



Message from the Chair

Dear Pewsey Vale u3a Members,

I hope you have managed to stay cool over the last few days. We have had to cancel a number of activities, it's been just too hot!

We have a number of events planned for the coming months and I hope you will be able to join us for any or all:

- Science and Innovation Park visit at Wroughton which promises to be a good morning.
- Cheese and Wine, an opportunity to meet in the evening and enjoy a glass of Wine and Cheese platter. Soft drinks also available.
- Cream Tea, a traditional afternoon cream tea, all welcome. Scones highly recommended.
- Group Leaders and New Members. We have combined the evening Group Leaders event with an opportunity for New Members to find out what Pewsey Vale u3a has to offer them.
- Line Dancing, an opportunity in the afternoon to let your hair down.
- Quiz, a relaxed Quiz evening with a bring and share supper.

We were sorry that Pam Tuxford, has had to step down from running the Mahjong Group. Pam is one of Pewsey Vale u3a's long standing members, her tuition has introduced many people to the discipline and challenges of Mahjong. Liz Whitebread has kindly stepped up to carry on the Group. We wish Pam well and hope she will be able to continue to join us for events.

Just a reminder, we are always looking for more support for the u3a. Helpers are always welcome for the Social meetings and events. Our Treasurer Martin Cook has done his bit and would like to step down from the Committee. If you enjoy handling money, see Martin's outline of what's needed from a u3a Treasurer. If you have ideas for future Events or Group activities please get in touch.

Here's hoping the weather is kind to us for the rest of the year.

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

July 2026	Tuesday 21 st	Social Meeting with David Clensey - Walking The Standing Stones: Wiltshire's Sarsen Way and Cranborne Drovers Way , about his experiences with his son Charlie walking from Swindon to Salisbury based on his recent book.
	Friday 31 st	Cheese and Wine evening 7-9pm £8 per member
August 2026	Wednesday 12 th	Cream Tea 3-4:30pm £5 per member
September 2026	Wednesday 2 nd	Group Leaders and New Members Event 7-9pm
October 2026	Friday 2 nd	Line Dancing 3:30-5:30pm in the Scout Hall
	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.
	Friday 27 th	Quiz evening 7-9pm

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.

£ COME AND COUNT OUR MONEY!

After 4 years I'm hanging up my hat as our u3a's treasurer and we need someone to take over from me.

Is it difficult? No. Is it time consuming? No.

If you use online banking yourself and can maintain a simple spreadsheet or cashbook, you're almost there. It'll take about 2 or 3 hours per month, at most, maybe bit more for the AGM, and you'll be taking part in about 7 committee meetings a year (where coffee, cake and laughter are also on offer). Plus there's always support available if you have any problems.

So, please do contact me if you think you can help out with this vital role. We can meet up, if you like, and I can explain in a bit more detail.

❖ 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



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 June Dave and Lizzie gave us Sauvignons Blanc and Pinots Noir. The group was delighted by the wines and the delicious accompanying nibbles. (I was away toasting their health - in Rosé rather than Sauvignon Blanc, which is a little too fruity for my palate.)

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.

ANCIENT HISTORY ON THE DOORSTEP

So, I thought, I'm a U3A member. What else do people of a certain age do? Why, they subscribe to Saga magazine!

So I did. Hmmm, am I ready for this I wondered. And then something really interesting - an article called 'If you go down to the woods today...', about the ancient trees of the UK. But wait a minute - there's one, a 1,700-year-old yew tree, in a churchyard in Alton Priors.

That's about three miles from Pewsey. But surely, I thought, there isn't a church in Alton Priors. I must have driven or cycled through it several hundred times over the last two decades, and I've never seen a church.

Except I was wrong: there is a church in the tiny hamlet: All Saints is just a few hundred yards across fields from the much higher profile (but also tiny) St Mary's Saxon church in neighbouring Alton Barnes.



And sure enough, there it is: the Alton Priors yew. A tree that's believed to have been there since well before 400AD, significantly predating St. Augustine's arrival in England in his bid to convert the pesky Brits to Christianity.

My first thought was, "What must this tree have seen over the centuries?" And then I looked around. Fields and downland, the occasional rooftop. So not much, albeit all extremely beautiful.

"Ah well", I thought as I walked back to the car. "Maybe it's about to see lots and lots of Saga readers..."

Do any readers have a similar experience of finding something unexpected just down the road? If so, don't hesitate to share...

DEFEAT THAT HEAT!

David - master of understatement - writes: Well, it certainly has been a little warm in recent weeks.



And it's been amazing to see just how many people in and around Pewsey elected during those record-smashing few days to reorganise their daily lives: exercising and gardening before their normal waking hours, finishing work by midday, staying in behind closed curtains during the heat of the afternoon and evening...

We've been wondering if anyone out there has some tips they'd like to share on what really worked for them during the time of hottest heat - or any warnings about tricks that really didn't work.

So let's get the ball rolling - is your dog panting uncontrollably, restless, miserable and heartbreakingly miserable? If so, try this ridiculously simple solution (no guarantees however!)... Just soak a tea-towel in cold water and plonk it on his or her back.

It certainly worked for a spaniel of this writer's acquaintance: happy dog, happy owner!

MUSIC APPRECIATION GROUP

Members take it in turns to present the monthly talk. The title they choose may give a slight clue but the surprise is always in the genres and the performers selected. This always leads to a healthy exchange of comments and an opportunity to share experiences of owning the recordings or hearing them in live concerts or in films, etc.

Jazz Piano - April

From a wealth of great jazz piano players the speaker chose sixteen using twenty three tracks to illustrate their varying styles.

These ranged from early jazz with Scott Joplin, Jelly Roll Morton, moving through the decades with Tatum, Garner, Monk, Peterson (who had a 14 note span), Previn, Brubeck, Hancock, Correa and others. The great pianist and composer Duke Ellington was in there too.

The final track brought us up to date with a 2005 recording of '*North Portland*' by 26 year-old Robert Glasper from the 2005 album '*Canvas*' - his first album released on a major label (Blue Note).

Chinese Music Part II - May

Our speaker continued his February talk with three pieces in the Cantonese style. A beautiful one act opera '*Le Cinesi*' (*The Chinese Women*), with music composed by Gluck in 1754; '*Pagodes*' the first movement of Debussy's '*Green*' had more of a Chinese feel and the piano concerto '*Yellow River*' reflected, at the wish of Lady Mao, the strength of the Chinese in dealing with invaders. '*The Legend of the Purple Jade Hairpin*', '*The Sacrifice of a Princess*' and two tracks '*The Ditty of Shandong Province*' and '*Meditation in Retirement*' chosen by members from a list compiled by the speaker closed the meeting, throughout which he had educated us in the use of voices, the language and, more importantly taught us how to listen to Chinese music and in particular Opera.

Impressions of Three Cities - June

The classically trained pianist Billy Joel started the proceedings with '*A New York State of Mind*', followed by Gershwin's 1931 film score '*New York Rhapsody*' and Aaron Copland's 1940 '*Quiet City*' written for the play of that name and finally '*Beautiful Noise*' by Neil Diamond.



London featured the '*Minuet*' from Handel's '*Water Music*' played three times going to and during George I's water party and on the return on the Thames ending around three o'clock in the morning! '*Waterloo Sunset*' by The Kinks gave us a different view of the river before our coffee break.

Refreshed, we heard the LSO play Vaughan Williams' '*London Symphony*' and Elgar's '*Cockaigne*' first performed on 20 June 1901 - how fitting then to choose it for our June meeting. The term Cockaigne was used by Edwardian moralists as a metaphor for gluttony and drunkenness but the music reveals many pleasant aspects of life in London during that period.

Leaving NY Chris Rea took us down '*The Road to Hell*'

Rome was represented by Hans Zimmer's theme from the film '*Gladiators*'.

COUNTRY DANCE MUSIC

We have had a busy few months starting in April playing at the Kennet u3a Coffee Exchange at the Marlborough Town Hall. Seven intrepid players entertained the happy throng for 20 minutes with some folk dance tunes from the UK, France and the USA. The chairman was very complementary of our efforts and the crowd clapped enthusiastically, so we left with a smile on our faces and tried to forget any "rustic harmonies" we may have inadvertently played.



The Pewsey contingent, mindful of our carbon footprint caught the X5 bus to and from the gig, all making use of our bus passes.

Then in May we played at Merlin Court Care Home in Marlborough for the residents, again using the X5 for the tour bus. Our next outing may be to Merlin Court again in August for their summer open day, nice to be invited back, we must have done something right!

We now meet in the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at Wilcot Village Hall at 10:30am, and the 3rd Thursday at the Crown in Pewsey at 7pm. New players always welcome, do not feel you have to perform on our outings, it's purely for those who want to. Come along to the Crown and hear us and have a chat in the beer break at half time.

After playing together for 18 months the sound is coming together, so if you have a garden party, fete or village event and need some background music, please let me know. We are evolving into more of a folk music band really and will be adding some songs over the next few months, so fun times ahead.

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.

Did you know that there used to be pronouns for two people? **Wit** means the two of us. **Git** means you two. **Unker** means the two of them. What a shame we lost them!

BOARD GAMES

We play Board Games at Pewsey Leisure Centre cafe on the second Monday afternoon each month. It is a free activity and members bring along any game that they would like to share with other group members.

Please contact me if you would like to join us or need more information.

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

APRIL - Linda

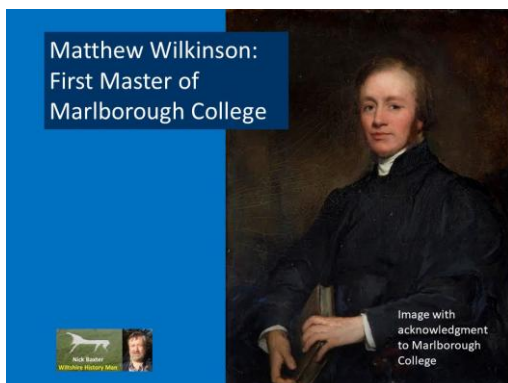
Kennet u3a member Linda gave a truly fascinating talk about the aristocratic St John family and their historical importance. Originally from Normandy the family first became connected to the Estate at Lydiard Tregoze in 1420 when Oliver St John married 10 year old Margaret Beauchamp, who later became grandmother to Henry VII. Altogether there were 6 Viscounts, who were involved in the military and politics. Nonetheless their history was peppered with many scandals ranging from duels to fathering illegitimate children and squandering large amounts of money.

The final Viscount Bolingbroke, Vernon St John, was a mild-mannered and genial man who loved nature and became closely involved with the community. Sadly due to the profligacy of his forefathers the estate had to be broken up when the title passed to distant relatives. However, Lydiard Park itself was purchased by Swindon Corporation and is still there for us all to enjoy. *(Photo courtesy of Friends of Lydiard Park.)*

Linda's talk inspired the group leader to visit Lydiard Park in mid-June. She will return with another historical talk next year.

MAY - Nick

A regular visitor to our meetings Nick this time captivated us with the story of Matthew Wilkinson, First Master of Marlborough College.



Born 1808 in London into a Yorkshire mercantile family Wilkinson's education started at Leeds Grammar School. On completing his schooling he became Third Master teaching the younger boys. Teachers earned a salary of £60 to be paid in full if they remained in the role for six years. Having left after five years to study for a BA at Clare College Cambridge he received only half.

On gaining his degree, he accepted the curacy of Oakington in Cambridge and was ordained as a priest by the Bishop of Ely in 1837. He became First Principal of Huddersfield Collegiate School and aged 31 became Headmaster. His wife Rosa having died he married Laetitia Shield in 1840 who bore him nine children.

In the same year he was chosen to be First Master of a newly established school in Marlborough. The arrival of the Great Western Railway works in Swindon in 1840 had more or less wiped out the coaching trade in Marlborough. It was decided that the town was a healthy location for the establishment of a new collegiate school the redundant Castle Inn being identified as a base.

Sadly lack of space prevents me writing more about this interesting and popular man.

JUNE

It is always a pleasure to have a u3a member present a talk and in June one of our own gave us Part II of her talk about the celebrated Georgian and Regency portraitist Thomas Lawrence.

After a recap of his early life Avril gave a brilliantly illustrated account of Thomas's life following the death of both parents and moving to London.

He had complex romantic relationships with actress Sarah Siddon's daughters Sally and Maria, more than once shifting his affections between the two. Both young women suffered ill health, Maria dying in 1798 and Sally in 1803.

He was knighted in April 1815 by the Prince Regent whose portrait he had painted and commissioned by the Prince to travel across Europe to paint the portraits of the sovereigns and military leaders allied in the defeat of Napoleon. These paintings, some of which Avril shared with us, currently hang in the Waterloo Chamber at Windsor Castle.

Lawrence was the official Painter-in-Ordinary to King George III and served as the President of the Royal Academy from 1820 until his death in 1830. He had remained a bachelor.

His surviving letters to the sisters and other friends and professional associates have been published and many are held in the Royal Academy of Art archives.

Why not join us for our 2026/27 season of talks?

WALKING4EXERCISE



From castles, canals, woodland and open countryside the Walking4exercise group has explored various aspects of local Wiltshire recently. The members were very impressed by the huge number of pyramid orchids on Pewsey Hill at the beginning of June which were a wonderful sight to behold.

We walk 4 miles twice a month on a Monday afternoon. Please get in touch if you would like to come along.

MAH-JONG

The Pewsey Vale u3a Mah-Jong Group has been running for a very long time. First it was led by Margaret (she is one of the very first PV u3a members) and then she handed it over to Pam who very ably ran it for many years - and we had happy times at her house, spreading into a second room when we had too many players for one table. Pam has sent us a message via her daughter and wishes to thank all the members past and present for the many happy Thursdays we have had over the years.

I first joined immediately after Covid when we could meet in the garden and I have a vivid memory of being in a second group squashed with her and another couple into her summerhouse - it was wonderful and they patiently helped me learn, when I had only played the 'rummy' version when I was a child. The rest of the group were at a table in her very lovely outside 'cave'. Luckily it was a lovely summer. Very happy memories for us all I think.

Pam has been unwell during the winter but is now happily feeling much better, though she is no longer able to play. She loves us to visit. We are continuing with the 1st and 3rd Thursday afternoons pattern to play, and the venue has now changed a few times, but mostly at my home. We currently have the most viable number of enthusiastic members but if you are interested in joining us, do contact me via the website.

I think I can speak (write!) for all members past and present to thank her for being such an exceptional host, not just for the regular sessions, but the extras at Christmas and midsummer when we had party times.

DOG WALKING



Our walks have been small as several walkers and their dogs have had to stand down some for health of themselves or their dogs: the latter we look forward to welcoming back in due course.

Meanwhile we have gained two new members but with having other groups meeting at the same time we share their membership!

This group though is not about numbers but about getting out into the fresh air and enjoying a walk with friends. We walk on the paths around Pewsey. Our walks are short but chatty and friendly, all the dogs we've had the pleasure of meeting enjoy the walks and each others' company. My only stipulation is if your dog is a bitch and she's on heat then it's kinder to all concerned to stay at home please!



This time of year we have to be aware of ticks etc that are just as happy on a human as on a dog and within Jones Mill there are usually Adders and others, being a nature reserve, though these feel the vibrations of footsteps - but like most things they want to be left alone so we keep away!

PRACTICAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP – 1ST QUARTER 2026

April – Urban Landscapes

A popular choice of topic with sixty nine photographs being submitted for review.



Members had mostly visited places in Wiltshire but other images were from Hungerford, Oxford, London and the Isle of Man. Some taken in Bath were as a result of a u3a CHINES outing to visit the areas frequented by Pepys or that had existed when he visited the city in the 17th century. One photo taken in Malaga looks like a frozen river but is in fact a dry concrete channel where the river has been diverted and used since for recreation such as walking, skateboarding and ball games.

May – Abandoned & Discarded

It is surprising how many and how diverse were the items found during our hunt for anything abandoned or discarded.



There were cars, household furniture and fittings, piles of wood from dilapidated sheds and the only too familiar litter. Bicycles, tyres galore, machinery and most surprisingly six boats were discovered including the one we share with you here looking more like an art installation. Not so surprising was the well travelled shopping trolley abandoned beside a beautiful white rhododendron in full bloom. And we must not forget the traffic cone found nowhere near a path or road.

June – Wildlife



Easy for some but not so for others. Among us we have birdwatchers who travel afar for sightings, members who explore our own island and travel far and wide across other continents. Then there are those with only the wildlife around Pewsey to photograph. Consequently between us we submitted an excellent selection of images ranging from our native insects to four-legged animals in Africa.

We were delighted to see that one member had his wonderful close-up view of a Turkeytail Fungus selected for the u3a EYE 'Layers' album earlier in the year.

BIRDWATCHING



In April we visited Blashford Lakes near Ringwood. Unfortunately there were no exciting birds of prey this time for us. However, good views of a singing ChiffChaff (I'm certain this little warbler is actually a ChiffChaff as he obligingly sang) and the Black Headed Gulls on their nest were entertaining.



In May we tried the Cotswold Lakes and Lower Moor Farm hoping for Hobbies but a bit of an overcast day. But we did get to see the wild flower meadows with a number of Orchids, Green Winged Orchid in particular. And we also had close encounters with a number of dragonflies, Downy Emerald Dragonfly, I think....



Our early June holiday clashed with a holiday week so instead we tried a bird song session in our garden in Pewsey. I had hoped the group would hear the Tawny Owlets, but no luck. Instead the Muntjac Deer put in a brief appearance.

As some of you will know I have been trying to see a White Tailed Eagle for some years, narrowly missing sightings by a few days on several occasions. And then while out walking we saw one! Thank you Avon Valley Path.

GARDENING

The emphasis has been on nurseries and plant sales. We went to the open day at West Kingston Plant Nursery in April. The prices are very good, but you do need to label the pots yourself on your way round or you will never know what it was you bought... And you will need the provided trolley, it's a large site. There is another trip planned for the autumn.



Also visited in April, Longstock plant fair which attracts a lot of 'real' nurseries from the West Country. Not so many bargains but some really good varieties and a wealth of plant knowledge to be shared. The flower picture is a rather nice Iris named Orinoco Falls. I hope I can nurture a good clump. We also planned trips to Hardy's Cottage Garden Plants and also NT Avebury but the weather put us off. Next time....



789 WALKING GROUP

These pictures are the 789 walking group in Grovely Woods near Great Wishford. There were 3 Witches' Trees that we found in the wood. The beech trees along the Avenue were spectacular. (Photos Louise.)



Lesley arranged our April walk near Wilton, which took us through Grovely Wood and the Handsel (witches) Trees before descending Hadden Hill to Great Wishford and heading back to Wilton along the Wylve River valley. We had time for a look at the Italian Romanesque-style Church of St Mary and St Nicholas in Wilton. We covered just over 8 miles and then enjoyed a well earned lunch at The Pembroke Arms.

For our May walk Sue took us to The Three Magpies, Sells Green. The route is mainly through fields with a little bit of road walking back to Devizes. Then all the way along the Canal, passing Caen Hill Locks and Foxhangers. 8.5 miles in all.

We postponed our June walk as it was just too hot at 30 Degrees C plus!

If you would like to join us let me know.



WALKING 9 TO 12



We are now well on the way along the Avon Valley Path from Salisbury to Christchurch, in five stages, led by Colin. We have been using a combination of X5 and X3 buses and the Salisbury Park and Ride to save us some time.



It can be tricky to follow the path across the water meadow in the reed beds, thankfully mostly dry under foot. The views are excellent. Colin says he knows the way....

This month's stage was Fordingbridge to Ringwood and just before we got to Blashford Lakes we spotted a juvenile White Tailed Eagle, which made my day. Just to confuse, there is no white tail on a youngster. But no difficulty identifying such a huge bird, 6.5 - 8ft wingspan! One day I will get a picture! So just the last leg Ringwood to Christchurch remaining and then we will come up with a new idea.

If you fancy a longer walk let me know, I don't always get distracted with birdwatching.

BRIDGE GROUP

Having got to 80 without having played many card games beyond SNAP and Happy Families, I was a complete novice at Bridge but decided to come along and see what I could achieve. I was made very welcome by Libby and fellow novices.

After 18 months I would say I have a good grasp of the main rules, but mistakes are never a problem because we are all similar in experience. I enjoy the game and the friendship of others (not quite sure what they think of me!).

We have two separate groups: beginners and intermediates. Libby has overall responsibility, but primarily spends her time teaching the beginners.

We extend a cordial welcome for any u3a member to join us.

We meet at the Scout Hut on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of every calendar month between 2 and 4pm (with a break for tea/coffee etc). The cost is currently £2 per session.

CARD GROUP

Last month as a group we went off to Busy Hands craft shop, where Pauline showed us how to use card making tools in different ways. New ideas are always welcome, so this month we are putting some of these ideas along with old favourites into practice.

Meetings are on the 1st Monday in the month with some exceptions. We have a place for a member to join the card group if they would like.

567 WALKING GROUP



567 walking group has enjoyed walks from Horton, Marden, Bremhill and Ogbourne St Andrew during the last few months. Our pub meals after the walks have been jolly get-togethers and tasty experiences. We have eaten at The Bridge Inn, The Millstream, The Dumbpost Inn and The Silks on the Downs. All highly recommended by the walkers.

Many thanks to the walkers who organised these walks and lunches for the group.

Please let me know if you would like to join us to walk 5, 6 or 7 miles.

TABLE TENNIS AND PICKLE BALL

A third table tennis table!



In April we purchased a 3rd table for the very popular Table Tennis Group, who meet on Wednesdays at 2.15pm for an hour. The players can now enjoy more games and also have the opportunity to play singles matches.

Alongside the table tennis activity, we also run the Pickle Ball Group. The courts are booked at the same time, Wednesdays at 2.15pm.

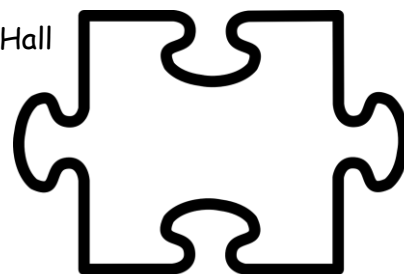
Both activities take place at the Vale Campus in Pewsey.

FREE JIGSAW PUZZLE SWAP

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

- July 14th, 21st and 28th
- August 11th and 25th
- September 8th and 22nd

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



DARTS GROUP

The friendly rivalry of the darts group!

The necessary requirements for this hardy group are:

1. "Layer up" and simply aim for the dart board, and, if at all possible, avoiding both the wall and the radiator (which is never turned on, and situated underneath the dart board)
2. The radiator's Heath Robinson cardboard cover must at all times be in situ to avoid a dart falling behind the rad and not being retrievable *
3. The ability to count your score up very quickly in order to avoid confirmation that maths was indeed never your best school subject
4. Most important of all, to remember that you did approach the board with 3 darts, so retreating with 3 darts is an unquestionable requirement

* Another lovely member has constructed a wooden shelf to cover the radiator for the group.

Do come and give us a try if you're free on 1st and 3rd Monday afternoons, upstairs at the Royal Oak Pewsey. They don't charge us, so just buy a drink at the bar to bring up with you. We have u3a darts you can use. We are a very friendly bunch and there's no shaming and we laugh with each other (not at each other!). It's a fun afternoon. Do contact me if you would like any more information.



COUNTRY DANCING

Fortunately the Bouverie Hall has been a cool venue so we could still participate in Country Dancing during the hot weather.



Our dancing repertoire has increased and some of our new dances have become popular with group members. Well done to all the dancers for trying out and persevering with tricky steps and timings.

We have had a lot of fun and laughter along the way as usual.

More dancers are always welcome. Come and give it a try on a Tuesday afternoon. No previous experience is needed.

BOOK GROUP 1

Since our last report we have enjoyed the following reads:

January

The Lifeline by Libby Page

Not voted our best read

February

A Calamity of Souls by David Baldacci

This book makes one aware of the difficulties of being black in the southern states of America in the past. The writing is powerful and descriptive throughout the book. A black woman stands up to a white judge when her black friend is accused of murder. His innocence is believed by the white lawyer who against all odds takes on the case. In those times it is unheard of for a white lawyer to defend a black person. We agreed this is a book to be recommended.

March

The Seamstress by Maria Duenas

A translation from the original which was really well done. We all found this story fascinating. It follows a young seamstress through many adventures during the Spanish civil war. She moves from Portugal to North Africa and to Spain where, still practicing as a seamstress, she lives and works for the Nazis whilst spying on them. I cannot think of a book which has left me more spellbound throughout.

This month we are bringing a book of choice to share

PATCHWORK GROUP

Margaret gave a talk to the Cameo (come and meet each other) group, held in the Wesley Hall once a month on the second Wednesday afternoon.



Patchwork Craft or Need?

Katherine assisted me and showed off her Japanese style of Patchwork which she has been learning, talked about the first settlers in America and the beautiful patchworks they made from as young as eight years old, and had a calendar with many different designs which harked back to the frontier days of the late 18-19th Century.

I gave a brief history as this craft/ need goes back 5,500 years with evidence found in both the tombs of the Pharaohs and those of the Lui-Song Southern dynasty of Chinese Emperors. Here they found wall hangings and furnishings of the Neolithic period (New Stone Age).

Traces of patchwork garments have been found all round the Middle East and the Mediterranean both from this period right the way down history with garments for soldiers, workers and slaves also blankets stitched and patched .

In Medieval times knights wore a Gambeson under their armour. This was made of strong pieces of cloth padded and stitched together, keeping them warm, more comfortable and safer.

In times of prosperity it is a craft but in times of hardship and poverty it becomes a need- make-do-and mend! The English paper piecing patchwork dates back to the 18th Century when the better-off had time and off cuts of fabric to use - the V&A have a collection. The late 19th century Victorian enjoyed making "Crazy" patchwork which is a mix of fabrics and embroidery put together anyhow rather than the paper piecing where each piece is planned - and our group practices today.



I took along several quilts and cushion covers which I have made at differing periods of my life. I also explained my first dabbles and why this is down to watching my Mum make patchwork cushions for an Antique shop in gorgeous fabrics in beautiful colours.

LET'S TALK GARDENING

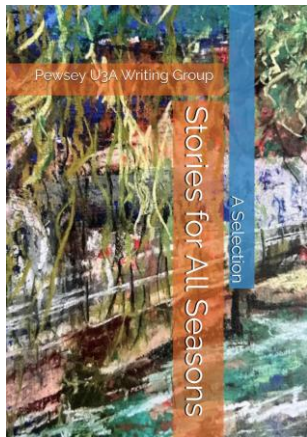


We have been together as a group since last October, and as a group we have talked about the woes of gardening, mainly when the weather has been too cold, too wet, too windy, too dry, too hot. The list goes on.

But I am pleased to say the joys have outweighed the woes of gardening. The excitement, for example, when expectations have been reached and the seeds did come up!

The next few months are being taken up by visiting each others' gardens; this way we will get to understand more about each others' views and ideas and from each other we will learn. As a group we wish each member of u3a a happy peaceful summer with many joys shared with nature

CREATIVE WRITING GROUP ONE



In the six years that our group has been meeting we've written thousands of words and consumed a great deal of cake. We can't share the cake with you (because we've eaten it) but have been looking for ways to make our writing available to a wider audience. Having dipped a tentative toe into self-publishing a couple of years ago, our clever colleague, Fiona, has now encouraged us to produce an actual book via Amazon. Thanks to her skill and persistence, we are now the proud co-authors of *Stories for All Seasons*, complete with a beautiful cover created by another talented colleague, Ann.

The book is now available in paperback from Amazon for the bargain price of £3.86, which covers only the printing costs. We won't get rich on this, but would love you to read 'Stories for All Seasons: A collection by Pewsey Vale u3a Writing Group' - and maybe give us a positive review!

*(Go onto Amazon and key in **stories for all seasons Pewsey**)*

ROCK AND POP PLAYLIST

One of Pewsey U3A's newest groups, launched late last year, is clearly proving that even a small number of people can share an incredibly diverse and eclectic range of tastes.

The eight-member Rock and Pop Playlist group has already had multiple agreements and disagreements about a vast and varied assortment of artists, from Bowie and the Beatles to Smokey Robinson and Radiohead, David Essex and Roberta Flack - and many, many more.



While nobody will admit to having had their minds completely changed about a particular artist or song, everybody has learned a great deal - about singers and bands they already knew, as well as music that's completely new to them.

It's proving to be great fun too, although maybe the tone will be a little more serious at the next meeting - on the theme of political messages. There are no rules, except that anybody suggesting more than one Dylan track will be sent out to make the tea.



CREATIVE WRITING 2

What's in the bag?

What's in the bag?

'Out of the way, let me get in the door.'

What's in the bag?

'Careful, I'm going to fall over you.'

What's in the bag?

'There's nothing in there for you.'

What's in the bag?

'Get out!'

What's in the bag?

'Oh, I give in! You're always the same when I come back from shopping, here, have one of your treats, blasted cat!'

Our Creative Writing group members continue to amaze me with the quality of the pieces they submit. Unfortunately we now have more members than we probably should but the waiting list is no more. We can of course start a new waiting list for those interested.

The Group would like to send our congratulations to Creative Writing Group 1 for publishing a small and very smart book of their excellent poems and stories. (Available on Amazon)



SINGING FOR PLEASURE

Like all other u3a groups, SFP is run by volunteers - Barbara and myself. And guess what? We both have commitments large and small so sometimes we have to miss an SFP session.

I have missed a few sessions since Cheryl handed SFP over to Barbara and me and, as it happens, I missed the first session this very June. In her inimitable way, Barbara got several people to stand up front and attempt to fill the gaping void created by my absence, and they all did really well.

It seems that SFP is in rude health. We continue to get enough singers so we can keep the door money down to £1 per head, but we are always recruiting and are always keen to see new people coming through the door.

There's no magic to it. We just sing familiar songs. There is no plan - as long as it's in one of the two books, we can, and will, sing anything that's suggested/requested on the day. And that's it! After an hour of the above, we have hot drinks and biscuits. And everyone leaves the Bouverie Hall uplifted and energised.

'Cos that's what it's all about - the clue is in the name: **SINGING FOR PLEASURE**

ART GROUP

We have had two local artists visiting the group since the last Newsletter - local artist Richard visited in March. Richard has worked as a photographer, designer, publisher and artist for over 40 years. He enjoys painting landscapes, especially those containing sea views and demonstrated how he achieves sea and sky effects.



At the end of May Kate (pictured left) spent a very enjoyable afternoon with us. Kate paints in watercolour and she demonstrated her painting and the group then worked on their own paintings of the same subject. The group thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon working along with Kate's expertise and advice and produced some excellent results. As a bonus Kate also said how much she had enjoyed her afternoon working with our very enthusiastic group!

We have welcomed two new members to the group this year 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.

