

Fairford and District

u3a



June 2026
Issue 328

Chairman's Report

Anyone who failed to come to either of the last couple of monthly meetings missed a real treat. Firstly, Richard Rickett gave us a fascinating presentation on the life of the honey bees and even had some pots of his honey for sale afterwards. I hope that the thought of sitting through the AGM didn't discourage you from attending but we did get through it in double quick time.

The meeting in May was another great success when Francis Burroughes gave us a talk on glass all the way through from ancient times to more modern works of art, mostly focused on Bristol Blue glass. Thanks to Sue Martin for finding such excellent speakers.

The Palmer Hall has recently upgraded the audio-visual equipment. The new projector and screen should result in clearer brighter pictures and we hope that the sound system upgrade will shortly follow on.

I commented recently about the fact that u3a is not as well-known as we would hope, so we will use opportunities to make ourselves known. We will be attending the town meeting on 16th May, and probably the festival in early June. We are also planning an open day in the Community Centre for September when we hope to encourage visitors to the market to pop in and say hello.

June is traditionally a month when many seniors like us take a short holiday before the crowds come out in July. If that applies to you, may I wish you a warm and relaxing time.

John Lang



www.fairfordu3a.uk

Registered Charity No 1072658

Palmer Hall, London Road, Fairford at 2.30pm

SPEAKER FOR TUESDAY 2 June 2026

Our speaker for 2nd June is Alexandra Stanbrook who will tell us about the History of Hats and some Hilarious ones. The talk will cover hats through the ages, the original reasons why they were worn, trends through the ages as well as lots of interesting facts with a touch of humour.

Sue Martin



No new members notified this month

Teas at General Meetings



June — Five Rhythms Dance
July — French Conversation 1
August — no meeting

Please send items for the
July/August Issue
by **17 June**
to
editor@fairfordu3a.org.uk



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

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/>

Fairford and District u3a May Meeting Report

At our meeting on the 5th May, Francis Burroughes gave us a fascinating talk on the history of glass.

Francis Burroughes used to make glass in Bristol. The first of many exhibits passed round to illustrate a great talk was a Victorian necklace of obsidian glass beads. Obsidian is a natural thin layer of glass formed 700 million years ago. The first manmade glass was produced 3,000 years ago by the Syrians, then soon the Egyptians made glass jewellery so that their middle class could copy the real gems of the upper class.



We were shown small vases made in clay moulds dating back to the 14th century BC. The Romans were blowing glass from 100BC, it was still opaque and bubbled; you need 1400°C to get bubble free glass. We don't find much Roman glass compared with pottery; it was expensive to make and they recycled it.

Venice at the end of the spice and silk routes attracted the eastern glassmakers, who settled on Murano Island, safe away from the wooden city. Some of these makers emigrated, escaping Venetian laws, and set up glass making works across Sussex using the, then plentiful, supplies of timber for fuel and the many patches of sand as raw material.

Five centuries later in 1615, glassmaking in Sussex became illegal, the wood was needed for shipbuilding. Glassmakers moved to Southwark, Newcastle and Hotwells (Bristol), where they had access to supplies of coal

The Bristol founder was Edward Dagney; his glass was still opaque. By 1685, Ravenscroft, after 15 years of experimentation, produced clear flint glass. He added lead which meant it could be more easily cut. Ireland was making very heavy cut glass pieces by the mid-1700s. Isaac Jacobson, using cobalt coming through Bristol port for the Staffordshire potters, rediscovered how to make a blue glass.

Thus BRISTOL BLUE.

Pam Spencer



Group Reports

AI Explorers: Old Photos, New Tricks!

Last week, Fairford U3A's AI Explorer group ran two sessions on 11th and 14th May, looking at how AI can help us create and edit images.

There was plenty of fun to be had tweaking old photographs, improving faded pictures, and even colourising black-and-white images. We quickly discovered, though, that AI needs a careful eye. While it can brighten, sharpen, and enhance a photo beautifully, we agreed it is important not to let it change people's faces or alter who they really are.

We also talked about a useful free app called PhotoScan, which can be used on a smartphone to take a good digital image of an old printed photograph. Once captured, the image can then be edited, refined, or gently restored using AI tools.

Another important topic was privacy. We discussed how some free AI models may use chats, images, or prompts as learning data, because AI companies need human data to improve their systems. It was a useful reminder to think before uploading anything personal or sensitive.

Overall, the sessions were fun, practical, and full of "wow!" moments — with just the right amount of caution mixed in. Here's the traditional AI-created limerick:

There once was a photo quite faded,
That AI very kindly upgraded.
But we said, "Mind the faces —
Keep people in places!"
And no mystery aunties created!

Our next AI Explorer session will be on Thursday 4th June at 10:30am. We look forward to seeing you there!

Joanna Petty

Solos2 Activities in May

Our Meeting this month was Saturday 2nd May at The Bull.

Sunday 17th May Lunch at The George Kempford.

Thursday 28th May. Cream Tea at Stratton House Hotel Cirencester.

Sunday May 31st. Weymouth Trip .

Jennie Sanford



Group Reports

Book Circle 1

Inspector Imanishi Investigates – Seicho Matsumoto.

Fair to say this was not a popular choice of novel. Most of the group struggled with the reading experience itself. The biggest obstacle was keeping track of the cast of characters, the multiple investigators, witnesses, suspects and family connections. For readers unfamiliar with Japanese naming conventions or social structures of the period, the confusion only increased as the plot unfolded.

The translation also became a major point of discussion. It occasionally felt formal to the point of awkwardness. It was difficult to tell whether this was faithful to the original tone or simply a dated translation.

Inspector Imanishi Investigates may prove rewarding. For our club though, the confusing cast, stilted translation, and densely complicated plotting made it a challenging rather than pleasurable read. The only person who enjoyed it was the person who suggested it and she's read another by the same author and will read others!

Kate Stephenson



Book Circle 2

Picnic at Hanging Rock by Joan Lindsay 1967

Born in Melbourne, Australia in 1896, Joan Lindsay was 70 when she wrote this book which presents an unsolved mystery and has become both a bestseller and source of many theories right up to today. In 1967 it was made into a film still available on Amazon Prime / Netflix

Her publisher told her to cut out the final chapter which she did - a stroke of genius as the unfinished nature of the tale has produced a storm of conflicting ideas from the public. Eventually the author released her final chapter to her publisher, which was only to be disclosed on her death. Mistress of Mystery!

The tale is written with such skill that settings and characters can haunt the memory of readers for years.

We discussed at length and were glad to finish with a cup of tea.

Jane Pugh May 2026

Group Reports

Solos2

We went on a couple of outings in April.

Firstly we went on a 'Tour of the Stores' at Northleach (near the prison). It was very interesting. There were about a dozen of us on the tour, that is all that can be managed safely. Caroline took us around what is quite a big area (barn/shed and a couple of floors) It was a bit of a squeeze sometimes.

Things from the obvious like archaeological artefacts from Roman and old English graves and ruins, to household utensils from the 18th century and onwards. Bones formed a fair amount, a young man showed us a Roman skull which proved he had had sinus problems! That is the owner of the skull, not the young man showing it to us! It was all very good. We then strolled down to the prison for a nice lunch.

Even the drive there and back was good. Some lovely sunshine and beautiful scenery.

Our next outing was a drive out to Aston Pottery. Their lunches are always worth going for. Not too many flowers yet but they will be having a beautiful display soon I am sure. They have some unusual things for sale. Some are pricey but, if you look, others quite reasonable. Upstairs in the 'kiddies' department things are more reasonable and unusual. Wrapping paper and cards, books and knick-knacks.

The drive home was spoiled by the dreaded 'road-works'. I think we went round in circles before we finally got home. Another good day out though.

Jo Stichbury



A lovely day out visiting the bluebells at Coleshill last month

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

Tuesday 16 June

A trip to either Slimbridge for, maybe, bittern and common crane chicks, or a return to RSPB Otmoor for possible bittern and a wide range of species, depending on the weather and what's being seen where! Will update everyone on the day.

Mick Jones

Five Rhythms Group

Have you ever wanted to dance like nobody is watching?

Five Rhythms is a safe, welcoming, and non-judgemental space to explore movement. There are no right moves, no choreography to learn and no set steps. This is not a dance class; it is a space to explore your own authentic movement through the five rhythms: Flowing, Staccato, Chaos, Lyrical and Stillness.

We have a few spaces available so if you would like to join us, we meet just once a month at the Palmer Hall. All you need to bring is yourself, comfortable clothes, non-slip shoes and water if required.

If you wish to join us, please email me for more details.

Jane Davies
janedav09@gmail.com

Solos2

Next Meeting Saturday 6th June @ 11.00 at The Bull.

Jennie Sanford





Walking Groups

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



Straddlers Walk Tuesday 23 June 2026

This is an approximately 8.5-mile circular walk in the River Leach area, starting from the village hall car park in Southrop. The terrain is gently undulating with no steep climbs and only a few stiles.

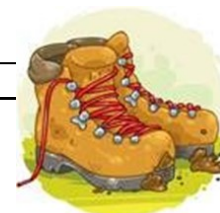
There is around 1.5 miles of quiet Cotswold road walking, but the route is mostly along footpaths, tracks, and bridleways. There is one river crossing via stepping stones, which may be muddy and a little tricky.

The route follows a clockwise direction from Southrop, passing the old Southrop airfield and through Macaroni Woods. After a short stretch of road past a large farmhouse, we take a footpath on the left to join the Roman road, Akeman Street. From there, we continue across Macaroni Downs, cross the River Leach, and arrive at Eastleach. The return leg follows a riverside footpath back to Southrop village hall car park, with a short detour through the Thyme Estate.

Meet at 9:40am at Fairford car park or 10:00am at Southrop Village Hall car park where we will meet you. Please bring drinks, snacks, and a packed lunch.

After the walk, you are warmly invited to join us at our home (just a 2-minute walk from the village hall) for tea, coffee, cake. Please let us know if you intend to come.

Philip and Dorothy



Striders Walk Thursday 18 June

A circular walk from Kempford, up to 6 miles, starting from the George pub in Kempford. We travel along minor roads, tracks, green lanes and fields past the old quarry workings, now lakes, with lots of wildlife, before emerging into Whelford. From there we take the footpath/cycle path back towards Kempford, before diverting off towards Dunfield.

We return to Kempford via fields and pavement through Kempford back to the George. There are no stiles and the route is flat. The route can be shortened to around 4.5 miles for those unable to manage the full 6 miles.

Meet at Fairford car park by 9:30am or go direct to the George (GL7 4EQ) for 9:45am. Parking at the pub. Meal arrangements to be confirmed nearer the time. Suggest a travel contribution of £1 each.

Keith & Jacqui Howlett

Strollers Walk Friday 26 June

This month's walk will be starting and finishing at the car park next to the Cotswold Outdoor Shop, Spine Road, South Cerney. Lunch will be taken in the cafe next to the shop.




Please meet at the car park in Fairford at 10.30am or at the Outdoor Shop car park at 10.50am. The walk will be along canal paths and along streamside paths for about 3 miles.

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 	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 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 in the Barker Room at the Community Centre. Note change of venue

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
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
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.

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>