

## **The Vale of Pewsey**

The Vale of Pewsey runs East to West from around Bedwyn to around Devizes. To the north lie the Marlborough Downs and to the south is Salisbury Plain. The Marlborough Downs contain the three highest points in Wiltshire – Milk Hill, Tan Hill and Walkers Hill – all about 900 feet above sea level. They are rich in wild flowers, particularly orchids.

In the early 19th Century canals were created to speeden transport, and one such canal linked the Bristol Avon with London by joining up the two rivers, the Bristol Avon and the Kennet, a tributary of the Thames. The Kennet and Avon Canal runs through the Vale of Pewsey and is still very much in use, though nowadays the barge traffic on it is mainly recreational. Two hundred years ago coal, timber, cotton and heavy goods were carried and canal bridges, wharfs, pumping stations, locks, etc. were needed. Some of them are used today.

Into this interesting, attractive area my husband, Eric, and I moved in 1986 and lived in a house in the village of Pewsey. We soon joined in local activities and met plenty of local people. One lady was interested in wild flowers and I immediately had something in common with her. She persuaded me to join a large group who were working on a new book recording all the species of wild flowers growing in Wiltshire. We were all assigned small areas of the county to explore. Eric and I drove round recording all the species of wild flower we could find in my area. While I searched high and low for flowers Eric would usually find something to sketch (a church, a bridge, a canal lock, etc.) and every week he would go to his art class and paint the scenes he had sketched.

Thus I helped to create the book called *Flowers of Wiltshire* and Eric produced a number of oil paintings of places in the Vale of Pewsey.