



# Pewsey Vale u3a

## NEWSLETTER

Issue 61

October 2023

### Message from the Chair

Dear Members

I can hardly believe that it's October, and now Christmas is just around the corner - or so the shops would like us to think. But fear not as there are plenty of things that you can fit in before then. You only need to read what has been going on within our u3a these last 3 months to see how active we are.

At our recent committee meeting we were discussing the title "*u3a - university of the 3rd Age*" and we thought it can be misleading, as not only are we a co-operative group, sharing our knowledge, strengths and skills but also a "*Youth Club*" for those of us who are no longer in full time work! A place where we have fun, share a cup of tea or a glass of wine, have a laugh, make new friends and enjoy life.

With this in mind we need, to expand our range of groups and activities, and for this we need your help. We must be one of the only social groups that has a membership age range of 50 plus years therefore we need a wide variety of activities to meet out different needs and aspirations.

Joanna has written a plea for help in this newsletter and I would like to re-iterate it. The success of our u3a depends on YOU, not just to attend events and groups but to help us develop new groups, to help run our existing events and expand our membership.

Recently I met a couple of our members whilst out and about. When asked if they were coming to an event, they said they didn't want to come and be on their own. Please, please don't think like this. I can appreciate their position, I knew nobody when we moved here, but I can assure you we will look after you and will make sure you feel welcome.

So with those thoughts, please enjoy reading this fantastic newsletter and hope to see you soon.

Take care and keep smiling.

Fiona

**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

October 2023	Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup>	Cheese and Wine evening Social Meeting with speaker Tim Edwards of the Great Bustard Project
November 2023	Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup> Friday 24 <sup>th</sup>	Annual General Meeting followed by Social Meeting with David Dawson from Devizes Museum on "Gold from the Time of Stonehenge" Quiz and BYO supper
January 2024	Tuesday 16 <sup>th</sup>	Social Meeting with Morton Burdick on "Our Noisy Neighbours on Salisbury Plain"

### CHEESE AND WINE EVENING

You are invited to the u3a Cheese and Wine evening  
on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023 6pm to 8pm  
at the Bouverie Hall



The cost per person is £10 and is only for Pewsey Vale U3A members  
The closing date is 10<sup>th</sup> October

We look forward to seeing you  
The Pewsey Vale u3a Committee

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Hello and welcome to those of you who have joined Pewsey Vale 3a in the last three months.

If you're a new member at a Social Meeting or outing, do come and say hello to one of the committee - we're all labelled and easy to find - so that we can introduce you to some friendly faces. At individual groups, this will happen anyway, so you won't feel left out.

## IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO ALL OUR MEMBERS - PLEASE READ

Hello dear members and please bear with me. This isn't a comfortable piece to write and you won't find it comfortable to read, but it's vital to the continuation of our u3a.

**We need more members - a LOT more members - to be proactive in our organization.** When you read the newsletter and look at the list of groups, you'll see the same names cropping up time and time again. Now we need YOU to do something as well.

What happens if you don't? Without wishing to sound melodramatic, our u3a may not be able to continue. The same people can't be expected to run everything year after year, indeed our constitution forbids our officers from staying in their roles for too long. Some of us have been doing our jobs for several teen years and we can't continue indefinitely. **Now it's your turn.**

Let's dispel some myths:

- **Committing to a u3a activity will take up too much of my time because I am retired / have family /travel / do other things.**
  - We're all busy people and making a contribution to our u3a needn't take more time than you can afford. It might only be the odd hour here and there, or could be a few days a month, as suits you.
- **I'm not an expert in anything**
  - The u3a is by members for members: we learn together, from each other, or from others we've persuaded to share their skills or knowledge. We all have life experience of working, raising families and/or other responsibilities, skills which are invaluable to our organization.
- **I'd be worried about taking on the responsibility by myself**
  - You don't have to. Jobs can be shared, tasks allocated, to two or more people. A group generally shouldn't be about one person doing all the work - share, take it turns.
- **I haven't been a member for very long and don't want to push myself forward**
  - That's not a problem: people will help you and we'll be so grateful for your participation. If you've only recently retired or semi-retired, you'll be bringing in a fresh perspective and more recent business experience.

## So what can YOU do?

- **Lead or co-lead a group.** It can be a new group, an existing group or a spin-off of a group that's too full to take on any more members (see below\*). The leader is the point of contact for the members and isn't obliged to do everything themselves. You could make the tea, take the register, organize an occasional speaker, outing or activity. Your group doesn't even have to meet regularly or commit to a long run of meetings. If you're unsure, speak to a member of the committee.
- **Speak at a meeting** - just one (unless you get a taste for it!)
  - We're always looking for **speakers for our Social Meetings**. Are there any personal or professional adventures you could tell us about? Do you have knowledge, skills or enthusiasms you could share with us?
  - And **individual groups are crying out for speakers**. These include Travellers Tales, History of Transport, Local History. Come and share your knowledge with us.
- **Take on a role on the committee.**
  - Help the committee run your u3a.
  - Or take one of the leading roles (not scary, truly, and the cakes are good!) such as Vice Chair where you could shadow Fiona and help her as needed.
  - Or you could take on my role of Group Leader Co-ordinator, or just part of the job, such as helping start up new groups, process meeting registers, keeping our meeting venue list up to date. Or help with publicity.
- **Host a meeting** or series of meetings in your house or garden. You don't have to do it every time and you don't have to be the group leader - just the host. Some of us have bigger sofas than others!
- **Provide general help from time to time**
  - At Social Meetings we desperately need **help with setting up the tables and chairs** before the meeting, putting them away afterwards, setting out and serving the **teas** (Sue can't do it all herself!)
  - Or be a gofer to distribute hard-copy newsletters to non-email members in Pewsey, and our promotional posters to shops and businesses in the area.

Have I managed to convince you? If there's anything we can persuade you to put your hand up to, or you just feel you'd like to contribute something as yet unspecified, please let me or another committee member know (the list is on the penultimate page of this newsletter). We can all get together and make plans for the exciting future we know we can have.

On behalf of the committee

Joanna Goulson

PS \* **If you are waiting for a place in a group which is full**, please contact me so that we have an idea of how many members this applies to. If several people want the same subject, we can get you together to discuss how you can form your new group, but be aware that YOU will be doing the work, not me!

## ART GROUP

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

Our numbers have swelled and at the moment we are full, and have a waiting list, but if anyone would like to start another art group.....we can give you a list of prospective members!

Each time we meet the group members continue to work on their own pieces and although we don't give formal tuition everyone is always happy to share expertise and new ideas with everyone else in the group. We have members working in oils, acrylics, watercolour, pastels and mixed media as well as drawing.

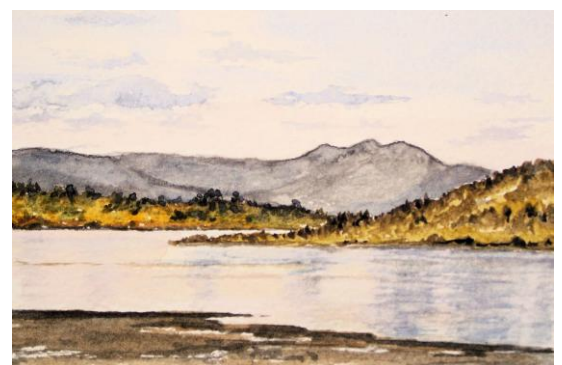
We have occasional visits from local artists and following on from an excellent afternoon with Cathy Pearce in April, we will be welcoming Ria Rys-Reuten for an afternoon in October for a session on Chinese brush painting. We have so many very talented local artists it's great to welcome some to the group to show us their work.

If you would like to be added to our waiting list - or even better if **you'd like to start a new art group, please get in touch**, we'd be happy to tell you what we do.

*Bob and Ann Smith*



Pictures by Ann, Bob,  
Ian, John, Marie-Jose,  
and lots more you'll  
see next time.





## WORDSMITHS

To quote from the Wordsmith.org daily emailings (no relation):

### **OSTROBOGULOUS**

PRONUNCIATION: (ah-struh-BOG-yuh-luhs)

MEANING: *adjective*: Unusual; bizarre; risqué or indecent.

ETYMOLOGY: Coined by writer Victor Neuburg (1883-1940). A fanciful formation from either Greek oestrous/estrous (heat or rut) or ostreon (oyster) + bog (dirt) + -ulous (full of). Earliest documented use: 1951.

Isn't that a lovely word? If this tickles your fancy, you might be a budding wordsmith:

We meet in Upavon on the third Wednesday of the month, with friendly dog(s) present.

*Joanna Goulson*

## GARDENING GROUP

The U3A gardening group continues to flourish. The sunflowers have finished flowering but the winner is still to be announced.

Here is a note from Lynn:



I joined the Gardening Group just over a year ago and, although nervous at first as I was a complete novice, it turned out to be one of the best things I have done. The members of the group are not only welcoming, but listening to them has given me the confidence and helped me learn about plants: how to look after them, feed them, prune them and try different things.

Meeting up regularly to discuss successes, problems and new projects with like-minded people who have vast amounts of knowledge and experience, over a cuppa, followed by a meander around their own garden is, in my opinion, two hours well spent.

There is lots of information you can get online but nothing beats talking about plants face to face. I have not yet heard anyone bring up a problem they were having in their own garden that has not had a solution offered by other members.

We discuss what tasks we should be undertaking in the garden at the time of the meetings, best places to get seeds and plants from, and members regularly turn up with cuttings and seedlings to share around - what is not to like?

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



## TRAVELLERS TALES

We are now back into autumn mode having returned from our summer break, but our final Group meeting in July was a very jolly affair, with a devious and clever quiz with a geographical theme set by Rita Edwards and followed by a "picnic" in the Village Hall at Easton Royal where we meet on the first Tuesday of each month.

So September saw a return to "proper travel" and Jean Rickard finished off her tales of the trip she took to Jordan and Egypt, with the spotlight on this latter country. It is a fascinating destination, so full of much historical interest, and Jean had some really great photos of such places as the Aswan Dam, the Pyramids, and Nile River and the temples at Abu Simbel. Many thanks to her for a fine presentation.

We have an old friend of Pewsey u3a visiting the Group in October, Bill King, who is going to tell us about a leg of a walk he and his wife have done in the past along the Thames Path. This part will take us from Teddington to the Thames Barrier with various points of interest along the way.

Between now and the end of the year our plan is to go on a cruise of the west coast of the British Isles and then to Kenya, so quite diverse locations, and next year we have plans for Iceland, South America and even the Isle of Man! The first Tuesday in the month is the day, meeting at 10.00am-ish for a cup of coffee and natter, with the talk getting underway at 10.30am. You would be very welcome!

*If you are interested in joining our Group, please contact me, Bob Greateorex.*

## MILITARY HISTORY

Yet another new session has started for this ever popular Military History Group (which meets on the first Wednesday of the month at Easton Royal Village Hall at 10.00am for a 10.30am start). Our September meeting was unusual in that we welcomed a speaker who is still a serving member of HM Armed Forces, at the Royal Army Flying Corps at Middle Wallop, where he is also a volunteer at the prestigious Museum there.

His theme for this meeting was Aviation during World War One, and he brought along with him some authentic items of clothing and other equipment which was used at that time - a flying suit which was so heavy and which made me imagine how uncomfortable it would have been after flying in the rain in one of those open cockpits of the aircraft of the time. The goggles, boots and notebooks were a real eyeopener and the images and photos of the aircraft and such basic technology of the time were astonishing. How we have moved on since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century!

We have a busy schedule lined up for the rest of the year, starting with quite a coup in that we have General Sir Mike Jackson talking to us at our October meeting. He is regarded as one of the most high profile Generals this country has had since World War Two; it will be a popular meeting I know. Also in October a group of us are going to visit the REME Museum at Lyneham for a guided tour of the many exhibits on display there. This will be followed in November by a visit to RAF Brize Norton.

We are very fortunate to have quite a few ex military members in this Group who are able to assist in arranging speakers and visits, so many thanks to them for their input into our schedule. This is a popular group, but we still welcome any new u3a members who might like to come along. *If so, please contact me, Bob Greateorex*

## CHINES

Our official season of visits has now ended, though if anyone wants to arrange anything in the next few months, I'll be happy to work with you on it. Of course, the later in the year, the more weather dependent we are. So far this year we have been remarkably lucky and not been rained on once!

Thank you to all of you who have participated and especially those who have organised our visits. As you know, u3a is by members for members, so it's really important that everyone plays their part.

This year we have been to:

- April - Calne with guide Nick Baxter
- May - Malmesbury: Wendy and Gerald with guide Andrew Butterworth
- June - Salthrop: Di and David
- July - Wilton: Wendy Lawrence with Wilton House guide
- August - Winchester with city guide Pauline Shier and cathedral guide
- September - The Vyne: Michael and Cathy (Dot's photos below and on <https://pewseyu3a.slickpic.com/albums/CHINES-The-Vyne-Sept-2023/?wallpaper> )



We're next due to convene early in the New Year - though it can be sooner if you like - to plan our next season of outings. I have a spreadsheet of all the places we've been to over the last few years, plus some suggested venues, and am happy to forward that to anyone who is interested in leading an outing, with my help. We've also been talking about spreading our net wider and travelling a bit further. What do you think? Here are some examples:

- Abbotsbury 2.25 hrs 80 miles
- Sherbourne 1.5 hrs 55 miles
- Shaftesbury 1.25 hrs 40 miles
- Oxford 1.25 hrs 48 miles
- Wells 1.5 hrs 47 miles (we have leaders for this already!)
- Bombay Sapphire Whitchurch 0.75 hrs 30 miles (note: indoor, not cheap)
- Glastonbury 1.8 hrs 66 miles
- Slimbridge 1.5 hrs 60 miles
- Gloucester 1.25 hrs 50 miles

I should at this stage reiterate that we do not provide transport though we do encourage and help organise car sharing. CH(urches)IN(ns) and ES(tates) involves being on our feet for several hours, exploring on foot or standing, looking and listening. There are costs involved and these vary.

Joanna Goulson



## WHAT ARE YOU READING?

The headline of this column is a question, to which I have never yet received any answers. Its purpose was to generate discussion and for members to recommend books to each other (or to warn them off!)

So I shall make this very brief, with a request that you inundate me with your own reading suggestions in time for the next issue. That gives you till the end of the year, so get reading!



As a topic let's look at Whodunits. What do you like and why? Is it the classic Agatha Christie, Ngaio Marsh, Marjorie Allingham, PD James, Dorothy L Sayers, etc books. Or do you prefer something more up to date? I have a liking for Donna Leon's *Inspector Brunetti* stories - quite gritty but not graphically brutal, cultured and with lots of lovely Italian food in them.

Joanna Goulson

## BOOK GROUP 2

We have a happy band of nine readers who provide an eclectic mix of views on books at our monthly gatherings.

Over the last few months, we have read and discussed:

**The Keeper of Stories - Sally Page** - We generally agreed that this was an enjoyable book and the storyline, complexities of different lives and characters created an interesting read. A couple of us were not so enthused.

**Girl Woman Other- Bernadine Everisto** - We had a wide ranging discussion centred on aspects of the book. Most of us had not enjoyed the book but one member said that she did not dislike it. Everyone had read all or parts of the book and we were able to refer to several of the characters, none of whom we warmed to. We 'did not mind' the writing style but found little connection between what seemed to be a collection of short stories. We felt that the novel, like many modern novels and also television plays, was 'ticking boxes' by focusing on controversial current issues which came at the reader as wave after wave of arrogant attempts to force points of view.

**The Heart's Invisible Furies - John Boyne** - Most of us enjoyed the book and we talked through the book club questions provided at the back of the book. One member's feedback: "Given when and where the story was set, it was possibly a common reaction to unmarried mothers, especially given the power of the Catholic Church. It was a realistic ending. Both sad and happy". We thought we might seek out more of John Boyne's books to read.

**Islands of Mercy - Rose Tremain** - A distinguished author but most of us found this a challenge. Strong women characters.

**The Silence of the Girls - Pat Barker** - Only one member of those present liked the book. The feedback was that it was too much about Achilles and not enough about the women. They did say it was very well written. Just a thought she had: there are parallels between Achilles, King Charles III and Prince Harry, all with absent mothers in childhood!

Carolyn Whistler on behalf of Book Group 2

## BOOK GROUP 1

We have recently read:



### ***A Silent Death - Peter May***

A very good read. A deaf blind character. A character in the autistic spectrum. Illegal immigrants. Dead body decaying so well described you could smell it.

### ***The Railway Man - Eric Lomax***

A book everyone should read, it's so well written. The autobiography of his life on the Burmese railway as a prisoner of war.

### ***The Dickens Boy - Thomas Kineally***

### ***The Lido - Libby Page***

### ***Still Life - Sarah Winman***

Another excellent read. Unforgettable characters taking place during the Second World War in Italy.

We are now reading a nonfiction book ***Lady in Waiting by Anne Glenconner***, her extraordinary life in the shadow of the crown.

*Group Leader Ann Saxton*

## WINE TASTING AND APPRECIATION



Our group continues to sample a variety of wines, chosen by the members presenting at each meeting. The presentations, the wines and the members are delightful and we hope that our knowledge is increasing, though alas so is the price of wine.

Our two consecutive evening sessions cover six wines each, generally three white and three red. Our meetings are usually very well attended, but we may be able to squeeze one or two more members in if you don't mind being on standby for last minute places. Sorry, not very satisfactory, but it's the best we can offer at present.

*Joanna Goulson*

## BOARD GAMES GROUP

In our Board Games Group Scrabble fans tend to play their game quietly. (*Hear hear. Ed.*)

Rummikub players are more vocal and Word Rummikub players are the loudest of all! (We have been helping each other while we learn how to play so that's our excuse for the rowdiness.)

If you play "Bonkers" it drives you mad, if you play "Bananas" you go crazy and "Worst Case Scenario" hasn't been touched for obvious reasons.

Anyway whatever you play and however vocal you are you are welcome to come along to the Board Games group to join in. We have room for several more players and there are various games to choose from or you can bring along a game that you enjoy.

We meet on the second Monday afternoon each month 2.30 till 4 at The Heritage Centre room in Pewsey.

Get in touch if you would like to give it a try.

*Lynne Batsford*





What can be nicer than walking 4 miles on a Monday afternoon in Summer?

The Walking4exercise group have been out and about enjoying the countryside, the wildlife and each others' company. Every walk is different with special things to enjoy.

Honey Street Cafe was an excellent place to start and finish a walk in July with canal-side drinks and cake afterwards.

More homemade refreshments were enjoyed in Rosemary's garden after her walk which took us through Jones's Mill.



We had a mystery ramble on the Marlborough Downs. Even finding the starting point proved tricky for some! And another well-hidden start point was North Newton Church where we began a walk through The Manningfords.

We will be heading off to Wootton Rivers very soon and then who knows where to enjoy the delights of Autumn?

You are very welcome to come along and find out. Just get in touch.

*Lynne Batsford*





## QUIZ GROUP

- ❖ 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month 4:30-6pm
- ❖ Pewsey Heritage Centre education 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



*If you'd like to join us contact Group Leader: Joanna Goulson*

## 567 WALKING GROUP



This Summer the 567 Walking Group have enjoyed beautiful warm and sunny walks on our Thursday morning get-togethers.

There was a lovely walk starting and finishing at The Black Horse Inn, Devizes, where we ambled down the Caen Hill flight of locks and continued a clockwise circle through farmland back to lunch at the pub.

From Oliver's Castle in July we gazed at beautiful views across Wiltshire countryside before wandering down into Devizes and finishing with a steep climb to

return to our start point.

At Urchfont we were disappointed that The Lamb pub was closing soon, but we travelled to The Millstream instead after our enjoyable 6 mile walk up onto Salisbury Plain with more fabulous views. We had earned our delicious lunch there.

As a bonus there was a fifth Thursday in August so we met again for a 6.5 mile country walk from Pewsey, through Pewsey Hill farm land, taking in the Manningfords and Sharcott.

Our September walk started at Netheravon where we

Thank you to all the group members who have planned the walks this summer.

Please get in touch if you would like to join us.

*Lynne Batsford*



hoped to see the Red Devils again!





## HISTORY OF TRANSPORT

Since this Group meets on the fourth Wednesday in the month (at the Pewsey Heritage Centre Education Room) the September gathering is very fresh in my mind. We do not meet in the summer months of July and August, this meeting being the first of our "new term", and in fact we carried the nautical theme through from June when we listened to David Hodgson's reminiscences of his days as a river pilot, to a fascinating talk by John and Liz Marston covering the 17 years they have owned and travelled in their narrow-boat on the English and Welsh waterways and canals.



John had prepared a very comprehensive outline of most of the canals in England and Wales, described at great length some of the many locks, swing bridges and tunnels they have navigated and gave a potted history of the construction of the canal network and the historical commercial reasoning for it. I'm sure none of the members present realised the complexity of the canals in this country nor the great fraternity there is amongst narrow boat owners (or the live-aboards as they are known!). Liz told us about how a little kindness from them to some previously unknown travelers resulted in a fruit cake being left for them on their gangplank as a thank you!

We all asked lots of "domestic" questions such as "how do you do your washing on a cold, wet day?" - answer, you find the nearest launderette and discover many other boaters doing the same thing, have a good natter and find out useful hints on what hazards there might be to avoid on a planned route, so a whole day used up and nice clean towels to use! It was a really very interesting insight into a different way of life.

As I mentioned in my last piece for this newsletter, I shall not be continuing to lead this Group after the end of the year. Sadly no one has come forward to take over, so the Group will fold. I intend to perhaps organise a few transport-linked outings from time to time, including another to Haynes Museum for their new exhibition of motorcycles after its opening on 21<sup>st</sup> October. I am quite willing to help someone else to become Group Leader, so please give it some thought and get in touch with me. We have meetings planned for October and November, so the History of Transport Group has not quite yet expired!

Sue Greatorex

## NEEDLEWORK GROUP

Come and join the group: bring your own work, sew and chat. Sue has taken over from Maureen Evans who is moving away and we thank Maureen for her cheerful leadership. The group meets in Pewsey on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month and welcomes new members.

Contact Group Leader Sue Croudson

## COUNTRY DANCING

The Country Dancers have continued perfecting their skills throughout the Summer months.

We are becoming quite proficient at some of our favourite dances. But we never know when someone's mind will wander and everything will go haywire again. That all adds to the uncertainty and excitement.



Last week even Alabama Jubilee was wonderful! We were all amazed and delighted. Will it last though? We doubt it very much.

We have begun to revisit some square dances which are more complicated and there has been much discussion and analysis after the dances to work out where it all went wrong in each set!

However we always eventually remember that we dance for fun and it doesn't matter if dances are not up to professional standards (yet).

If you think you can add to the chaos come along to jig about a bit with a tea break in the middle. We meet on the second and fourth Tuesdays at The Bouverie Hall, Pewsey, 2pm until 4.

Unfortunately, there's no meeting on October 24th because Bouverie Hall is not available.

Lynne Batsford

## CREATIVE WRITING GROUP 1

During June and August (we took a break in July), the Creative Writing (1) group focussed on aspects of short story writing.

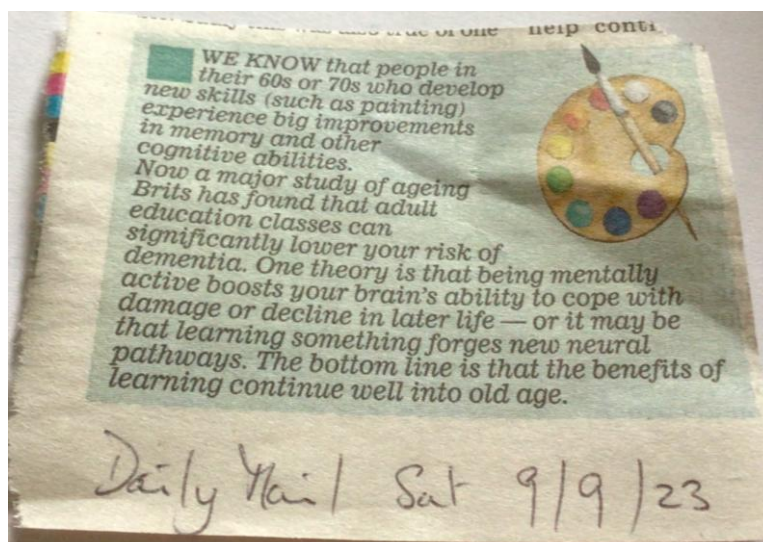
First we wrote a detailed DESCRIPTION OF OUR MAIN CHARACTER in order to get to know them really well and anticipate how they would react in different scenarios.

Then we had a session on 'OPENINGS - How to begin a story so that the reader is drawn in and wants to carry on.

Thirdly we wrote a SCENE that got right into the story, introduced the setting and ensured that something actually happened to move the story on.

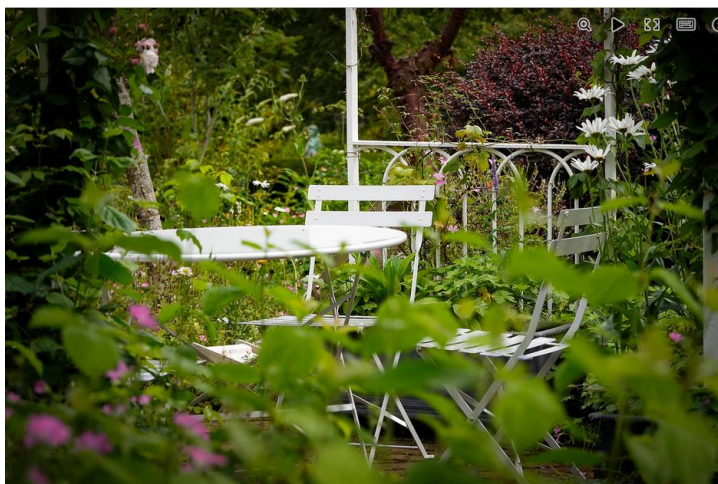
As a result of all this we are hoping to produce a small collection of short stories which, when printed, will be available for other u3a members to read. Look out for it just before Christmas!

Group Leader Wendy Argent .





## PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP 2 (PG2)



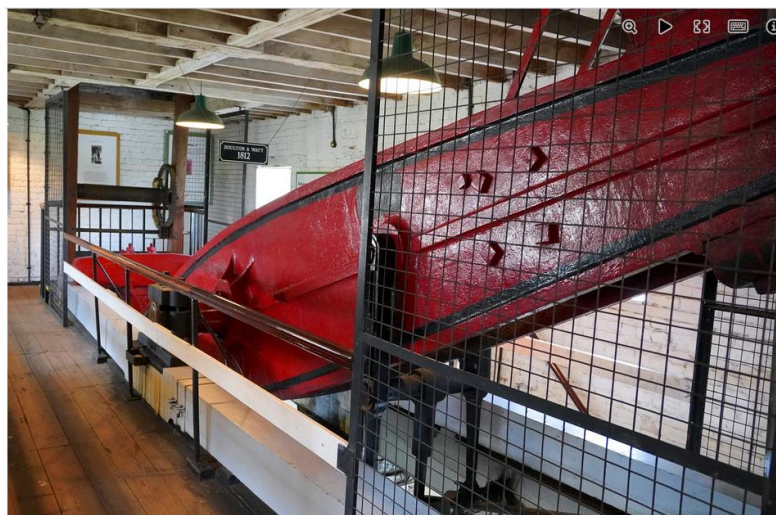
In July we visited **Westwinds**, a beautiful private garden in Manton. Owners Jerry and Kate were preparing for their first NGS open garden day and gave us a very warm (and tasty!) welcome.



For all our photos see

<https://pewseyu3a.slickpic.com/albums/PG2-Westwinds-July-2023/?wallpaper>

In August we visited **Crofton Beam Engines**, where we were given a private guided tour (on a non-steaming day). Once again, we were made to feel very welcome and look forward to visiting again, perhaps when the engines are being dismantled for cleaning so that we can see their innards as well as their outards (is there such a word?)



For all our photos see

<https://pewseyu3a.slickpic.com/albums/PG2-Crofton-August-2023/?wallpaper>



## Upavon Photographic Competition



The annual village fete, complete with photographic competition, took place on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. A great many of the entries were from Pewsey Vale u3a members, for which I am very grateful - we took the opportunity to promote our u3a at the same time. And guess what? Our members won several of the awards, including Best In Show! Here's Caroline showing us her winning photograph.

**PG2** (the group that goes out to take photographs together) tries - and often fails - to stick to the fourth Friday of the month. Membership is fluid with members of Practical Photography, Art and other groups frequently joining us. You don't need a sophisticated camera, just a keen eye. Let me know if you'd like to come too. (Pub lunches frequently feature.)

*Group leader: Joanna Goulson*

## CREATIVE WRITING GROUP 2 (aka WRITING FOR FUN)

### Chances

"James, come on, lunchtime. You can go back and play in the garden later."

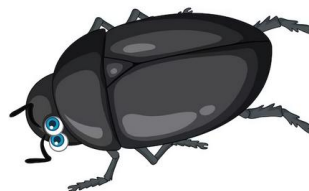
It was flying ant day. Swarms of winged ants were emerging, as if by a magic signal, from the cracks between the paving stones. The small, skinny boy watched them crawling up the walls and fences, then abruptly taking off in a haphazard upward flight to who knows where. The big ones were the queens, he knew. He heard his mum's voice, but vaguely, in the distance. Something new caught his eye. A shiny black beetle scurried away, then paused. It looked as though someone had polished it. He crouched to examine it, putting out a small, freckled finger, in case it decided to climb on. He could see its head and intricate feelers, even its eyes.....

"James, come on now!"

He sighed.

"Coming Mum."

He trudged up the path to reality.



*MS September 2023*

*There followed a wonderful story of his adult life working in a museum with insects and how love came unexpectedly into his life. 1800 words in total.*

*Leader Liz Whitebread*





## PRACTICAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP (PPG)

The topic for June was originally named 'Macro photography - Invertebrates' but later changed to 'Close Up' which we believed would give us a greater range of subjects to photograph.

Invertebrates make up over ninety percent of all living animal species so it was not surprising that many spiders, snails, worms and flies still crawled or flew their way into our collection of eighty images. An amazing variety of butterflies, flowers and a few everyday objects completed a topic which we all enjoyed more than we had expected.



Many of our members also belong to other u3a groups which allow us further opportunities to visit places of interest. These frequently include large estates and smaller private gardens open to the public and, of course, there are always our own gardens to admire (unless like me you don't have one!).

All or any of these locations were the ideal places to meet the challenge of our July topic 'Gardens & Gardening'. The day came in August to review everyone's photos which covered a wide range of plants while only a small number featured gardening being undertaken or the tools required to do it - perhaps that was too painful a reminder for members to photograph.



One of our rules is that all photos must be no more than 12 months old on the date they are reviewed and so 'Days Out' was the ideal topic for August as we were able to look back on a whole year of daytrips, weekend breaks and holidays.



Some members chose to present eight images taken during a particular event, whilst eight to produce a selection covering a number of different outings.

The group will be displaying a selection of their work at the u3a AGM on 21<sup>st</sup> November - do stop and have a look.

We meet on the second Friday morning of each month to review our photos and give constructive criticism. Although we are currently unable to welcome new members do please contact the Group Leader if you would like to know more about the group.

*Group Leader: Keith Bew*

## DOG WALKING GROUP



What a time we've had; shouldn't complain! but walkies has been somewhat interrupted by the weather being too hot at the operative time - so the walk had to be cancelled sadly! Here is a picture of Josh luxuriating in the cool water in the early evening.

However two of our group enjoyed a walk together from Pewsey Wharf along the canal path and back down the foot path over Buckleaze Bridge and so up to Knowle.

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 my message is pretty similar to what I've said in previous Newsletters. We meet twice a month and we have great fun singing - that's it 😊

The Bouverie Hall can accommodate way more than the 30 or so singers we are currently getting at each session, so there's no question of being full or needing a waiting list. However, the Hall is relatively expensive to hire for 2 hours each month (setting up, sing for an hour, tea & biscuits afterwards) and the current charge of £1 per person at the door is not quite covering the cost. If we get more people at every session there is no problem, otherwise we will, at some point, have to increase the charge at the door to remain solvent.

But all that aside, the group is in rude health with lots of people who keep coming back and who seem to enjoy the sessions as much as I do. Singing is good for the soul and good for the body too. In fact the health benefits are tangible and it's the perfect feelgood way to start the weekend.

More singers please - we can accommodate all of you :-)

*We meet in the Bouverie Hall on the second and fourth Fridays of the month at 10.30am.*

*Andy Vowles*



## LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

This quarter's report is shorter than previous ones due to the fact that the local history group takes a break in July and August.

Something quite different from our usual meetings was arranged for September as a surprise for members who had said in advance that they would be free on 21st.

Nearer the date these members were given details of what had been planned. Instead of meeting in the Education Centre the group of nine were to make their way to the award winning Southcott Vineyard. The close proximity of the vineyard to the centre of Pewsey meant that most of us could walk there and only two needed to drive.

On arrival we were warmly welcomed by owners Sarah and Tim Ingram Hill who, in 2005, bought the land on which a previous owner had grown grapes for German wine production. We were soon heading towards the vineyard but not before admiring the grand sundial that stands three metres tall on a base of York stone. The intricate design was modelled on the Labrynth, a meditative work at Chartres Cathedral.

The vineyard is ideally situated facing due south on chalk and green sand soils and was established in 2005 when, having cleared the land of the old vines, the family planted classic champagne grape varieties, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier. All their stock is sourced from the region of Champagne in France.

Although he admits to his real passion being gardening, an enthusiastic Tim led us between the numbered rows of vines loaded with red or green grapes, relishing in the opportunity to talk about the numerous and varied jobs that need be carried out over a period of ten months each year to produce a quality wine. The list is long and I have only mentioned a few below.



A warm and moist climate is ideal as it is for their greatest problem - mildew. Roses, which are an early indicator of this being present, have been planted at the end each row; leaves that turn red on the vines are removed and vines sprayed. Weed control is carried out twice a year and a hydrometer used to measure the alcohol content, the aim being to reach 60% - it was almost there the day we visited.



Harvesting follows these preparations which have involved long hours, early morning starts, and a great deal of backbreaking labour. This year's harvest is due to take place during the first two weeks of October after which the grapes will be sent to a winery in Hampshire. Will this be yet another prize winning wine?

Following a short but well-deserved break at the end of the year they start all over again in January.

After the very informative tour of the vineyard we retired to their C18 Grade II Listed home where we were privileged to taste a generous sample of the Southcott Brut, Vintage 2018. This delicious sparkling wine won a Gold Medal at the Wine GB Awards and was due to be launched on 30<sup>th</sup> September. Some of our members will be in the queue to buy the wine for Christmas celebrations and as gifts.

We all had a lovely time but may not have left as sedately as we had arrived.

During the summer break we were fortunate to enlist two new members who have already shown an eagerness to get involved in upcoming group activities such as the upcoming Members' Research morning - more please!!

We meet in Pewsey on the third Thursday of each month and have extended our interests beyond the Vale of Pewsey enabling us to research and/or learn more about other areas and to engage speakers from the wider u3a community and other organisations.

However, what we really would like is to have more presentations by Pewsey Vale u3a members - "u3a by the members for the members." We are always willing to help if needed.

*Group Leader: Wendy Lawrence*

## **BIRDWATCHING GROUP**

Our recent visit to Langford Lakes in September proved to be rewarding despite a very poor start. Our journey down to the reserve was undertaken during an intense deluge and after we arrived and the rain had stopped, brilliant sunshine shone across the lakes. However, birdlife seemed non-existent and the two larger lakes held only 4 cormorants and 3 mute swans. We took a break by the café and within 10 minutes hundreds of Canada Geese flew onto the lake in carefully timed and positioned landings at just over one minute intervals, which one member remarked looked like squadrons of aircraft landing. Even more impressive was them leaving some three hours later in carefully timed segments. The remaining three lakes contained more but in smaller quantities. We estimated there to be probably 1000 present. With them was a lone white goose.

This in itself would have been sufficient, but the top end of the reserve held more surprises. Good quantities of Gadwall, probably up to 100 Lapwings, a single Little Grebe, Teal, Buzzard and Swallow, plus 7 Green Sandpipers (below) and 5 Snipe, Tufted Ducks and Herons. Later we moved to Great Wishford and spotted a Raven, Kestrel and Pheasants. In total we spotted 28 species that day.



*Group Leader: Peter Mander*



## PATCHWORK GROUP

Here we have two examples of the first two projects, the really useful pincushion and an optical illusion - these three pieces are flat on the table but they look like they're an upright box. The illusion is made from three diamonds; this particular pattern can be quite challenging when you first start it to make a cushion cover.



These next three projects show some of the different ways patchwork can be used. The hexagons make a lovely oven glove that would brighten up any kitchen.



The two mats made from scraps and pieces together without using papers have a really fresh feel.



This quilt uses a different style of patchwork called puff patches, these create a ready padded and lined quilt by cutting out two sizes of patch one in a pattern and the other in the backing fabric, then cutting wadding to be the same size as the backing, then folding the backing over the patterned fabric and running along the edge thereby encasing the wadding and creating a wadded lined quilted patch. Once all these are joined your quilt is complete.

*Group Leader Margaret Blacker*



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