

November 2026
Issue 332

u3a
Learn, laugh, live

Fairford an
Special Bulle
November 202

Chairman's Report

Here we are sliding into Autumn – putting the garden to bed and resetting the clocks to GMT. Halloween is upon us and the children are looking forward to Guy Fawkes Day.

It must be time to start thinking about Christmas! Last year we found only limited enthusiasm for a Christmas sit down lunch. Many members told us that their activity groups were doing their own thing and we struggled to get enough people to make the event viable. Therefore, we are not planning any event for this year. However, your committee is thinking about how we mark the celebration of Christmas.

Solos - Our current Solos Group has become so popular that it is now too large to accommodate everyone who would like to join, and we already have a waiting list.

I believe that Solos is an important part of what u3a is about. It provides an opportunity for people who find themselves living on their own to meet others, make new friendships and, perhaps most importantly, feel part of a supportive community. We would really like to be able to offer this opportunity to more of our members.

Geoff and Beth are therefore looking for someone who would be willing to help set up and lead a second Solos Group and are holding a meeting for anyone interested on 9 November. Please see page 4 for further details. We appreciate that everyone has commitments and that taking on something new can sound daunting. However, this does not need to be a huge undertaking. The group could be shaped around what works for the people who join it, and there would be support from the existing Solos Group and the u3a committee.

And importantly, you don't have to be a solo yourself to lead the group. What matters is being someone who enjoys bringing people together, making others feel welcome and helping to create a friendly and supportive group.

If you think you might be able to help – even if you are not quite sure what would be involved – please get in touch with one of us for an informal chat. There is no obligation, and we would be very happy to talk through what might work.

The showcase / taster day at the Community Centre in conjunction with Working 4 Wellbeing went down reasonably well. We were able to spread the word about u3a and picked up a few more members in the process. We are now planning a drop-in session at Lechlade library but it won't be until December – so watch this space!

Finally, the new Audio-Visual system at the Palmer Hall is still suffering with some problems in the hearing loop and a few weeks ago the PH committee called in some more technical people to assist. Meanwhile, many hearing aid users have commented that the new speakers are so good they can hear reasonably well without the loop.

John Lang

www.fairfordu3a.uk **Registered Charity No 1072658**

Palmer Hall, London Road, Fairford at 2.30pm

SPEAKER FOR TUESDAY 3 November 2026

Our Speaker for November is Mark Wardle who will tell us about his travels in Japan

Japan is a stunningly beautiful country. The talk starts in Tokyo, through the Japanese Alps to the Western Coast and Kanazawa, then south to Hiroshima and Kyoto. Scenery, temples and gardens, Japan has it all and this presentation aims to provide a flavour of what you might expect if you are lucky enough to visit.

Sue Martin



Asakusa temple in Tokyo

Teas at General Meetings



November	Geology
December	Italian
January	Mah Jong
February	Pétanque



Welcome to our new members:

Kevin Wigham
Liz Moore
Penny Lillie
Maggie Taylor
Paul Brockbank

Please send items for the
December Issue
by **17 November**
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 October Meeting Report

The Story Behind Remembrance

We were very fortunate at our last meeting to welcome our local resident Major General Sir Evelyn Webb-Carter to give us a fascinating talk on the history of Remembrance. With his distinguished military career and experience as Chief Executive of the Army Benevolent Fund, Sir Evelyn brought both historical knowledge and personal insight to the subject.

His talk began by taking us back to the First World War and the enormous human cost of the conflict. He explained how the events surrounding the Armistice and the years immediately afterwards shaped the way Britain remembers those who died. Among the many poignant stories was that of the Commonwealth War Graves cemetery at St Symphorien, near Mons in Belgium, where both one of the first and one of the last British soldiers killed in the First World War are buried.

Sir Evelyn then described the origins of the Cenotaph in Whitehall. Originally constructed as a temporary memorial for Peace Day in July 1919, it attracted such an extraordinary response from the public that a permanent memorial was commissioned. The Portland stone Cenotaph that we know today was unveiled on 11 November 1920 and has since become the focus of the nation's Remembrance commemorations.

Another fascinating part of the talk was the story of the Unknown Warrior, whose grave in Westminster Abbey represents all those who died in the First World War without a known grave. Sir Evelyn explained how the identity of the individual chosen was deliberately kept secret and how the Unknown Warrior came to symbolise the loss of thousands of families who never had a grave at which to mourn their loved ones.

The talk also covered the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the origins of the Royal British Legion, and the importance of the poppy as a symbol of remembrance. Sir Evelyn explained how the Royal British Legion developed from organisations established to support veterans after the First World War and how its role has continued to evolve to support serving personnel, veterans and their families today.

He also spoke movingly about his own experience of working with the Army Benevolent Fund and the often, long-term effects of military service. In particular, he highlighted the fact that difficulties, including mental health problems, may not become apparent until many years after someone has left the Armed Forces.

The talk concluded with a look at the National Memorial Arboretum and the way in which remembrance has developed to include those who have served and died in more recent conflicts.

It was a thought-provoking and very informative talk which gave us a deeper understanding of the traditions surrounding Remembrance and, importantly, the people and stories behind them.

Stephanie North

After Sir Evelyn's talk he sent the following additional information :



Major Vere Duncombe Loxley
1st Royal Marine Battalion RN Division Royal Marine Light Infantry.
Killed in action 13th November 1916 aged 43 at the Battle of Ancre.
His memorial is in Knightsbridge Cemetery, Mesnil Martinsart.
Born on 7th September 1881 at The Vicarage, Fairford.
The son of the Revd. Arthur Loxley and Alice, nee Duncombe Loxley.
His father was the Vicar of Fairford.

Sue Martin

Solos 26 A New Group

The u3a Committee has identified the need for a further Solos Group. In order to start up this Group, Beth and Geoff Dennis have agreed to get things rolling. A meeting will be held to discuss setting up and programme planning on 9 November 2026 at 2pm in The Bull Hotel, Fairford. Anybody interested can contact Beth or Geoff, and/or come to the meeting to give their input.

Beth and Geoff Dennis 01285 712195

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!

Have you taken any photos?

It's always great to feature photos of our members being creative, active, and having fun in our Interest Groups.
Please send your photos to: membershipsec@fairfordu3a.org (ensuring anyone recognisable in the photo is happy to be featured).
Help us show just how enjoyable u3a can be!
Many thanks
Joanna Petty





Group Reports

AI Explorers Workshop

October Meeting

We talked about the bad news in the press, balanced with some recent successes. We shared some recent examples of using another great AI tool - Gemini Notebook. We didn't have time to do this justice so we will be focussing on that at our next workshop. Here's our AI poem - written this month by ChatGPT:

The BBC warned that AI might one day destroy us all,
Which gave our Fairford group some thoughts to mull in the hall.
But then we saw it helping teachers — useful, clever and benign,
And helping universities work towards a greener, net-zero line.

Next stop is Amazon — now that should be fun,
To see AI and robots getting the real work done.
We'll watch them pick and pack with impressive precision,
Then bring our Fairford questions — and maybe our own tradition!
And if a robot fancies joining our u3a crew,
We'll give it a warm welcome… and a committee job to do!

The AI Explorers group will be seeing modern logistics and technology in action during a visit to the Amazon Fulfilment Centre in Swindon on Wednesday, 25th November. The one-hour tour involves 1–2 km of walking and several flights of stairs, and will be followed by a social stop for coffee and cake at The Highworth Hotel.

To find out more and discover what our AI Explorers sessions are all about, please contact the group leaders.

Joanna and Ray Petty.

Birds, Botany and Bugs

18 September WWT Slimbridge, dull, windy with showers





Today was much quieter than expected; probably a knock-on from the drought, many species just not present! We did however have good views of the birds present, the long staying Ross's goose with the barnacle geese, lots of shelduck, wigeon, gadwall. Also teal, at least three garganey, shoveler, pochard, tufted duck, two little grebe, cormorants, little and great egrets and grey herons. There was a spoonbill, at least sixteen common cranes on site, and lapwings. We eventually had good views of some knot, at least twenty ruff, snipe, black-tailed godwits, curlew, spotted and common redshanks and greenshank. We also saw green sandpipers, a common gull, meadow pipits, grey and pied wagtails, chiffchaff and goldfinches. There were 2 roe deer, a clouded yellow butterfly, some migrant hawker dragonflies, a willow emerald damselfly (a recent colonist to the United Kingdom!) as well, but stealing the show, two snipe less than six feet from us to end the day.

Mick Jones

Group Reports

Book Circle 1

Middle England by Jonathan Coe

We had our usual monthly meeting yesterday 13th October. A couple were on holiday but they did send their comments which turned out to be much the same as the rest of the group!
We read it! Some said it was too long, personally I thought there were just too many characters. There was a lot of unnecessary information. We did not need to know all their sexual peculiarities, which would have made it shorter. It was supposedly humorous. We did not find it funny.
I think the best part was the historical references that we could all go along with. Set in our own past. i.e. Brexit and Europe, we enjoyed the closing of Birmingham's car factory and redevelopment of that area. One theory was that it was actually part of a trilogy and that if read in order might have helped. Yes, so some of it was OK but not one that could be recommended wholeheartedly. Next month we choose next year's books

Jo Stichbury



Creative Writing

For a short break from our labours on our collaborative written novel which proceeds, albeit slowly, we decided to write short accounts of an amusing event that happened on a local journey. Not all of us followed instructions - see what you think.

Jocelyn Wishart

Getting Your Ducklings in a Row JW

I was walking the dog across Allcourt Meadow in Lechlade one morning when I noticed a car on the nearby A417 slowing, and eventually stopping in the middle of the road. Within seconds the cars on the opposite carriageway had also stopped and I wandered over to have a look. A female mallard appeared to be chivvying six or seven, fluffy ducklings into order on the pavement while she waited for a safe moment to cross. Sure enough, once all was quiet, she set off over the road towards the marina with all the ducklings following in single file.

I was left with two questions a) how did she know to wait for the traffic to stop? And b) how come all of the drivers sat and waited patiently for the best part of ten minutes when you just know they'll be champing at the bit and swearing at every red traffic light in town?

An Ageing Boy Racer JC

"Did anyone see that?"

I spoke aloud but knowing no one would hear me.

Group Reports

I was fuming, best described as road rage. He or she had come out of nowhere, cut across me and I ended up on the grass verge. I said to myself no way, be it a he or a she, are they getting away with it. But by the time I got going again, he or she was already some distance ahead and the prospect of catching them remote. Then my luck changed, he or she got stuck at a pedestrian crossing controlled by lights.

Now my foot is on the floor and I am off, trying to get there before the lights change. They've seen me in their mirror and swing out to stop me over-taking. But I cannot stop and my disabled buggy smacks bang into him or her, and I go over my handle bars into the outstretched arms and a soon to be wiped off grin of a, quite definitely, she on her disabled buggy.

Remember the Tufty Club? MR

Currently there are three-way traffic lights just outside Cirencester, which take an age as the final set is for pedestrians. I was just too late to slip through on green and so was sitting at the head of the south bound queue. I suddenly noticed a squirrel and one of her kits scurrying down from a tree beside the road. They bounded along to the edge of the pavement, where they stopped briefly in front of a northbound car that was also waiting before heading to the middle of the road. They stopped again. To my astonishment the mother looked quickly to her left, which was clear, nodded to her kit and they scurried to the far side before disappearing into long grass. The northbound driver, who now had the green light, was also clearly mesmerised as he didn't move, and the car behind drove into the back of him! I so wished I had caught it all on camera – it would make a great reel to show off to the grandkids on Instagram!

When in Rome? ZIW

Back in the late 60's we were on our way to the Colosseum when, with the wind in my eye, I blinked. Out popped my contact lens. In those days, one only had the 'hard' lenses, tiny discs of plastic just covering the iris.

"Oh, stop, I've dropped my lens!" I screamed and went on all fours to look for it. And so did my friend.

Just at that moment, an army of student demonstrators, shouting and chanting with banners in hand, approached. From ground level I shouted, "Per favore, fermatevi!"

The group in the front, seeing us searching the ground also fell on their knees, not knowing exactly what they were seeking. "Un diamante!" shouted one. "Oro," shouted another. By now around twenty of us were on our hands and knees on the pavement, with the oncoming demonstrators falling on top of us.

"Ma cosa cerchi?" finally asked someone. I pointed to my eye. The word went from one to another, the crowd which had been so angry now collapsed on the pavement roaring with laughter.

Group Reports

Pétanque

In recent weeks, four new players have joined the Wednesday play, and so, for the first time in many months, Wednesday was bigger than Tuesday. In all, 23 members played in the second week in October. Play will continue throughout the winter, wet weather permitting (snow we can play in, but rain is not so good).
More new members will be welcomed.

Geoff Dennis 01285 712195



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.

CURIOUS ABOUT AI - LOOKING FOR AN EASY INTRO?

Ever wondered what all the fuss about AI is? Come and explore it with us! Our friendly, jargon-free sessions are designed for beginners, with practical examples of how AI can be useful, interesting – and sometimes surprising. No technical knowledge needed – just curiosity and a willingness to have a go.

NEW 3-SESSION 'AI EXPLORERS INTRODUCTION' – JANUARY TO MARCH 2027

Three Thursday morning sessions at Fairford Community Centre, followed by the opportunity to join our regular monthly AI Explorers workshops. Interested? Register with us now and if we get enough interest, we'll go ahead and book the dates.

Joanna and Ray Petty

Birds, Botany and Bugs

Friday 27 November

Please note date change, Friday 27 November, a trip to Slimbridge, the white-fronted geese and the Bewick's swans should now be on site, plus many other wildfowl, waders and birds of prey! Meet in Fairford car park for 08:50 for car sharing etc, lunch up to individual, please dress for winter.

Mick Jones

Garden Group

Thursday 26 November

We will be visiting Millets Farm and Nursery, near Abingdon this month.
Please let me know if you are interested in going so we can arrange transport. Suggested contribution £3.50.

Beth

Walking Groups

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

Straddlers Walk Tuesday 24th November

This month's walk is on our doorstep. Starting at the Lakes By Yoo Bar & Kitchen (GL7 3DT) where there is plenty of parking, it weaves around lakes, along quiet lanes and tracks, and a beautiful meandering stretch of the river Coln (flat/no stiles/7 miles).

As the walk is nearby it will start a little later than the usual time. Meet at Fairford Car Park at 9.30am or Lakes By Yoo at 9.45am. Bring a drink and packed lunch and the café will be open at the end of the walk for any further refreshment.

Please let Janet know if you will be coming and where you plan to meet.

Janet Edwards



Striders Walk Thursday 19th November 2026

A walk of 6 miles through fields, lanes and tracks. We start at the White Horse Inn Woolstone nr Faringdon SN7 7QL www.whitehorseinnwoolstone.co.uk where we will take lunch following the walk.

One stile, and an unchallenging flat walk. At this time of year, field margins may be wet, so appropriate footwear is recommended. Part of the walk finds the remnants of the old canal and towards the end of the walk, you will see an unrivalled view of the famous White Horse Hill.

Meet at Fairford car park at 9.15am or 10.00am at The White Horse Inn w3w.shorts.proposes.princely. There is plenty of parking space in the pub car park.

There will be the need to pre order, so please look at the menu to confirm your choice. I have also been asked to pay a deposit of £5 per head.

Please let us know by Sunday 15th November of your intentions to join us, and your food choices.

Pete & Meriel





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.
Chess 	Gordon Lee	Meet on the third Tuesday of each month in the Heritage Room at the Community Centre from 2pm to 4pm. Cost £3 per session. Contact Gordon Lee for more information.
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 Grou	th 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 of the month. Note latest time and venue - 2.30 pm in the KEBLE Room at the Community Centre.

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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 and third Wednesdays 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
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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