

u3a
Learn, laugh, live

December 2026

Chairman's Report

Well, it's certainly Winter now and it's back to scraping car windscreens in the early morning, and the first frosts have certainly brought the leaves tumbling down – so now we are all busy shovelling them up!

Last month I mentioned that Geoff & Beth would be holding a meeting for potential new Solos group members, we have six interested members and an initial programme for November has been drawn up with a review session towards the end of the month. So, it looks as though Solos26 has taken off.

The next General Meeting on 1st December will be our Christmas meeting so we will break out the decorations. Sue tells me that we have a musician playing tunes you know and love, we will also bring out the wine and mince pies plus an extended choice of nibbles. Who knows, we might even have a good sing along.

I have also mentioned that we are holding another u3a 'showcase event' at Lechlade library in early December (see poster on page 4). Why not drop in and bring a friend with you?

Anyone thinking about next year's holiday yet? If you are considering using Riviera Travel do please look at the message from Christine on page 3. We have just received £274 from Riviera due to one of our members making a booking with them. Thank you to the person concerned.

Looking ahead, we have planned another discussion meeting with the committee and the group leaders. So we can find out what works well, or less so and pick up any new suggestions. One item on the agenda is whether it is about time to have another new members' meeting.

Finally, in order to support our promotion activities, we have a set of display boards and a collection of posters and pictures that can be easily attached to them. This will be used at the event in Lechlade library and will also be on show at the monthly meetings.

STOP PRESS – The Palmer Hall should have new chairs before the next meeting.

Finally, may I wish Happy Christmas to you and yours and Best Wishes for the New Year.

John Lang

Palmer Hall, London Road, Fairford at 2.30pm

SPEAKER FOR TUESDAY 1st December 2026

Our speaker this month will be Andy Smith, a multi-instrumentalist who will present his talk "Sing a Century". Andy's presentation features songs written and recorded over the last hundred years.

Singing at least one song from each decade - the audience can try and guess the year, the song, the artist, the musical....

There have been some amazing songs written since 1920 and, in this talk, Andy will feature some well known classics - plus a few forgotten gems!

Sue Martin

♫♬♪♩♩♫♬♪♩♩

Teas at General Meetings



December	Italian
January	Mah Jong
February	Pétanque



Welcome to new members this month:

Doug Moore,
Katy Sobral Peres

Please send items for the

January Issue

by **14 December**

to editor@fairfordu3a.org.uk





Yes it's you we're looking for!

Your newsletter editing team needs your support. Please contact us or find us at a General Meeting if you'd like to know more about the role.

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

Fairford and District u3a November Meeting Report

Travels in Japan



Mark Wardle came to take us on a journey around Japan. He drove west from Tokyo, through the mountains, to Matsumoto with its spectacular wooden castle, surrounded by a moat, lit up at night. Then onto Narai which was one of the post towns on the Nakasendo Trail which historically linked Kyoto to Tokyo.

It was autumn and the colours of the trees were stunning. Next he drove to Shirakawa-go, a World Heritage Site, famous for its thatched houses with steeply shaped roofs designed to withstand the heavy snow in winter. From the mountains, down to the coastal city of Kanazawa with its famous Kenroku -en gardens which are quite spectacular, including its Castle, Ninja temple and Samurai district.

He then drove via Miyajima Island in Hiroshima Bay, with its sacred temple, and onto the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. Next stop was Kyoto, with its myriad Pagodas, its giant Bamboo Grove, the historic Geisha district, Nishiki market and the stunning, golden, Buddhist temple. To name but a few of the attractions. Finally, back to Tokyo with views of Mount Fuji, the Palace gardens and so many districts selling different wares.

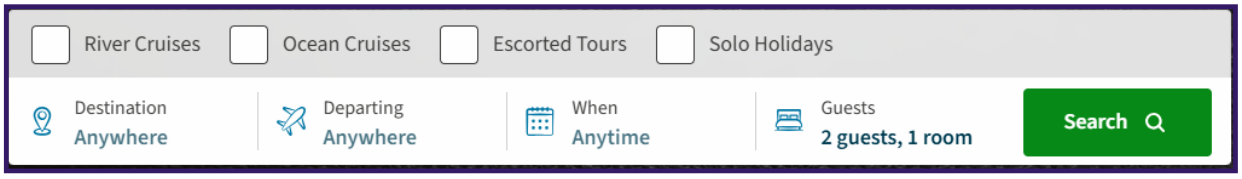
Amazingly, he did all this in a hire car which sounded very difficult until he said that, since the Olympics, all the road signs are in English as well as Japanese.

Christine Blackwell

Riviera Travel

Riviera Travel supports the U3A Nationally, so when you are thinking about your next holiday, have a look to see what Riviera have to offer. It they have a trip you would like, then when you book it, tell Riviera that you are a member of Fairford and District u3a and they will give 10% of the holiday cost to us.

This only applies when you book directly with them. If you book through a Travel Agent, they get the 10%



Christine Blackwell

Fairford and District u3a



Showcase

Wednesday 9 December

Lechlade Community Library

11am to 4pm

Drop in and see what our u3a can offer you.



We have over 30 interest groups, from physical activities, to learning, to fun!

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US FOR

CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH

AT THE COMMUNITY CENTRE, FAIRFORD

from 12:30

For individuals and couples in Fairford & surrounding villages – & Lechlade – who may be on their own and would like to celebrate Christmas Day in company.

Please ring Amanda or Mervyn Cully
01285 712700 to confirm your place.
Lifts to & from the centre can be arranged.
£5 donation please.



5



1. Which British monarch delivered the first ever royal Christmas message?
2. What cartoon family has a pet dog called Santa's Little Helper?
3. If you're born on Christmas Day, what's your star sign?
4. Where might you come across erithacus rubecula at this time of year?
5. How many geese-a-laying are given away by her true love in the song the 12 Days of Christmas?
6. What is the scientific term for a star that appears – whether in the East at Christmas or not?
7. If the light reflected from Rudolf's nose is getting redder as he travels through space (and quite possibly time) is he travelling towards or away from you?
8. Estimates suggest there are 1.7 billion children under 12 in the world today. Assume there are 2.5 children per house. That means Santa has to make 680 million stops on Christmas Eve. What gadget does he borrow from Hermione Granger to do this?
9. If each child on average receives toys weighing two lbs, the sleigh must carry 1,517,857 tons (not counting Santa, who is usually described as overweight). Conventional reindeer can pull 300lbs. Even if flying reindeer can pull twenty times that, the sleigh should need over five hundred thousand reindeer to fly but, how many reindeer does Santa actually use to pull the sleigh? *
10. What are their names?

ANSWERS AFTER THE GROUP REPORTS — HOW MANY DID YOU GET?

* N.B. Rudolph may well be shown pulling the sleigh on today's Christmas cards but he's not one of the original team.

Group Reports

AI Explorers November

We had an interesting workshop looking at how AI is changing government, including Freedom of Information requests, complaints and feedback. We had a lively discussion exploring the huge increase in written communications to official bodies - is it spam or people who felt unable to respond now feeling empowered? ChatGPT wrote us a poem….

AI Explorers – Government and AI
From local councils to Whitehall too,
We explored what AI can help us do.
Could it make life's dealings simpler each day,
And help us find answers along the way?
We shared our experiences, thoughts and views,
With plenty of stories and tips to use.
There's much to learn as AI finds its way,
But good conversation made our day!

CURIOUS ABOUT AI? HERE'S ANOTHER CHANCE TO FIND OUT!

Missed our earlier announcement? There's still time to register your interest in our new AI Explorers Introduction, a friendly three-session introduction running from January to March 2027.

Ever wondered what AI is all about, or how it might be useful in everyday life? Our relaxed, jargon-free sessions are designed especially for beginners. No technical knowledge needed – just curiosity and a willingness to explore.

Three morning sessions at Fairford Community Centre: 12 January 2027/2 February 2027/ 9 March 2027

Afterwards, there will be the opportunity to join our regular monthly AI Explorers workshops. Interested? Let us know now! If there's enough interest, we'll confirm the arrangements and get things underway.

Joanna and Ray Petty.

Birds, Botany and Bugs

OCTOBER 16TH WWT SLIMBRIDGE, SUN AND SHOWERS, MUCH COOLER

Well today was better than expected, we started the day on the Rushy with our customary hot drink! A very close great egret showed really well, as did many common snipe, ruff, common redshank, green sandpiper and a little grebe. Moving on around the reserve we were pleased to find the first white-fronted geese of the season plus returning wigeon and teal. From the Tower and Zeiss hides we noted barnacle geese, shelduck, a dozen little egret, grey herons, buzzard, two each of kestrel and peregrine, six common crane, lapwing, curlew, great black-backed gulls, skylarks, meadow pipits, pied wagtails, stonechat, and large flocks of starlings and linnets.

After lunch we went to South Lake, seeing gadwall, pintail, shoveler, pochard, tufted duck, common gull, a cattle egret and, hidden among a flock of black-tailed godwits, a knot and five spotted redshanks. Then, after a heavy shower, the sun came out prompting dozens of common darter dragonflies to fly. We also saw a southern migrant hawker, a new dragonfly for the group! Returning to the Rushy before leaving, a pair of grey wagtails up close and excellent scope views of a kingfisher were a great finish to the day.

Mick Jones

Group Reports

Petanque

As part of the fund raising for the extension to the Cricket Clubhouse, a team entered in the monthly quiz, managing to finish above one of the 6 teams. This was a fun evening, and we will be repeating our entry in the future.

Play continues on the piste (rain permitting), and 20+ members play each week, boosted by four new members. The sessions are on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings from 10am to midday. Further new members would be gladly welcomed.

Geoff Dennis 01285 712195

Fairford u3a Recorder Group

Recently, the Fairford u3a recorder group invited the Recorder Consort from Faringdon u3a to join us for a session. This gave us the opportunity to meet other recorder players. It also meant that we had two conductors, hence two choices of music and two approaches to conducting. There should always be variety in music and the joint meeting certainly produced variety. We hope to have a return visit to Faringdon in the Spring.

The Fairford u3a Recorder group is run in conjunction with Cirencester u3a and we were delighted to welcome two new members recently. This has been great. The combined group is more resilient. We're more likely to have people to play each part and less likely to be inquorate with the resultant need to cancel sessions. However, we still have room for more members. If you've played the recorder in the past and would like to try again, please do contact me.

Sue Snell

SOLOS26

An initial meeting was held to start the Group and six members planned November activities. Lunch at The Swan in Lechlade and visiting Kempsford Cafe were settled on. Also suggested were visits to the Barn Theatre and cinema and The Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham.

The next planning meeting is 30 November at 2pm in The Bull. Come and join us, all will be welcome.

Beth and 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.

Birds, Botany and Bugs

Friday 18th December

Our last trip of the year will be to Slimbridge, should be stacks of birds, if by chance the site is frozen, a local walk might be a better option? Meet in the car park for 08:50, lunch up to the individual, will update nearer the time.

Mick Jones

NEWSFLASH!

See the group reports on pages 6 and 7 for AI Explorers and Solos26 for information on their upcoming plans.

Walking Groups

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

Looks like the walkers have hung up their boots for a winter break and put their woolly socks in the wash. (ed.)

Answers to the Christmas Quiz:



1. George V
2. The Simpsons
3. Capricorn
4. Robins appear on Christmas cards
5. Seventy-two
6. Supernova
7. Away – red shift is caused by increasing the wavelength of light as the object moves swiftly from the observer.
8. Time Turner
9. Eight
10. Donner, Blitzen, Dancer, Prancer, Comet, Cupid, Dasher and Vixen. (8 points)

If you scored more than 50% (8/17), award yourself a mince pie. If you scored 100% then the editor owes you one.

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 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 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
Solos26		New group being planned, contact: Beth and Geoff Dennis 01285 712195
Stitching and Knitting	Jan Mills	First and third Wednesdays of the month from 12.30pm to 2pm 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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