



u3a
Learn, laugh, live

**October 2025
Issue 320**

Chairman's Report

Isn't it nice to be back to good old British weather — a bit of sun, then some rain for the plants? At least we can ease off with the watering can!

I hope you've enjoyed the summer with family, friends, and perhaps grandchildren. It felt like a long spell without our usual August meetings, but now that everyone is back to school, college, or work, it must be time to start thinking about Christmas. Your committee is already planning the festivities and taking into account the views you shared in the survey. Keep an eye out for an email with this year's option.

We are still hoping some members will volunteer to help with a new Solos group, and we also encourage you to consider joining the committee, perhaps even as Membership Secretary. The responsibilities of the Membership Secretary role are described in this newsletter so you know what it involves.

The u3a is more than just groups and get-togethers — it's a vital support network. For many members, especially in the Solos groups, it provides friendship, companionship, and practical help when people might otherwise feel isolated. It offers shared experiences and emotional support that brighten lives. Losing access to any of these groups or seeing them fully subscribed would be very disappointing to many who rely on them for social connection and wellbeing.

Overall, the u3a structure is a little unusual: we're not branches of the national body but independent charitable organisations. Even so, we work in a "federal" way, balancing national unity with local autonomy. To make sure we are not left to flounder there are regional u3a link groups. For us we are lucky to have the support of the Cotswold Link, 28 separate u3as share support networks where officers can meet — usually on Zoom — so Secretaries, Treasurers, or Membership Secretaries can exchange ideas and support each other.

So come on — step forward and help us make things work! You're always welcome to come along to a committee meeting and see what it's like.

You might even discover that it's fun!



John Lang

Palmer Hall, London Road, Fairford at 2.30pm

SPEAKER FOR TUESDAY 7 October

Our speaker for October is Mark Wardle who will tell us about:

"Travels in Patagonia and Beyond"

Patagonia is one of the lesser known regions of the world and covers a vast area of what is essentially wilderness. This photographic journey to South America starts in Buenos Aires and then heads South into what can only be described as a desolate and stunning landscape with a surprising amount of wildlife.

Sue Martin



Photo by Snowscat



Teas at General Meetings

October - Birds, Botany & Bugs
November - Boccia
December - Book Circle 1



Welcome to our new members:

Anne Retty
Louise Robinson
Mike Chappell

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

**Live in Fairford or the surrounding
area and reading this newsletter?
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 — Maureen Partington



Fairford and District u3a September Meeting Report

Al Sylvester gave members a riveting and awe-inspiring talk on the work of the RAF Mountain Rescue Service.



This had started in an ad hoc way from the start of aircraft flying with rescue groups sent out from nearby RAF Stations, but after the Second World War it was recognised that the difficulty of reaching crashed aircraft in the mountains with the right sort of experienced team needed a more professional approach. By the 1970s health and safety for the rescuers also became a priority.

The National Maritime Operations Centre near Portsmouth receives distress calls from all over the world. Every ship, aircraft, cyclist, walker can carry a GPS device that can call for help and the NMOC can immediately call on the most suitable team.

Rigorous training is essential:- fitness and determination is paramount. Training includes: - rock climbing in all seasons; navigation, which is most essential in poor weather conditions and at night although nowadays helped by the GPS system; and first aid, nowadays with a paramedic in attendance. A lot of equipment has to be carried to cover all eventualities, including camping equipment.

Teams are on call 24 hours seven days a week. More recently water rescue techniques have been introduced in the training. Search and Rescue Dogs are important members of the team and are invaluable in finding injured walkers. In the 1990s women were allowed to become part of the team and nowadays about 50% of the teams are women.

Al showed members several examples of aircraft crashes in the mountains, some survivable and some not and how specific difficulties had been overcome. He explained the workings of an ejection seat; at 10,000 ft the pilot and ejection seat separate so not only do the pilots have to be found but the ejection seats as well as they contain explosives which may or may not have detonated.

The RAF Mountain Rescue Team also supports civilian incidents, such as the Lockerbie air disaster in 1988 and the Boeing 737-400 crash on the M1 at Kegworth in 1989. Their expertise is of invaluable assistance.

Can you spare an hour a week to help a child learn to read well?

Jacqui Howlett writes "as a member of Fairford U3A I thought other members would like to know about Readwithme".

Read With Me volunteers hear children read on a one-to-one basis in schools across Gloucestershire, helping to improve their literacy skills and confidence!

- No previous teaching experience necessary.
- Flexible times to make volunteering work around your schedule.
- Comprehensive training and DBS check are provided.

Visit <<http://www.readwithme.org.uk/for-volunteers/>> to find out more or get in touch:

- 07880 288395 (weekdays) or 07791110906 (evenings and weekends)
- Or email volunteer@readwithme.org.uk

Join our u3a Committee: Membership Secretary Wanted

Are you organised, friendly, and keen to help our u3a run smoothly?

We're looking for a **Membership Secretary** to join the Committee and keep things ticking over.

What you'll do:

- Welcome new members, help with joining up and issuing Welcome Information
- Keep the membership database up to date, send renewal reminders and liaise with the Treasurer
- Produce membership stats and reports for committee meetings
- Attend monthly committee meetings and take part in decision-making
- Help ensure good communication with members and support new people in finding their way in our u3a
- Take the register of those attending our monthly meetings

What we offer:

- A friendly, supportive team
- Training / handover from current Membership Secretary
- The chance to meet many members and contribute to making our group thrive

If you'd like to make a difference, or just want to find out more, please contact (membershipsec@fairfordu3a.org.uk). We'd love to hear from you!

Obituary: Joyce Deane

29th September 1929 - 12th August 2025

We are saddened by the passing of **Joyce Deane**, one of the founding members of Fairford & District u3a, whose passion for poetry, learning, and friendship had a lasting impact on us all.

From the very beginning, Joyce was active in shaping u3a. She was part of the original Steering Committee when the idea for Fairford & District u3a was first put together in 1995, and in March of that year she was made Vice-Chairman. Although she stepped back from that formal role to sail around the world in 1996, her engagement was never far from u3a life; she resumed important roles in group leadership for many years after.

Joyce's love of poetry was a gift to the group — she was a founder member of the Poetry Circle and strength of voice, memory, and knowledge, made her readings memorable. Visits to her home, where her garden was a delight, were always special.

She also contributed in other ways: together with others, Joyce helped establish an Italian study group (using resources such as *Buongiorno Italia!*), introduced members to the Five Rhythms dance sessions, and took every opportunity to enrich u3a's cultural life. Her leadership, generosity, and beautiful speaking voice will be remembered by many.

Joyce's kindness, enthusiasm, and sense of the poetic in all things made Fairford & District u3a a richer place. We extend our sympathy to her family and all who had the privilege to know her.

Obituary: Rosemary Westlake

21st June 1937 - 15th August 2025

It is with deep sadness that we hear of the death of Rosemary Westlake, a much-loved member of Fairford & District u3a, who gave generously of her time, skills, and spirit.

Rosemary brought up four sons locally and taught French at Farmors School, instilling not only language but discipline and kindness in all her pupils. She worshipped at the local Catholic church for 45 years, demonstrating her steadfast faith and involvement in the community.

Within u3a, Rosemary was instrumental in its development during the early 2000s, serving as Chair and also as Programme Secretary. She led the French groups for many years, sharing her love of language and culture, and she regularly hosted meetings of the "Listening to Music" group at her home, leaving many members with happy memories of those sessions.

Her interests in u3a were wide: she was active in walking, book circles, music, history groups, and more. Rosemary had an exceptionally community-spirited nature — for instance, she helped organise the u3a holiday to the HF House in Dovedale, making such events possible and enjoyable for many.

Rosemary's kindness, quiet leadership, and commitment provided a sense of warmth and dependability. She will be missed greatly by all who knew her through u3a and beyond. Our thoughts are with her family in this loss.

The National u3a Short Story Competition 2025

The theme for this year's competition is Lost and Found. You are invited to write a story with a maximum of 1,500 words. Your name won't be shared unless you're one of the top scoring entries, so have a go – you never know! Submit your short story by Friday 17 October by visiting the Learning Activities website link on the u3a national website.

You can find the website by searching for u3a. On the top of the opening page, click on Learn. From the dropdown menu choose Learning Activities, then scroll down to find the Short Story item. Please note that 17th October is the correct date. Unfortunately the wrong date has been given in the u3a matters magazine.

The winner will receive a book bundle, including The Writers' & Artists' Yearbook 2026 and Sara Grant's new book The Ultimate Guide to Editing Your Novel: A revolutionary approach to transform your writing. The top fifteen entries will also receive prizes, with thanks to Bloomsbury Publishing.

Sara will be delivering an exciting Online Event in support of the competition, optional for entrants to attend on Friday 3rd October, by Zoom. She will share a series of practical tips & simple exercises to help you improve your short story. The event will conclude with a Q&A session. Go here to book your free place: <<https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events#Events>>

If the links don't work for you, go to the u3a national website (just search for u3a to get there). At the top of the first page click Events. From the drop down menu choose Online Learning Events, then scroll down to find details on the right hand side.

Group Reports

Birds, Botany and Bugs

August 15th WWT Slimbridge. 29 degrees, HOT!

Once again we had extreme temperatures, though the prolonged drought had not affected the reserve too badly. Many of the lagoons' water levels had obviously been well managed, yet we only birded the hides today, the tide being wrong for the long walk along the River Severn. One surprise was a tundra bean goose on South Lake and, across the reserve, we added: Ross's and barnacle geese, many shelduck, a single wigeon, plenty of gadwall and teal, at least two garganey, shoveler, pochard, tufted duck, three little grebe. Plus sixteen little and four great egrets, six heron, two spoonbill, red kite, buzzard, kestrel, eleven common crane (at least six wild birds), lots of waders, lapwing, ruff, snipe, black-tailed godwit, curlew, spotted and common redshank, ten green, two wood and a common sandpiper. Two kingfishers, dozens of sand martins, swallows and house martins, pied wagtail, blackcap, chiffchaff, goldcrest, goldfinches and a large flock of linnets completed the list.

Yet another great day out at the Trust!

Date of Next Meeting...

October 17th, a trip to Slimbridge for hopefully the first winter arrivals: winter thrushes, wildfowl, golden plover and other over wintering birds. (I will keep an eye on the tide times for Severn Beach!) Meet in the car park for 08:45, lunch up to the individual.

Mick Jones

Book Circle 1

Here are our reviews for August and September:

The **Ashes of London** is an atmospheric historical mystery set against the backdrop of the Great Fire of 1666. Andrew Taylor brings Restoration London to life, from the smoke-filled ruins of St. Paul's to the shifting political intrigues of the time. Some of us loved the rich historical detail and slow-burn mystery. Others found the lead character, Cat, deeply unattractive, and unbelievable. Overall, it's a novel that rewards patience with atmosphere and setting, though whether that outweighs the sometimes meandering plot depends on what you look for in historical fiction.

Behind the Scenes at the Museum is Kate Atkinson's debut novel, weaving together generations of the Lennox family through the eyes of Ruby, the youngest daughter. Some of us admired Atkinson's wit, sharp observations, and the way she plays with memory and perspective to create a layered family history. Others, however, felt that the sheer number of characters and shifting timelines made it hard to keep track of who was who. Overall, it's a novel that some found richly rewarding in its complexity, while others felt it could be overwhelming.

Kate Stephenson



Group Reports

Book Circle 2

THE FLIGHT PORTFOLIO by Julie Orringer

This is a gripping novel based on the true story of USA journalist Varian Fry's attempt to save the lives and works of artists fleeing the Nazi regime in France.

It is a long book taking several years to write, and has been made into a film called Transatlantic.

It was interesting to learn how reluctant initially Marc Chagall and many other well known writers, poets and artists were to leave France until it was almost too late, and to hear a little of their private lives.

The pressure Varian and the team worked under was intense, and considerably increased by an obsessive relationship between Varian and his partner Elliot Grant.

Some of the group were overwhelmed, but those who completed the book found it a good read, with plenty to discuss .

Ann Duckney

Creative Writing

The group have taken a well-deserved break from composing this year's anthology (watch this space!) to tackle this year's u3a Short Story competition. Why not join them? The theme is Lost and Found but the deadline, for a short story of up to 1500 words, is quite soon—17th October. More details on p5 of this newsletter.

Jocelyn Wishart

Postcards Group

At the September Postcards meeting, we travelled all over the world on the search for 'D' postcards. We went 'Down Under' to Melbourne, Australia with 1960s postcards of the beautiful city buildings and across the sea to New Zealand where we visited the Driving Creek Railway. Then we went across the Pacific to Hawaii and the beautiful view of the Diamond Head volcanic crater, now a popular hiking trail. Back to Europe where we visited Dubrovnik, the Dordogne and Dieppe. Across the English Channel to Dover and then westwards where there was plenty of scope for views of Devon and Dorset, which brought back many holiday memories. Dodington House, South Gloucestershire, where James Dyson now lives, once a horse and carriage museum and Denman House, Berkshire a former WI college, a memory for WI members. Other topics included Daffodils and Donkeys. We are always creative with our choices and one was 'Don't know' a set of Edwardian postcards of what looked like Cotswold villages, but the group was unable to help with identification.

The next meeting is on November 11th when the choice is letter 'E' or because of the date 'wartime' postcards. New members welcome.

Alison Hobson

Group Reports

Petanque

The new piste has attracted a number of new players, some experienced but others total beginners. As the piste has five lanes, we are able to accommodate up to 20 players at any one time. So... there's room for more!!

Play continues on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings from 10am to 12midday. Please be on time to avoid missing the ballot for the first games.

Geoff Dennis 01285 712195

PopDance!

Don't forget the second Tuesday of the month!

70s and 80s tracks to get us all moving (and singing along?) in the Party Room at the back of The Plough, PH.

All u3a members welcome for this hour of fun—your chance to dance—no pressure!

Mervyn Cully 07773 557846

Solos2

Sunday 21 September was lunch at The Jolly Tar, Hannington @ 12 midday.

We also visited the Ploughing match at Barrington Park Estate.

Future dates for your diary:-

Saturday October 4th: Solo2 Group Meeting at The Bull Hotel @ 11.00

Wednesday 8th October: Jo is arranging a free day out at Westonbirt arboretum. Times to be arranged. Please contact Jo Stichbury 01283 239152 or 07444738113

Thursday October 9th: A Jazz evening at The Palmer Hall Fairford 7.30-9.30. Purchase your own tickets.

Saturday/Sunday 11th/12th Oct: a WWII display at The Corinium Museum, Cirencester.

Sunday 12th Oct: Lunch at 13.00 at The Golden Cross. Meet in Fairford Car Park at 11am. Please Contact Jackie Ephgrave on 07749789968.

Monday October 27th @ 2pm: Downton Abbey at The Barn Theatre Cirencester. Please contact Jennie Sanford if you wish to go.

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.



Walking Groups

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



Striders Walk -Thursday 16th October 2025

This is a walk of 5 miles starting at The Farmer's Arms in Guiting Power (GL54 5TZ). We follow the Diamond Way (and Winchcombe Way) heading north west from the village and at the end of Castlett Wood turn east to Kineton. At the end of the village turn back towards Guiting Power over the fields and along the road towards Little Windrush farm, then back to the pub.

It is a fairly gentle walk along quiet roads and tracks with only 3 short steep inclines and one stile

Meet at Fairford car park at 9.10am or at the pub at 9.45am to order lunch. Park in the pub car park. Suggested travel donation is £2. Please let us know by 14th October if you are coming so that we can let the pub know.

Michael Bottomley and Peter Howlett. Please contact

Michael Bottomley 01285 712074 or michaelbottomley@hotmail.com

Straddlers Walk – Tuesday 28th October

This is a walk of a round 7.5 miles starting from Great Rissington. We will walk clockwise to Little Rissington before passing briefly through Great Rissington to complete a southern loop near Sherborne Common walking along the Windrush back to our starting point. There are several stiles and gates, with an undulating terrain.

Bring drinks, a snack and a packed lunch for the walk. There is also a chance of refreshment at the Lamb in Great Rissington or the Fox at Great Barrington after the walk.

Meet at Fairford car park at 9:15am or go directly to the start point of the walk at 10:00am, which is St John the Baptist Church in Great Rissington (postcode: GL54 2LN or what3words: garages.mango.diverts). Suggested car sharing contribution £2.50

Please let us know if you are joining us - Derek and Robyn

Strollers Walk – Friday 24th October (Contact group leader to confirm date)

The start and finish of the walk is the pub, The George in Kempford, where lunch will be taken. Meet at the car park in Fairford at 10.30am, or at the George at 10.45am.

The walk is along side roads, grass tracks and field paths, so walking boots are recommended. It will be about 3¼ miles, and the weather will be fantastic!!!







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
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.
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.
Cycling 	Pete McHugh	Thursdays. Meeting as pre-arranged. Distance varies from 25 to 40 miles.

GDPR requirement: To protect personal identity, members' contact details 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
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 Hoaksey	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 leaders 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 leaders house. Currently has free spaces.
Latin 1 & 2	Peter Hewes	First Wednesday or Thursday from 2.30pm in leader's home. Contact the Group leader to discuss which group to attend.
Mah Jong	Paul Saddington	Second and fourth Thursdays from 10am to 12noon in Fairford Community Centre.
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.
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. Party room at the back of Plough PH.
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 , Farmor Room.

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Activity	Leader	Information
Rummikub	Sally White	Held in the Heritage room on the third Thursday in the month from 2pm to 4pm. The cost is £1.50 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. The next season begins Sept 17th New members welcome but must contact group leader in advance.
Short Tennis	Mike Middleton	Weekly. Monday from 3pm to 5pm in the Palmer Hall
Solos	Mike Johnson	Meet in Beaumoor on the first Monday each month at 2.30pm to discuss activities.
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 01285713928	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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