



Pewsey Vale u3a

NEWSLETTER

Issue 59

April 2023

Message from the Chair

Dear Members

Can you believe it - we are now into April and can hopefully look forward to much drier weather and some sunshine? I know I could do with it, never mind my poor garden, it has suffered a bit this winter.

A big welcome to our new members, please do make yourselves known to the committee at one of our next events. We are a friendly bunch, as are all our members. Andrew and I only moved into the village about 4 years ago and have found many new friends through the u3a!

I have enjoyed the last hour or so reading through all the Group Leader reports about what has been going on since Christmas. I cannot express how proud I am of leading such an active and diverse u3a. I have had a couple of Zoom meetings with the Chairs from Wiltshire and Bath Network and with HQ and we certainly seem to be as busy as some of the bigger town groups. Even more groups are in development, and I wish them well.

It is a momentous year with the Coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla next month. Don't forget to book your place with Jean Rickard at our Hog Roast on Friday 5th May when we will be starting the celebratory weekend off with a cheer or two. Then later in the year in August we can reflect on that weekend at our afternoon tea; maybe some of you will be able to enlighten us to the differences between this occasion and that of Queen Elizabeth. That would be very interesting.

Looking forward to meeting more of you during the summer

Take care and keep smiling.

Fiona Cook

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.



Your diary page

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

January 2023	Tuesday 17 th	Social Meeting with Andrew Cook
February 2023		
March 2023	Wednesday 1 st Tuesday 21 st	Mystery Dinner Social Meeting with Bernard Lockett on The Heritage of Gilbert and Sullivan
April 2023	Friday 7 th , Monday 10 th Friday 21 st	Easter CHINES Calne
May 2023	Monday 1 st Friday 5 th Monday 8 th Tuesday 16 th Friday 26 th Monday 29 th	Bank Holiday Hog Roast dinner Coronation Bank Holiday Social Meeting with Brian Freeland on 50 Years of Seaside Entertainment CHINES Malmesbury Bank Holiday
June 2023	Friday 9 th	CHINES Salthrop House
July 2023	Thursday 6 th Tuesday 18 th	CHINES Wilton Social Meeting with speaker to be announced
August 2023	Thursday 3 rd Friday 4 th Monday 28 th	Afternoon tea party CHINES Winchester Bank Holiday
September 2023	Friday 8 th TBC	CHINES Living Rainforest
October 2023	Monday 9 th Tuesday 17 th	Cheese and Wine evening Social Meeting with speaker to be announced
November 2023	Tuesday 21 st Friday 24 th	Annual General Meeting followed by Social Meeting with speaker to be announced Quiz and BYO supper
December 2023		

OUR MYSTERY DINNER



Huge thanks to Jean for organizing our Mystery Dinner to the Horseshoe Inn, between Salisbury and Shaftesbury. Goodness knows how you managed to find it, Jean, but it was a brilliant choice. Tony, Pat and Jayne made us feel so welcome and served us a wonderful meal.



There were (I think) 28 of us and we were driven there by coach through dark country lanes until most of us hadn't a clue where we were! On the way, we speculated where we might be going, from Blandford Forum to Shaftesbury, or perhaps a burger van at the Salisbury Park and Ride, but nobody came near to guessing our true destination.

If you missed out on this trip, let that be a lesson to you - come with us next time.

GILBERT AND SULLIVAN AT THE MARCH SOCIAL MEETING

I am sure those of you who attended our meeting would agree that it was fascinating. Bernard Lockett our speaker was excellent and very knowledgeable. I learnt a lot about Gilbert and Sullivan.

Bernard has kindly sent on some details about the Gilbert and Sullivan festivals and where one may find some excellent excerpts from their shows which you can enjoy at your leisure. Please find below a link to G&S show Excerpts from G&S Opera TV, and the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festivals.

<https://gsopera.tv/programs/introducing-gsoperatv>

Performances are by the National Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company and filmed at the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival - www.gsfestivals.org



You will enjoy excerpts from;

- The Gondoliers - 2019
- The Mikado - 2019
- The Pirates of Penzance - 2019
- The Yeomen of the Guard - 2019.
- HMS Pinafore - 2017.
- The Grand Duke - 2012
- and the song, "Tit Willow" from the Mikado.

A full range of G&S shows are available to see from the G&S Opera TV Subscription Streaming Service - see: www.gsopera.tv - a range of subscriptions available from £9.99 per month.

He hopes you will enjoy these.

Fiona

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS



Hello and welcome to those of you who have joined Pewsey Vale u3a since the beginning of the year. We hope we haven't missed anyone out - if we have, please accept our apologies and claim your free grovel from the editor.

Roy Barry
Ian Burch
Christine Cann
Sheila Chaplin
Susan Cosgrove
Malcolm Exeter

Ruth Hopkins
Keith Jones
Zeena Keast
Pamela L'Heureux
Carole Noon
Margaret Slater

John Spencer-Peet
Jeanette Therrien
Geraldine Warren
Stephen Warren
John Yelland

We know it can be daunting to walk into a room full of strangers and we do our best not to leave you sitting alone at our meetings. When you arrive at Social Meetings, we'll check you in on the register and introduce you to a friendly face or two who will soon become a familiar face or two. And at meetings of the various groups, the Group Leader will make sure you're not left stranded.

And don't be backwards in coming forwards. u3as are run by members for members and we need every pair of hands we can get to make ours as lively and successful as possible. It doesn't matter whether you've been a member for years or have just joined: your contribution is valued. It could be anything from joining the committee, starting a new group, making teas at a meeting, helping set out furniture, or doing anything else that needs doing. We all have skills gained from professional and/or family experience: don't let them go to waste.

A NAG ON BEHALF OF THE GROUPS

Where would this newsletter be without my regular nagging session on the topic of ***Be Kind to Your Group Leaders?***

We've probably all done it: joined a group and then found that Life Has Got In The Way and we don't have time to come to the meetings. And, as you know, several of our groups are full and we're sadly having to say to anyone enquiring, sorry but we can't squeeze you in at the moment. As Group Leaders, we're reluctant to boot anyone off our lists so, if you're holding a place in a group that's fully subscribed and you don't attend very often, it would be very kind if you would step back so that someone else can take your place.

Juggling meeting numbers can be a fine art. We, as leaders, have to commit to being at our meetings (unless someone deputizes for us) and it makes our lives a lot easier if our members tell us beforehand whether or not they are planning to come. As you know, some groups have to stay small by the nature of what they do - can you imagine a dozen or more people all trying to talk at once at a discussion session? - not to mention the physical limitations of how many people we can fit into a room. Of course, the larger groups don't have the same constraints and have the luxury of being able to welcome any number of members, although it's nice for them too if we tell them when we can't come to a meeting.

Thank you and end of nag.

Joanna (as Group Leader Co-ordinator)

ART GROUP

Due to rising hall costs the group has changed venue and we now meet in Manningford Village Hall twice each month.

2023 has seen a bumper rise in numbers for the group and we have lots of new members. We now have people working in watercolour, acrylics, oil paints, pastels, drawing and collage with some excellent input from all members old and new - some of the work from the group is included in the Newsletter to give you some idea of the versatility and talents of the group.

We are an open and friendly group with no rules on levels of ability - we welcome new members with little or no experience since their school days! - just a wish to enjoy being creative and enjoying art.

The group has currently reached full capacity of the hall but if you fancy giving art a try do let us know and we'll put you on our waiting list.

Bob and Ann Smith

You will see pictures from this amazingly talented group throughout the pages of this newsletter (Ed).

MAHJONG FOR BEGINNERS **NEW GROUP!**



Mahjong is a tile-based game that was developed in the 19th century in China and has spread throughout the world since the early 20th century. Using a set of 144 ornate and very attractive painted tiles, four players are seated around a square table signifying the four directions North, East, South, West. (With a slight variation a group of three can also play).

It's a compelling game, with a mix of skill and luck. Similar to the Western card game of rummy, it's easy to learn, contrary to popular belief, but as in all games, the more one plays the more one realises how much there is to learn.

This new group offers a friendly, social atmosphere to welcome beginners and anyone who has played before in the past and would now like to re-learn. No prior knowledge is required. Please come along to enjoy learning the game within a relaxed environment.

Develop skills such as observation and memory. Once you've learnt the rules, your skills will progress into strategic and tactical play!

The group meets on the 4th Monday of the month from 10.30-12.30 in Burbage.

For further details:- please send a message to the Group Leader - Ginny Carnighan



CHINES

At the time of writing, we're planning our events for this year. CH(urches), IN((ns) and ES(tates) is a group which goes exploring, around once a month from (generally) April till September. See diary page.

Outings are organized by members in turn. Would you like to arrange one, with my help? Do get in touch if you can be persuaded. It's very enjoyable.



When a CHINES trip is coming up, I let the membership know and ask for bookings. Please be aware that, in many cases such as guided walking tours, the number of places is limited so you have to book fast. It's first come first served. You have been warned!

Just to recapitulate:

- There are costs involved, eg for a guide and/or entry to a venue, for refreshments and lunch, perhaps parking.
- We do not provide transport. You have to get yourselves there and back. Car sharing is actively encouraged and we can help get you together if necessary. We do ask passengers to share the drivers' costs too, either in cash, perhaps by buying their coffee or by giving them a lift on another occasion, as appropriate.
- We are on our feet, walking or standing, for most of the visit. The odd seat may be available briefly during a visit or tour, but don't count on it.

BOOKING NOW

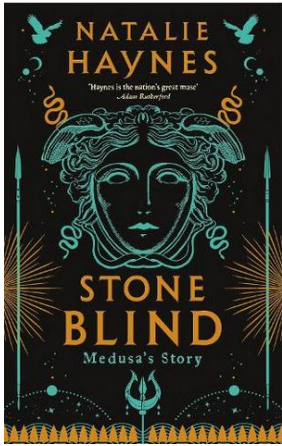
Our CHINES season starts with a guided walking tour of Calne with local historian Nick Baxter on Friday April 21st. Some of you have walked with Nick in Marlborough and Devizes and know what a lively and informative speaker he is. The tour is entitled **In the Footsteps of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: what Calne was like two hundred years ago** - see more info below and Nick's web site <https://wiltshirehistoryman.org.uk/my-walks>

The cost of the tour is £6 per head, plus coffee at the start of the walk and lunch afterwards. Places are limited so you need to book quickly to secure a place. Please email me to book and/or for more details of the day.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the great Romantic poet, lived in Calne with his friends in a rented house from November 1814 to March 1816 whilst recovering from a laudanum-induced mental breakdown. He wrote his life work, the "Biographia Literaria", and had his play, "Remorse", performed here. Coleridge would have known St Mary's church; the Lansdowne Coaching Inn, then known as "The Wheel"; the Bentley Free School; the canal wharf; and the sites of the old town hall, the town mill and millpond, the wooden bridge over the River Marden, and Thomas Bishop's druggists where Coleridge obtained his laudanum.

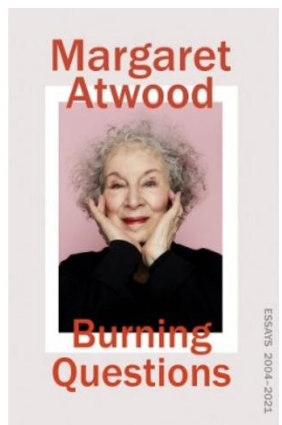
Coleridge benefitted greatly from living in Calne and drew inspiration from it and the surrounding area. St Mary's church reminded Coleridge of his childhood in Ottery St Mary, Devon. The walk starts at the Lansdowne Hotel (SN11 0EH) and ends at the Pig Sculpture in Phelps Parade (SN11 0HA). The length of the walk is approximately 0.75 of a mile. We estimate it will take at least an hour and a half.

WHAT ARE YOU READING?



This time I have for you two books I wouldn't have expected to enjoy so much, but both are so beautifully written and know exactly how to talk to YOU, ME, THE READER by addressing us directly.

Stone Blind by **Natalie Haynes** is the story of Medusa, the Gorgon. Not, you would think, a very jolly topic what with lots of rapes and slayings and general spitefulness among the gods. But actually it's a warm and rather charming story about a young mortal who gets caught in the crossfire of all this nastiness, and her two immortal sisters who try to protect her.



I've also read a collection of **Margaret Atwood's** essays, **Burning Questions**. I don't usually quote book blurbs but this says it better than I can:

"From cultural icon Margaret Atwood comes a brilliant collection of essays -- funny, erudite, endlessly curious, uncannily prescient - which seek answers to Burning Questions such as:

Why do people everywhere, in all cultures, tell stories?

How much of yourself can you give away without evaporating?

How can we live on our planet?

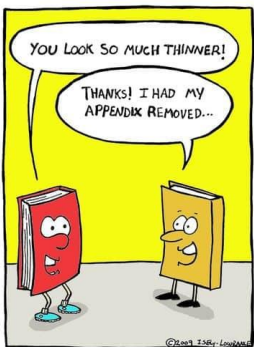
Is it true? And is it fair?

What do zombies have to do with authoritarianism?

In over fifty pieces Atwood aims her prodigious intellect and impish humour at the world, and reports back to us on what she finds. This roller-coaster period brought the end of history, a financial crash, the rise of Trump and a pandemic. From debt to tech, the climate crisis to freedom; from when to dispense advice to the young (answer: only when asked) to how to define granola, we have no better guide to the many and varied mysteries of our universe."

Joanna Goulson

PS Did you know that Josephine Tey used apostrophe's incorrectly? I'm shocked!



SHORT MAT BOWLS

In case anyone else is confused about when the groups meet, Tony explains:

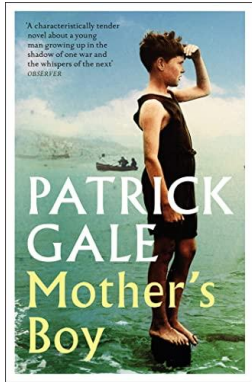
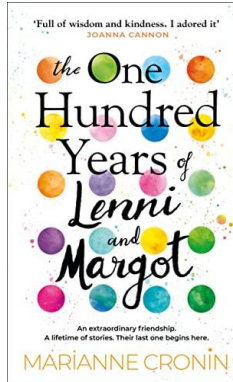
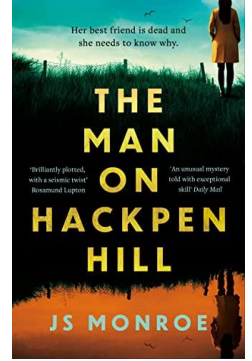
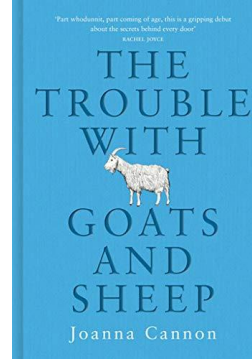
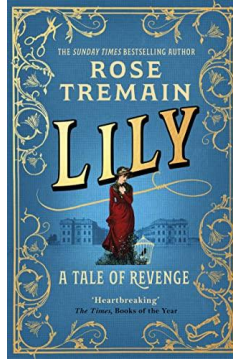
- Short Mat Bowls (Pewsey) continues at the Leisure Centre on Mondays between 2.25 and 4.15pm.
- Short Mat Bowls (Upavon) has its last Thursday meeting of the season on April 6th and then reconvenes on October 5th.
- Short Mat Bowls (Upavon) continues at the Village Hall on Fridays between 1 and 3pm.

Group Leader Tony Gallagher



1ST BOOK GROUP

Book club one have so much fun,
On Tuesday mornings meet
Once a month for a treat.
Knowing the plot, discussing the style,
Commenting on this and that for a while,
Literary styles, character sorts
Unless a biography of course.
Book club one is such fun.



Books read:

- 🚦 Lily Rose Tremain
- 🚦 The Trouble with Goats and Sheep Joanna Cannon
- 🚦 The Man on Hackpen Hill JS Monroe
- 🚦 100 years of Lenni and Margot Marianne Cronin
- 🚦 The Railway Man Eric Lomax
- 🚦 Mother's Boy Patrick Gale

Group Leader Ann Saxton

BRIDGE AND MAHJONG GROUPS

Pam says "I'd like to thank both the Bridge Group and Mahjong Group for making such a happy, relaxed group. I am not a teacher: the idea is to have fun while playing and to discuss and improve. I could squeeze some more in if anyone wants to join."

Group Leader Pam Tuxford



Michael's Hawk Experience

KNITTING AND CROCHET GROUP

Some members of the U3A Knitting group have been knitting warm clothes for Home Start North Wiltshire. The families are in the Tidworth area, many of whom are those of service men and women.



The group also knits for the Mission for Seafarers. The life of seafarers can be far from idyllic, with many international seafarers regularly completing long term voyages which leave them isolated from friends, family and loved ones for up to nine months at a time. For others it is a career of choice which enables them to provide a better life for their families at home and is worth the sacrifice of time away from them. We knit hats and scarves which are distributed by missionaries around the world.

*To contribute and for more information contact
Jean Rickard*

TABLE TENNIS GROUP

Phyllis Jennings writes "It is now 7 years since I started this group and I feel that the time has come to pass on the reins to someone else. Simon LeMarechal has agreed to take over and I have passed the register and account to him. I would like to thank you for your support over the last 7 years."

Our thanks to Phyllis and to Simon for picking up where Phyllis has left off. This lively group which caters to all levels of ability meets every Wednesday at the Pewsey Campus from 2:00-4:00pm.

JIGSAW SWAP

Jigsaw swap takes place at the Bouverie Hall between 2 and 4 o'clock on the second and fourth Tuesdays each month. Also at Social Meetings.

Most of the puzzles are 1000 pieces but there are a couple which have 500 pieces.

If you don't have a puzzle to swap at first, you are very welcome to borrow a puzzle from the collection and then swap it for another one when you have completed it. There is no charge.

Lynne Batsford



BOARD GAMES GROUP

The board games group held its first meeting in March at the Heritage Centre room. A variety of games were brought along and played. There was a lot of chatting and laughter as members taught each other new games and enjoyed playing them.

The group runs on Monday afternoons* between 2.30 and 4pm with a £2 cost to pay for the hire of the room and refreshments.

Please get in touch if you would like further information or to join the group.

Lynne Batsford

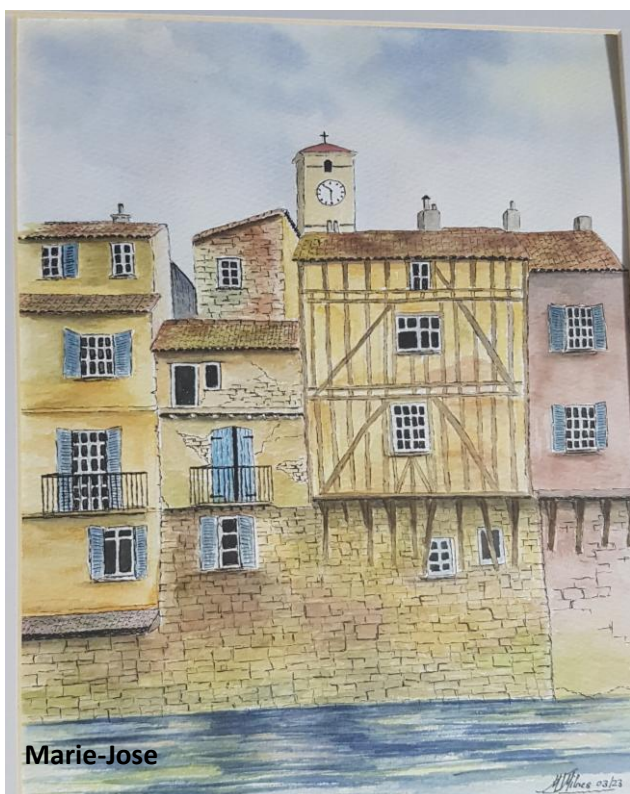
** That's usually the second Monday of the month unless it is a bank holiday, in which case the group meets a week later. (Ed)*

CARD GROUP

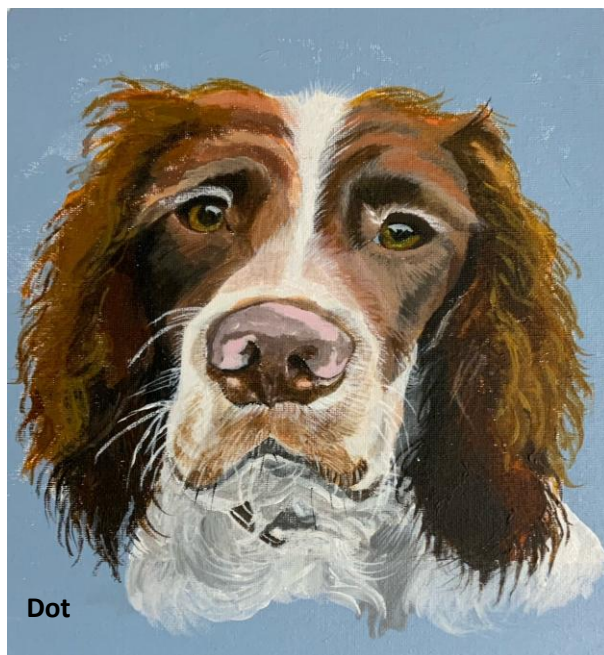


The card group meets once a month to make cards in various ways. We all learn from one another. Mostly we do our own thing, but if Julie (our leader) is not in a good mood, we do as we are told!

Jules Barrett on behalf of Julie and the team



Marie-Jose



Dot

GARDENING GROUP

The U3A gardening group continues to flourish and Spring is just round the corner where anticipation is very much part of the plan, so this is when we try to get on top of the design part.

Despite the wet, cold and miserable weather being useless for gardening, we took advantage of this fact and gathered indoors, warm and snug in a local conservatory and indulged in our belated but nonetheless enjoyable Christmas munch up - mince pies, stollen, sausage rolls and mulled wine if you wished!!! However, we did discuss gardens - not a lot to be said there except bulbs are beginning to push themselves through, how brave and how grateful we are to see them. Lizzie distributed two sunflower seeds per head with instructions to plant one in a pot indoors (soon I think) and the other one outdoors March time, both to germinate in due time and then see which one does best! They are giant single ones apparently and can grow to 6ft. We shall see and we were severely instructed that there must be no cheating, i.e., trotting down to the Garden Centre in the Spring - as if we would?!! Also, the usual swapping of ideas took place, solutions to problems etc. One of which will be ongoing until the end of the

season to get results and we will let you know via the newsletter then if it has any veracity. It is how to get rid of the dreaded ground elder, a menace for most of us. It is to plant turnips, yes turnips, because they apparently produce some by-product which does for ground elder! Who knew - watch this space and then perhaps we will!

This month we visited a garden very much at the before stage and it is great to see the plans and dreams that will hopefully be vested in that space



We meet up on the second Thursday morning from 10am so if you fancy coming along then give Lizzie Humfress a call.

DOG WALKING GROUP

Walkies or non walkies? What a winter of illness and misfortune! Both for owners and their loyal companions! From flu/Covid and thorns in paws to fractured fibula, torn ligament and ear infections, this sounds more like the non walking and the wounded!



To start we have enjoyed some lovely walks with good company. Numbers vary as needs must. Currently Josh is missing the company of his friends and looking forward to the time when She Who Must Be Obeyed is back on her two feet and able to take him on proper walkies again!

We meet on the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month at 2pm outside the dentists in the High Street Pewsey. We welcome new members. Our walks are around Pewsey unless anyone would like to share one closer to their home, as long as there is enough safe parking.

Margaret Blacker & Josh leaders

SINGING FOR PLEASURE

Well! Who knew how popular Singing For Pleasure was going to be?

The number of people turning up to sing, on a Friday morning, has continued to drift up. We are well north of 30 and have topped 40 several times. Which is just as well as the cost of our sessions is increasing, from £30 to £35, from 1st April, and has to be covered by money taken at the door.

I printed 50 of the nice new books, and so far, we always have sufficient copies. If numbers continue to increase, I can easily get more printed and the Bouverie Hall can accommodate many more people so there is no limitation in sight.

Of course, there are as many reasons for coming as there are people, but for myself I really look forward to the sessions and seeing the enjoyment they bring. It's a real boost to my week and I hope it is, too, for all those who join in to make the sessions such simple fun.

We meet on the second and fourth Fridays of the month at 10.30am.

Andy Vowles

TRAVELLERS TALES

We have only managed to fit in two "tales" so far this year, both maritime trips, yet 65 years apart!



The first was a visit to Greenland by inveterate travellers Ray and Rita Edwards. It is a country that is virtually one big rock, with hardly any wildlife or plant life, very few roads and certainly not a location for anyone seeking modern entertainment or nightlife! It was fascinating nevertheless and the photographs the Edwards had to show us were superb.

The second talk, by Robin Mackelden, covered his first and only voyage as a marine engineer on board the MS Houston City (built in 1942), when he left the UK for what turned out to be virtually nine months away from home, stopping off at the Panama Canal, thence on to Canada (where he managed to make contact with a family relation who showed him a lot of highlights he would never have seen on his own). Robin decided he was not cut out for that kind of life, interesting though the long trip had been, and so

he quit the ship upon returning home. The photos he had taken showed us a very young Robin and fascinating scenes of vessels as they were in the 1950's, and it was altogether something different and thoroughly enjoyable.

Our forthcoming Travellers Tale in April will be a presentation from our good friend Sonny Hamid, in fact a new version of a "tale" he has told us before about Brick Lane, and which was so much enjoyed he is back by public demand! This will be on Tuesday April 4th (usually the first Tuesday in each month), meeting at Easton Royal Village Hall at 10.00 am for a 10.30 am prompt start. If you would like to join us, you would be most welcome, and it would be an idea to initially contact *Bob Greateorex*

WALKING4EXERCISE



The Walking4exercise Group has experienced a range of weather conditions in our recent walks.

There was glorious sunshine in February when a good number of us walked across the Marlborough Downs near Beckhampton. Only ten hardy walkers trudged through the mud and rain near Everleigh in March. It was windy on Windmill Hill near Avebury and a mixture of drizzle and dry spells through Wilton and Bedwyn Brail.

Whatever the weather the company is always excellent!

If you would like to enjoy a lovely walk with a friendly bunch of people on Monday afternoons please get in touch. The only thing that cannot be guaranteed is the weather!

Lynne Batsford



QUIZ

- Q. When does Quiz Group meet?
A. On the second Monday of the month, from 4.30-6pm
- Q. Where do we meet?
A. At the Education Room of the Pewsey Heritage Centre.
- Q. What do we have to bring?
A. 10 Q&As, pen/cil and paper, £2, brain and sense of humour.
- Q. What do we do to come to a quiz?
A. Tell me! *Joanna Goulson*



See, that was easy, wasn't it? No competitive point scoring, just a bit of fun and digging around in our memories for things we know but may have forgotten!

MILITARY HISTORY

Apart from the rugby and golfing activities on Marlborough Common each week, most people would think of that location as quiet and peaceful. However, this is peace-time, and if you were old enough to have been alive during the early 1940's it was altogether a totally different environment, with casualties returning from France following D-Day being triaged and re-routed on to various specialty hospitals catering for the specific needs of the patients. It was a buzzing and vibrant place, teeming with people, many of them American and only passing through what was a very important hospital during the latter stages of the War.



The scenario for this and other aspects of Americans in Marlborough during the War was retold in graphic detail by Neil Stephens, a lifelong enthusiast of "What the Americans got up to in Marlborough during World War II". He had made great studies of their activities in and around the area and what he had to tell us was fascinating, a superb talk.

This was just one of the amazing Military History talks we have heard during the first three months of this year, and the other two were just as interesting, including Robert Bruce's history of events leading up to the conflict between Russia and

Ukraine, and his personal "take" on how things stand at the moment and how they might develop in the coming months. Plenty to think about....

Sandwiched in between these two talks we had an enlightening presentation of what goes on on the Salisbury Plain and other military ground in the way of archeology and how it can have therapeutic benefits to veterans who may be suffering from physical or mental traumas still.

We have such varied topics during the year, all of them attracting a large audience in the Easton Royal Village Hall - do come and join us on the first Monday of the month (though with a lot of Bank Holidays in the near future, dates can vary, so please check). We meet at 10.00 am for coffee and a social natter, getting underway at 10.30 am. We welcome newcomers, and if you would like to learn more, please contact *Bob Greateorex*

Photograph of 1940s Marlborough from The Merchant's House (Ed)



567 WALKING GROUP



There are so many surprises on the walks with the 567 walking group!

We have been sung to by one of our musical walkers standing on a stile, learnt historical facts about places visited, observed wonders of nature and discussed problems of all kinds with various solutions suggested.

Members of the group have also tried out lunches available in convenient pubs. We recommend The Pelican at Froxfield who took the group in unexpectedly when the venue we had booked closed due to a gas leak! A very jolly time was also had at The Crown Inn at Bishop Cannings.

If you would like to join us on Thursday mornings you would be most welcome.

Lynne Batsford



WINE TASTING AND APPRECIATION

Wine Group continues in its usual cheerful way, with members taking it in turns to choose and present the wines of the month. We've had meetings focused on a particular grape and/or country right through to very varied selections according to what looks interesting in the shops at the time.



Recently we've had an evening of New Zealand wines: all the whites Sauvignon Blanc and all the reds Pinot Noir. It's amazing what variety there is even in such a restricted range.

We also had a mixed bag (bottle, cask?) of wines from Castile, Greece, Sicily, Thailand, Moldova and India. I missed that meeting and oh how sorry I am that I didn't get to taste this selection.

As I said before, I am sorry that we're now so full (no, not like that!) that we can't welcome any more members into our group. We already run two consecutive sessions so I can't take on any more, but will be happy to help any member(s) who want to start an additional or similar group.

Joanna Goulson



Stephen



Stephen

WORDSMITHS

Do you like playing with words? Then you're probably a wordsmith. If you don't, then you're probably not even reading this!



Every month, our small and readily distracted group brings linguistic snippets to share. We have a theme but no rules about how that theme is to be tackled, so there is rarely any overlap of our contributions.

Coming up we have sayings gone wrong, plurals, royalty and more.

Our group is sort of fullish - and how's that for bad use of English - but as not everyone is able to come every month, we might be able to squeeze in one or two more enthusiasts.

(PS we meet in Upavon with dog(s) present).

Joanna Goulson

PATCHWORK



We welcomed Hazel to our group at the end of January when we also invited the owners of The Gnome Hut crafts shop from SSI House, Fordbrook Business Centre to bring along some of their wares which you see in the photos. We all had a most enjoyable afternoon and were encouraged to buy fabric and useful sundries to inspire us with our next projects.

We meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday 2-4pm at the Pewsey Heritage Centre Education Centre.

Margaret Blacker





John



Stephen



Bob



Stephen



Vicky



John



Marie-Jose

HISTORY OF TRANSPORT

The presentations in 2023 so far have had a distinct leaning towards trains, not because we have a good number of members who are avid train admirers, but it's just worked out that way! January's presentation by Ian Baxter showed us some of the new facades and re-furbished stations for which his company has been responsible. He also gave us a potted history of the GWR and some of his own thoughts about the current situation on the rail network and how things might transpire in the near future. Very interesting and thought provoking.

The February talk was altogether different, being given by the daughter and son-in-law of a recently deceased ex signalman who began to write his memoirs "From the Blitz to Beeching - the Memories of a Wiltshire Railwayman". Rachel Gough and her husband have now put these all together and compiled a small book, the highlights of which they showed us and told us about, again very interesting indeed.



Sonny Hamid, who has been a frequent presenter at our u3a Group meetings, returned in March to give us a talk about the History of the London Underground. I know he has done a great deal of research for this enlightening presentation. April's talk will not be about trains, but will cover transport by mules and camels, altogether rather different!

Our Group Meetings take place on the fourth Wednesday of each month, in the Education Room of the Pewsey Heritage Centre, meeting at 10.00 am for a coffee and natter before getting underway at 10.30 am. If you would like to join us, you would be very welcome, and it might be an idea to liaise with *Sue Greatorex*

COUNTRY DANCING

The Country Dancing group has been growing over the last few months and we now have 28 regular dancers each meeting. This means that we have been able to add different dances into our repertoire.

Dancers have delighted in learning new routines and have found much hilarity in all the mistakes that have been made while learning the steps.

One or two dances have been "filed" because they were too fast for our feet and brains to cope with! But I am pleased to say that Alabama Jubilee is **almost** perfect now!

The fun happens on Tuesday afternoons if you would like to come along to give it a try. It is an enjoyable workout with lots of laughter!

Lynne Batsford



CREATIVE WRITING GROUP 1

What do three naughty rabbits, a wobbly tooth, treasure hunting with a metal detector and flying white horses all have in common?

These were some of the imaginative and varied themes the Creative Writing group chose when we tried our hands writing stories for children. While everyone's work took different directions, we identified some common "ingredients" behind a good children's story:

- A strong rhythm
- Repetition of words or phrases
- An element of mystery or fantasy
- Creating a safe environment - and setting any scary events away from this space
- Absence of adult/ parental presence (think Hogwarts)
- Comforting, familiar details such as meals (lashings of ginger beer!)



Wendy's story contained many of these elements, with the added bonus of a strong Wiltshire setting.

WHITE HORSES

When Poppy looked out of her bedroom window, she could see the White Horse on the hill.

Yesterday Daddy had taken her all the way up the steep hill to see the horse. It was made of chalk and its eye was a big round tuft of grass. She walked along its back and down its straight legs and then sat on the green eye to eat her picnic lunch.

When she was back at home, Poppy looked out at the horse and felt sorry for it. It was always in the same place and it never moved. Real horses could gallop.

That night, Poppy could not sleep and she slipped out of bed, pulled back the curtains and there, on the hill, was the white horse shining in the moonlight.

Was it lonely? Poppy wondered.

She put on her dressing gown and slippers, crept downstairs and looked at the front door. She could just reach to turn the key, pull the handle down and open the door.

It took a long time to walk up the hill. When she got to the horse, it neighed a hello then started shaking and bending its legs. First it knelt on its front legs then pushed its back legs to help it stand up.

'Are you coming?' it asked Poppy. 'Just sit tight on my back and we'll be off.'

Poppy was a bit frightened when the horse started moving and held on tightly to its mane. When it started galloping, she started to giggle. As they went over the fields, it felt as though they were up in the air but horses can't fly, can they?

After a while, Poppy saw that her white horse was not the only one. As they passed Alton Barnes, another white horse joined them. Another started to gallop beside them at Marlborough and at Hackpen, then one more each at Broad Town, Cherhill and Devizes- each one easing itself up and away from the grass in its hill.

Poppy yawned. 'Where are we going?' she asked the horse.

'Not far now,' the horse whinnied. 'We are nearly to Westbury.' And it kicked up its back legs in excitement. Poppy nearly fell off.

At Westbury, the last horse joined in and then the horses formed a circle and galloped around as though they were dancing. Poppy tried to count them but they were going too fast. They all looked so happy.

'I'm really tired,' whispered Poppy to her new friend. 'I think I need to go home now'

'I know you are. Don't worry; we are going back to Pewsey now. We need to say goodbye to all the other horses.'

On the way back, one by one, the horses returned to their places on the hillside. Westbury, Devizes, Cherhill, Broad Town, Hackpen, Marlborough, Alton Barnes; each white horse broke off from the group, slowed down and nestled into its place before stretching out on its side and lying still, just as though it had never been on a night-time adventure.

Poppy waved goodbye to each of them, the Alton Barnes horse being the last one.

The Pewsey horse stopped galloping and slowed to a slow walk along the path by the canal. Poppy leaned forward onto its mane and rested her head. Her eyes closed and soon she was asleep.

When she woke up, Poppy called her mum, 'The White Horse! Where is the White Horse?'

'Well if you get out of bed and look out of the window, you will see that it is up on the hill, just as it always is'.

Poppy looked out and there was the White Horse, in the same place as usual but Poppy was sure that its legs, normally quite straight, were a little bit bent. And with the sun on his grassy eye, she was almost certain it was blinking.

Poppy said, 'Mummy, did you know, there are lots of White Horses? He's not the only one.'

'That's right. Perhaps Daddy will take you to see one of the others one day'.



We are a friendly, welcoming group who meet every second and fourth Wednesday to share the simple joy of writing. Each session usually involves sharing aloud our writing efforts, giving one another helpful (and invariably encouraging) feedback and trying our hand at different writing exercises designed to get the creative juices flowing. All fuelled with tea, laughter and lashings of home-made cake!

Fiona Napthine on behalf of the group leader Wendy Argent



CREATIVE WRITING GROUP 2

Being new to wondrous Pewsey, and widowed towards the end of the lockdowns, I threw myself into various groups of the u3a and even joined the Committee. I'd seen Creative Writing on the list and had wondered about it - at the back of my mind was a fear that I would fall way below the standard of the others in the group. Then one day I was chatting to Wendy Argent who runs the group and she commented she had a waiting list of eight people. I had a u3a committee light bulb moment: 'That's a new group'. A chat to lovely Joanna: 'Go for it'.

Wendy supplied the waiting list emails and in a dark and chilly January morning we had an initial meeting of the potential new group with Wendy there to guide the six of us (one apology). I had attended Wendy's group the day before so I had a slight idea of what went on. Everyone was eager to proceed and we decided on the third Wednesday, 2-4 pm each month, *chez moi*. We also set some 'ground rules', mostly relating to keeping to the point and avoiding rambling!

Our new group has now met three times, all seven of us submitting a 'challenge' by email on the Sunday before the meeting. These have been 'Where I Live', 'The Visit' to include some dialogue, and this week a piece from an animal's point of view. In addition we did a short piece about ourselves, similar to those found in any book about the author. We have also written a short piece in the second meeting. The results have been stunning. We limit the challenge to a maximum of two sides of A4, and have had poems as well as prose. We then discuss the challenges in the group.

At the meeting this week we finished with a discussion on how we felt the group was going. All very positive. We have a space or two available, so put your fears behind you and come and join this very friendly group - apply quickly! (They have critiqued this item for me!)

Leader Liz Whitebread

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP 2 (PG2)

Unlike those clever creatives in PPG, we just get together and go exploring with our cameras, phones and other visual recording devices. (How pompous does that sound!)



We have just been to the wonderful Boscombe Down Aviation Collection. In the next few months we're expecting to visit Drew's Pond in Devizes and Cholderton Rare Breeds Farm, among other places, and our outings inevitably include a stop somewhere for refreshments.

We try - and often fail - to stick to the fourth Friday of the month. Let me know if you'd like to join us.

Joanna Goulson

BIRDWATCHING GROUP

2023 has started well for the group with 31 species being seen at Blashford Lakes during our January visit there including large numbers of water birds including a Kingfisher. Dozens of Siskins were seen too.

In February we went to Langford Lakes and our tally was 30 different species. A very different mix to those seen in the previous month. A good collection of game birds, Pheasant, Red-legged Partridge, and a single Grey Partridge. It was very nice to see a Bullfinch again.



In March a group of us went to Sussex on our birdwatching holiday. The weather forecast was for a wet five days, but we were surprised to find that it only rained hard during the nights. On day one, we visited Burton and Chingford mill ponds with splendid views of Great Crested Grebes, before moving on to Warnham Millpond where we saw numerous birds including three Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Nuthatches, many garden birds and Herons re-building their heronry.

The weather on our second day was extremely windy, which strangely worked in our favour. During the morning we planned to visit Knepp Castle Estate primarily to see White Storks. With high winds the storks were grounded and were feeding in a very sheltered valley together with flocks of Redwings and Fieldfares. Green Woodpecker and a Jay also sheltering together with a female Mallard Duck with 8 ducklings. Another highlight was 2 Red Deer stags charging across the track in front of us, followed two minutes later by 6 hinds. A visit to RSPB Pulborough Brooks in the afternoon proved interesting with masses of ducks, a few geese and swans, Snipe, a magnificent Marsh Harrier and a Peregrine Falcon together with kill being pestered by 2 corvids. (See bottom photograph)



Our next day started at Pagham Harbour where unfortunately we experienced low tide. However, quite a number of waders were viewed including Avocets, Bar-tailed Godwits, Curlews and Dunlins. Our afternoon at Arundel included Stonechat, Chiffchaff and another of our target birds the Cattle Egret.



Our final full day was along the South Coast and another target bird, the Bewick Swan, was seen in fields at Burpham. Brooklands gave us a Little Grebe in fine colours, a Cetti's Warbler and a variety of Gulls including the Great Black-backed Gull.

Our final morning was spent looking for Hawfinches without success, leaving us with just a Goldcrest and Kestrel. The following day a flock of 40+ Hawfinches were seen where we had been, plus the first Wheatear sightings were reported from Pagham. A good four days with 77 species seen.

Photographs courtesy Keith Bew.

Group Leader: Peter Mander

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Bea Tilbrook's talk 'Tales from the Lych Gate' attracted a well-deserved full house in January. The names of forty-two servicemen appear on the war memorial at St John's church in Bemerton. Eleven of them who died during, or as a result of, active service in World War 1 had a connection to the nearby village of Quidhampton.

Following years of extensive research by Bea and her co-researcher into the family histories of all



forty-two men John Foster's story was the one told. Foster had served for 21 years in the Royal Marine Light Infantry, fought in the Boer war and was a member of the Transport Staff in Le Havre until his death in France in 1918.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the presentation which was both professional and moving. We also gained a new member! Bea told me later of her surprise at the end of the meeting to learn that no-one had recognised her co-researcher whose name she had mentioned a number of times! (I wonder who that might have been?*)



Sadly the talk scheduled to be given to the group in February had to be cancelled due to the speaker getting a positive Covid test result a few days earlier. Thankfully he will be returning 'in a flash' to entertain us in April.

Following the success last year of a guided walking tour of Devizes by Wiltshire's own 'History Man' he was immediately asked to visit our group in March this year. That was the easy part, choosing from Nick Baxter's extensive list of interesting lectures was not so simple. With the date getting ever nearer he was eventually invited to present 'From Slavery to Parliament' which gave us a second full house in three months.



JAMES TOWNSEND Esq^r
LORD MAYOR of LONDON.

The story is of James Townsend born 1737 the descendant of a black woman from the Gold Coast, and grandson of a 'mulatto' thus making him a 'quadroon' (one-eighth African), He was the first black MP, the first black Lord Mayor of London and probably more surprisingly a brother of the physician, scientist, and economist Joseph Townsend, who made important contributions to population studies and geology, perhaps better known to readers as the Rector of Pewsey.

This is a most fascinating story with so many links to other interesting people and places that are worthy of further exploration - a simple search of the Internet would be most rewarding for anyone interested in learning more. The image is of James Townsend as Lord Mayor in 1772.

* This is Wendy being modest! (Ed)

Group Leader : Wendy Lawrence.



STROLLERS

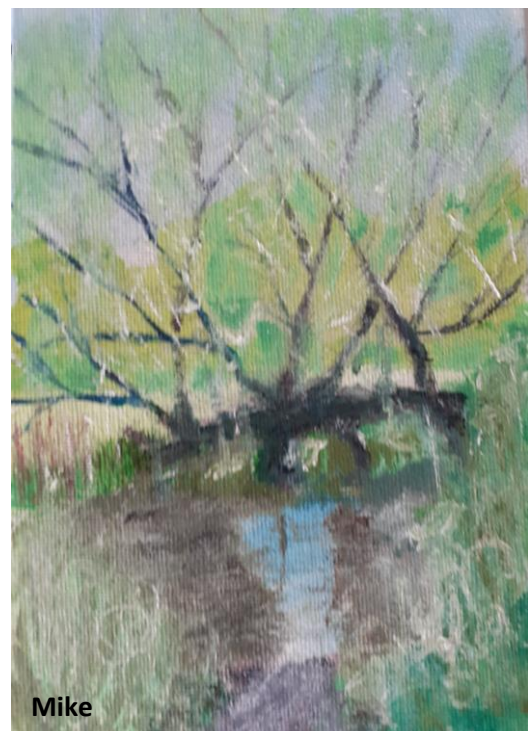
We are a small friendly group of walkers, who meet twice a month and walk for 2 miles on fairly flat ground with no stiles. We take it in turn to lead a walk of our own choice. In the winter we try to keep to hard paths and roads, so we usually visit villages such as Upavon, All Cannings, Rushall, Charlton St Peter, The Manningfords and Urchfont. We enjoy looking at houses, gardens etc. and meeting people out with their dogs.

On our visit to All Cannings, we were very lucky to meet and watch a thatcher at work. In Upavon we walked along an ancient Pathway, and at Urchfont we met a lady walking her pony and very small dog. On occasions we have coffee and cakes at a member's house after a walk and at our last walk we popped into Urchfont Village Hall where they were serving coffee and cakes. We have had a couple of cancellations owing to bad weather. In the summer we take to the fields and woods to see the fauna and flora while out walking.

Pictures above taken at Urchfont.

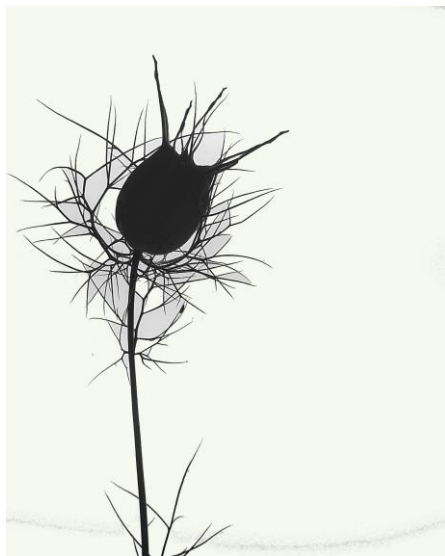
If you are interested in joining the group, please contact me.

Group Leader: Janet Mander



PRACTICAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP (PPG)

At ten o'clock on the second Friday of each month we meet in the Heritage Centre's Education Room. After making ourselves a cup of tea or coffee we settle down to review photos of last month's topic which are projected onto the large screen.



We started the year by looking at 'Shadows & Silhouettes'. That sounds an easy enough topic doesn't it, but this is definitely one that requires just the right lighting conditions. The group managed to capture sixty-two images on camera with an almost equal split between the two.

'Winter Trees' were up for review in January and there were plenty of them. One intrepid member took a photo in the December snow but most of the scenes in the group's collection looked positively autumnal having been taken on sunny days. However a little frost and plenty of fog later in the season resulted in some very atmospheric images too.

On the subject of Seasons we finished taking our 'Winter' photos at the end of February and have leapt into 'Spring' revitalised by the delightful sight of snowdrops and daffodils everywhere we go.



At our meeting in March we thoroughly enjoyed looking at the photos members had taken of 'Strange and Amusing Signs'. These were not reviewed for their quality or construction but simply enjoyed for the humour in them. It was a surprise to us all that there were no duplications and we agreed that it was a fun subject to tackle.

All photos taken so far this year (and in previous years) can be found on the Pewsey Vale u3a website :

https://pewseyu3a.slickpic.com/albums/_2023?wallpaper&back_ref=833562

If you would like more details of what we do please email Group Leader Keith Bew

