# Pewsey Vale u3a

# NEWSLETTER

**Issue 73** **October 2026**

## Message from the Chair

Dear Pewsey Vale u3a Members,

Well at least it has cooled down and today we have some welcome showers. The grass is even green again. Let's hope Autumn and Winter are kind to us.

We are trying to come up with some new and different events in addition to our regular Social meetings and Group meetings. The new Science and Astronomy groups sound particularly interesting and I know many of you are already signed up to Line Dancing. We would welcome your ideas on things to do. I really enjoyed the visit to the Science Museum Storage facility at Wroughton, I had no idea what was there despite having driven past it on my way to work for years. At the end of September a number of us are going to visit Burlen in Salisbury, who make carburettors, which I'm really looking forward to, but not for everyone, I know. Both of these events are "Non u3a Events", we don't have to worry about u3a insurance cover as they are hosted elsewhere and managed by other people, and so the invitation can be extended to non-u3a members.

It's also worth mentioning our reciprocal arrangement with Kennet u3a. In case you didn't know, as a member of Pewsey u3a you are entitled to join one Kennet u3a group for free. Also of note is that the Travel Group, which had a Joint Kennet and Pewsey u3a Group status, is now operating as a "non-u3a activity" potentially offering more freedoms.

We currently have some room on the Committee for some extra people. You don't have to commit to full time involvement; we don't expect you to come to all the meetings, we just need some extra help and opinions when you can. You can choose to be a Committee member without having to take on one of the specific roles. However I am looking for a new Speaker Secretary so I can hand over the task. It's not an onerous role. We now have speakers booked for the rest of 2026 to the end of 2027. The Speaker Secretary just needs to confirm that the Speakers are available for their slot, look after them on the day and in the fullness of time book six speakers for 2028. Let me know if you would like to join us.

I hope you enjoy the Newsletter.

*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.**

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## GROUP LEADERS AND NEW MEMBERS DRINKIES



Lynne led the committee in organizing an evening in which to say thank you to group leaders, and at the same time hello and welcome to some of our new members who dared to raise their heads above the parapet.

I hope they did indeed feel welcome and found out more about groups of interest to them. I for one recruited a couple of new group members and very much enjoyed having the chance to chat with them.

So hello to our new members and many thanks to Lynne and the team for a very pleasant evening.

## BADMINTON

The badminton group has had a change of leadership. I have now taken over from Carole and am co-leading with Brian. We would like to thank Carole for all the hard work she has put in over the last few years.

We are arranging for some coaching to be held at the end of October which will hopefully help some of us (me in particular!) improve our game. If successful, a further session may be run later in the year.

We are delighted to say that we have had some new players join our group since the last newsletter and we are always ready to welcome new players. You can find us at the Pewsey Vale Leisure Centre every Wednesday between 1pm and 2pm. *Sue*

## 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
- As a member of the group you are expected to learn (and retain!) a couple of facts, such as what is the capital of Greenland? And what are the five rivers of Salisbury (hint, mnemonic Never Eat Bananas When Angry.)?



## 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. I also subscribe to the (free) Wordsmith.org site which feeds me delicious words like ***breviloquent:*** a long way of saying "using few words"!

## WINE TASTING AND APPRECIATION

In August, guest speaker Theresa took this as her theme: "In the early 1220s, the French King Philip II held what may be the first recorded wine tasting in history, as outlined in the 1224 poem *La Bataille des Vins* ('The Battle of the Wines') by Henry d'Andeli. At this event, over 70 wines were sampled by the attendees, and judged by an English priest." We didn't taste 70 wines but Theresa gave us half a dozen carefully selected wines to sample, along with comprehensive tasting notes – and delicious nibbles to go with them. It was an excellent evening – and no, we're not usually as erudite!

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 or occasionally a guest speaker.

## SHORT MAT BOWLS



Short mat bowls has started again.

- Mondays: 2.15 in Pewsey Leisure Centre.
- Fridays: 10am in Upavon village hall.

There is also a session run by Stef on Thursday afternoons in Upavon village hall. This starts at 1.30 pm.

*Tony*

## 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.

## CHINES

Our CH(urches), IN(ns and) ES(tates) going out group has just reached its autumn hiatus although we are looking at non-weather dependent venues for possible visits during the colder and darker months.

This year we have been to:

- Salisbury Cathedral for a Graffiti Tour – an especial passion of mine - and we have followed this theme up in at least one other venue (not to mention the dozens I have been exploring personally). You can see just a few photos in our on line album https://pewseyu3a.slickpic.com/albums/PG2-Graffiti
- Pepys in Bath with our dear guide Andrew Butterworth
- Fairford and Buscot Park https://pewseyu3a.slickpic.com/albums/CHINES-Fairford-And-Buscot





- Wells https://pewseyu3a.slickpic.com/albums/CHINES-Wells

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- Talos sculpture park https://pewseyu3a.slickpic.com/albums/CHINES-Talos

And Teasel garden under the National Gardens Scheme.

In each case, the visit to the house or garden has been followed up by a delicious lunch (usually in a pub) and a visit to a church.

# MUSIC APPRECIATION GROUP

## July – Creatures Great & Small

The speaker wanted this to be a light-hearted talk which she certainly achieved by selecting mainly playful tunes that we remember from our younger days.

She set the scene with the parade from *Peter and the Wolf* followed by *'Champion the Wonder Horse'* sung by Frankie Laine (remember him?) and the hilarious *'Delaney's Donkey'* performed by the unforgettable Val Doonican. *'How Much is that Doggie in the Window'* led to a discussion about radio programmes such as Junior Choice with Uncle Mac, Family Favourites and various others.



Insects were represented by *'You're so sweet horseflies keep hangin' round your face'* showing a different side of Neil Diamond. This definitely had everyone laughing with one member adding that they had been bitten by one the previous day – after all it was horse-fly season!

More dogs, tame and wild cats, birds, rodents, reptiles and sea creatures followed – sadly too many to list here but I am sure you have got the picture. Summed up by one of the members as "A very eclectic, enjoyable and entertaining trip down memory lane of mainly popular music around the theme."

## August – The Mediterranean

Composed by award winning Debbie Wiseman *'The Traveller'* was a good choice to start us on our trip around the Med. I listened while watching a host of sparrows in the hedge outside performing a perfectly timed ballet to the music.

We then cruised from *'Southampton'* the appropriately named film track from 'The Titanic' before docking in Malaga to hear Marisa Robles' brilliant rendition of the first movement of *'Concerto de Aranjuez'* arranged for the harp – 10/10 in my book. In contrast *'The Road to Morocco'* sung by Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and Dorothy Lamour moved us on to Libya to Purcell's extremely sad *'Dido's Lament'* by arranger Michael Kamen for the TV series 'Band of Brothers'.

Before the interval we visited Alexandria to *'Walk like an Egyptian'*, Jordan accompanied by *'Laurence of Arabia'* and Athens with *'Zorba the Greek'* by guitarist Kosta Papadopoulos.

After the tea break we attended a *'Yugoslav Wedding'* from Cliff's 1963 film 'Summer Holiday'; went to Naples to hear *'Volare'* by the Gypsy Kings and on with Ottorino Respighi to his *'Pines of Rome'*, then to Paris to the tune of Michael Nyman's composition for the inauguration of the TGV railway line in 1993. We relaxed with an *'An Afternoon in Paris'* played by Stéphane Grappelli. Elgar's *'Cockaigne'* took us back to London with Taylor Swift and a *'London Boy'* ending our tour.

## September – When I was a Lad

The title *'When I was a Lad'* conjured up a vision of a steep hill, cloth cap and bicycle but the music was far from tranquil. It was, of course, the song from 'HMS Pinafore' by Gilbert & Sullivan that opened this month's presentation.

It was followed by Peter Sellers's version of *'Hard Day's Night'*, Simon & Garfunkel's *'Sound of Silence'*, *Top of the World* by the Carpenters and the incredibly clever and funny *'The Gas Man Cometh'* from Flanders & Swann while Elton John thought *'It's a Little Bit Funny.'*

Then we got heavy with *'10538 Overture'* by ELO plus multi-instrumentalists Roy Wood & Jeff Lynne, Deep Purple and two from Pink Floyd before the interval. The second half offered listeners tracks from David Bowie, The Strawbs, Genesis, Ravi Shankar, a very sad *'So Far Away'* by Carole King, an equally moving *'I'm not in Love'* from 10cc and Queen's *'Mama'*. Fred Wedlock's *'The Vicar & The Frog'* sent us home laughing aloud – if you don't know it do have a look on YouTube.

## LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

It seemed we had waited a very long time for our only talk this quarter but it was certainly worth it.




On 17th September Ruby returned as our guest speaker bringing with her tales from one of the most haunted public houses in the UK.

The Haunch of Venison is an iconic English pub which has stood for centuries in the heart of Salisbury, opposite the Poultry Cross, on the edge of the city's chartered market, and neighbouring the graveyard of St Thomas's Church.



But how many people know its history? For whom was the building erected? Who owned it? Who lived there? Who worked there? And who drank there?

What happened to the real severed hand? Did Churchill visit the pub? Who were some of the celebrities who have frequented it over the years? And do ghosts really exist?

With the wealth of knowledge gained from detailed and lengthy research Ruby was able to convincingly answer these and our own questions. This fascinating talk was presented in her usual relaxed style and beautifully illustrated by many of her own photographs.



But what about those ghosts? Eyewitness accounts from customers and staff of the Haunch of Venison are certain that they can exist! Why not visit or stay overnight to test it for yourself? Or, if that is too spooky an idea, buy her book to read all about it.

## WALKING4EXERCISE

Some hardy members of the group continued with our walks during the glorious hot summer.

Our recent outings have started from Upavon, Wootton Rivers, Great Bedwyn and East Grafton. We tried to incorporate shade and waterside paths to keep us cooler. There were two shocking moments in the last couple of months. The first was a very near miss from a flying golf ball at the back of Upavon Golf Course. The second unsettling discovery was to find at least 100 ducks in Bedwyn Braille near a pond that was almost completely dried up. The ducks were not pleased to see us and it was upsetting to see them.

Nothing exceptional to report on other walks, just the usual gorgeous countryside and good company. We are so lucky!

## DOG WALKING

Yes the Dog Walking group is back after a weather imposed summer break!



September has seen the group re-emerge and enjoy two walks, the first across the field off Ball Road and today's a slightly longer walk, passing the fire station to see the commemorative bench and plaque that were unveiled this morning in a special ceremony.



The dappled shade of Scotchel nature reserve was welcome after the hot bright sunlight of North Street, following the path up to Knowle, passing Buckleaze Mill then following the canal path down to the bridge where our dogs can have a drink and paddle before making our way back along Hollybush Lane and so back down to the High Street.

Today there were four of us with our dogs. We are a friendly group who enjoy having company. Our group size varies; we meet on the first and third Monday afternoon walking for just over an hour.

## AVEBURY SCULPTURE EXHIBITION



Not a group outing, but four of us went the other day. The gardens are looking lovely and there is an extensive variety of sculpture and even some paintings, which might appeal to you. Especially if you're a National Trust member and can get in free!







## WALKING 9 TO 12

Well, we made it to Christchurch, completing the Avon Valley Path. Combined with the Pewsey Avon Trail that was some 67.3 miles but only in bite size chunks, thank you Colin.

Since our long walk, we have been walking more locally. A nice dry and sunny Pewsey Vale peak to peak in August, Pewsey Hill to Oare Hill and the valley in between, 10.5 miles.

*Ian*

# PRACTICAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

Regular readers of our reports may recall that we meet each month to review photos relating to the previous month's topic.

Members had uploaded 63 images covering an incredible number of different activities some of which were being performed by street and shop traders, farmers, gardeners and groundsmen; mechanics, tour guides and street entertainers, soldiers, a charming waiter and more than enough builders featuring tons, or should that be miles, of scaffolding.

## August – Your Choice



The best way to explain the nature of this topic is to quote our instructions "*to be unfettered by the idea of themes and take some photos of your own interests and activities.*"

The result was an extremely interesting and varied collection featuring vintage cars, aeroplanes, birds, butterflies, portraits, graffiti, days out and a few photos illustrating a member's interest in art, music, general and family history. A topic that certainly revealed more than just our photography skills!

## September - Bridges

One really cannot go anywhere without seeing a bridge which is why the images this month were taken from a range of locations both near and far.



Being closer to home Pewsey and the canal, Netheravon, Crofton and Bedwyn, Hungerford and Lacock proved popular, with the addition of images from North Newnton, Manningford, Amesbury and Salisbury.

Holiday destinations such as London, the Midlands and North of England, Norwich, Conwy in Wales, the Isle of Man and Brittany, provided many of the 76 photos taken.

A train with 'Heidelberg' painted on the side was a red herring – it was in fact an advertisement for a multinational building materials company and photographed in Hungerford - the train was travelling over a bridge of course.

Having an album for each month of the year there is always plenty for you to see and hopefully admire in our gallery on the PVu3a website.

## BIRDWATCHING

I have been a little repetitive but I think justified, visiting Blashford Lakes, Langford Lakes followed by you guessed it - Blashford Lakes. We have been treated to some rapid Kingfisher fly pasts, glimpses of Marsh Harrier and Hobbies, and a delightful Little Ringed Plover chick. Blashford Lakes did come up trumps, but not what I expected, a Common Tern performing close to the hide and spinning to shake the water off after a dive.

For Autumn I will try to find some interesting waterfowl. Let me know if you would like to come along.

More pictures at u3a Slickpics Birdwatching Album

*Ian*







## GARDENING



It's been too hot, too dry and just not conducive to gardening. So I decided on a bit of a makeover and invited the group over to view the results, but unfortunately the tree surgery overran - so the big reveal will have to wait. I did learn two new words to me and not perhaps what you are thinking. "Cords" the bit of timber you want kept for firewood, and "Chunking" the rather long winded approach of removing tree branches in bit size pieces, thus eliminating the risk of damage to the greenhouse and fruit trees



*Ian*

## 789 WALKING GROUP



So July was just too hot, August everyone was either on their holidays or otherwise engaged. But we did get a good walk in September, Sue organised a walk from Seend across the fields to Devizes and then back along the canal via the Caen Hill Locks 9 miles to the Three Magpies for a well deserved lunch.

We also learnt a new word "Gongoozling". The definition is claimed to be: "The leisurely activity of standing or sitting and staring at canal boats and activities on waterways for pleasure".

*Ian*

## CARD GROUP

'Flight', was the topic for September's card making. See photos below.




October's meeting will be at 'Busy Hands' Weyhill. November's meeting will be getting ready for Christmas. December's card making will be catching up with those celebration cards for the New Year,

We as a group are always thinking ahead for new ways to decorate our cards. We have found many outlets of card materials difficult to come by due to companies closing down.

The cost of posting a card against e-mailing good wishes, comes into question.

Our thoughts: how lovely to open a card on your special day, so for our group we have fun trying to plan that very important task of getting that card just right for the receiver

## 567 WALKING GROUP



Many walkers have been away or not wanted to walk far during the very hot weather. Nevertheless some of us have been out and about with plenty of drinking water and pub visits! Walking in the woods from Great Wishford, along the River Kennet from Mildenhall, beside the Kennet and Avon Canal from Kintbury and through countryside south of Marlborough.

Now that the temperatures are cooler there will be more of us out and about again looking forward to autumnal colours. Urchfont and Hackpen Hill are already on our to-do list. You are very welcome to come along.

## BOOK GROUP 1

Ben Macintyre's writing held us spellbound. Agent Sonya was an exceptional read. Non-fiction spy tales beat any fiction. Agent Sonya, a Soviet spymaster, led a remarkable life from post WW1 Weimar Republic to the fall of the Berlin Wall. She was a housewife with three children feeding the Russians our secrets including our advances in nuclear weaponry. She was never betrayed by her colleagues. She had many lovers, worked in Poland, China and Germany.

*Ann*

## ART GROUP

The Art Group continues to meet twice a month in Manningford Village Hall, which is perfect for the group.



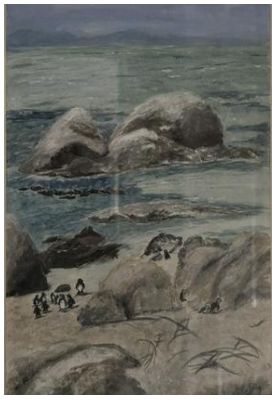
We are lucky to have a founder member of the UK Coloured Pencil Society living nearby and we spent a very interesting afternoon with Pat at our meeting at the end of August. We were amazed at the complexities of using coloured pencils in this way and the stunning pieces of work that Pat brought along to show us.

The exhibition Pat and her group of fellow coloured pencil enthusiasts currently have in the Wiltshire Museum Devizes is astounding. Having learned some of the simple techniques, Pat will be coming back to spend another afternoon with the group for another session in a few weeks.

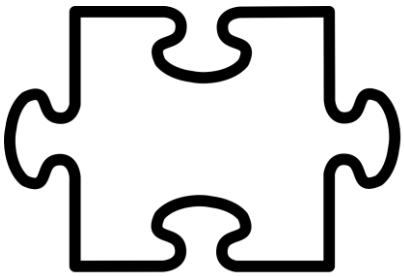
Meanwhile group members have continued to work on their own pieces of work and also sharing with the group any ideas they have come across from other courses or groups they have attended.







## FREE JIGSAW PUZZLE SWAP



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

- 13th and 20th October
- 10th and 24th November,
- 8th and 22nd December
- 12th and 26th January

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

## COUNTRY DANCING

Country Dancing is on the second and fourth Tuesday afternoon each month.



Several people took up the invitation to visit Country Dancing group over the summer and a few of those have now joined the group. Our numbers have remained over 20 at each session which means that we can dance most of our dances. However there's room for a few more participants so do come along to give it a try. No previous experience is needed. The dancers pay £2 per session.

Spectators are also welcome. If you would like to watch us dance and have a chat and a tea or coffee you are welcome to come to the Bouverie Hall and pay £1 for your drink. Please let me know if you are coming.

## BOOK GROUP 2

We've been busy over the past 6 months reading a variety of book titles every month. Our group remains committed and enthusiastic, as we use the superb services of Wiltshire Libraries to source our monthly reads. We are so lucky to have an excellent library in Pewsey, which is staffed by very helpful and friendly librarians and volunteers.

Back in the Spring, we read "Small Pleasures" by Clare Chambers, a book we all enjoyed. Set in the 1950s, Clare creates the story of a female character living in and around South East London with a mundane life, which changes when she investigates the story of a woman who claimed to have a virgin birth. Jean, the main character finds herself entwined in complex relationships with the woman, her husband and their daughter. An excellent book which was long listed for the Women's Prize for Fiction.

Within a few months, we read Clare Chambers' latest book "Shy Creatures". Clare gave a fascinating talk and Q & A at Devizes Library, where she spoke firsthand about "Shy Creatures", explaining her ideas in bringing the many intriguing threads of her story together. Another story which was interwoven with many interesting and strong characters.

Another repeat author, this time, Kristin Hannah, who has become a very popular author in recent years. We read "The Four Winds", the hard-hitting story of a woman's life and survival in the 1930s Depression in the American Dust Bowl area. The author describes the details of the living conditions, drought and unequal society which existed then, where the poor were kept in their place, with little chance to change their life scripts.

We chose a non-fiction book, for a change, "Politics on the Edge" by Rory Stewart. An account of his time as a politician in various parts of the country in varying roles, with insight in the inner workings of the English parliamentary world.

*Jo*

## PATCHWORK GROUP



The 1st photo is of an Advent calendar in the making; these come already printed on the fabric with the little pockets in a strip along one side ready to cut and attach in the right place, they are all numbered ready to fill with sweets etc.

2nd is a snakes and ladders quilt for a bed lined with wadding and quilted.

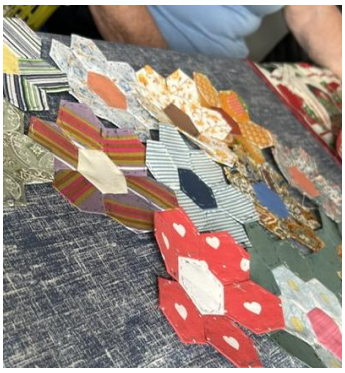


3rd is a quilt for a little boy showing vans made up of several pieces of fabric for each vehicle on individual squares all hand stitched together it is lined and interlined.



4th this is bed quilt made from hexagons; these were given to our group

and have been beautifully put together to make this amazing quilt.



5th Here are another selection of smaller hexagon pieces again these were given to our group, as you see these have been partly put together but the overall design has not yet been decided.



And lastly here's a patchwork dog made of leftover squares.



Three of my Patchwork Ladies are starting a dressmaking group and we wish them all the best with this new venture.

*Margaret*

## TRAVELLERS TALES

No expense is spared when this Group of intrepid travellers meet each month! After our summer break when members probably did physically travel to foreign parts, our meetings cost nothing other than the price of a cup of coffee as we listen to them recounting trips they have made for business or holidays and we get to know such a lot about many different parts of the world.

Our September meeting however didn't involve foreign travel as our speaker took us back to Brick Lane in London – a reminder of the salt beef bagels one can buy there made us all feel quite famished! We have a full programme for 2026 and going into the New Year, covering such destinations as Belize, North Australia and Canada. We meet on the first Tuesday morning of the month at Easton Royal Village Hall at 10.30am.

## MILITARY HISTORY

Just like many students our members of the Military History Group enjoyed a break from studies and presentations in the summer, and we resumed our activities in September with a fast and furious talk by an old friend Paul, whose days in the RAF saw him "Operating at Range" and telling us about such hair raising exploits as In Flight Refuelling en route to the Falklands. We have quite a few members who had a career in aviation and were familiar with Paul's details and terminology, but to us "lesser mortals" it was exciting but frightening at times learning of the details of all these operations and the duties of aviators like him.

We have a very varied programme ahead for the rest of the year, starting in October with Bill reminding us of his talk several years ago about the contribution of the Nuffield organization (Morris Motors) during WW2 with some additions about the activities at South Marston. Jumping back into even earlier history, we shall be hearing about the Battle of Agincourt in November and the Crimean War in December, so we certainly have themes with plenty of variety!

In addition, in mid October we have a unique tour arranged at the REME Museum at Lyneham to visit the Reserve Vehicle Collection, an opportunity to see the work going on to preserve and repair the recovery vehicles and to examine closely their valuable history.

If you would like to join this popular Military History Group you would be welcome to join us on the first Monday morning of each month at 10.30am at Easton Royal Village Hall.

## LET'S TALK GARDENING

I joined the gardening group in March this year. I have never been into gardening but needed to learn how to look after and manage my garden.

It is a real learning curve with the other members of the group willing to share their tips and advice. This has been invaluable as there is so much to learn. I have even borrowed gardening books from the library and started visiting garden centres more often!

One of the leader's projects during the summer was for us to visit and appreciate each other's gardens to see how different they are. They were all unique in terms of size, trees, shrubs, and flowers.

The extremely hot weather meant that certain plants had suffered, and the lawns looked very dry.

Joining this u3a group has helped me appreciate my own garden and how to look after it and more importantly enjoy it. It certainly gave me ideas to work on for next year.

# ROCK AND POP PLAYLIST

Our group has been meeting each month and sharing our music tastes from many different topics. We always find something new to share with each other and it has brought a wealth of knowledge and preferences to listen to and explore further.

We recently shared our choices of *"Summer time"* songs and lyrics, some of which included:

*San Francisco*, Scott McKenzie. *Rockaway Beach*, The Ramones. *The Sea*, Morcheeba. *Sloop John B*, The Beach Boys. *Summer Breeze*, The Isley Brothers and also the original by Seals and Croft.

Another theme was *"Political and Protest"* songs, singers and bands.

Having just returned from exploring some of the Balkan countries, I visited Bosnia/Herzegovina. My choice was the powerful song and video by Bono, The Edge and Pavarotti *"Miss Sarajevo"*. The poignant opening lyrics. … "Is there a time to keep your distance, A time to turn your eyes away?"

Other songs and artists included:

*Talking about a Revolution*, Tracy Chapman. *Trapped*, Bruce Springsteen. *Big Yellow Taxi*, Joni Mitchell. *Long Road out of Eden*, The Eagles.

We talked about artists who were often renowned for their political and social statements like, The Jam, Paul Weller, Billy Bragg, The Specials, Nina Simone, Sam Cooke, Bob Dylan, Woodie Guthrie, Pete Seeger and current music, like Public Enemy and Kendrick Lamar.

u3a learn, laugh, live