



Pewsey Vale u3a

NEWSLETTER

Issue 58

January 2023

Message from the Chair

Dear Members,

I wish you all a very Happy New Year.

I know Lynne did a fantastic job as our Chairman for the last 4 years. So may I again say "Thank you Lynne, for all your hard work and the time you dedicated to lead Pewsey Vale u3a through this difficult period. We all really appreciate it "

Just before our November AGM with the enthralling speaker Jim Buttress, we celebrated the postponed Cheese and Wine evening - which was such a success, it will be repeated - perhaps with slightly less cheese! Then, at the beginning of December we had a brilliant quiz night. Many thanks to the organising teams.

We hope to be able to run a few more events this year; the committee is currently planning an event to celebrate the coronation of King Charles as well as other activities and possible trips out plus the usual bi-monthly social event at the Bouverie Hall. Watch out for more information coming your way!

I am looking forward to seeing you for our first social meeting this year on Tuesday 17th January 2pm, Bouverie Hall. Kim Sharman will be talking about the History of the Canals. I am certainly looking forward to this as we used to live in a village on the Leeds Liverpool Canal. The talk will be followed by our usual raffle (tickets only £1) and by tea coffee and cakes.

As you know the u3a is run by the members, for the members, so all the activities and events that we have are dependent on you. It is exciting to read about the things groups have been doing and about new groups starting. Just look at all the things we get up to! Do you have another interest or hobby that could be the start of a group? Please talk to us. You don't need to be an expert to start a group, just willing to explore and further your interest with other people.

Meanwhile I hope to be able to organise, with the group leaders, a time I can pop into one of your meetings to experience first-hand all that is going on, and meet you all.

If you are not yet a member please read about some of the things our groups are doing and consider joining us. You won't regret it.

Take care and keep smiling.

Fiona Cook

Fiona.cook@cheerful.com



Your diary page

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

January 2023	Tuesday 17 th	Social Meeting with Kim Sharman on The History of the Canals
February 2023	Date tba	Mystery Dinner
March 2023	Tuesday 21 st	Social Meeting with Bernard Lockett on The Heritage of Gilbert and Sullivan
April 2023	Friday 7 th , Monday 10 th	Easter
May 2023	Monday 1 st Monday 8 th Tuesday 16 th Monday 29 th	Bank Holiday Coronation Bank Holiday Social Meeting with Brian Freeland on 50 Years of Seaside Entertainment Bank Holiday
June 2023		
July 2023	Tuesday 18 th Date tba	Social Meeting with speaker to be announced Afternoon tea party
August 2023	Monday 28 th	Bank Holiday
September 2023		
October 2023	Tuesday 17 th Date tba	Social Meeting with speaker to be announced Cheese and Wine evening
November 2023	Tuesday 21 st Date tba	Annual General Meeting followed by Social Meeting with speaker to be announced Quiz and BYO supper
December 2023		



This was our delightful AGM speaker, Jim Buttress, the Queen's Gardener. If you want to know more about him or contact him, see <https://jimbuttress.co.uk/>

Our Christmas Tree

Thank you so much to all the groups who created decorations for our Christmas tree, which was on display in Woodborough Church and at our Quiz Night. Much of your beautiful work is shown in this newsletter.



NEW GROUPS

New Year, new groups. What shall we do this year?



First of all, we have an offer of a new **Qigong (Tai Chi) Group**. Sounds brilliant - do let me know asap if this appeals to you so that we can discuss details. Numbers per meeting will have to be limited and I think this will be a very popular group so stake your claim now! We're also considering whether we should meet in Burbage or Pewsey, or perhaps alternate the two. Please include in your reply whether you are willing to come to Burbage.



Next, a suggestion has come for a **guitar group** - nothing elaborate, just maybe picking (sorry!) up from where we may have left off in our youth. We did have a ukulele group, which disbanded a few years ago. Might we perhaps have a mixed musical group, for various instruments? Do let me know what you can play - even if it's not terribly well - and whether you'd be interested in forming part of a group. I can't play anything myself but will be glad to help you set it up.

And see also Charmian and Jacqui's **French Groups** report - might you form a third one?

And another **Creative Writing Group**? Come on, be brave: leading a group isn't difficult and we'll help you.

Joanna Goulson

CHINES

At the time of writing, we're starting to plan 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 October.

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.

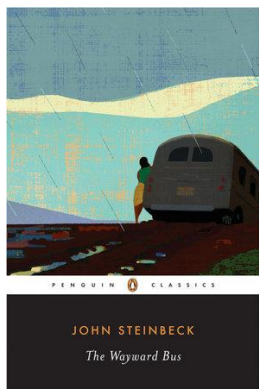
Joanna Goulson

What are you reading?

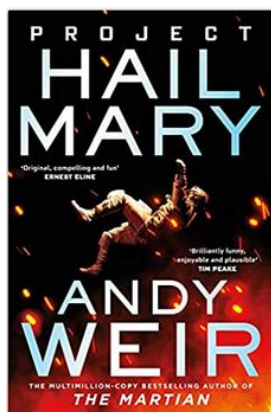
Last time, I told you about some books I had read and enjoyed, but didn't get any feedback. Maybe this time?

I think I said before that I don't find book jacket blurbs especially useful and certainly don't have the skill to write helpful ones myself, so no details, no spoilers, but just a hint about why I enjoyed these books and think perhaps you might too.

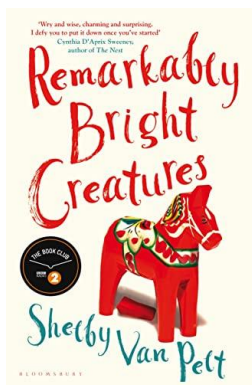
My first book is John Steinbeck's *The Wayward Bus*. I think I read most of his major works when I was still reasonably literate, ie in my early teens, and hadn't given him another thought since. Then this book came up as a special offer: I tried it and was bowled over by his style. Even though I didn't identify with any of the characters, they came alive on the pages. And, as for the descriptive passages.... well, you'll see for yourself.



"I haven't any idea as to whether it is any good or not," Steinbeck admitted to friends. "But the people in it are alive, so much so that sometimes they take a tack I didn't suspect they were going to." "I hope you will like it," Steinbeck wrote his boyhood friend Jack Wagner, "although 'like' is not the word to use. You nor anyone can't *like* it. But at least I think it is effective. It is interesting to me. . . This book depends on mood, on detail and on all the little factors of writing for its effectiveness. It has practically no story." He elsewhere allowed that "It is what I wanted to say and I think it is in there for anyone who really wants to find it and there's a top story for those who don't."



My next book is quite different. I grew up on classic science fiction - Asimov, Bradbury, Herbert etc - but haven't taken much interest in how the genre has developed since. But then I came across ***Project Hail Mary* by Andy Weir**. And, again, I can't possibly give you a synopsis of the story or you'd say what a load of rubbish. Only I didn't think it was: to me it was gripping and charming and I very much enjoyed it. One caveat, though: the author has created an extraordinarily detailed set of scientific information on which the story is based. I was impressed by it but have to confess that I skipped the sci-fi background in favour of the story and the characters themselves.



Finally, the book ***Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt** also came to my attention as a special offer, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. It's perhaps not as well written as the other two books, but still had a warmth that appealed to me. It's with trepidation that I tell you that, broadly, its subject is the friendship between a woman and a giant octopus in an aquarium.

"Darkness suits me. Each evening, I await the click of the overhead lights, leaving only the glow from the main tank. Not perfect, but close enough.

Almost-darkness, like the middle-bottom of the sea. I lived there before I was captured and imprisoned. I cannot remember, yet I can still taste the untamed

currents of the cold open water.

Who am I, you ask? My name is Marcellus, but most humans do not call me that. Typically, they call me that guy. For example: Look at that guy—there he is—you can just see his tentacles behind the rock.

I am a giant Pacific octopus. I know this from the plaque on the wall beside my enclosure.

I know what you are thinking. Yes, I can read. I can do many things you would not expect."

Joanna Goulson

Book Blurbs - Glossary of Terms

(shamelessly pinched from the Laughing Librarian on Facebook)

Enchanting	there's a dog in it
Heart-warming	a dog and a child
Moving	child dies
Heartrending	dog dies
Thoughtful	mind-numbingly tedious
Haunting	set in the past
Exotic	set abroad
Audacious	set in the future
Award-winning	set in India
Perceptive	set in North London
Provocative	infuriating
Epic	editor cowed by author's reputation
From the pen of a master	same old same old
In the tradition of	shamelessly derivative
Spare and taut	under researched
Richly detailed	over-researched
Disturbing	author bonkers
Stellar	author young and photogenic
Classic	author hanging in there
Vintage	author past it

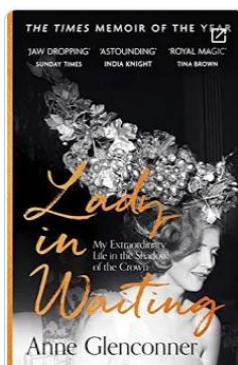
1ST BOOK GROUP

Created this lovely little booklet as a decoration for our Christmas tree.



2ND BOOK GROUP

Our Book Group has met each month this year, mostly in person, which has been a positive experience. We've almost forgotten how we had to adjust our lives and give up our freedom, when we had no choice but to meet online. Life feels back to normal now and the experience is richer when we meet up at each others' homes.



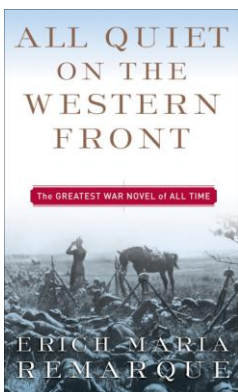
Once more, we've enjoyed a huge variety of genres, from **"Lady in Waiting"** the biographic experiences of Lady Glenconner, to **"Slow Horses"** one of the Mick Herron Slough House series, which is currently showing on certain TV channels. We have a few Mick Herron fans in our group!



The classic book of World War I, **"All Quiet on the Western Front"**, with its serious and sombre content. Giving way to a lighter and more contemporary read from JoJo Moyes **"Giver of Stars"**.

In the Autumn we read one of Patrick Gale's stories **"A Place Called Winter"** and quite unusually, mostly all of our group enjoyed his writing style and story, much based on his own family generational experiences and characters. Some of us were delighted to attend Patrick's talk at the Marlborough Literary Festival in October.

We have finished the year discussing **"Spies"** by Michael Frayn, whilst enjoying tea, coffee and cakes at the Strawberry Fields Café at Woodborough Garden Centre for our special Christmas meet up,

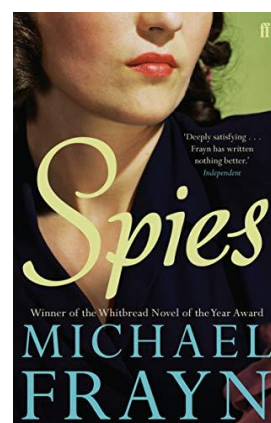
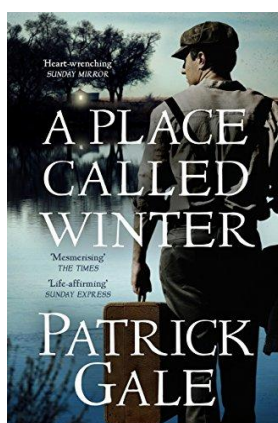
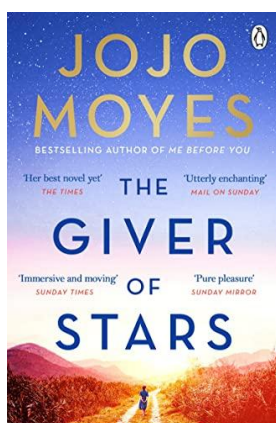


Our Group has expanded and we have welcomed 2 new members in the past few months. We are now at full capacity and continue to enjoy sharing our thoughts and feelings on each book, as well as other good reads we've personally enjoyed and recommended.

Here's to the 2023 book list, ready to critique and share.

Best wishes to all Pewsey Vale u3a members and a happy, healthy New Year.

Group Leader Jo Turner



BIRDWATCHING GROUP

Spectacular sightings were made at our recent visit to Langford Lakes when a rare visitor to the UK was spotted, a Pectoral Sandpiper. A total of 30 species were seen that day, including Willow and Sedge Warblers, Teal, Green Sandpiper, Snipe, Marsh Harrier, Lapwing, Red-legged Partridge and Greylag. Pectoral and Green Sandpipers below.



October saw us visit the Cotswold Water Park and surrounding areas with the aim of seeing general water life and winter thrushes. Another glorious day out, mild and good spells of sunshine and no wind. The Great White and Little Egret were spotted plus numerous Grey Herons. Otters were seen swimming in one of the lakes. Our day finished on a high with numerous Redwings being seen devouring berries from trees and shrubs laden with fruit.



During November we visited the lakes around Andover, and were rewarded with 28 species being seen, including 30 + Little Grebes.

Group Leader: Peter Mander

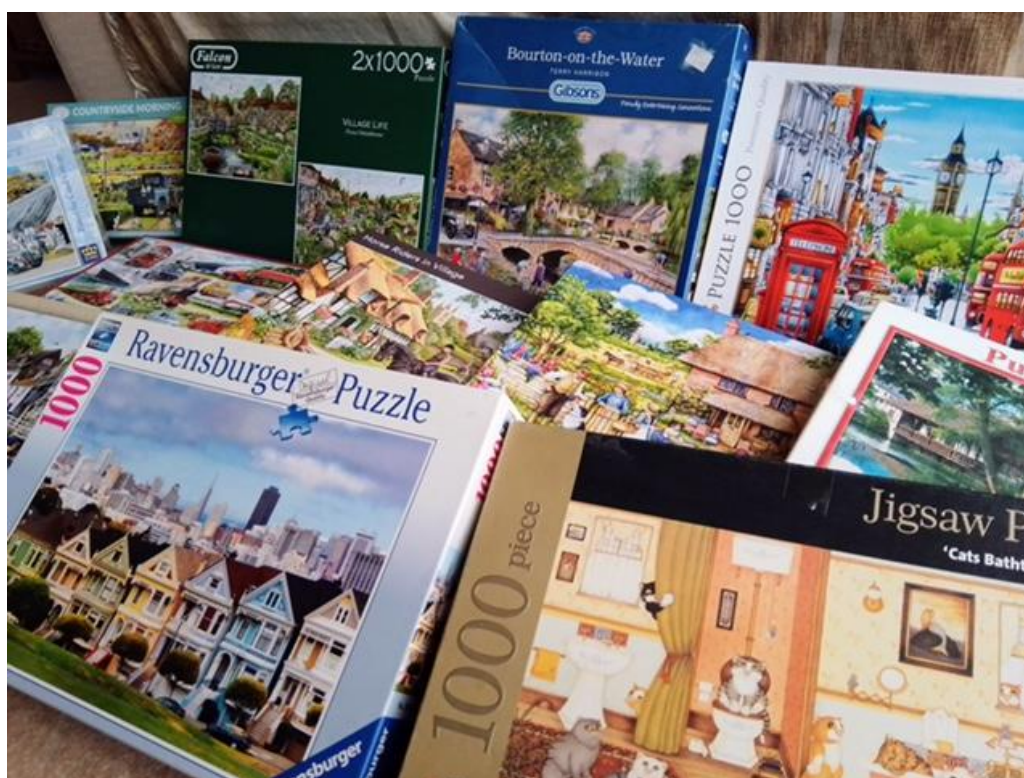
JIGSAW SWAP GROUP

Whether you are an avid jigsaw puzzle fan or a novice who would like to give a puzzle a try, the new Jigsaw Swap Group is for you.

Come to the Bouverie Hall to borrow a puzzle or bring one to swap on the second and fourth Tuesday each month between 2 and 4pm. It's the same time as Country Dancing so you can have a dance too if you feel like it!

Here's a selection of the jigsaw puzzles available to borrow or swap.

Lynne Batsford



And Beryl writes:



This took me several afternoons!

A lot of different tile patterns and strips of coloured steps. I am a bit of a jigsaw addict. One of my early memories is being away from school with flu (or something) and sitting up in bed with the coal fire alight in the bedroom doing a Cinderella puzzle that my Mother had bought at the newsagents. Interesting - the coal fire in the bedroom, only used when someone was ill. On ordinary nights we just went up to a cold bedroom.

CARD GROUP

The card group would like to express all their good wishes to all members of the u3a. May the new year bring new goals , new happiness, and new blessings.

Julie and the team



GARDENING GROUP



The u3a gardening group continues to flourish although in the winter we are not showing off our best, but as we all know planning is part of the game so this is when we try to get on top of the design part. January will be our chance to raise a glass to the weather gods and I will be starting our enthusiasts in a competition of who can grow the biggest sunflower.

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



SINGING FOR PLEASURE

Well, briefly, SFP is really thriving, and we have reduced the door contribution back to its traditional £1. There is a trickle of new people joining and there is a nice sense of community. Essentially, we all go to the sessions for an emotional lift.

Traditionally, Barbara and I have agreed a playlist beforehand, but recently, we have run a few sessions where we only preselected the opening song and requested suggestions/requests from the room. These sessions worked quite well, and we will make sure to accommodate requests at every session, but not to rely on it. This is how we find out what people like to sing.

People appear to like the new lyric books, which are easy to handle and clear to read. Of course, the number of songs in the book is fixed, but SFP has always accommodated additions to its repertoire, and we can continue to do so. I can easily produce loose sheets for new songs, and they can be consolidated into the book when the next edition is printed. We wait to see how the books cope with the physical demands on them. The drivers for a new edition will be the physical state of the books and the amount of new material to be accommodated. We may need to put the door contribution back up to £2 for a time to fund it :-), but that's all in the future. . .

In the week before Christmas, a group of SFP singers went to Edwardian Court and, on the same night, to Manor Court, to sing carols along with the residents - this is something that SFP used to do before lockdown. We were received with great hospitality and conviviality, so this is something that I hope we continue to do.

Happy New Year to everyone.

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

Andy Vowles

A few photos from our Wine and Cheese evening



TRAVELLERS TALES

Thank heavens that we are now able to spread our wings and travel some more! Holidays are at the hub of this Travellers' Tales Group, and thankfully we have some reliable members who greatly enjoy seeking sunshine, sea and sand.



Ann and Bob Smith know the Greek Islands well, indeed, they have a boat out there, and in October gave us a delightful selection of views of many ports and islands they have visited for some years, and of course of the tavernas! The constant blue skies and enviable sunshine is so appealing and we could almost feel the welcome warmth in their photos.



Peter Jackson's tale of his adventures in his younger military days arranging and fulfilling a venture in the Amazon was altogether different, particularly bearing in mind that this was all organised without the modern-day use of mobile phones and the internet to arrange flights, reservations, connections etc. It was a fascinating story and a look back at how travel then was radically different.

Our December meeting didn't quite follow the usual pattern - we did not have one of Sue's "easy" quizzes, and instead had a very vivid and fascinating account of Jean Rickard's recent trip to Canada, with some glorious autumnal colours to complement the overall presentation. Our Group's version of a Christmas lunch followed, to conclude an excellent season of "Tales", and for which I must thank those good folks who have researched the internet and dug deep into their own photographs to entertain us so well during the year.



We meet on the second Tuesday of each month at Easton Royal Village Hall, for a 10.30 am start - although our first meeting of 2023 will be on Tuesday February 7th, when Ray and Rita will tell us all about a trip they enjoyed to Greenland a couple of years ago. If anyone would like to tell us about their own travels (and they don't have to necessarily be overseas), I would be delighted to hear from them, and of course we welcome new members at any time to join us even if they have no tale to tell!

Please contact Bob Greatorex



WALKING4EXERCISE

The members of the group have explored the landscapes of Avebury, Marlborough Downs, Froxfield and Little Bedwyn, Upavon, Burbage and Pewsey over the last few months.

Some of us have enjoyed refreshments at The Who'd a Thought It at Lockeridge, The Antelope in Upavon, The Pelican Inn at Froxfield, and Rosemary's house.

The walks have been very enjoyable and the company fabulous! Many thanks to the members of the group who have organised walks and hospitality for everybody.

If you would like to join us in 2023 you will be most welcome.

Lynne Batsford

Devil's Den on the Marlborough Downs and some horses wanting to accompany us at Lockeridge.



If you would like to walk 4 miles with us on a Monday afternoon please get in touch.

Lynne Batsford

MILITARY HISTORY

As many of you will remember, we commemorated the 40th anniversary of the Falklands War with several presentations from notable speakers during this year of the Military History Group. We welcomed some eminent people and members very much enjoyed hearing them and in some cases re-living their own experiences during the conflict.

We also featured some other very interesting topics, including the origins and present day duties of the Imperial War Graves Commission, and some very thought-provoking talks about the Fall of France in 1940 and also world affairs as they stand today.

We certainly continue to present subjects of great interest to many people, and our little group has grown enormously in the last couple of years. We are happy though to welcome more visitors to our meeting place at Easton Royal Village Hall on the first Monday of each month for a 10.30am start. (However the first meeting of 2023 will actually be on Monday 9th January). If you would like to join us, please contact Bob Greatorex

QUIZ



Q. What's a nice thing to do on a Monday evening?

A. Come to Quiz Group

Our lighthearted Quiz Group continues to meet on the second Monday of the month, from 4.30-6pm at the Education Room of the Pewsey Heritage Centre. (*This means that there is potential for another group to share our room booking, from 3-4.30pm or 6-7.30pm.*)

Each member brings a set of questions (complete with answers, of course). We play informally, don't compete for scores and generally have a good laugh. We each pay a small amount towards the cost of hiring the room.

Do get in touch if you'd like to join us.

Joanna Goulson

We also held our Quiz-and-Supper evening at the beginning of December, with over 50 members and guests taking part in teams. The highlight (for me) - apart from the delicious food - was the round called Next Line Please, in which quizzers had to say or, even better, sing the next line or couplet of a song or rhyme. Here are some examples:

Q. I met her in a club down in old Soho / Where they drink champagne

A. *And it tastes just like cherry cola*

Q. May he defend our laws / And ever give us cause / To sing with heart and voice

A. *God save the King*

Q. Tom Pearce, Tom Pearce, lend me your grey mare / All along, down along, out along lee,

A. *For I want for to go to Widdecombe Fair*

Q. We're after the same rainbow's end / Waiting round the bend

A. *My Huckleberry Friend / Moon River and me*

567 WALKING GROUP

Since my last report the 567 Walkers have seen the Red Devils parachute team jumping from a plane with flags attached to their heels, near Netheravon during a walk which skirted their airfield! Also, several friendly animals in secret and unexpected locations, exceptional autumn colours and scenery of Wiltshire and enjoyed the company of the members of the group.

We have eaten at the Pelican Inn in Froxfield and The Tale of Spice in Pewsey and we feel that we are back to "normal" now! (None of us are "normal", by the way!)

Come along and find out!

Lynne Batsford



WINE TASTING AND APPRECIATION



Wine Group goes from strength to strength (or, as we like to call it, Alcohol By Volume). Our monthly meetings are filled with information, conviviality... and there's some wine there too.

We've recently tried wines from Hungary, from Chile and had our annual Christmas wine/food pairing session with wines from the Languedoc, recommended and supplied by Avery Wines. We're looking forward to plenty more tastings in the New Year, with volunteers to lead each meeting from January to May - thank you, team, and cheers!.

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

ART GROUP

If you enjoy art - at any level - do come along and meet the group in our new venue.

We meet on the second and fourth Thursday of each month in Manningford village hall from 2-5 pm.

New members are very welcome and you'll find us a welcoming and helpful group.

Bob and Ann Smith

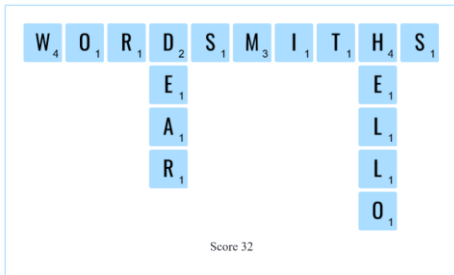
From our u3a Christmas tree. Aren't they beautiful? I didn't want to give them back (Ed).



WORDSMITHS

If you like to dig into the origins of words and expressions, have a fondness for plays on words, enjoy discussing how our language has evolved, then you're a wordsmith. Sadly, though, we can't currently invite you to join our Wordsmith Group, because we're at full capacity.

However, if you'd like to start another similar or parallel group, do let me know and I'll be pleased to help you.



Do you perhaps subscribe to the <https://wordsmith.org/> emailings? On a daily basis, a new word comes in, with etymology, examples and a quote of the day. It's well worth checking out. The author has also just created a new site called Scrabalize <https://wordsmith.org/scrabble/> where you can put in any text you like and it will arrange it in Scrabble-like format. Have a look, it's quite fun and might even lead you to write some humorous verse or the like. Do let me know if you do.

Joanna Goulson

PATCHWORK



This October the patchwork group made some Christmas decorations. Margaret encouraged us to bring our ideas into our first meeting of the month.

From the pictures you can see some of the decorations we made: some made their way to the u3a Christmas tree festival in Woodborough church.

We have The Gnome Hut coming to visit on 24th January bringing fat quarters etc to our meeting. (*I queried what Margaret meant by fat quarters and she explained "fat quarters to a patchworker are quarter meters of usually cotton. How and why? Simply it's a cut metre of cloth, cut in half lengthways and half again crossways. These are then perfect for patch making as a full metre or*

even half metre is just a bit much because you wouldn't then have the variety of plain and patterned cottons to work with. Also it would be heavier to transport and make the hobby too costly." Ed)

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

Margaret Blacker



HISTORY OF TRANSPORT

Members of the History of Transport Group have been treated to a good selection of diverse modes of transport this year – feet, bicycles, motor cycles, rail tracks and aircraft without however a single car being mentioned!



In September we welcomed Richard Heacock to give us a presentation about the Salisbury, Marlborough and Andover Railway (and as a result of this we hope to make a behind the scenes visit to the Swindon and Cricklade Railway later in 2023). In October we welcomed back our good friend Bill King and his History of the Bicycle, and in November Steve Potter was on hand to tell us about, and show us plenty of photos of, aircraft that he has admired, and very probably flown during his aviation career.

It's been a very interesting year with some excellent presentations, and we have a pretty full schedule lined up for 2023, starting on Wednesday 25th January when Ian Baxter will talk about the Railways in Great Britain today and what may be to come, and also about the old Great Western and its railways through Pewsey. It could be a controversial topic judging by how things are currently, so please join us at the Education Block of the Pewsey Heritage Centre for a 10.30am start – new members are always welcome and if you would like to know more, *please contact Sue Greateorex*

COUNTRY DANCING

What is Country Dancing?

Is it counting? 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8. 1,2, side, side. 1,2,3, clap, back 2,3, clap!

Is it Geometry? Circles, Squares, Figure of eight and Triangles.

Is it a different language? Chasse, Do-si-do, Grand Chain, Coquette.

Or is it natural? Strip the Willow, Snowball, Redwing.

Whatever it is, we have danced them all. It is lots of fun and we laugh a lot.

If you would like to give it a try come along on the second and fourth Tuesday afternoon each month to the Bouverie Hall, Pewsey 2pm until 4. There will be a warm welcome, exercise, music and dancing, refreshments and chat. Give it a go!

Chaos at country dancing! We all have fun but we are not elegant!



Lynne Batsford

CREATIVE WRITING

The group continues to meet on the second and fourth Wednesday of the month. The group is now full and there is a waiting list of five. **Would anyone like to start a second group?** You do not need to be an 'expert' or a published writer, just someone who enjoys writing (journals, short stories, poems, memoirs etc) and likes to encourage others.

Our contribution for the newsletter is a festive poem by Fiona Jones, using the first line of a well-known poem and giving it a modern twist.

Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house,
Mummy was hiding mini bottles of Grouse
"Your mother is coming, she'll judge and she'll stare,
I'll need to be drunk to get through this nightmare"

Daddy retorted, tangled lights at his feet,
"My Mum's not as bad as your Uncle Pete
Remember last year? His conspiracy theory?
That Santa's a communist? It was hardly cheery.
And let's not get started on your sister Suzy,
One Babycham and she's everyone's floozy"

Mummy was cross, she called back with a holler
"I remember her lipstick ending up on your collar!
Hide the mistletoe darling, for everyone's sake,
Let's please not repeat what was last year's mistake"

Daddy went quiet, and his face turned quite pink
"It was dark in the hallway, what was I to think?
And have you invited young Rainbow and Tegan
Your niece and your nephew, the ones who are vegan?"

"Oh cripes" cried out Mummy, "I completely forgot,
I can't feed them pheasant, not the ones that you shot
They'll lecture us all about animal rights
And I haven't the energy for those kind of fights"

Daddy's face turned deep red, his temple was throbbing
With his head in his hands, he was almost sobbing
"I've had quite enough, this just simply won't do
Family Christmas is awful - and I'm not eating tofu"

Mummy sighed, hugged dear Daddy, and opened a drink
"Oh darling, that's just what I'm starting to think.
Next year, we'll send them to your brother Charlie,
And FaceTime the lot from a hotel in Bali"



LEISURE WALKING GROUP



Our new year has started with good numbers attending and with new members joining, and there is always room for more. Our recent walk around Walkers Hill using the Wansdyke Path and White Horse Trail was undertaken in glorious weather with unbelievably no wind as seen from the photographs. Ravens and skylarks were seen together with a myriad of wild flowers, fungi and mushrooms. An old crop circle stood out well in the sunshine.

Walking round Chirton, Connock and Marden we were pleased to find that all the stiles had now been replaced with gates. A good turnout was achieved with members enjoying a perfectly flat walk. New paths were walked around the Manningfords, plus some old favourites from Great Bedwyn.



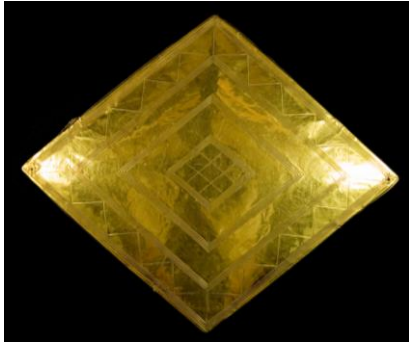
Our Christmas walk took place at Westcourt on a cold frosty morning with a glorious blue sky. We finished with hot soup, sandwiches and beverages in relaxing surroundings.

Group Leader: Peter Mander



LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

In October we were delighted to welcome back the Director of the Wiltshire Museum, David Dawson.



His previous talks have always been enjoyed by our members and this occasion was no exception. '**Gold in the Age of Stonehenge**' proved to be a most exciting subject about which we learnt much that we had not known before. David brought from the museum a few 'copies' of gold artefacts for us to handle and examine. They were decorated with such intricate engravings that one wondered how on earth such fine work could have been undertaken in that era. David kindly sent me the photo of one of the originals to include in this report.

You can't get much more local than the story of **E H Thorne & Son - Pewsey Vale Coaches**. This was the subject of our talk in November and, other than the owners themselves, our guest speaker Richard Giles probably knows it better than anyone.



A bonus came in the form of a second talk entitled '**The Charlton Milestone**'. With the aid of photographs to support his notes Richard guided us through the immense task undertaken by a motley crew from Charlton St Peter who decided that travellers using the A342 deserved a new sign. The photo shows the result of their labours. The old milestone had been badly damaged some time ago and its original site is now identified by a wooden marker.

Richard's talks were of particular interest to members who had only recently joined the history group and enjoyed by others who knew they would be thoroughly entertained. As usual, everyone appreciated the additional touches of humour with which Richard's presentations are always sprinkled.

Snow on the ground and icicles hanging from the neighbouring Heritage Centre provided the ideal backdrop for our December meeting. Ideal because members that day were presenting their own pieces of research based on a **Christmas theme**. A month earlier they had been given three categories - Personal, Literature and History, each with two or three suggested topics from which they could choose two, but not from the same category.

The morning started with a cup of something hot, and mince pies made by one of the members provided a welcome and tasty addition to our usual assortment of biscuits. All the while a delightful e-Advent Calendar was being projected onto the large screen.

A wonderful variety of work was then presented. Photos were shown and stories told about past family Christmas celebrations held both here and abroad, readings included the Longfellow poem 'Christmas Bells' and a very amusing account written by Gervaise Phinn of a school nativity. Even the Christmas Alphabet song was sung.

A Power Point presentation based on the life of a famous person born on Christmas Day ended with a piece of his recorded music, and a fascinating presentation about Stir-up Sunday and the History of the Christmas Pudding was interlaced with a number of questions posed by the speaker, most of which had us all stumped.



To close this most enjoyable meeting everyone was given a raffle ticket and chose a prize when their number was picked from the hat.

Our planned events for 2023, details of which will appear in the Chairman's emails (thank you Fiona) will be open to the wider Pewsey Vale u3a membership. We meet in Pewsey on the 3rd Thursday of each month and hope to see you in the audience sometime.

Group Leader: *Wendy Lawrence*

WHIST GROUP

Our gatherings on the 2nd and 3rd Monday afternoons are very enjoyable as seen from the attached photograph. We are still continuing to be mindful of health and safety issues with the sanitisation of chairs and tables taking place before each meeting. We operate from Manningford Bruce Village Hall starting at 2.00pm.

We concluded the u3a financial year with prizes being awarded for the highest number of points being achieved over the year with Mary topping the bill. Our Christmas whist afternoons, together with prizes, was held during December, with festive food being served in place of the traditional biscuits, and was enjoyed by all.

New members are welcome at any time, so why not give it a try and have a fun afternoon?



Group Leader: *Peter Mander*

PRACTICAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP (PPG)

Group members agree in advance the twelve topics for the year October to September. Each month members upload their eight best photos for the current topic and these are reviewed at our meeting the following month. Below are brief accounts of what we achieved in the months October, November and December 2022.



Rows and Lines : When reviewing photos we are frequently surprised to see the variety of subjects that members have chosen to photograph. This month fifty-six were uploaded showing a diverse range covering music (piano keys, guitar strings, organ pipes), trees, hedges and fences, windows (house, church, shop), steps, headstones and vehicles and more.

Framed : As in October there were many different interpretations of this theme as demonstrated in the interesting collection of sixty-four windows (church, shop, home), arches and the natural frames created by nature.

AGM Exhibition : Less than a week after our November meeting we were busy setting up an exhibition of our photos ready for the u3a AGM. This has become an annual tradition but involves a great deal of work beforehand such as printing photos to a specified size, putting them in mounts and, on the day, putting sticky spots on the back of each photo before affixing them to the display boards. This is all achieved through teamwork.

There was a slight change to our procedure this year. Instead of displaying a mix of photos placed in various categories each member selected six photos that they had taken anywhere and at any time, and not necessarily for the monthly topics. Each member had a panel on which to display their photos beneath his or her name. This was the first exhibition at which members were identified. The end result was visually pleasing and received much attention and praise from other u3a members attending the annual meeting. No doubt we will do it all again in 2023!

Fungi : What adventures were to be had searching for fungi - although there were quite a lot to be found in Rectory Grove (Pewsey). However most of this was of the same type so intrepid photographers scanned the countryside to find more and better sites. Some members had fungi growing in their own gardens so not much mileage needed there! The results of everyone's efforts can be seen, as with all our other photographs, on the u3a website.





Seasons : We continue to take 'Seasonal' photos throughout the year but we each now only upload one photo taken at the same location each season. The four seasons' photos will be reviewed this time next year.

We are a mixed and enthusiastic group always willing to learn from each other and prepared to adapt, by mutual agreement, when it will benefit the whole group. Our friendly meetings are held between 10am and 12 noon on the second Friday of each month in the Education Room next to Pewsey Heritage Centre.



Do please have a look at our albums on the u3a website and contact the Group Leader if you think you would like to join this group.

Most of us also belong to our sister group PG2 which operates in a quite different way (see their Group Leader's report below).

Group Leader: Keith Bew

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP 2 (PG2)

Do get in touch if you think you might like to join us. You don't have to be a skilled photographer to take part and, as long as you enjoy taking photographs and have the means to do so (on anything from a sophisticated SLR to a mobile phone), you'll fit right in.



Recently we've been to Avebury and Woodborough (garden centre and church) and are planning portraiture and still life sessions for the colder months.

Joanna Goulson





The Travel Group went on a 5 day holiday to Harrogate in October. Visits included Nostell, Harrogate, York, RHS Harlow Carr, the Dales and Chatsworth House



FRENCH GROUPS

Such is the interest in French conversation, and the obvious need to limit the numbers so everyone has a chance to speak, there are now two groups as we have been fortunate to find a second leader.

The long-established Thursday Group has some fluent French speakers who have either lived in France or visited many times and enjoy keeping up their French. As well as general conversation, members sometimes prepare a written account of an experience and read it to us, or bring a cutting from a French paper to share. By reading and translating, not only does everyone have a turn but we can also keep up to date with the French of today and adjust to the French "tournure de phrases" rather than ending up with an English way of putting things in French.

The Tuesday Group is going ahead brilliantly and there is lots to chat about in French as new members meet each other. In this group too there is a good mix of reasons for wanting to continue to speak French. One member lived in France for many years and wants to maintain her French, while another spent a year in Paris over 60 years ago but has retained a wonderful accent and more vocabulary than she thought she had! The group has been meeting since September and everyone comes along with a 'Quoi de neuf' to talk about. Times have certainly changed - I sit there with my trusty old Collins Robert dictionary to hand while others turn to Google translate for a more up-to-date translation - a mix of the two seems to work well.

As numbers are kept to eight per group there is still a short waiting list but don't let that put any potential new members off. Who knows, if there are enough people interested, we may even end up with a third group!

Jacqui Reid and Charmian Spickernell