



Pewsey Vale u3a

NEWSLETTER

Issue 71

April 2026

Message from the Chair

Dear Pewsey Vale u3a Members,

Isn't it nice to see some Spring sunshine at last, however briefly? We have been out a few times recently when the sunshine has finally felt warm. I hope you have had a chance to get out in the good weather.

As you will have heard if you were at our last Social Meeting we do now have a nice new set of microphones and you should all be able to hear what is said much more clearly. One new handheld microphone is for the Chair and for anyone with questions, and a new headset microphone for our speakers. Hopefully they will prove to be a sound investment and last us a long time.

The Pewsey Vale u3a have a long association with The Vale Community Campus - Leisure Centre for a number of activities including table tennis. Only recently The Vale Community Campus have said they could accommodate a third table tennis table, to enable more people to play but had no funding. So the u3a Committee have decided to provide a table tennis table to The Vale Community Campus as a gift to the village and of course to benefit our members too. I hope this meets with your approval.

If any other groups have a need for further equipment, please email us putting forward the case for the investment. And apologies in advance if we can't meet everyone's requests.

Just a reminder, we are always looking for more support for our u3a. Helpers are always welcome for the Social Meetings and events. The u3a Committee also has several vacancies and more support would be welcomed. If you have ideas for future events or group activities please get in touch.

The Committee hopes you enjoy your membership in the coming warmer sunnier months.

Best regards Ian

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.

All images in this newsletter are provided solely for use in this newsletter or other Pewsey u3a media and remain the property of their original contributor/Pewsey Vale u3a



Your diary page

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

May 2026	Tuesday 19 th	Social Meeting with a member of the Wiltshire Air Ambulance Service who will talk to us about their work.
July 2026	Tuesday 21 st	Social Meeting with David Clensey - Walking The Standing Stones: Wiltshire's Sarsen Way & Cranborne Drovers Way , about his experiences with his son Charlie walking from Swindon to Salisbury based on his recent book.
October 2026	Tuesday 20 th	Social Meeting with Marcus Ward of New Forest Tours - A Year in the Life of Lymington and Keyhaven Marshes .
November 2026	Tuesday 17 th	AGM and One Gun, Two Dead, the Hastings Murder of 1911 . Miranda Pender will provide an entertaining insight into her Great Grandfather Joseph James.

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.

BOARD GAMES GROUP

The Board Games group meets at The Pewsey Leisure Centre on a Monday afternoon. This venue has been improved recently with the new cafe opening so that we can buy a drink and slice of cake to sustain us while we play.

We would welcome new members to the group so please do get in touch if you would like to come along. You may bring a game that you would like to play or choose from our selection.

CARD GROUP

The February meeting: the group went through using mica powders or water colours on embossed parchment papers. Not an easy process, it is so easy to over wet the parchment, or over emboss which leads to buckling or split parchment.

The March meeting: the group did their own designs and ideas.

If you would like to join us and you have got some knowledge of this craft then please get in touch



567 WALKING GROUP



Lunch is usually included when the 567 Walking Group meets. We have had delicious lunches at The Kings Arms, All Cannings, The Harvester at Old Sarum and The Hatchet Inn at Lower Chute.

The walks have been very varied and interesting too! The photo shows the church at Upper Chute where the church yard was full of primroses.

We have made use of our bus passes to travel between Pewsey and the start and end of a walk. (A couple of our members are too young for a bus pass so they had to pay for their ride.)

If you would like to join us to walk between 5 and 7 miles you are most welcome. Please get in touch.

❖ 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

We meet on the 1st Friday of the month at 10.30am at Wilcot Village Hall, and the 3rd Thursday of the month at 7pm at the Crown pub in Pewsey. You can always come along to the Crown for a drink and a listen sometime.

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. We took a break from our usual train of thought in February, because we were only a small group and had got our hands on some historic records of Upavon, Rushall and Charlton. Maps were the order of the day rather than language, but March saw us in the **Pink** (yes including Lily).

CREATIVE WRITING 1

From April, our group will meet once a month, on the second Wednesday of each month from 2pm till 4pm. Although we shall be meeting less often than previously, we will still be sharing our writing by email so that we can give feedback when we do meet.

We are not submitting a story for the newsletter this time as we have been very busy choosing our favourites for our latest project which is revealed by Fiona, below.



Our writing group have decided to re-enter the world of self-publishing, following the Tales of the Third Age anthology produced in 2024.

'Stories for all Seasons' is a new collection of a dozen or so stories and poems written by different members. Each reflect, in different ways, the times of the year and changing seasons; a metaphor for the way each stage of our own lives has its unique beauty and value. The wonderful artwork on the cover, 'The River Avon, Pewsey', was painted by Ann, a member of our group as well as Pewsey Art.

It has been enormous fun looking back over our writing from across the years and selecting the ones we most enjoyed creating and reading. The final stage is to work through some of the technical challenges of publication.

We hope the book will be available from April.

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.

We have been working on our own projects apart from one meeting in January when Dot introduced us to the use of air-drying clay. Members of the group used the clay to make some small patterned shapes that could be used as Christmas decorations, gift tags etc with a surprising way to decorate them..... this was something fun and different for the group to try.

We are planning visits from a couple of visiting artists. Local artist Richard has worked as a photographer, designer, publisher and artist for over 40 years. Later in May Kate, a local watercolour artist will be working with us for the afternoon.

We have welcomed two new members to the group this year, Maggie and Collette, but we are now full at the moment. We do have a waiting list, don't let that put you off - people do drop out of the group for various reasons or move away. Just let us know and we'll keep in touch with you and let you know when a space is available.



TRAVELLERS TALES

We put the winter blues behind us in January for the first meeting of 2026, when fellow member Anne gave us a very jolly presentation about a holiday she had taken with members of her family to Namibia and the fabulous experience they all had on safari there. We were treated to some delightful photographs of lots of animals, and were amazed to see just how close some of them got to the vehicles. Scary stuff!

In February we were treated to the conclusion of a talk about a holiday in the USA undertaken by Ray and Rita. Rita particularly featured the State of Texas and since most of us are "of an age" we well remembered the TV series Dallas and the Ewing Family at South Fork before heading on to Elvis's famous home at Graceland. It was a fun visit and we all enjoyed Rita's obvious pleasure at the memories of the trip as well as all the photos too.



From the States in March we had a short hop across "The Pond" and Joanna gave us a super whirlwind tour around Scotland, emulating the trip she and Phil did last year, highlighting the highs and lows of their various accommodations and the stunning beauty of the scenery. Sadly they didn't experience all the heatwave we were enjoying further south and they were jolly glad of the warm clothing they took! The deserted beaches and ancient castles were a real temptation to us to venture up to the Highlands again, they were just delightful.

We continue to travel widely for the rest of the year - to South Africa on Safari in April, Costa Rica in May and New Zealand in June, so why not join us on the first Tuesday of each month at Easton Royal Village Hall at 10.30 am?

WALKING 9 TO 12

Colin has done us proud and a number of us have completed the Pewsey Avon Trail to Salisbury in three stages with good use of the X5 bus. The PAT is a total of 29 miles, my only slight disappointment that it doesn't always follow the course of the River Avon.

Our next long walk is to do the Avon Valley Path from Salisbury to Christchurch in stages. Let me know if you would like to join us.



BIRDWATCHING



Well, January is always the best month for birdwatching but I finally got to see an elusive Water Rail, in the snow at Langford Lakes (see photo), that made my day. There were also some very cold Ducks and Geese gathered round the clear patches in the ice covered lakes. Including some rarer White Fronted Geese, not that you could tell with their heads down.

February was a wash out, just too wet a day...

In March we went to Savernake Forest, nothing terribly exciting but unusual to see seven Buzzards in the air at once above you. Plenty of woodland birds about, our most unusual sighting was one of the resident Marsh Tit, there are a number in the forest. We also met a friendly Robin (see photos).



SHORT MAT BOWLS

We finish the Friday sessions in Upavon on 17th April, and the Monday sessions in Pewsey on 27th April. Both will start again in September.

Over the summer it is hoped that we can play pétanque on Fridays in Upavon on the terrain in the lower playing field.

COUNTRY DANCING

Country Dancing is good exercise and great fun. Some dances are very simple and others are more complex. The speed varies as does the shape of the sets; from circles to squares to long sets.

Dancers have their favourite dances and choose whether to join in with every dance or sit out to watch and have a breather.



Most of the dancers come along as individuals and find a dance partner when they arrive at the Bouverie Hall.

We have plenty of room and there's space for more dancers. So if you would like to give it a try please get in touch. No need to have danced before. Full instructions are given for every dance with lots of support and encouragement from all the dancers!

WALKING4EXERCISE



This photo shows the group standing in front of Adam and Eve stones.



This picture was taken in an unknown area of Savernake Forest north of Stitchcombe

The weather has improved at last and the Walking4exercise group has enjoyed walking on dry and even sunny days!

We have started our walks at Amesbury, Woodborough, Beckhampton, Savernake Forest and Mildenhall making the most of the beautiful countryside around the Pewsey Vale.

Thanks must go to the members of the group who have organised the walks.

If you would like to come along on future walks please get in touch.



Here was a rest stop half way up a hill near Mildenhall. It was a bit damp that day but not raining!

WALKING 789

In January we did a windy walk on Pewsey Down, one of my favourites past the Alton Barnes White Horse, back along Wansdyke and through the woods and fields back to the Ridge above Huish. Not the best of days but it blew away the cobwebs.

February was just too wet...

For March we had a sunny walk up Pewsey Hill and across to Milton Hill and then down to Milton Lilbourne and back. Nice not to be rained on and see blue skies across Pewsey Vale.

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.

In February we tasted Spanish Rioja and Tempranillo wines, along with tapas to go with them. March saw us in Chile and Argentina. Where will we find ourselves in April?

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.

DOG WALKING

We have enjoyed some lovely walks with good company for all, with the dogs having a good run and chase in the fields and by the pump track which was great fun with the dogs rushing up and down and round. That was during our snowdrop walk where we passed several gardens with beautiful displays.

The dog walking group numbers always seem to fluctuate with both people and or dogs not able to come along for health reasons: we wish them all well and look forward to them returning when they feel able. We have also welcomed new members which is great! Josh my co-leader, has become an elderly gentleman and a WOT! scooting for home so to stop him I have to keep him on the lead which is a real shame. (WOT - wicked old thing!)



WHAT ARE YOU READING?

AA Milne

I came across Gyles Brandreth's biography of Alan Alexander Milne (1882-1956) called *Somewhere, a Boy and a Bear*, and started to read it. Although I did think it was well written, it was somewhat repetitive and in a sense read like a chronological series of essays. But I say started to read it because I am readily distracted and as soon as the book mentioned any of his works, I went hunting for it, so it took me some time to finish the biography. See below for some of the places I visited en route:

We of course think of AAM predominantly as the creator of Winnie the Pooh, but the children's books were only a very small part of his whole canon and he very much did not want to be identified mainly by these. He wrote a large number of plays, novels and articles, and was very much involved with *Punch* among other leading publications.

The Red House Mystery (1922) - a whodunit that pays homage to Sherlock Holmes stories. An easy read but I don't think this one stands up very well today.

Mr Pim Passes By (play 1919) and *Mr Pim Passes* (novel 1921) - a satire on social hypocrisy shown through a misunderstanding - is he dead or isn't he dead? ooh! - but again I don't think it works very well today.

Not That It Matters - collection of essays (1919). Now this is what I really wanted to tell you about after that long preamble. I thought these articles were fantastic! Intelligent, informed, quirky and witty. Apart from his inveterate pipe-smoking, I barely felt that they'd dated very much at all. I wonder if Brian Bilston has read them? - they're literary soul mates, in my view. Very much recommended and you can currently buy the Kindle edition for 65p (and no you don't have to have a Kindle to read it).

Some photographs from our on-line albums - thank you Practical Photography Group!



PRACTICAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP



January - Smoke

Having last met before the Christmas and the New Year festivities, we started our meeting by taking time to catch up over a cuppa before reviewing 57 photographs of smoke.

Nowadays smoke is not so easily found. Thankfully we all seemed to come across enough of it emanating from trains, chimneys and bonfires as well as finding some very effective ways of using candles and incense cones.

February - Doors & Door Furniture

Sixty-nine images forming a colourful and decorative collection of doors were shown on the big screen this month. Doors ranged from modern to historic, derelict to pristine; were of various shapes and sizes crafted out of many types of wood, glass and stone. Doors led into private houses often with its number or name attached; churches with studded doors, museums, shops

We were amazed at the variety of door handles, hinges, letter boxes and decorative panels. Some doors had porches, others canopies and/or columns and had steps leading to them. Door knockers could easily be a topic all on their own! These came in all shapes and sizes lions probably being the most popular. There was even the Three Legs of Mann symbol below a fake porthole - or was it that we could not see in but the occupier could see us?

March - Lighting



The brief was to find the best time to take certain photographs so that the lighting added to or in fact made the scene more dramatic, an example of which was the one here of a petrol station at night.

Between us we had taken some stunning examples both indoors and outside that included buildings, plants, people and trains. There was an impressive street-scene, a glorious sunrise and a compact disc which emitted rainbow colours when lit in a certain way

Unbelievably we are already halfway through our 2025/26 programme! When you have finished reading this why not make yourself another cup of coffee and log in to the website to take a look at our offerings so far

EYE EYE - WELL DONE CLIVE



Wendy Lawrence says "Following my plea for members to take up the u3a EYE challenge by submitting a photo of 'Layers' I am delighted to tell you that Clive's photo appears in the selected few on the website."

DARTS GROUP



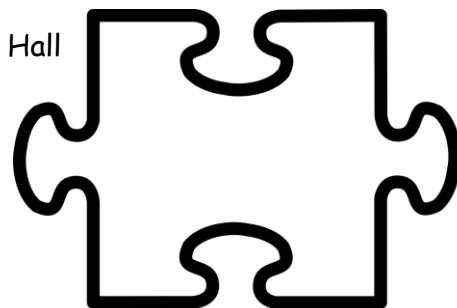
In March we restarted trying to play darts in the very spacious room upstairs in the Royal Oak, central Pewsey. Some new members also joined us with varying degrees of 'aim'. If you are free on a Monday afternoon, why not come and join us, we have darts you can use, so the only cost is to purchase a drink at the bar to bring up with you. They very kindly do not charge us for the use of the room. I'm afraid we don't take this very seriously and after a bit of practice, we have very friendly competition between 2 or 3 teams. Many laughs and good banter.

Contact me if you wish to come as the bank holidays are disrupting our Mondays - normally 1st & 3rd, 2.00 - 4.00pm.

FREE JIGSAW PUZZLE SWAP

Jigsaw puzzles will be available to borrow in the foyer of the Bouverie Hall between 2pm and 4pm on

- April 14th and 28th
- May 12th, 19th and 26th
- June 9th and 23rd
- July 14th, 21st and 28th



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

TABLE TENNIS AND PICKLE BALL



The group meets at 2 pm every Wednesday.

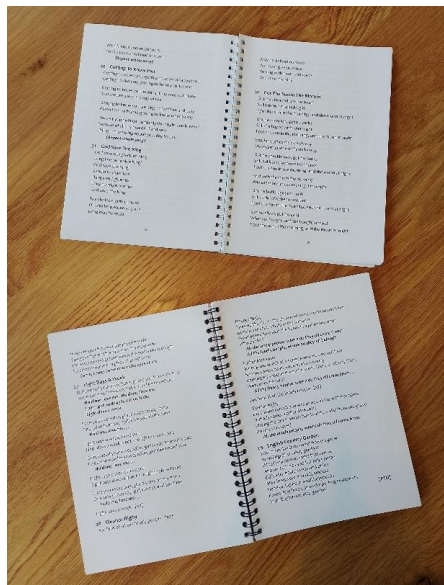
Good news: we have finally got permission for a third table. The cost will remain the same i.e. either £1 or 50p per week.

Also Pickle Ball will resume on Wednesday 1st April, previous sessions were cancelled due to the Sports Hall being needed by the school.

SINGING FOR PLEASURE

Well, SFP is in rude health and continues to attract up to 40 people to each session. Which is good because that means we can continue to hold the door money to £1 per person. However, we are always recruiting - not only because we want to share the joy, but also we haven't quite paid off the cost of Book 2.

The Book 2 project covered collating and printing the actual book, sourcing all the scores and binders in which to store them and boxes and bags to store and transport everything in. The total cost was £667.55, all of which has been paid off save £44.55 which is still owed to me. From time to time, when funds allow, I extract another £10 so we are getting there. I really do not want to increase the door money.

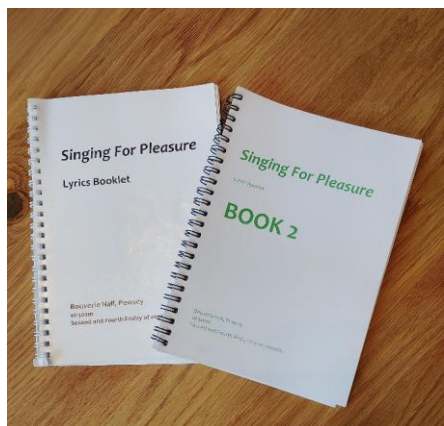


Book 1 contains 109 songs plus 11 Rounds, and Book 2 contains 109 songs and 9 Rounds, and Barbara the musical score for every one of 'em. So that's 218 different songs plus 20 different Rounds which is a pretty wide repertoire.

The sessions are hosted by me (Andy) with Barbara on the keyboard. Everyone gets a copy of each book and all the songs are accompanied by Barbara.

We are a participation group - we do not perform for others. We do have one, regular, carol-singing visit each year, to Edwardian Court, but everyone gets a song-sheet and is encouraged to sing along.

Since we operate in the Bouverie Hall, we can easily accommodate more people, so come along and give it a go. (Did I mention we are always recruiting. . . 😊?).



Thanks,

P.S. Book 1 has a WHITE wire spine: Book 2 has a BLACK wire spine.

P.P.S. We are always recruiting. . .

CREATIVE WRITING GROUP 2

Our group continues to amaze me with the quality of the writing. The group is full (I believe that Group 1 is also full) and there is a small waiting list. If you are interested in joining a group, why not consider leading a third group? Do contact me and we can help you set this up.

And this from new member Rachel:

Children of the Resolution - a Boomer Anthem

We're the next generation on
From those who saved our nation
We still carry the yoke of their determination
'Cos we're the children of the resolution
Held our breath in anticipation
As we lived through cold war confrontation
Greenham Common a focus for demonstration
'Cos we're the children of the resolution
School kids with grants for further education
Studied all hours for qualification
Worked bloody hard and coughed up taxation
'Cos we're the children of the resolution
Flares and kaftans were the fashion
Dancing to Night Fever in disco motion
Sweeney car chase on television
'Cos we're the children of the resolution
Voted to strike to please the union
Downed our tools through affiliation
A three-day week and electricity on ration
'Cos we're the children of the resolution

Contraception brought emancipation
Burnt our bras for liberation
Still battling against discrimination
'Cos we're the children of the resolution
Boycotted Barclays against segregation
Mandela was our inspiration
Staged a sit-in against persecution
'Cos we're the children of the resolution
Meeting with real people was our communication
No screen, no electronic vibration, no constant
notification
We found time for peace and reflection
'Cos we're the children of the resolution
Our elders died for freedom of expression
So we don't owe you any explanation
When we make a stand against your cancellation
'Cos we're children of the resolution



BOOK GROUP 1

In March we reviewed **The Lifeline by Libby Page**. This was a sequel to **The Lido**. Both books advocate the joy of wild water swimming. Whilst **The Lido** was well received this book was less well enjoyed.

It was about two women who had slight mental problems. One was a mental nurse, the other a new mum. The beginning was all about mothers with their firstborns. Coping was difficult. The two characters' stories are intertwined until they eventually meet together at a wild swim base in a wide river. There are parts which have a good feel factor and romance blossoms. Sewage spills into the river causing misery. All is not lost however; the group come closer together to find a solution.

In January we read a variety of classics: **Jane Austen** and the **Brontës** Our next read will be **The Seamstress by Maia Duenas**.

BOOK GROUP 3

The group has read a variety of books and given us food for thought on how they impact our lives today.

Small Pleasures by Clare Chambers, a book we all enjoyed. It starts with a train crash, of which significance we don't know until the end of the book.

We read two books that crossed time frames. **This Must Be The Place by Maggie O'Farrell** not only crosses time frames but continents through the consequences of a marriage. Received mixed reviews.

Our other book crossed decades was **The Glass Maker by Tracy Chevalier**. It starts in 1486 in Italy and ends in 2019. We all enjoyed the early period when we were introduced to glass making but we got confused as the book progressed.

If you like **Jeffrey Archer** you would enjoy **Cometh The Hour** but you need to read the preceding books of the chronicles to appreciate this one. It had mixed reviews from the group.

The last book we read was **In The Far Pashmina Mountains by Janet MacLeod Trotter**. It begins in 1810 in England and then onto India. It is a love story between two people who it seems are never destined to be together. The author's grandparents lived in India and she is very familiar with the life and politics of the time. We all enjoyed the book.

GARDENING

For January we met up in Pewsey and did some scheming. We are hoping to do a few more National Garden Scheme events and shorter more local trips where possible and weather permitting!



The National Garden Scheme Westcroft Garden, Boscombe Village provided Snowdrops in February (See photo). Apparently there are over 500 varieties of Snowdrop, I only bought a few. Good tea and cake and a warm welcome. Did you know that all our Snowdrops were introduced from Spain from around the beginning of the 16th Century?

For March we met at Hilliers Garden Centre, Weyhill, Andover. Membership is free and gets some healthy discounts. There is also the Clearance Table for us bargain hunters.

MILITARY HISTORY

We began the New Year with a royal theme, as Simon gave a brilliant presentation about the late Queen Elizabeth's Funeral back in September 2022 when the nation paused to remember the sovereign we all revered and loved. For many of us she was the only monarch we could remember, and it was an excellent reminder for us of that state occasion with which Simon had very close links.

We jumped forward from links to the past in January to a more high-tech talk in February all about drones, both military and commercial. Robin truly scared the living daylights out of us by telling us a great deal about the enormous capabilities and intrusion this modern-day technology is able to achieve. I'm sure none of us realized just how individual and tiny objects can be picked out as targets for the horrendous weapons the world is now sadly having to experience, nor how beneficial drones can also be to enhance our everyday lives. A real eye-opener, and also alarming and concerning.

March's meeting saw us welcome back a good friend, Bill, who gave us not just more of an insight into the invaluable achievements of Bletchley Park code-breakers during World War 2, but how the world of intelligence gathering and disseminating both then and now is arrived at. Again, another eye-opener, and thoroughly enjoyable.

We have a full agenda of talks for the rest of the year, and Ukraine and Operation Chastise (the Dam Busters Raid) figure in the next couple of months. If you would like to join us for any of these presentations at Easton Royal Village Hall on the first Monday of the month, you would be most welcome.

PATCHWORK GROUP



The first picture is of a part started machine made patchwork passed to me for re-homing which I eventually found someone willing to take it on and complete it before passing it to project Linus.

The second photo is of a patchwork hanging made part by hand and part by machine to be hung in a kitchen.

The third is a hand worked hexagon patchwork suitable for a baby or a young child, when completed and backed with cuddle fleece will be passed to Project Linus.



Lastly a machine quilt which will be used as a travelling quilt for wrapping round shoulders and back on a chilly evening in a campervan.



LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

January - Nick

We were delighted to again welcome Nick who packed 'The History of Pewsham Forest' into sixty minutes. This is a very brief summary of key points covered.



- Pewsham Forest once connected Chippenham with Melksham, Bromham, and Calne.
- The outlaw Fulk FitzWarin resisted a siege in 1202 by King John's henchmen at Stanley Abbey, which lay within the forest.
- Four centuries later John Pym, a future MP for Calne, began the process of disafforestation leasing forest lands to Royal favourites.
- The "King's Bowerwood" (Bowood) was sold to Orlando Bridgeman, who built a house from a former hunting lodge and went bankrupt, feigning his suicide in the Thames to escape his creditors.
- The Earl of Shelburne acquired Bowood and completed the house, a major tourist attraction today.

February - Simon

The talk by Simon captured everyone's interest with ease. Simon hails from a long line of clockmakers and has a vast knowledge and love of all things relating to time-keeping. Simon commenced with a



succinct history of time-keeping, from Egyptian water clocks, through pendulum and carriage clocks to atomic and optical lattice clocks whose accuracy is beyond human comprehension!

During the second half Simon showed us some of the treasured clocks in his collection: a charming carriage clock in its original leather box; an extremely rare 100 year old marine chronometer in a beautiful case; a car clock which is also something of a rarity; and lastly an exquisite musical pendulum-style clock dating from around 1780.

March - Andrea

Our determined speaker arrived on crutches to share the results of her extensive research into 'Amesbury in the 17th Century' with the focus on the monarchy and religion, the period of civil war and the commonwealth, the reinstatement of the monarchy and religion in 1660.

The local population, agricultural economy, religious change and the law during the century, as well as the extent of the four Amesbury manors in 1600, two of which were gifted to Edward Seymour by the Crown, were all explained.

The talk tracked the ownership of the Seymour family across the century, to bring national and local changes into perspective, primarily to inform about the presence of the local labouring families. A key point was class division, there being two distinct forms - upper and lower.

Images -

Stanley Abbey seal by kind permission of Premhill Parish History Group

Simon by Wendy

FRENCH GROUP 1



There used to be a time before the coffee when getting back into French after a month of not speaking it, lacked a certain flow but now that is no longer the case. Members seem to arrive ready to speak as they left off the time before.

The little grey cells are further extended by reading and translating a passage in French, so we can appreciate the French ways of saying things and learn new words and phrases.

We enjoy each other's company. We wish we could invite more people but alas, not only is space limited but if we were more numerous it would take too long for each of us to have a turn.

FRENCH CONVERSATION GROUP 2

Parlez-vous français?

The French Conversation 2 group met at Jackie's for the last time in March as unfortunately (for us) Jackie has had to give up leading the group as she is spending more and more time in Newcastle with her grandchildren. We had a lovely farewell session, with fizz and cake, and were sorry to say goodbye.



However we are hoping it is only *Au revoir* and not *Goodbye* as we are keen to continue to meet as a group and will be getting together in April to try and find a way forward. The current members are happy to take over the administrative running of the group and to host the monthly sessions but what we'd really like is a competent French speaker to attend on a regular basis to help with grammar, pronunciation, etc.

So here's a plea to any French-speakers out there, is anyone willing to pitch up each month and join in our chat? Apart from listening and chatting, no other responsibility is required - we'll identify topics to discuss, provide a venue and refreshments and deal with any admin, you'd just need to come along and correct our mistakes!

Merci d'avance! Jackie



Drawing by Michal

Imaginary The Dance of the Cockerellas
BBC Breakfast Sains Seating
Carnival of the Animals March 26

CHINES



CHINES has got a new hobby - or at least I have and I think several of my colleagues have caught the bug too. Church graffiti. No not in the modern sense of ~~kilroy was here~~ but marks scratched into the stone of churches, representing mason's marks, witch marks, religious symbols (those two overlapping Vs are called Marian Marks), initials and much more, from the early middle ages to as late as the eighteen century.

It started for us with an excellent guided graffiti tour of Salisbury Cathedral; much recommended. You can sign up for one of their regular tours or go to your local church, or any other, and see what you can find. I've found a few in most churches where I've looked and it's becoming something of an obsession with me.



Now going away from the graffiti theme, we have just done a walking tour called Pepys in Bath, which focuses not on the famous Regency resort of the eighteenth century, but of Restoration Bath of the late seventeenth century. Once again we are guided by Andrew who has taken us to many places of interest and we very much hope will take us to many more. He brings everywhere he takes us to life and he's very much One of Us.



Coming up we also have visits to Buscot Park, Wells, Courts Gardens, Longstock Leckford estate, Talos sculpture park, Teasel gardens and more.

CH(urches)IN(nns) and ES(tates) travels by car sharing (with shared costs) and does not provide transport. We are on our feet - standing or walking - for the duration of our visits and of course there are costs involved. And we have a pub lunch, usually to finish our day (or maybe an ice-cream - see left.)

NEEDLEWORK



Our group has grown recently and we have new members with new talents, from knitting to embroidery, cross stitch and bead work, and we still have time for a good natter and cuppa.

Here are some photos of our group and work completed and ongoing. Our group is currently full.



MUSIC APPRECIATION GROUP

'Up, Up and Away with the LSO" - January

Our speaker had, through her long career with British Airways, met the London Symphony Orchestra at the beginning of their 1983 World Tour and remains a special friend of theirs to this day.

An insight into her travels with them was illustrated by twelve carefully selected LSO performances each separated by lively anecdotes, photographs and personal memories.

The London Symphony Orchestra World Tour April 26 — May 30, 1983	
April 28 Kennedy Center Washington Scully Annan Murrells Conductor Claudio Abbado	May 19 Dunika Kalkan Tokyo Conductor Claudio Abbado
April 29 Symphony Hall Boston Conductor Claudio Abbado	May 20 Dunika Kalkan Tokyo Conductor Claudio Abbado
April 30 Symphony Hall Philadelphia Conductor Claudio Abbado	May 21 Festival Hall Osaka Conductor Claudio Abbado
May 2 Rockefeller Center New York Luncheon Brass Quintet Concert	May 22 Pukucha Palace Fukuoka Conductor Claudio Abbado
May 3 Avery Fisher Hall New York Scully Annan Murrells Conductor Claudio Abbado	May 23 Chater Gardens Hong Kong Luncheon Brass Ensemble Open Air Concert
May 4 Carnegie Hall New York Scully Annan Murrells Conductor Claudio Abbado	May 24 City Hall Hong Kong Luncheon Brass Ensemble Open Air Concert
May 5 Orchestra Hall Chicago Scully Annan Murrells Conductor Claudio Abbado	May 25 Landmark Hall Hong Kong Luncheon Wind Ensemble Concert
May 6 Davies Hall San Francisco Conductor Claudio Abbado	May 26 City Hall Hong Kong Scully Douglas Cummings Conductor Ian Fischer
May 9 Sydney Opera House Sydney Scully Douglas Cummings Conductor Claudio Abbado	May 27 University Auditorium Bangkok Scully Douglas Cummings Conductor Ian Fischer
May 10 Sydney Opera House Sydney Conductor Claudio Abbado	May 28 Victoria Concert Hall Singapore Visitors Concert Given from the violin by Michael Davis
May 12 Victorian Arts Centre Melbourne Scully Douglas Cummings Conductor Claudio Abbado	May 29 Victoria Concert Hall Singapore LSD Brass Ensemble Conductor Ian Fischer
May 13 Victorian Arts Centre Melbourne Conductor Claudio Abbado	May 29 Malaysian Chinese Auditorium Kuala Lumpur Scully Douglas Cummings Conductor Ian Fischer
May 16 Kawasaki Hall Matsudo Japan Conductor Claudio Abbado	
May 17 Hitomi Memorial Hall Tokyo Conductor Claudio Abbado	

Here are a few pieces that we heard : 'The Flower Duet' (Delibes), 'The Toy Symphony' (Haydn) during which members of the cabin crew were invited to play; 'Trumpet Tune & Air' (Purcell) featuring Maurice Murphy, principal trumpet for 30 years and 'The Hero's Companion' from Ein Heldenleben (Strauss) a musical portrait of the composer's wife Pauline, during which we concentrated on the interplay between the hero and his companion.

We also heard a recording from one of the cabin crew's annual pantomimes. The LSO kindly gifted, for 40 years, a backing track to which the crew acted, danced and sang. Sounded like great fun!

'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds' taken from the orchestra's Classic

Rock Concerts reflected the speaker's name and when in the audience musicians would give her a wave.

Her reminiscences made for a lively and extremely interesting morning.

Chinese Music - February

Meeting shortly before Chinese New Year our morning was devoted firstly to hearing Western music composed in the Chinese style and later the reverse - Chinese compositions following the Western style.



Examples were the LSO's orchestral version of 'Nessum dorma', The 'Sugar Plum Fairy' creating a traditional Chinese melodic rendition and Erik Satie playing 'La Belle Excentrique'.

Our introduction to Chinese compositions written with a Western influence began with 'Dance of Rainbow Skirts and Feathered Robes', a 1923 composition by Leipzig-trained Xiao Youmei.

After a coffee break we were amused to hear the 'Ying Tong' song by the Goons, and yes most of us did join in! Sanity was restored by one of the most famous of Chinese orchestral works 'The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto'. Written for Western orchestra and a solo violin that aims to mimic the sound of the Erhu, an example of which our speaker owns and brought for us to examine.

Trains & Boats & Planes - March

The speaker guided the group on a musical journey to New York and back. As the title suggests, these and other forms of transport were represented by either the titles or lyrics of tracks; 17 in all. Billy J Kramer kick started our journey by singing the title song.

We sailed, rode in trains, taxis and cars; visited night clubs in Harlem and far too soon we were flying home. We had listened to jazz, blues, rock'n'roll, orchestral music and songs from musicals - and would you believe it, at the last minute the LSO gate crashed again!!