



September 2026
Issue 330

Chairman's Report

Phew – what a scorcher !!

After the wet and windy June, it was great to see the warmer weather arrive in July but I think we have all had too much of it by now and almost everything in the garden is just so dried out and the grass is now quite crunchy to walk on.

After my last report in July when I was praising the contribution made by Maureen Partington to the Special Interest Day, it was so very sad to learn that Maureen had passed away a couple of weeks later. We all send our condolences to her family.

Just before our last meeting, we had some good news from the Palmer Hall, that the installation of the new audio-visual system had been completed. Unfortunately, at that meeting we found that there were a couple of issues in the connection of our u3a microphone systems to the new hall equipment. The installation engineers had tried to solve it earlier in the day but were unable to resolve the matter in time. The engineers have since returned to site and further testing is being scheduled.

I am delighted to report that over the last two months we have been joined by 11 new members – Welcome all.

We continue to try to spread the word about u3a and encourage new members and we have arranged a New Members Showcase event in conjunction with Working 4 Wellbeing talking café on 30th September (10:00 – 12:00) in the Community Centre. We will have a number of our activity group leaders present and hope to encourage new members.

Finally, I am continuing to make a plea for a new webmaster. Martin Snell has continued to provide support but has previously stated that he won't continue for another year and wants to step down. There must be someone who is prepared to take on this role, it isn't difficult, doesn't take up much time and Martin will support you while you find your feet. If you feel that the role is still a bit daunting how about sharing it. I am sure we can make it work for you. So come on, step up and help us to keep going.

John Lang

Palmer Hall, London Road, Fairford at 2.30pm

SPEAKER FOR TUESDAY 8 September 2026

Our speaker for September will be Nigel Thompson with his talk entitled "Iberian Idyll".

Nigel will describe his journey through Northern Spain, taking in the beautiful city of Leon, some Gaudi architecture and then on to Northern Portugal visiting Guimaraes, City of Porto then down to Lisbon and Cascais. The return journey takes a different route via Salamanca, some battle sites where Wellington's troops took on the French, plus the most outstanding cathedral in Burgos.

Sue Martin



To our new member: Elizabeth Jefferies.

(Ten further new members were welcomed in July)

Teas at General Meetings



September — Yoga

October Not yet confirmed

November Not yet confirmed

Please send items for the
October Issue
by **17 September**
to
editor@fairfordu3a.org.uk

Maureen Partington

The newsletter editors are sad to announce that their co-editor Maureen Partington passed away this summer after a short illness. She was very involved with our u3a and contributed regularly to several groups as well editing the newsletter. She will be greatly missed.

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 July Meeting Report

Do you fancy being a film extra? If so, contact John Kinory our speaker at our July meeting. John gave us a talk about his experiences as a film extra which he has been doing for many years. I always thought it would be a boring experience but he assured us that it was not so, especially as there was a food wagon that was always open serving excellent food.

He gave us the definition of Extras as people who perform the background to supporting roles and provide ambiance, and the rules - to be on time, do what you are told and not to approach the stars of the show.

Of course, you need an Agent or preferably more than one, and they will have a complete description of you, your height, your build etc so that they can match you to the parts being offered. John has a large grey beard so has often been cast as a professor and a Bishop in 'The Crown'. The pay rates vary but a minimum of £125 a day whether you are used or not and don't forget the free food! The only snag is that you usually have to be on site by 6am regardless of how far you have had to travel to get to the site of the shoot.

He told us tales of the many shows he has been in from Midsummer Murders to the film Paddington and his occasional interaction with the stars.

An enjoyable afternoon.

Christine Blackwell

Caught in the act... of enjoying yourselves!

We're looking for photos of our members being creative, active, and having fun in our Interest Groups for our new membership drive.

No need for anything fancy — simple smartphone snaps are perfect. Natural moments are just what we're after!

Please make sure anyone recognisable is happy to be in the photo — or feel free to capture the activity without showing faces.

Send your photos to: membershipsec@fairfordu3a.org

Help us show just how enjoyable u3a can be!

Many thanks

Joanna Petty

Editor needed. Can you help us?

And then there were two ... Sarah Bottomley and Jocelyn Wishart are looking for more help with editing the newsletter every month.



This could also be an opportunity to redesign and rethink the newsletter moving on from Publisher as it loses support from Microsoft after October.

Perhaps you have a design or similar background and would like to explore a completely different format going forward? Or try something completely new.

If it's only every 3 or 4 times a year it's not too time – consuming and is fun to do. Please consider joining us. **We need you!**

Group Reports

AI Explorers Workshop

On 10th July we met for our AI Explorers workshop. I asked ChatGPT to write a poem celebrating our session - here it is!

On a Thursday in July, beneath a fiercely blazing sky,
Eleven AI Explorers gathered as the mercury climbed high.
With Joanna and Ray to guide us, we bravely took our place,
Hoping AI could help us cope with the heatwave's warm embrace!

We asked our AI companion to organise and compare,
It sorted all our answers out with calm and digital flair.
We shared a few surprises, a few laughs along the way,
And left a little wiser after a very enjoyable day.

Our next meeting is on Thursday 10 September.

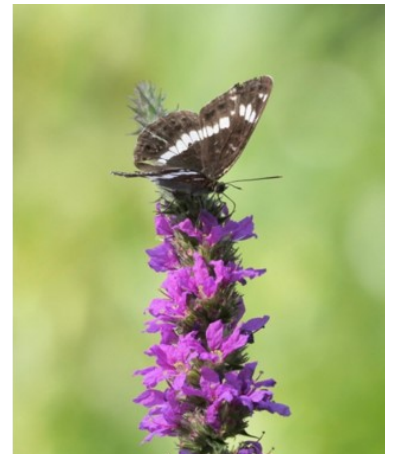
Joanna Petty

Birds, Botany and Bugs

July 10th Ravensroost Wood, very hot and sunny

Well, to say it was hot was a bit of an understatement! Still those who did come had a great day! Hundreds of butterflies, nineteen species seen, including the scarcer wood white, clouded yellow, small copper, brown argus, common and holly blue, white admiral, painted lady, dark green and silver-washed fritillaries. The meadows full of wildflowers (swathes of the scarce devils-bit scabious) and full of the commoner butterflies, numerous grasshoppers, dark bush and Roesel's bush crickets, several roe deer with fawns. The Odonata included banded demoiselle, common, southern and brown hawkers, emperor and the scarcer lesser emperor, four-spotted chaser, common and ruddy darters. Also, despite the heat, we still managed a few birds, red kite, buzzard, swift, great spotted woodpecker, swallow, song thrush, blackcap, chiffchaff, willow warbler, the rare marsh tit, nuthatch and jay. The day did end with cake on the route home!

Mick Jones



Group Reports

Book Circle 1

Raising Hare by Chloe Dalton Based on a true story.

Chloe Dalton was a political advisor who led a very busy life which included lots of travelling. In February 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, whilst walking in the country near her home, she came across an injured baby hare, a leveret.

Rather than letting nature take its course she decided to rescue the leveret, took it home and nursed it for several months till it was strong enough to be independent and survive on its own.

The story is about her relationship with the leveret for whom she felt great affection, and how she went to great lengths not to allow it to become domesticated so that one day it would be able to go back to its natural habitat and have a family of its own. In that she was successful.

Through her relationship with the hare, she began to re-evaluate her own life and values as she became more aware of the natural world and how modern farming methods were destroying the natural habitat of many small mammals.

The story was sympathetically written, and we had an interesting discussion about bringing wild animals into the home. Whilst the book was widely acclaimed in the literary world, we agreed that, whilst most of us enjoyed the style of writing, it was not a book we would have chosen to read. It did however make us stop and think about nature and how man is destroying the habitat of many creatures.

It made me want to watch out for hares in the natural world and I will look upon them more sympathetically having read this book. Unfortunately, I haven't as yet seen any.

Carole McDerment



Book Circle 2

I was pleased to know that everyone at the July meeting appeared to enjoy reading my choice: Freeze Frame by Peter May .

This award-winning author has written many novels set in Scotland, where he was born, and in France where he lives. Freeze Frame is set in France, where his forensic expert, Enzo MacLeod, investigates one of France's most confounding murders.

Everyone who read it at the book club said they had not solved the murder until the end of the story. Passion for detail was commented on and one person spoke about the detailed description of the harbour at Isle de la Croix, Brittany.

I found the book gripping throughout with a satisfactory ending. I hope more people will read it.

Pat Rainbow

Group Reports

Book circle 2

August

The book we read was The Housemaid by Freida McFadden; although this book was a commercial success and made into a film, the general consensus of our group was that it was a well-written novel but the story was not enjoyed by our members.

Juliana Watkins

Creative Writing

The Creative Writing Group has been working through a challenging time, what with the relentless heat and members away through both holiday and, more sadly, ill health. However, we are still planning on finishing our collaborative novel, a family saga set locally in the Cotswolds. I'm afraid it won't be out by Christmas this year though.

Well, not unless you'd like to join us and help? Many hands make light work 💡 and all that.

Jocelyn Wishart

MAHJONG

The Mahjong Group is looking for new players and would welcome you if you have never played the game before or are an experienced player.

We meet twice a month on the second and fourth Thursdays from 10am to 12noon in the Fairford Community Centre, ground floor Heritage Room.

This is an interesting Chinese game played with tiles rather than playing cards and is not dissimilar to playing Rummy or Whist. New players will be given lessons and will gradually learn the rules and different hands which makes it an interesting and challenging game that is easy to pick up.

This is a friendly group and we have refreshments and biscuits mid-morning. Cost is £1.50 per session. if you want to come along and have a go or would like more details, please contact

Paul Saddington

01367 253220 or paulsaddington@hotmail.com

Group Reports

Postcards Group

On a hot July afternoon, the postcards meeting's task was postcards with a connection to the letter 'I' but without the use of the word Isle or Island.

The Group rose to the challenge as to be expected. Abroad we visited Itzehoe, Ibiza, Innsbruck, Istanbul, Indonesia and Indian ladies in Ceylon (the post card was pre 1972). In the UK we visited Ireland, Ilfracombe, Ironbridge, Idwal in Wales and very locally the lovely Inglesham church. We also had advertisements for Ice Cream and IBM computers and my favourite, although rather a cheat, a Britten-Norman Islander aircraft of the Falkland Islands Government Air Service which had come 8,050 miles (12,955 km) by post to Buckinghamshire in 1994. It had a charming 34p stamp of rockhopper penguins.

The September meeting's task is the letter 'J'.

Alison Hobson

Solos 2

Solos had a busy time in August.

They visited Moreton in Marsh Garden Centre, had a cream tea at Stratton House Hotel, lunch at the Red Lion in Castle Eaton, went on a trip to Kew Gardens and finished with lunch at the Highwayman.

Jennie Sanders and Jackie Ephgrave



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 18 September

A trip to Slimbridge, should be plenty of waders and passage migrants, meet in the car park for 08:45, lunch up to the individual.

Friday 16 October

Probably a return to Slimbridge, hopefully the drought will be long over! We should start to see the first returning winter migrants, but if anywhere else looks good, I will let you know, meet in the car park for 08:50, lunch up to the individual.

Mick Jones

Postcards Group

The next meeting is on September 15th, the topic is postcards beginning with 'J'.

Please contact Alison Hobson for further information.

Solos2

Saturday 5 September

We will meet to plan the month ahead.

Already on the calendar: meet at the Greyhound on Sunday, 20 September

Jennie Sanford





Walking Groups

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



Straddlers walk Tuesday 22 September

This is a 7 mile walk starting from St Mary's Church in Bampton. Our route will take us to the Thames at Radcot Lock, from there we will walk along the river following the Thames Path to Rushey Lock before heading back to Bampton. This is a flat walk mostly over fields and tracks with around 7 stiles.

Meet at Fairford car park at 9:15 or 9:45 at St Mary's Church in Bampton.

Post code: OX18 2LZ

W3Words: frocks.loopholes.merchant

Suggested passenger contribution £1.00. Bring drinks, a snack and a packed lunch for the walk.

Derek and Robyn



Striders walk Thursday 17 September

This is a walk of about 5.2 miles starting at The Frogmill, Shipton Oliffe. Our route takes us out in a clockwise direction past Shipton Golf Course and then on towards the village of Foxcote and the Kilkenny Viewing Point before returning to The Frogmill.

The terrain comprises a mix of country lanes, bridleways, tracks and fields. There are two uphill sections which result in an overall climb of circa 500 feet, but these are generally on fairly low gradients. There is only one stile on the route.

Meet in Fairford carpark to leave at 9.10 or at The Frogmill car park (GL54 4HT or W3Words: rocky.undertone.decency) for a 10.00am start. There is plenty of parking but car sharing is normally available and the suggested travel contribution is £2.00.

After the walk we will be making a short 7-minute drive along the A40 to [Dunkertons Park](#) (Dowdeswell Park, London Road, Cheltenham GL52 6UT) for lunch. This venue has a rotating selection of independent eateries offering street food like pizzas, burgers, dim sum, tacos, and Filipino cuisine. It is not possible to reserve seating but there are normally plenty of tables available and you will order your chosen meal on arrival.

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

Jerry and Tracey

Strollers Walk Friday 25 September

Please contact the walk leader for details of this walk.

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 Cooper 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. Spaces available
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

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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 07342278974	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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