



**October 2026
Issue 331**

u3a
Learn, laugh, live

Chairman's Report

Was it only a month ago when I said the garden was dried out and crunchy? The weather at the moment feels as though we missed September along the way!! Although it has warmed up a bit just recently. Writing this in the middle of September is a couple of weeks ahead of our showcase/ taster day at the Community Centre, in conjunction with Working 4 Wellbeing (10:00-12:00 on the 30th). We are hopeful that some of our existing members will pop in and bring along some potential new members.

Palmer Hall.

The new Audio-Visual system at the Palmer Hall caused us a few headaches at the first meeting after installation when our microphones were connected. We carried out further testing in August/ September and all now seems to be working well. However, the loop system doesn't seem to be working as there is some interference. The loop system on its own works properly but problems arise when the AV system is on. Further testing is planned before our October meeting when we hope to have it fixed.

Webmaster

I am going to go on about this again because we cannot function without someone to deal with the Beacon system or the updating of the website. Is it fair to expect someone else to go on doing it after they have already given up time for you over a few years? We will also be needing a couple more committee members because some of us are due to stand down as our three years of duty are up in April next.

U3a survey

With the recent restructuring at the top of the Third Age Trust they wanted to get a better view about how members feel, so a large survey was commissioned and over 10,000 responses received. The answers to the questions looked like this:-

- 95% said that life had improved by being a member of u3a.
- 90% agreed with the opportunities to keep learning.
- 79% welcomed the expanded social connections.
- 77% agreed that their sense of wellbeing was improved.
- 66% said it helped them to stay mentally and physically active.
- 43% reported reduced feelings of loneliness and isolation.

So, it seems that we agree that u3a is good for us.

John Lang

www.fairfordu3a.uk

Registered Charity No 1072658

Palmer Hall, London Road, Fairford at 2.30pm

SPEAKER FOR TUESDAY 6th October 2026

Our speaker for Tuesday 6th October will be:

Evelyn Webb-Carter who will tell us about the Royal British Legion.

- How it started and how it developed over the years.
- The work it now does.
- The Poppy - the concept, the factory and the Appeal.
- The future.

Sue Martin



To our new members:

Malcom Youens
Donald and Sheila Culver
Jo Cloughley

Teas at General Meetings



October	Garden Group
November	Geology
December	Italian

Please send items for the

October Issue

by **17 September**

to

editor@fairfordu3a.org.uk

learn, laugh, live

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 — Jocelyn Wishart

Editor next month — Sarah Bottomley



Please consider sending us items for the newsletter—all news items relevant to Fairford and District considered. TIA.

Fairford and District u3a September Meeting Report

Iberian Idyll

Nigel Thompson took us on tour of the Iberian Peninsula around Northern Spain and Northern Portugal. From his photographs, the scenery is spectacular as is the architecture of the region.

He and his wife stayed in Paradors in Spain, converted historic buildings and the Portuguese equivalent, Pousadas. The public spaces are truly extraordinary even if the bedrooms are mostly in modern blocks

His highlights were the lesser-known buildings by the famous architect Gaudi and the spectacular cathedral at Burgos in North Spain. Nigel was also impressed by the stunning Sintra Hills in Western Portugal where the rich and famous have homes.

The Portuguese are very friendly and actually like us British, but then we are one of their oldest allies thanks to the marriage of John of Gaunt's daughter Philippa to King John I in 1387, Charles II's marriage to Catherine De Braganza, and fighting alongside them in the Napoleonic wars against the French. Portugal is also one of the more affordable European destinations.

By the end of his talk, I can only imagine an upsurge in bookings to this beautiful region of Spain and Portugal.

Kate Stephenson

Opportunity to take part in a research project on hearing loss

Nottingham University are looking for people who find it hard to hear speech in noisy places, including hearing aid users, to take part in an online training study. The study aims to improve two newly developed listening and thinking games designed to support people with hearing loss.

They will be testing the two new listening and thinking games in a programme called PLUS (Practice Listening and Understanding Speech). These training games were developed in collaboration with people with hearing loss in order to support everyday listening, including listening in noisy situations.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Nottingham Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

If you are interested in taking part please contact Natalie Lerigo-Smith, Lead Investigator and Helen Henshaw, Chief Investigator. T: 0115 8232606 E: helen.henshaw@nottingham.ac.uk.

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 each month.

This could also be an opportunity to redesign and rethink the newsletter as we move away from Publisher which will no longer be supported by Microsoft after October.

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

If there's three editors, it's only every 3 or 4 times a year so it's not too time-consuming and is fun to do. Please consider joining us.

We need you!



u3a CHESS GROUP



A new Fairford u3a Chess Group is being set up to replace the previous one which came to a halt during the Covid lockdowns.

We plan to meet at 2pm on the third Tuesday of every month in the Heritage Room at the Community Centre for two hours, starting on October 20th.

The plan is to have two large tables, each for up to eight players playing four games at any one time. So we are aiming for a Group membership of around ten. We currently have a few places available in the Group if you would like to join. The playing standard is expected to vary from "Beginner" to "Advanced" and everything in-between!

Experienced players will no doubt be happy to guide those new to the game and it's OK if you don't manage literally every meeting - just let us know.

The cost per meeting will be £3 cash per player to cover the cost of the room on the ground floor. Any surplus funds will be paid back to members. Toilets are nearby. Tea/coffee facilities also available.

Please apply for membership to: Gordon Lee on 07833 525 133 or email: lee4gordon@btinternet.com

Group Reports

AI Explorers Workshop

On 10th September our AI Explorers Group met after the summer break for our workshop that included learning more about AI models and comparing responses from different chatbots. We had a good session and Joanna asked ChatGPT for a poem to celebrate our work. The following is an original work by AI!

September brought us back again,
To see what's changed since we began.
From January's "What is AI?"
We've learned to question, test and try.
We compared chatbots, side by side,
And checked the answers they supplied.
We've learned, we've laughed, and had our fun —
And this AI journey's just begun!

Our next AI Explorers workshop is on 1st October - do note the change of date. We're also considering an excursion in November to the Amazon Fulfilment Centre in Swindon, to have a first-hand look at modern industrial AI and robotics.

Joanna and Ray Petty

Birds, Botany and Bugs

AUGUST 21ST, WWT SLIMBRIDGE, HOT AND SUNNY

We were not expecting too much today due to the prolonged drought! However, we did have a great start, seeing a little owl in the barns above the mill at Fairford!

Because of the low water levels we did well on wading birds: avocet, little and common ringed plovers, lapwing, dunlin, ruff, snipe, black-tailed godwits, curlew, spotted and common redshanks, greenshank, green, wood, and common sandpipers. The Ross's goose was with the barnacles, plenty of cormorants, with little and great egrets, and grey herons alongside many shelduck on the estuary.

Large numbers of migrating swallows, sand and house martins were present throughout the day. We also saw good numbers of yellow wagtails along with a few pied wagtails, a spoonbill, large numbers of gadwall and teal, a few shoveler and tufted ducks, little grebes, red kites, buzzards, sparrowhawk, kestrel and hobby. A dozen common cranes, Cetti's and reed warblers, chiffchaffs, goldfinches and linnets and plenty of migrant hawk dragonflies were also seen. Spotting a clouded yellow butterfly, a species new to one of the group, finished a very pleasant day's wildlife watching.

Mick Jones



Group Reports

Book Circle 1

Our book in August was 'Manifesto: The Battle for Green Britain' by Dale Vince.

The book combines autobiography with an argument for tackling climate change through changes to energy, transport, food and politics. It traces Vince's journey from living as a New Age traveller to founding the renewable energy company Ecotricity and pursuing other environmental projects. Vince proposes his practical solutions for reducing dependence on fossil fuels and creating a greener economy while highlighting the responsibility of business, government and schools to raise awareness and facilitate these. Overall, we found the book a bit of a 'dry' read, although it did contain some important messages.

Tracey Montgomery

Our next book was 'Everything You Need Is in the Library' by Michiko Aoyama

Our group thoroughly enjoyed Everything You Need Is in the Library. The plot revolves around a rather strange librarian giving book suggestions to a cast of characters that ultimately will change their lives for the better. She also gives them a felted toy, she makes them whilst staffing the Enquiry Desk, that has a bearing on the recipient's life and aspirations.

One of the aspects we liked most was the interconnected short story structure. Each chapter introduced different characters and situations, but their stories were cleverly woven together. The interconnected nature of the novel gave a more rewarding feel than the traditional collection of short stories. The author also managed to give life lessons without being preachy.

We found the writing engaging, thoughtful, and easy to become immersed in. Overall, everyone in the group agreed it was an enjoyable and worthwhile book club choice.

Kate Stephenson

Book Circle 2

The Correspondent by Virginia Evans

This book, about a 70-year-old woman who writes lots of letters, was not much noticed when it was first published but went on to become a bestseller and was awarded the Women's Prize for fiction. It prompted a lively discussion as we did not all agree. One member did not like it at all, and another did not like the letter-writer. But most of us admired the way the author had used the form to portray this woman and her family relationships.

Miriam Scott



Group Reports

Creative Writing

Our family saga, the tale of the Daglingworth family who own a large country house between Fairford and Cheltenham, is now within sight of the 1960s and we are beginning to think about how to end the novel. Are you the sort of person who prefers a happy ending or would you like to see a shock event? One of the challenges of writing for a wide audience is that, for everyone who prefers one route through a story there will be someone who would like something different. Do let us know if there were any key events in Gloucestershire between 1960 and 1966 that we shouldn't omit. We'd also be interested in any local memories of the Big Freeze in 1963.

Jocelyn Wishart j.m.wishart@bris.ac.uk

Petanque

Following on from recent rains, the piste has settled down somewhat. This has made play more predictable.

Play continues on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10am to mid-day. There have been some new members, and more would be welcomed.

Geoff Dennis 01285 712195

Postcards Group

Postcards with the letter 'J' proved to be more of a challenge than expected and the group responded with great ingenuity.

The geographical locations were fairly easy: several postcards of Jersey and of Jerusalem; Johnson, Vermont; Jeju, Korea; El Jem in Tunisia and a lovely picture of the Jungfrau mountain in Switzerland. Animals were the Jabiru bird of Australia, Jackass penguins, Jungle parrots in Miami and a 'jade' elephant in the Ashmolean Museum. People included Jane Austen (a modern interpretation from an old portrait), John Keble (a Fairford famous son!), Amy Johnson, and Doctor Jenner carrying out a vaccination. Miscellaneous subjects were Judges of Hastings, a company who was a prolific postcard publisher in the day, a jigsaw postcard which could be broken up and sent in an envelope provided to the recipient and, my favourite, Jemima Puddle Duck!

The selection was supplemented by postcards that have been given to the Group which are a useful backup. As usual the postcards were accompanied by lots of memories and chat.

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 16 October

A trip to Slimbridge, hopefully there should be good numbers of wildfowl, and the winter flocks of waders will be starting to build up!

Meet in the car park for 08:50, lunch up to the individual.

Mick Jones

Garden Group

Thursday 22 October

This month we will be going to Batsford Arboretum for Autumn colours.

Please meet at Fairford Car Park at 1pm to arrange transport. Suggested contribution £3.50.

Please advise if you will be attending.

Beth Dennis

Postcards Group

The next meeting is on November 17th the topic is postcards beginning with 'K'.

Please contact Alison Hobson for further information.

Alison Hobson

Strollers Walking Group

There will be no further Strollers walks for the foreseeable future.

Geoff Dennis

**Don't forget you can always contact the group leaders via logging in at our website
<https://fairfordu3a.uk/>**



Walking Groups

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



Straddlers Walk Tuesday 27th October 2026

This is a walk of 7.5 miles starting in Clanfield and using a mixture of road or lane, track & field. It's a very flat, unchallenging walk with around 8 stiles. Our route takes in the secluded hamlet of Little Clanfield and the pretty village of Grafton before heading towards Langford and then Alvescot before returning to Clanfield, where will indulge ourselves with a cinnamon bun at Blakes !!

Meet at Fairford car park at 9:15am or 9.45am at Clanfield Village Car Park Main Street/The Green/Marsh Lane ///stamp.struts.regarding. Suggested passenger contribution £1.00. Bring drinks, a snack and a pack lunch for the walk.

Pete & Meriel



Striders Walk Thursday 15th October 2026

This is a walk of about 6 miles starting at the Black Horse Inn, Cranham (GL4 8HP).

It is mainly through lovely woodland with two steady uphill sections and two downhill, but generally fairly level with a section of quiet road at the end. We walk across Cranham Common, past the school and down past Brook farm. Then up into Saltridge Common wood, following the eastern edge of the wood into the national nature reserve. Along Slade Bottom, up the valley to Foston's Ash house, past Overtown farm and back to the pub along the road.

Meet at Fairford car park at 9.00am or at the pub at 9.45am. (Bear in mind that the A417 dual carriageway upgrade may take you a rather roundabout way to Birdlip!). Park in the pub car park or, along the roadside on Cranham Common, just above the pub car park. Suggested travel donation is £2. Please let us know your lunch choices (see the pub website for the lunch menu) by Sunday 11th October if you are coming, as the pub is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Michael Bottomley and Peter Howlett.

Please contact Peter at peter.howlett@googlemail.com
Or mob. 07761 005369

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	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. Group currently on hold.
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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