a case study from her thesis about Tudor queenly resources and dower and jointure holdings. As such, it was one of the many types of property Tudor queens held. Savernake held by all of Henry VIII's queens, was assigned as a source of revenue and resources. Therefore, it is a good forest to examine as available evidence, *The Savernake Forest Court*

Book, demonstrate.

As presented, evidence tells of forest offences, granted licenses, and mentions the queen, Katherine Howard and Kathryn Parr, in an administrative view. Forest administration was also discussed. Sir John Seymour was the appointed warden and aided in preserving resources and vert and venison within the forest. In summary, Andrea's paper interestingly presented how she was able to utilise the court book to derive resources for queens, kings, and the Crown during the Tudor period.

My sincere thanks go to the speakers and note-takers who have contributed to this report and to all of the volunteers who have helped with the 'domestic' side of running the group.

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP 2 (PG2)

We've visited the large and fascinating Edington Church. We've also been to the Beechfield Reclamation Yard in Devizes, followed by KFR (Kennet Furniture Refurbiz) - both highly recommended as sources of things you may not even have known you wanted. And then the Christmas display at Avebury Manor, where they had made a valiant effort to decorate the house which is still not generally open after the flooding. In each case, of course, we then went and had a convivial lunch!



MUSIC APPRECIATION GROUP

'An Eclectic Music Mix' was the title chosen by Marie-Louise in October. The programme featured the voice and so we listened among others to tracks by Ray Charles; legendary songstress Fairuz from Lebanon recognising in song the leaders of that country and Blossom Dearie at the age of 72 but still sounding very childlike.



There was also melancholy Fardo from Portugal, Bolivian musicians and twenty minutes of Mahler.

In November Steve and Gerry taxed our brains with a Film Music quiz. Some members appear to have seen every film ever produced enabling them to quickly identify the film but not necessarily who was performing the instrumental theme tunes - singers however were mainly easier to recognise. A very mixed range of questions enjoyed by all - even by someone who had not seen the majority of films and shall remain nameless!

Gerry returned in December explaining 'What Made Me' through another excellent mix of recordings illustrating certain stages of her life. There was film, classical, and pop music with which most members could identify having ourselves enjoyed many of the original recordings, and in some cases owned the records.

The meeting was followed by an early festive celebration with lunch at the Woodbridge Inn.

DISCO GROUP

The discos are solely for the enjoyment of u3a members, which make for a very friendly evening.



Organisers Martin and Lynne, with a little help from their friends, create a welcoming atmosphere with the essential flashing, but not intrusive, lights and tiny ones set in empty wine bottles (members bring the full ones!) on small tables around the room.

The programme of pre-recorded favourites from the 60s, 70s and 80s plays non-stop with members choosing whether to dance or just sit and listen, perhaps reminiscing about their youth and admiring those who can still remember all the moves.

ROCK AND POP PLAYLIST

Our new group **Rock and Pop Playlist** was born on 12th November this year. We quickly aroused interest from 8 members of the Pewsey Vale u3a membership and have had 2 meetings to date.

The aim of our group is to share our interest and love for all types of popular music, from many decades, genres and styles. It will be a vast catalogue of music, musicians, songwriters and producers to choose from.

Our group has bonded well and we have already been sharing music from Heatwave, Michael Jackson and disco to Emerson Lake and Palmer. In a relaxed environment, we play Vinyls, CDs and YouTube videos and documentaries and are already learning lots about each other's interests and tastes.

Our December meeting broached the subject of Christmas songs, our favourite and most detested. Arousing much discussion, we talked about our past Christmas memories and the music we attach to these, as well as the "earworms" which seem to be constantly present in most shops during this season (which can sometimes turn us from loving the tune, to now detesting it!). We enjoyed the very beautiful 16th century Christmas carol, *Gaudete (Rejoice)*.

We shared Christmas related songs which some of us hadn't been aware of, by for example, a female singer/songwriter named Thea Gilmore.

In the New Year, we plan to choose topics to prepare and discuss with each other. The world of popular music is our oyster... bring it on!

Wishing you all good health and fulfillment for 2026.

GARDENING



In October a few hardy members ventured to Westonbirt Arboretum for the Autumn colour. We had had a few storms but there was still plenty of colour, but it was a cold day. For November we paid a visit to Woodborough Garden Centre, now under new ownership. Tea and cakes were enjoyed and a few purchases were made. I hope they are successful in 2026. In December Carole kindly hosted a small group and shared some of her ideas for the future of her garden in Manningford. I'm now planning what we might do for 2026.



PRACTICAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP (PPG)

September - Churches & Graveyards

Bearing in mind that every village has a church this month's topic was not a difficult one - other than choosing which to visit.

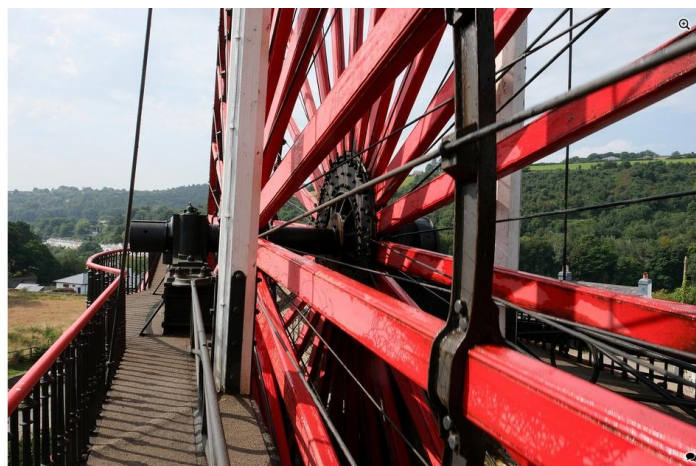
There was no restriction on where or how far members travelled and most did not stray very far from home. There were, as always, exceptions such as the memorial to the American crew who died when the Flying Fortress crashed on Arenig Faw, Mount Snowdon, during World War II - a few remnants of which remain. Another was St Mary's Cathedral Church in Perth, Australia and churches in Oxford, Chichester and Launceston.



October - Circuses & Fairgrounds



The Mop Fair in Marlborough, the Charter Fair in Salisbury and the circus in Pewsey during the carnival attracted the majority of our members but there were other locations too - Bristol, Pirbright, the Country Show at Rainscombe, Devizes, Hove "actually" and, as always, there were some from a distant land, this month Perth and Melbourne.



November - One Subject taken 8 Different Ways

Rather surprisingly everyone enjoyed the challenge of this topic and it was interesting to see how each member had adopted a slightly different approach to the subject. The results were all excellent.

It is not the easiest topic to illustrate with a single photo but his one might set you wondering "what and where is it?" You can see all eight views in our album on the Pewsey Vale website. There you will also see how varied the objects were and how successfully they were captured in '8 different ways'.

Throughout the quarter we were also busy planning our exhibition for the u3a AGM where 72 photographs depicting events in the Vale of Pewsey were on display.



We wish readers happiness and good health in 2026.