



u3a
Learn, laugh, live

Fairford and District u3a
Special Bulletin No 8
November 2020

March 2026
Issue 325

Chairman's Report

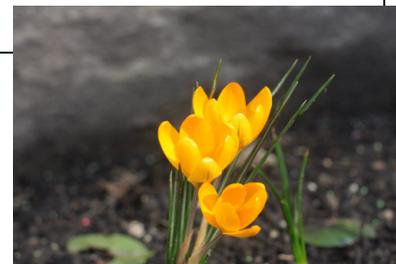
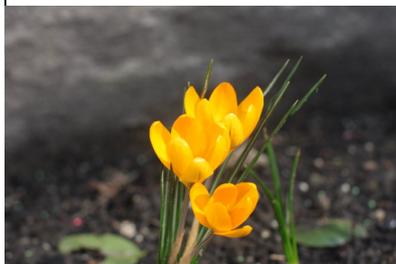
May I firstly apologise for the fact that I will not be at this month's meeting in the Palmer Hall as I will be away, but I'm sure you won't miss me as I will leave you in the capable hands of Kate and Steph.

However, I won't miss the opportunity for yet another plea for some more members to join our committee. While it is nice to feel that you don't want to kick us out and put someone else in place, please remember that 'once we have served three years' it's time to move on and let someone else have their say. I have been a member of u3a for about 20 years but have learnt so much more about the organisation in the last few years since I became involved with the committee.

Come on, the closing date for nominations is 9th March in order to give us the time to circulate the voting forms for those who cannot attend the AGM, receive the responses and count the votes. We are looking for a webmaster and at least one ordinary committee member.

Don't forget that our committee meetings are open to members to attend so come along and see how it works. Just let Steph know you would like to come along so that we can make sure there is enough room. (secretary@fairfordu3a.org.uk)

John Lang



www.fairfordu3a.uk

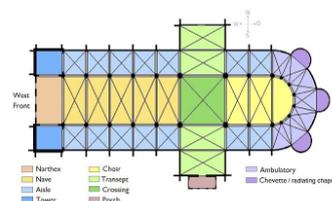
Registered Charity No 1072658

Palmer Hall, London Road, Fairford at 2.30pm

SPEAKER FOR TUESDAY 3 March 2026

Our speaker for 3rd March is The Reverend Dr. Nicholas Henderson who will tell us "How to Read an English Country Church".

The passage of time, movements, cultures and peoples affect the architecture and art forms evident in many of our older English country churches. From the pre-Christian era, through the arrival of the Romans and onwards to the Sixteenth Century and the Tudors, simple indicators are given how to identify churches with Roman and Saxon origins. Romanesque and Gothic architecture that followed the invasion of the Normans is also explained.



Sue Martin



Welcome to our new members:

Alison Godsal	Geoff Warren
Chris Withers	Jacqueline Short
Freda Crane	Sarah Lovat

Teas at General Meetings



March	- Computer
April	- Creative Writing

Please send items for the

April Issue

by **17 March**

to

editor@fairfordu3a.org.uk

Would you like to join our u3a?

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



Editor this month — Sarah Bottomley
 Editor next month — Jocelyn Wishart



Fairford and District u3a February Meeting Report

The Questionable History of the TV Quiz Show

On Tuesday February 5th Jeff Evans a journalist and television historian gave us a talk on the history of the television quiz show. It started soon after the birth of public broadcasting began in the USA in the early 1930s, when broadcasting was live: a spelling bee. Employers versus their secretaries and was fairly successful. WWII meant no television broadcasts. In the late 1940s there was a form of Twenty Questions on USA television using celebrities. In 1950 the BBC imported "What's My Line" from the USA where celebrities tried to guess someone's occupation. Introduced in 1952, "Puzzle Corner", gave a chance to people outside the London area to take part. An area of the country would be chosen and this was advertised in the Radio Times. You were invited to put a page of the Radio Times in your front window on the morning of the broadcast so that you may be chosen to appear on the show that evening. The radio show "Brain of Britain" was televised in 1955 with the title "What Do You Know" which became "Ask Me Another" one of its regular participants Ted Moulton became quite famous.

1955 was also the year ITV started broadcasting. "Take Your Pick" with Michael Miles in charge and Hughie Green with "Double Your Money". This meant people could win goods or money for the first time. Both quiz shows were very successful, often full of humour. For instance, a lady had answered her three general questions correctly, so Michael Miles gave her a choice of ten doors, she could have the key to one. There were unknown prizes behind each door. Three had booby prizes. The lady opened a door and on being told she had won a rolling pin, she assumed it was a booby. She was then told she had to collect it from the top of the State Building in New York. Both quiz shows ended in 1968 when the ITV franchises ran out. "Double Your Money" had eventually been allowed to double up to £1,000. Meanwhile in the USA, in the 1950s, there were allegations of cheating by the producers of the \$64,000 Question Quiz. Contestants had been coming back week after week accumulating huge sums of money and huge audiences. Producers began to feed the answers to the contestant until one reached \$127,000. The show had another huge accumulator, and the previous contestant blew the whistle. This instigated a national investigation which found all the US quiz shows were manipulating results. Many new regulations were introduced. In this country it was found that contestants in "Twenty-One" were helped by being given a reading list.

In 1962, "The Future of Sound Radio and Television", a report headed by Lord Pilkington was published. It was said that fear and greed was largely the driving forces of the quizzes and £1000 was to be the top prize allowed. Along came prestige instead of big prizes: 1962, "University Challenge" and "Sixth Form Challenge", the latter became "Top of the Form". In 1972, the BBC added "Mastermind" broadcast at 11pm which meant a small audience. However, "Mastermind" replaced a "Casanova Comedy" which was forced off the air by a Mary Whitehouse led campaign and it got the 8pm slot. The ITV equivalent, seen as a competitor with "Mastermind" was "The Krypton Factor" which ran from 1977-1995. ITV also introduced "Fifteen to One". Jeff took part in a revival in 2016 for £40,000. He did not win.

In 1971, "Sale of the Century" with Nicholas Parsons, where if you were able to collect points week after week let us say 4, this would allow you to win a car worth £4,000, there was a lot of pressure to change the £1,000 per show rule. Another style of quiz was the 1970 "A Question of Sport" using well known sports personalities, it ran for 55 years. There were spin offs for example "Tele Addicts" and in 1998, "Who Wants to be a Millionaire". The idea was rejected several times as being too easy and therefore too costly, too many winners. Eventually the head of ITV was persuaded to take part in a test to see how you might react when you might lose money you have already won. Using his own money £250 he could lose that or win £250. He soon realised the anxiety of possibly losing money put pressure on you. So, the show still has large audiences therefore a large revenue.

An enthralling talk especially as I had watched three quizzes the night before.

Pam Spencer

Membership Renewal - Final Reminder

If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2026 to 2027, you are reminded that payment was due on 1 February 2026. The final date for renewing your membership is March 6th after which your membership will lapse.

Full details of how to renew can be found in reminder emails sent to you by the membership secretary and also on the website at <https://fairfordu3a.uk/membership-renewal/>

Sue Snell (Membership Secretary)

Introducing Absentee Voting for Our AGM

We are pleased to let members know about an important update to our Annual General Meeting (AGM) voting process.

If you are **UNABLE** to attend the AGM in person, you will now have a straightforward alternative way to cast your vote. This year, we will be introducing **absentee voting**, which will replace the previous proxy voting system. The Committee believes this change will make the voting process simpler, fairer, and more accessible for all members.

How It Will Work

Our AGM will take place on Tuesday 7th April. If you are planning to attend the AGM in person, you should **not complete the online voting form**. You will be able to vote as usual at the meeting.

Seven days before the AGM, members with email access will receive a voting email containing all the necessary information and instructions on how to cast their vote. Votes submitted in advance will be counted **two days before the AGM**, allowing the results to be prepared for the meeting.

Members Without Email Access

We want to ensure that every member has the opportunity to participate. For those who do not use email, a paper voting form will be sent by post in good time, with instructions on how to return it.

We hope this new system will make participation in the AGM easier and encourage as many members as possible to take part in the decision-making of our u3a. If you have any questions about the new process, please do not hesitate to contact the Secretary (secretary@fairfordu3a.org.uk).

We look forward to seeing you on Tuesday 7th April.

Stephanie North

Group Reports

AI Explorers Fairford Group - February meeting

Our second AI Explorers session on Thursday 5th February was a lively success, with 17 curious minds gathered at Fairford Community Centre to tackle the noble quest of 'The Importance of Good Prompting'.

We discovered that talking to AI is a bit like talking to humans — clarity helps, and vague instructions can lead to... interesting results. The day is perfectly captured by a poem our AI companion produced. Its grammar may wander off occasionally, but its enthusiasm is undeniable:

The Art of Prompting

*Joanna and Ray led the way,
Showing how prompts make AI obey.
Persona, Context, Task, and Format—
Vague requests can end in combat.
Measure your words, cut once, cut right,
And watch your AI creations take flight!
Think ahead, plan each line and cue,
Then watch your stories feel fresh and new.
Your friends will marvel at what you can do!*

If this glimpse into the machine mind has sparked your curiosity, good news — we're launching a second AI Explorers Group in March. We'll run three intro sessions, from 10:30-11:30am to bring Group 2 up to speed with our first Group on:

Monday 9 March
Tuesday 7 April
Monday 11 May.

We do have a few spaces on these sessions, so contact us if you're interested. From June we'll switch to a monthly AI Explorers Workshop for everyone, meeting on the second Thursday of each month. These will be relaxed, informal gatherings to share tips, videos, news and general AI chatter — with coffee and biscuits, naturally.

Joanna and Ray Petty

Creative Writing

Apologies, there's little to share from the Creative Writing group this month, we're currently immersed in the 1930s plotting a novel that will go on to span several decades. Not sure whether it'll ever get written but it's already proving to be a fascinating learning experience.

Jocelyn Wishart



Group Reports

Book Circle 1 (January)

Our read was 'Keeping your Heart healthy' by Boon Lim.

A pertinent read in January after the indulgences of Christmas. A very different type of read for the group.

Dr Lim a leading Cardiologist describes heart conditions and treatments in understandable terms. His enthusiasm for heart health comes through in the text with his encouragement and suggestions that people can practice to aid this. At the end of the book, he states that his ideal world is 'one in which the public puts me out of business as a cardiologist because they've adapted the sort of lifestyle choices that keep the heart robust and healthy'.

This book led to much discussion. One found it difficult to read others found it interesting, enjoyable and providing common-sense advice. Worth the read.

Sheila Beer

Book Circle 1 (February)

The Lost Children by Mary MacCracken.

This book, (the first of four by Mary MacCracken on the same subject) relays her early experience working with children so emotionally disturbed they cannot fit into society. Set in the 1960s, it follows her first steps into teaching, her work and that of the school to shape the lives of children struggling to cope with everyday life and gain acceptance. The book generated a lot of discussion in the group. We would have liked more information about some of the characters and relationships and felt the ending was rather abrupt, but we all agreed it was an interesting read.

Tracey Montgomery



Book Circle 2

We read The Whalebone Theatre by Joanna Quinn.

This is a glorious book, set in the confines of the fictional Chilcombe estate in the Dorset countryside, between the World Wars. It follows the fortunes of the Seagrave family, the laissez faire upper class adults and their free-range children who survive a regime of benign neglect.

Cristabel Seagrave, the oldest child, along with Flossie and Digby, discover a dead whale on the beach and she claims it as her own. The bleached jawbones become the entrance to her makeshift theatre in the grounds of the house. Many adventures follow until World War Two, when the children become part of the war effort as young adults.

Everyone in the group really enjoyed this novel very much. We were all surprised it is Joanna Quinn's first novel as it is very well written and researched .

Lynn Thornhill

Group Reports

Postcards group

At the January postcards meeting, we spent a few moments sharing memories of Liz Hope who will be sorely missed.

Then we set off round the world visiting Fort Jesus in Kenya, built by the Portuguese, the French Quarter, New Orleans, Florence, Mount Fuji, and Florida and in this country Folkestone, Felixstowe, Falmouth, Freshwater, Fisherman's beach, Sheringham, Farleigh Bridge, Maidstone, Fylingdales and Fritton Church near Great Yarmouth with its round tower. Other subjects included fans, a Fiat advert and some fascinating postcards made of gramophone records, which once could be played but have now warped.

'Firsts' were a rocket propelled bicycle (it exploded!), the first hovercraft to cross the English Channel and the first air service from Gatwick to Le Bourget in 1935. This aircraft was later sold by British Airways to Spanish Nationalists but crashed on its way there.

Poem by AI ChatGPT from the meeting report :

At January's meeting, we paused for a while,
Remembering Liz with a fond, gentle smile.
Her kindness and stories will long stay in view—
We'll miss her but cherish the friendship we knew.

Then off round the world our postcards did roam,
From Fort Jesus to Florence, far away from home;
Gulf coast's sunshine, Mount Fuji's white crown,
And Florida's beaches where waves tumble down.

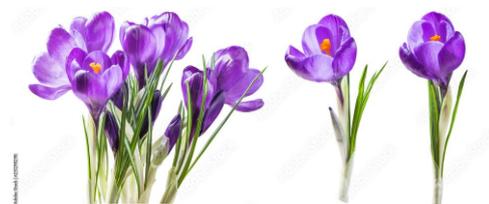
Back home we wandered through coastal delight—
Folkestone to Falmouth, all sparkling bright;
Sheringham's sands, Fritton Church's round tower,
Each postcard a window, a moment, an hour.

We chuckled at "firsts" both daring and strange—
A rocket bike (boom!) and the hovercraft's range.
A flight from Gatwick to Paris once flew—
With postcards, the world always feels new.

Next time in March, we'll travel again—
With "G" or with Ireland, through sunshine or rain.
So come join the circle, bring stories to share,
It's the company that counts when the postcards are there.

The next meeting is on 17th March, contact Alison Hobson for details.

Alison Hobson



Information for Upcoming Meetings

Please contact the group leaders if you are interested in joining any of the groups, or visit www.fairfordu3a.uk for further information.

Birds, Botany and Bugs

Friday 20 March

This month we are taking a trip to the Forest of Dean in search of hawfinch and other woodland species, meet in the car park for 08:10 sharp, lunch at Kaplans cafe Coleford, good walking boots and warm waterproofs. If once again the weather takes a turn for the worst, I will sort the arrangements on the Tuesday.

Mick and Jo Jones

Garden Group

Thursday 26 March

This month we are going to The Living Rain Forest near Newbury. OAP rate is £17.50 and we have to book. It is open from 10 - 5pm, and we will be making an afternoon visit.

Please let me know if you are interested in coming.

Beth Dennis

Pétanque

Now that the rain has abated somewhat, numbers playing each day have increased. The piste has settled down over the winter so far, but perhaps a new top dressing might improve it as the seasons change?

Play takes place at 10am to midday on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and new members would be welcome. For beginners, there are sets of boules available for a try out. Come along and enjoy the open air.

Geoff Dennis 01285 712195

Postcards Group

Friday March 17

At the next meeting the choice is letter 'G' or, as it's St Patrick's Day, Ireland. We also had the suggestion that it would be interesting to compare newer postcards (or photographs) with older postcards of the same view as and when they could be found.

We would welcome new members; you don't have to have many postcards but it is a very pleasant, sociable afternoon with many stories to go along with the postcards.

Please contact Alison Hobson for further details.



Walking Groups

Walk leaders- please specify the length of the walk in your description.



Straddlers Tuesday 24 March

This is a walk of about 6.5 miles starting in Lower Slaughter. Our route takes us in a clockwise direction out to the Macmillan Way, along the River Windrush towards Harford Bridge and then on to Upper Slaughter. From here we take the Wardens Way back to our starting point.

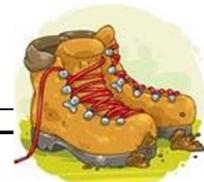
The terrain comprises a mix of country lanes, bridleways, tracks and fields. There are two short uphill sections, one of which is relatively steep (sticks are recommended). There are also a couple of stiles on the route.

Parking in Lower Slaughter is likely to be limited so we suggest arriving there at 9.30am and beginning the walk at 9.45. Meet in Fairford car park to leave at 8.50am or on Copehill Road by the Parish Church (GL54 2HR or w3w slide.raven.alarmed) at 9.30am. Car sharing is advised and the suggested travel contribution is £2.00.

For those wishing to enjoy a coffee and cake after the walk, we can return via The Old Prison at Northleach on our way back to Fairford.

Please let us know if you intend to come and where you will be meeting us.

Jerry and Tracey



Striders Walk Thursday 19 March

This is a walk of just over 5 miles on a combination of canal towpath, disused railway lanes and various trails. The terrain is flat with 2 low stiles and may be muddy so gaiters are advised.

We start at The Greyhound, Siddington (car park W3W staring.firms.innovate) and walk to view the impressive disused Siddington locks. We join the Thames and Severn canal towpath to link with the disused railway and pass through South Cerney. We rejoin the disused railway to return to The Greyhound for lunch.

Meet at the Fairford car park at 10:00 for a 10:10 departure or at The Greyhound car park at 10:30. Suggested travel contribution is £0.50.

Please let me know where you will be meeting and if you will be staying for lunch.

Depending on numbers we may have to pre order meals.

Paul Gardner

Strollers Friday 27 March

The walk this month will start and finish at the Trout Inn, Lechlade, and will cover 2½ miles of tracks and paths. Good shoes will be necessary in case of damp patches.

Meet at the car park at 10.30am or at the pub at 10.45am.

Geoff Dennis 01285 712195

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 & Ray Petty	Monthly Thursday mornings in Fairford Community Centre. Some spaces available.
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) - Farmor Room 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 01285712200	We meet at 3.30pm 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>

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 its a Bank Holiday) and third Monday from 11am to 12noon in the Barker Room at the Community Centre.
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 	Geoff 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 leader's 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 leader's 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.
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.

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Activity	Leader	Information
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
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 01285 713928	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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