



November 2025
Issue 321

Chairman's Report

Wow – what amazingly brilliant colours of Autumn. If only we could have a little more sun, it would be a stunning display. Apparently the colours are due to the long hot summer causing an increase in the sugars in the leaves. Unfortunately, I may have been a bit too optimistic about a change in the weather as the dry spell seems to be continuing and the watering can is still in use.

We seem to have jumped from late Summer into early Winter and, with November 5th in the next couple of days, it will soon be running up to Christmas. I haven't seen the results of your response to the suggestion of a Christmas buffet but we will let you know very soon.

I have recently been involved in discussions with other representatives of many of the u3a bodies in the South West region where there seems to be a common theme of finding difficulty in encouraging members to help run the committee. This is a great shame given that the whole ethos of the u3a is voluntarily working together in a learning environment, so why not volunteer to help to run the u3a? Apparently, some u3a groups have found that a few members are afraid of being a committee member because they become trustees and they have heard scary stories about trustees of a football club becoming liable for the debts of the club. There is no need to be worried about such things since, in common with most other charities, u3as have insurance cover to cater for such issues.

Our u3a can only function because we have people who are prepared to give up some extra time to make it all work.

John Lang



Palmer Hall, London Road, Fairford at 2.30pm

SPEAKER FOR TUESDAY 4 NOVEMBER

Our speaker on 4th November will be Kate Luck, who will tell us about the life and work of John Singer Sargent, the American painter best known for his portraits.

Kate is a member of the U3A and Cirencester Art Society.

Sue Martin

Portrait of Madame X
John Singer Sargent

Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Manhattan



Teas at General Meetings

November - Book Circle 1
December - Committee
January - Book Circle 2



Welcome to our new members:

Eileen Parris
Jan Krouse
Rosena Elsey

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



Editor this month — Maureen Partington
Editor next month — Sarah Bottomley



Fairford and District u3a September Meeting Report

Bienvenidos a la Patagonia (**Welcome to Patagonia**) Croeso i Batagonia

Mark Wardle's photographs are superb and, as a warm-up to the main event, we were treated to a selection of some of the highlights of England's Dorset, Hampshire and Sussex coastlines. He concentrated on the wildness and desolation of Dungeness, and the cliffs and sheltered bays and coves of Dorset.

The introduction was relevant as Patagonia has a barren and desolate landscape in the east and lush forests and rugged mountains in the west. Mark explained that Patagonia encompasses much of southern Chile as well as much of southern Argentina. He also pointed out the sheer scale of the region, which is over 4 times the size of the UK. Its location, if in the northern hemisphere, would extend from southern Spain up to the border with Scotland.

Not surprisingly, Mark focussed on the rugged Andes marking the boundary between Chile and Argentina and the two national parks of Torres del Paine in Chile and Los Glaciares National Park in Argentina. Both parks were displayed in vivid close-up and stunning detail in all his pictures. These highlighted the wild and changeable weather, so characteristic of the region, as helping the sharp clarity of the atmosphere. Surely a plus if you are scenic and wildlife photographer.

I did ask him about eastern Patagonia, but he pointed out the featureless nature of the landscape of those parts. Nevertheless, for many visitors from the UK, and in particular anyone with connections to Wales, the towns of Trelew, Gaiman, and Puerto Madryn, where the Welsh language is still used, would be of great interest.

A thoroughly enjoyable hour of top photography.

Clive Watson.



Group Reports

Birds, Botany and Bugs

September 19th WWT Slimbridge, very warm and sunny!

We started today with pleasant weather (although a little too warm in the afternoon!). Many cattle egrets and a great white egret were seen approaching the Trust. News of a grey phalarope sent us in the direction of the Zeiss Hide, but the old birder's saying "You should have been here five minutes ago" was in evidence! So, a little disappointed, we continued birding the reserve, seeing high numbers of black-tailed godwits, teal, gadwall, shoveler, a few pochard, a little grebe, several common cranes, an avocet, many ruff, spotted and common redshank, lapwing, snipe and a single cattle egret on South Lake.

It was over lunch that the news that the phalarope had returned split the group into two parties. One group hiked once again to the Zeiss Hide, this time finding the scarce grey phalarope at a little distance, but reasonable views were had! This was followed with great humour as we tried to reunite the group! Eventually we all continued, seeing green and common sandpipers, a hobby, a buzzard, more cranes and, on the estuary, many herons, some distant curlew and, an excellent find, a distant glossy ibis! Also goldfinches, linnets a few chiffchaff, supported with sightings of migrant hawkers, common and ruddy darter dragonflies and peacock butterflies enjoying the hot weather. We then decided to have a drink before home; this was quickly abandoned when a flock of twenty-three cattle egrets flew in to the Rushy, giving excellent views in the good light. A fitting end to the day!

Mick Jones



Book Circle 1

The Seven Sisters by Margaret Drabble

This book is about a recently divorced middle aged woman who buys a flat in London after moving from the country. She becomes friends with a group who are studying the Iliad at a night class. The friends are a disparate group and it follows their adventures. We all enjoyed the book immensely and it made for a lively discussion.

Lyn Thornhill



Group Reports

Book Circle 2

Child 44 by Tom Rob Smith

This book was based on the true story of a serial killer and set in Stalin's Soviet Union.

The beginning describes a family with children and the poverty and struggles, the significance of which perhaps had relevance later in the book. This came up in our discussions around childhood experiences and how that might impact adult life.

Fast forward to Moscow in 1953. The story develops around Leo, a security officer, and later his wife Raisa, working for the Regime and all the implications that entails until he realises there are children being murdered and it is not being admitted by the state. This changes his beliefs and he risks everything to discover the murderer.

The twists and turns with lots of details and challenges, even including his own wife, made this compulsive reading for most of the group. Gripping and enjoyable. Some of the group found the level of violence described was a bit too much.

A book that gave us plenty to discuss.

Sheila Beer



Creative Writing

Our writers have been having fun creating their last few pieces for this year's anthology which will again be on sale at the December meeting in the Palmer Hall. This year it will be structured by the calendar year. Think spooky tales for Halloween, short stories exploding with fireworks and poetry to help us remember the fallen on Armistice day.

If you have ever told stories to amuse children, yours or someone else's, why not join us and see what more you can do?

Jocelyn Wishart

Petanque

Recently, the groups entertained a team from Ampney Crucis in a challenge match. The format was 5 doubles matches, 3 triples matches and 1 singles match. The result was: Fairford won four, Ampney won four and there was one draw. This meant a 4 all draw. Thank you to those who took part and to Ampney Crucis for their participation. Tea/coffee and biscuits were enjoyed in the clubhouse afterwards.

Play will continue each Tuesday and Wednesday throughout November.

Geoff Dennis 01285 712195

Group Reports

Solos 1

For our October meeting we had a fascinating afternoon showing lots of pictures of our activities over the last 13 years. Of course we were all 13 years younger and could do things we can't do now. It was interesting seeing people who have moved away, sadly passed on, and the ones that are left but now just can't do what we used to do. However, we all enjoyed going down memory lane seeing the things we used to do, including celebrating the 10-year u3a party by the Lakes, going on 2 jazz cruises in different years along the Oxford Canal, visiting Slimbridge and many Turkey and Tinsel holidays.

We have eaten out a lot. We found the best places in the area, in fact at one time various u3a groups used our reports to choose places to dine. Now we are sadly closing our group down at the end of January 2026 as most of us are getting too old to go out very far and have various handicaps. We have four in their nineties, the oldest 94, and a lot in their late eighties including me. It's been a great friendly group, and I shall be sad to see it finish, but we can't go on forever.

Mike Johnson

Solos 2

A Good Day Out

We had a good day out on Wednesday (October 8th). Lets put it another way, we had a FREE day out on Wednesday!

Eight of us Solo Members went on the free Robin bus to Westernbirt Aboretum and, with the help of Mary Ann at the Welcome for Wellbeing, free entrance to the Arboretum. The bus was a bit 'crankey' and the ride there was probably as far as you would want to go, but we found plenty to talk about and the driver was very helpful and friendly.

It goes without saying it was beautiful. All the autumn shades in the glorious sunshine were breathtaking. Oh I forgot to say, we went on a guided tour (free), round the (Azalia grove) and also saw, and were introduced to, some huge great American fir trees (Wellington?), and another tree that looked like giant snakes!

All in all it was great. Our guide got us back to the restaurant, just before we all collapsed, where we had a very nice lunch and a welcome 'cuppa', which unfortunately was not free.

Then a ten minute stroll down the path to the entrance where our driver was waiting to bring us home.

A successful day out I think we can safely say.

Jo Stichbury



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 November 21st

Either a trip to Slimbridge if the Bewick's swans and White-fronted Geese have arrived, or birding a bit nearer to home, maybe a walk around Eastleach Downs and some of the local lakes. Either should produce hopefully flocks of wintering birds.

Meet in the car park for 08:45, I will let you know where we are going on the Tuesday before we go, to arrange lunch.

Mick Jones

Gardens Group

Thursday 27 November

We will be visiting Millets Farm near Abingdon this month.

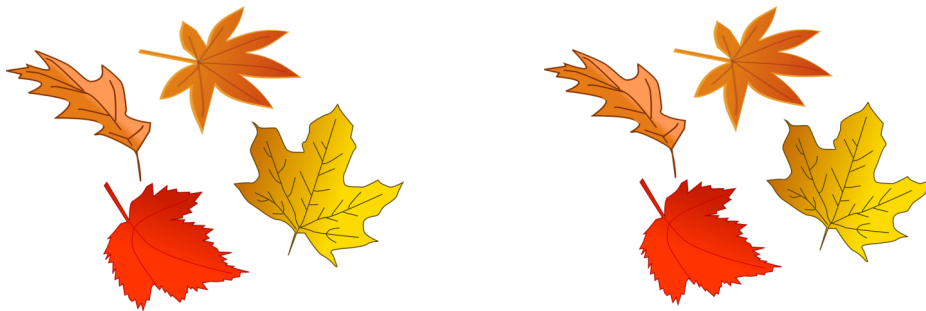
Meet at Fairford Car Park at 1pm to arrange lifts. Suggested travel contribution £2.50. Please let me know if you are interested in joining us.

Beth Dennis

Solos2

Next meeting Saturday 8th November at the Bull Hotel Fairford at 11.00.

Jennie Sanford



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 20th November

This is a walk of 6 miles with a mix of lane/road walking and country trails. The terrain is challenging, with some steep climbs and descents. We start at the Bathurst Arms and walk the lanes to Bagendon. We then take the Welsh Way country trail to our stop for coffee. We continue on the Macmillan Way to Woodmancote and take the country road back to the Bathurst Arms for lunch.

Meet at Fairford car park at 9:20am or the Bathurst Arms overflow car park, North Cerney at 10:00am. Suggested travel contribution is £1.00.

Please let me know where you are meeting and if you intend to stop for lunch so I can advise numbers.

Paul Gardner

Straddlers Walk for Tuesday 25th November

This is a walk of 6 miles mainly through beautiful covered woodland and some open country trail walking, with some steep climbs and descents.

The walk starts at the car park past the Black Horse Inn in Cranham, where there is sufficient parking (w3w suiting.stands.untrained). We head SE through Cranham Woods and across fields to turn SW into the Cotswolds Common and Beechwoods National Nature Reserve. We stop for lunch and continue through Lord's Wood and Saltridge Woods. We pass a trout farm and head home across Cranham Common.

Please let me know if you intend to meet at Fairford car park to leave at 10:00am or the Black Horse Inn nearby car park for 10:45. Suggested travel contribution is £2.00.

Paul Gardner

Strollers Walk – Friday 28 November

The Red Lion, Cricklade. Meet at the car park at 10.15am or at the Red Lion at 10.45am.

This walk is following the River Thames across the North Meadow, and back along the disused railway line. It will cover 3½ miles of flat grassy paths with no stiles. Stout walking shoes are recommended.





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 , Heritage 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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