



Fairford and District u3a



**January 2026
Issue 323**

Chairman's Report

Happy New Year to everyone !!

I hope you have set yourselves some New Year Resolutions and I hope that they are reasonably achievable otherwise you might have let your objectives slip before the end of January!!

Why do we do this? Is it born out of something that we experienced last year and we say, "I'll do better next year!" Or is it something that you have been thinking about for a while and the start of a new year is the time to say, "Just get on with it."

Whatever your motivation I wish you well in keeping focus on your objectives.

New Year and some New Groups in F&D u3a.

Last month I mentioned the new group **AI Explorers** with Joanna Petty. The response was amazing and in no time at all the membership list was full, then extended and still full and now there is a waiting list. Clearly this is a subject that lots of people want to know more about so we will put our thinking caps on and see what we can come up with – or maybe we ask AI for a suggestion!! Meanwhile we wish the new group every success.

We have had a group studying **Ancient Greek** with Peter Hewes for some time now but this small group have reached a level of skill that might make a beginner struggle. Peter has responded to a request for a beginners group and there is a note from Peter in this month's edition. So, if you are interested but don't know your alpha from omega get in touch with Peter.

John Lang



Palmer Hall, London Road, Fairford at 2.30pm

SPEAKER FOR TUESDAY 6 JANUARY 2026



Image source: Wikimedia Commons

The speaker for 6th January will be our local butcher, Andrew Butler, with his marvellous sausage machine.

Andrew will demonstrate the art of expert sausage making and tell us about the different flavours he has introduced in recent years.

Sue Martin



Teas at General Meetings

January
February
March
April

- Book Circle 2
- Bridge Improvers
- Computer
- Creative Writing



Please send items for the

February Issue

by 17 January

to

editor@fairfordu3a.org.uk

Do you live in Fairford or the surrounding area and are reading this newsletter? We welcome new members.

Full details of how to join the u3a can be found on the website at <https://fairfordu3a.uk/join-us/>

PLEA FROM THE EDITORS

If attaching information to be included in the newsletter please use Word or Open Document format not PDF. Thanks



Editor this month —Jocelyn Wishart
Editor next month —Maureen Partington

Fairford and District u3a December Meeting Report

The Rock and Roll Years 1957 - 1960

Nigel Thompson treated us to a fascinating talk on the Rock and Roll Years, which he cleverly interspersed with snatches of film from those days, vividly illustrating what many of us remembered. Nigel comes from a musical family and his interest in music was timed just right for the arrival of rock and roll.

After the 2nd World War jive music was the thing, which then developed into rock and roll in about 1949 and took off in the early 50's encouraged by a film "The Girl Can't Help it" featuring Jayne Mansfield with "Rock 'n' Roll" stars like Fats Domino, Little Richard and Gene Vincent raising the tempo. It was clear by now that rock and roll music, previously the preserve of black artists was helping to break down racial barriers and, in 1957, Bill Haley and His Comets were the first US band to tour the UK.

Around this time, the popularity of acoustic and hollow bodied guitars - both still available today - gradually faded to be replaced by the solid bodied guitar which was seen as more versatile. Cliff Gallup, who played briefly for Bill Haley, was one of the best guitar players of his day and is credited with getting many British players going, including George Harrison.

We heard about Sam Phillips who, it seems, had more to do with the success of rock and roll than almost anyone else. Based in Memphis, Tennessee, he discovered a white boy called Elvis Presley who could dance and sing music normally associated with black artists. Another indication of rock and roll breaking down racial barriers! Sam Phillips who was hugely influential and founded Sun Records, also producing early recordings of Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins and Roy Orbison.

Of course this talk was about the music and the artists, but Nigel took us on a quick trip into the style and fashion of the era, demonstrated pictorially by rockabillies - we knew them as Teddy Boys - with their heavily oiled, swept back, quiff hairstyles, drain pipe trousers, long drape jackets and the, de rigueur, brothel creepers!

Then back to the music where New Orleans was still the centre for rock and roll with Fats Domino setting the pace. It was his hit in 1945 that started the transition, with white audiences now catching on fast and by the mid-1950s his song Blue Monday completed the transition. There were still some crazy acts with Little Richard in the lead.

Now, of course, musicians were learning from each other on what worked best. Hank Marvin was lead guitarist for The Shadows and he was a major influence on George Harrison, for instance. But the learning was not just in musical terms. Buddy Holly, who died in a plane crash at the age of just 22, had a band known as The Crickets and the association of ideas resulted in a band previously known as The Quarrymen being rechristened as - The Beatles!

Rock and Roll was now firmly established as the way forward for the UK with groups like The Shadows with visits from the American heartland becoming part of the process. The Everly Brothers, Eddie Cochran (who was killed in a car crash near Chippenham) and Jerry Lee Lewis (who decided to sing Country and Western in his UK tour!) were all part of the influx of Rock and Roll.

Mervyn Cully



Membership Renewals for 2026-27

The next membership year for Fairford and District u3a runs from 1 February 2026 through to 31 January 2027 and you will be able to renew from 5 January 2026.

The membership fee has been held at £12, the same price as last year and includes online access to our monthly newsletter and attendance at our monthly Tuesday talks. The newsletter is available to view on our website or can be posted directly to you for an additional charge of £10.

The bank are now charging us to pay in cheques. To keep these charges to a minimum we would be grateful if you could only use cheque payment when necessary.

We prefer you to renew online where payment can be made securely by credit or debit card. Although payment is made through PayPal, there is no requirement for you to open or pay using a PayPal account. You can checkout as a guest using your preferred credit or debit card. Or, as last year, you will also be able to pay by bank transfer using Faster Payments (BACS).

Payment by post, using a cheque (no cash please), is still available using the paper renewal form.

Full instructions for all three membership renewal methods will be emailed to you at the beginning of January. If you do not receive this email then please check your Spam or Junk Folder as our bulk emails sometimes end up being automatically directed to this folder on your computer/tablet. Membership renewal details will also be available on our website.

If there are any queries our membership secretary will be happy to answer them. Contact Sue Snell membershipsec@fairfordu3a.org.uk

CALLING ALL WOULD-BE HELLENISTS (NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED!)

Ever wondered what logos, democracy, chaos, cosmos or even Philadelphia really meant to the people who actually used them? Or wished you could follow what Homer, Plato or Demosthenes actually wrote, rather than relying on how a translator has decided to guide you? Even a little Greek lets you glimpse the originals with far more confidence—and occasionally catch a translator being a bit too clever.

Building on the success of our existing Greek group (now reading Homer), I hope to start a new beginners class from scratch and need a few adventurous souls—five or six would be ideal, though I won't turn anyone away.

We'll use the much-praised Reading Greek course from the Joint Association of Classical Teachers: clear, well-paced, and it gets you reading real stories surprisingly early—without requiring you to know what an aorist is. (If you do know, excellent, but please don't alarm the others.) Each session will mix language, culture, and a little mythological mischief. No tests, no grades, and absolutely no risk of being sacrificed to Apollo for mispronouncing a diphthong.

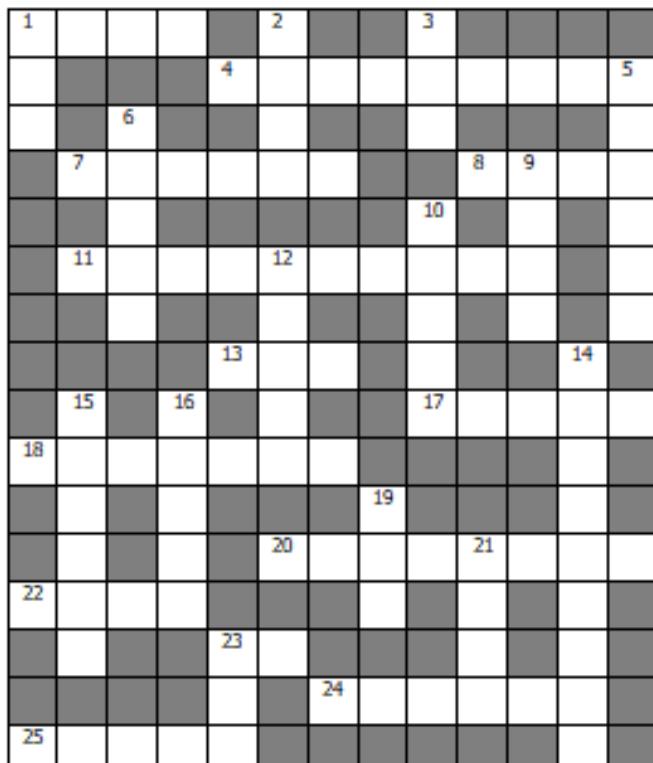
If your curiosity is piqued and you fancy an enjoyable mental adventure, do join us. No prior knowledge required—just enthusiasm, a pencil, and a willingness to laugh.

Contact Peter Hewes: 01285 712200 peter.hewes@btinternet.com



January Crossword

A distraction to help while away an hour or so in the dark evenings this month. If you are reading this online you will need to first download the newsletter and print out this page to complete the crossword. Remember to change the setting from 'All pages' to 'Page 5' before pressing 'Print'.



ACROSS

- 1 – Necessary for 1d to take place (4)
- 4, 7 - See 19d
- 8 – A sea bird that breeds in lands of cold and ice (4)
- 11 – A seasonal good intention (10)
- 13 – An ice climber needs one of these (3)
- 17 – How many 9d's arrived in Bethlehem on January 6th long ago (5)
- 18 – Hopefully, an easy one. What's this month (7)
- 20 – The Christian feast day celebrating the revelation of the baby Jesus (8)
- 22 – An opportunity under the mistletoe just before you take it down (4)
- 23 – This method of transmitting images and sound was first demonstrated in January 1926 (2)
- 24 - See 15d
- 25 - See 2d

DOWN

- 1 - These holidays are popular in January (3)
- 2, 25a - This January is the Chinese New Year of which animal (4,5)
- 3, 5 - What's unusual about Janus, the Roman god of this month (3,6)
- 6 – What's tempting about going shopping this month (5)
- 9 – See 15
- 10 – The twelfth on the fifth (5)
- 12 – Where the golden coffin of Tutankhamun was first uncovered, in January 1924 (5)
- 14 – A seasonal challenge, giving up all animal and insect products to support charity (9)
- 15, 24a, 9 – There's a U.S. federal holiday this month to honour this civil rights leader (6,6,4)
- 16, 10 – A celebration this month where the main dish of the feast is formally addressed (5,5)
- 19, 7a, 4a – National event run by the RSPB towards the end of this month (3,6,9)
- 21 – A warming winter dish #chopped meat, potatoes and onions (4)
- 23 - A possible loss to frostbite if you spend too long in 1ac (3)

Answers on Page 6

RUMMIKUB



The Rummikub group are looking for more players. New to Rummikub people are very welcome, no experience is necessary as we can explain the game.

This is a friendly and fun group that meets once a month on the third Thursday of the month from 2pm to 4pm in the Heritage room at the Fairford Community Centre. The cost is £2 per session.

Please contact Sally White at sallymarywhite@gmail.com

CROSSWORD ANSWERS:

1 SNOW	2 SKI	3 FIRE	4 BIRDWATCH	5 HEADED	6 SALES	7 GARDEN	8 SKUA	11 RESOLUTION	13 AXE	17 THREE	18 JANUARY	20 EPIPHANY	22 KISS	23 TV	24 LUTHER	25 HORSE
9 KING	10 NIGHT	12 UXOR	14 VEGANUARY	15 MARTIN	16 BURNS	17 BIG	18 HASH	19 BIG	20 EPIPHANY	21 LUTHER	22 KISS	23 TV	24 LUTHER	25 HORSE		
21 LUTHER	22 KISS	23 TV	24 LUTHER	25 HORSE												
26 DOWN																

Group Reports

Birds, Botany and Bugs

NOVEMBER 21ST WWT SLIMBRIDGE

Hard, overnight frost, but very pleasant in the sun!

Today was all about our winter migrants. Sadly they were few in number, not helped by most of the reserve being frozen over! We started with coffee in the Rushy Pen. For the two new members, today it was perfect with not quite so many species as normal giving them the time to enjoy the shelduck, pochard, tufted ducks and pintail. Sorting through the differences between them, we then moved towards the estuary seeing some of the newly arrived Bewick's swans and Russian white-fronted geese and, from the tower hide, Ross's and barnacle geese, buzzard, a pair of peregrines, several distant cattle egrets, great black-backed gulls, skylarks and huge numbers of distant wigeon. It was with great delight that a party of five common cranes flew in, giving excellent views through the scope!

Lunch was taken, in the heated hide for some and the restaurant for others. For those who ate in the Peng Observatory, a flock of dunlin and a ruff, six Bewick's and a black swan had arrived since our earlier visit! Moving on to South Lake, the handsome male teal became bird of the day for the newbie(s) who enthused over these stunning birds. Shoveler and gadwall were added, a great black-backed gull up close was unusual and, to see that its size was bigger than some of the geese, was very impressive! A quick visit to the Zeiss Hide only produced lapwing and a few snipe. The only new species added was a sparrow hawk perched by the bird feeder looking very innocent!

Date of Next Meeting...

Friday January 16th, a trip to Slimbridge, hopefully starting the year with a long list of birds! In the case of the reserve being frozen over, we will either go to the Forest of Dean or Severn Beach. Meet in the car park for 08:45 to arrange car sharing etc. Lunch up to the individual (this could change depending on the destination), will confirm nearer the time.

Mick Jones

Book Circle 1

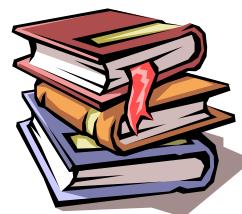
Dissolution by C J Sansom

This is the first in the series of Shardlake mystery stories. One of Cromwell's men commissioned to investigate a corrupt monastery with a view to dissolving it is found murdered. The hunchback lawyer, Shardlake, is sent to find the murderer and to complete the dissolution.

Unusually, we all said that we had enjoyed this book, even though it was only new to one of us. Being a historian, the author sets the story in a richly detailed context. All the characters are believable, particularly Shardlake himself. Though deformed in an age when superstition about deformity is rife, he uses his agile brain to tease out the solution.

A well-written book which we all agreed was a good read.

Maureen Partington



Group Reports

Book Circle 2

PRECIPICE. by Robert Harris

With many copies of the original letters, speeches and telegrams, this is based on the true story of Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith, aged 61 years and wealthy socialite Venetia Stanley, 26 years. It gives a wonderful description of the selfish, careless life of the Edwardian elite, with a glimpse of Government engagements, and personalities such as Lloyd George and Winston Churchill at the beginning of WW1.

The Prime Minister, with an increasing need/obsession to offload his concerns, writes to Venetia often 3 times a day, confiding top secret letters and telegrams. (There were 6 postal collections a day!) Venetia feels a sense of duty to keep him calm and happy, but gradually becomes overwhelmed by his intense passion. There is an astonishing, but true, disregard for international security which is being investigated by Special Constable Paul Deemer.

This is Robert Harris' 16th book. The group felt it was, perhaps, not one of his best, but exciting and readable.

Anne Duckney

Creative Writing

Thank you very much to everyone who purchased a copy of this year's anthology: A Word for All Seasons. We will be making a donation of £72 to Cirencester Food Bank before Christmas.

Copies may still be purchased via Amazon or from members of the group.

Jocelyn Wishart



Group Reports

Petanque

The new piste has attracted a number of new players, some experienced but others total beginners. As the piste has five lanes, we are able to accommodate up to 20 players at any one time. So... there's room for more!!

Play continues on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings from 10am to 12midday. Please be on time to avoid missing the ballot for the first games.

Geoff Dennis 01285 712195

PopDance!

Don't forget the second Tuesday of the month! 1970s and 1980s tracks to get us all moving (and singing along?) in the Party Room at the back of The Plough, PH.

All u3a members welcome for this hour of fun—your chance to dance—no pressure!

Mervyn Cully 07773 557846

Recorder Group

Earlier this year, members of Faringdon u3a recorder consort came across to Fairford for a joint playing session. We all enjoyed it so much that we accepted their invitation to a "return match" in November. Health issues meant that only three of us could go, together with one person who is a member of both groups. Nevertheless, we were made very welcome and we had another enjoyable joint session.

The music was chosen and led by the two conductors (both called Peter to confuse matters). We played some recorder stalwarts such as music by Handel, Bach and Purcell and some folk songs we had previously encountered and some we hadn't (anyone for the Bacup Coconut Dance?) We ended, appropriately, with the Ashokan Farewell. Then the intrepid three disappeared westward into the gathering darkness.

We hope to have similar exchange visits next year but perhaps make the Autumn visit before the clocks go back.

We're a small but, we hope, welcoming group. If you've played the recorder in the past and would like to play it again, please do contact us.

Sue Snell and Peter Stephenson

Walking Groups



All appear to have hung up their boots for a few weeks — more info next month



GROUP MEETINGS

Here you will find some information about the Interest Groups available to our members. If you are a potential new member, and are interested in joining any of our groups, please contact our committee members on the emails below:

Group-coordinator@fairfordu3a.org.uk

MembershipSec@fairfordu3a.org.uk

or see our website at www.fairfordu3a.uk

Activity	Leader	Information
AI Explorers	Joanna and Ray Petty	Monthly Thursday mornings in Fairford Community Centre. Group currently full.
Ancient Greek 	Peter Hewes 01285 712200	Weekly Wednesdays from 2.30pm. Meet in leader's home. Need some prior knowledge. Contact leader if a beginner.
Art Appreciation	Brian Etheridge	Towards the end of each month; as advised on email.
Birds, Botany and Bugs 	Mick Jones	Third Friday of the month.
Boccia 	Ann Wightman Jackie Ephgrave	Weekly Thursdays 1.30pm to 3pm in Fairford Community Centre. Winter Group only.
Book Circle 1	Jo Stichbury	Second Tuesday 2pm to 4pm. Meet in members' homes.
Book Circle 2	Jane Pugh	Second Tuesday 2pm to 4pm. Meet in members' homes.
Bridge Improvers 	Margaret Bishop	Mondays 2pm to 4pm (except Bank Holidays and August) - at Fairford Community Centre. Cost £2 per session including refreshments: Anyone who plays bridge and would like to improve is welcome, partners provided.
Classical Civilisations	Peter Hewes 01285 712200	We meet at 3.30 pm on the second Friday of each month to discuss pieces written by Ancient Greek or Classical Latin authors. All extracts in English, no ancient language knowledge required. We welcome new members but please first contact Peter to find out more.
Computer	Nick Humphris	Weekly on a Tuesday from 10am. Meet in leader's home.
Creative Writing	Jocelyn Wishart	Weekly on a Wednesday 10am to 11.30am on Zoom for 3 weeks then in members' homes once a month. New members welcome.

GDPR requirement: To protect personal identity, members' contact details may have been omitted. Members can contact their Group Leaders by logging in and accessing details from the u3a website at <https://www.fairfordu3a.uk>

GROUP MEETINGS

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Activity	Leader	Information
Cycling	Pete McHugh	Thursdays. Meeting as pre-arranged. Distance varies from 25 to 40 miles.
Five Rhythms Dance	Jane Davies Meriel McHugh	Third Tuesday of the month, at 10.30am to 11.30am in the Palmer Hall. New members welcome.
French Conversation 1	Sandra Cannock	First (or second if it's a Bank Holiday) and third Monday from 11am to 12noon in the Barker Room at the Community Centre. Group full.
French Conversation 2	Julie Whittering	Weekly on a Monday, 11am to 12noon. Meeting in members' homes.
French Conversation 3	Alison Wilson	Weekly on a Monday, 11am to 12noon. Meeting in members' homes.
Garden Group	Beth Dennis	Fourth Thursday in the month. Meet in Fairford Car park. Time variable (see notices).
Geology	Clive Watson	First Wednesday from 2.30pm in the Chapel, Milton Street.
Italian	Zehra Ipek Williamson	Weekly on a Monday at 2pm in the leaders home. Will move to the Community Centre if numbers increase. New members welcome.
Italian for Beginners	Bea Bostock	Weekly on Monday at 2.15pm at the leaders house. Currently has free spaces.
Latin 1, 2 &3	Peter Hewes 01285 712200	There are three groups studying Latin: Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced. We welcome new members but please contact Peter to work out which group would suit you best.
Listening to Music	Sylvia Jones	Meets in a member's home on the third Friday of the month at 2pm during winter and at 2.30pm during summer.
Mah Jong	Paul Saddington	Second and fourth Thursdays from 10am to 12noon in Fairford Community Centre.
Model Club	Graham Hall	Weekly Thursday 10am at Horcott Lake.

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Pétanque 1 and 2	Geoff Dennis	10.00—12.00 Tuesdays and Wednesdays at the Cricket Club in Park Street.
PopDance	Mervyn Cully	Monthly - 2nd Tuesday at 2.30 pm. Party room at the back of Plough PH.
Postcards	Alison Hobson	Third Tuesday at 2.30pm every two months in members' homes.
Recorders	Sue Snell and Peter Stephenson	Second and fourth Friday from 2pm. Fairford Community Centre, Heritage Room.
Rummikub	Sally White	Held in the Heritage room on the third Thursday in the month from 2pm to 4pm. The cost is £2 per session. We would welcome a few new members, no experience necessary.
Scottish Reels	Carol Thompson	Wednesdays 8pm to 10pm in Poulton Village Hall during Winter. New members welcome but must contact group leader in advance.
Short Tennis	Mike Middleton	Weekly. Monday from 3pm to 5pm in the Palmer Hall
Solos	Mike Johnson	Meet in Beaumoor on the first Monday each month at 2.30pm. Group closing January 2026.
Solos2	Jennie Sanford	Various outings each month i.e. visits, shops, theatre/cinema or places of interest. Monthly Sunday lunch, or just somewhere for coffee, all months variable
Stitching and Knitting	Jan Mills	First Wednesday from 12.45pm to 2.15pm in Fairford Community Centre, Heritage Room.
Straddlers	Pete and Meriel McHugh	Fourth Tuesday. See the Walking Groups page for more information
Striders	Pete and Meriel McHugh	Third Thursday. See the Walking Groups page for more information
Strollers	Geoff and Beth Dennis	Fourth Friday. See the Walking Groups page for more information
Table Tennis 1 and 2	Alan Topham 01285713928	Weekly Wednesday 2.30pm to 3.30pm. Weekly Friday 10.30am to 11.30am. In Fairford Community Centre. Groups currently full.
Table Tennis 3	Jo Stichbury	Weekly Friday 11.45am to 12.45pm in the Community Centre
Yoga	Liz Stuart	1st, 2nd and 4th Thursdays in Fairford Community Centre. 10.30am to 11.30am.

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