

FARINGDON & DISTRICT



Winter 2025

<https://faringdon.u3asite.uk/>

MEETINGS CALENDAR

Our main meeting is held at **2.30 pm** in **Faringdon Corn Exchange** on the **second Thursday** of the month. Meetings begin with a warm welcome from our Chairman, Peter Hoole and any notices from the groups. The talk, from a visiting speaker then follows. After the talk there are free refreshments and a chance to talk to Group Leaders and socialise.

If you would like to give a talk to our members or you have heard of a good speaker, do please contact me. I am always on the look-out for new topics and interesting speakers.

We look forward to seeing you in the Corn Exchange.

Tessa Timms

Thursday 11th December 2025

Carols by Candlelight

This will be the first time we have arranged such an event so come along and help make it an afternoon to remember. We invite you all to a sing-along of your favourite carols with accompanying music and a choir. Christmas Poems will be read by some members. Instead of our tea/coffee/biscuits we will be enjoying a glass of gluhwein (non alcoholic & alcoholic) with a tasty mince pie. We will decorate the Corn Exchange appropriately and you are welcome to come decorated with Christmas adornments on you too.

Thursday, 8th January 2026

January Japes is back

Please diarise this event. An online invitation notice will be circulated closer to the event to enable you to book your place. The meal will be followed with entertainment by Paul Lille who has entertained a number of other u3a branches all providing glowing recommendations of his performance. Paul is an Elvis impersonator who will also talk to us about the life of Elvis. All members are welcome to attend the entertainment which will begin at 2.30 even if they have not been to the meal.

Thursday 12th February 2026

The pitfalls of Artificial Intelligence

Robert Whitfield will talk to us in February about a subject that we have probably all heard about but the true impact and implications of it on our lives is unclear. Robert will provide an insight into AI and its consequences.

Thursday 12th March 2026

About The South Oxford Canal

This month Alex Higginbottom from the Canal & River Boat Trust will talk to us about the recent problems experienced by the South Oxford Canal due to the summer drought. Although the Canal has re-opened we will learn how it affected many people throughout the summer.

NEW MEMBERSHIP

We are delighted to welcome the following new members—

Faringdon – Giuliana Amisano, Philip Archard, Sarah Benson, Andrew & Lois Chell, Simon & Sarah Coe, Janet Curmi, Lisa Curtis, Terry Dunsdon, Amanda Harvey, Sean Hodgson, Lynda James, Alison & Peter King, Therese Maitland, Doug McElroy, Chris Mitchell, Judith Mortier, Mary Mountford-Lister, Thomas Sparke, Paul Steele, Anthony Tarry, Mary Thomas

Lechlade – Jane Claus, Helen Volk

Highworth – Lesley Crabtree

Wantage – Claire Dark, Kirsty Squires, Penny Vaughan-Fowler

Shrivenham – Jean Gates, Anne Hart

East Challow – Richard & Shirley King

Lyford – Deborah Lewis

Watchfield – Liz Rothschild, Ian Skerry

Bampton – Sara Rowland

We are sad to advise of the death of Dave Dalton

CHAIRMAN'S NOTE

Thursday Lecture December :I hope you have all noticed that we are opening the festive season with a change to our usual December Meeting, instead of a lecture we are offering a series of readings and carols to be followed by Gluhwein (alcoholic or otherwise) and mince pies. There will be Keyboard accompaniment and stiffening from Faringdon Community Choir. If this goes well it may be this or something like it in the future, Response has been positive so far and as the Corn Exchange is only licensed for 150 and there may be as many as 30 in the Choir please let Tessa know if you hope to come as we may have to limit numbers. tessaatimms@gmail.com

GROUPS : We have agreed a new approach to the formation of Groups. Until now we have relied on our members to suggest and lead new Groups. We are going to suggest an additional pathway. If you have an idea for a new group send it to Sue Cain groupscordinator@faringdonu3a.org.uk and we will publicise it, a committee member will call a meeting if there is sufficient interest and hopefully from that meeting a plan of what to do, how to do it and a leadership arrangement will emerge.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS : Now is the time for you to do something for the general good. At the AGM at least two members will be stepping down and will need to be replaced. Last year we had two new members who came forward, both excellent additions, Neville who has taken over on the Events duo and David who has taken on the role of Treasurer. Now the point I wish to make is that they are both NEW MEMBERS of Faringdon u3a and I am delighted that it is so, we need new blood with a fresh outlook so, if you are NEWish to Faringdon u3a please do not think that there is any bar whatever to your joining our committee, on the contrary we would welcome it—believe me.

Have a Good Christmas

Peter

wolfitha@hotmail.com



Thursday, 11th December
Doors open at 14.00
For a 14.15 start

u3a Carols by Candlelight

Please diarise and note the earlier time.....

the December Monthly Meeting is to be a Christmas event with Carols, Christmas Poems, Gluhwein & Mince Pies. Please come and join the Festive Experience.



Thursday, 8th January 2026

u3a January Japes

Notices about the
 format of this
 event will be
 circulated nearer
 the time



FARINGDON & DISTRICT U3A COMMITTEE 2025/26

Peter Hoole	Chairman	07385 297 571 chairman@faringdonu3a.org.uk
John Curtis	Vice Chairman	07866 745 814 vicechairman@faringdonu3a.org.uk
Rita Higazi	Events & Venue Team	01367 244 494 events@faringdonu3a.org.uk
Neville Brampton	Events & Venue Team	events@faringdonu3a.org.uk
Sue Cain	Groups Co-ordinator & Newsletter	07731 675 729 groupscoordinator@faringdonu3a.org.uk
Ricky Cunningham	IT/Website Coordinator	itcoordinator@faringdonu3a.org.uk
Carol Jones	Membership Secretary	07955 443 529 membershipsecretary@faringdonu3a.org.uk
Tessa Timms	Newsletter Editor	01367 358 613 newsletereditor@faringdonu3a.org.uk
David Emett	Secretary	secretary@faringdonu3a.org.uk
Tessa Timms	Speakers' Coordinator	01367 358 613 speakers@faringdonu3a.org.uk
Peter Foot	Thames Valley Representative	01367 358 046 tvnrep@faringdonu3a.org.uk
David O'Connor	Treasurer	
John Curtis	Publicity	07866 745 814 publicity@faringdonu3a.org.uk

ACTIVITIES REPORTS

Meeting - 11th September

Lost & Found—The Emotional Story that inspired a Book Series

By Hilary Coombes

Hilary Coombes a published author of a number of books spoke to us today about her experience as an adoptee.

Hilary pondered on her feelings that as an adopted child she didn't look like the rest of her family she pondered on the fact that she didn't quite fit in and liked different things and didn't have similar interests in common with her adopted family.

Are these the ponderings and feelings of all adopted people?

Who am I really? Who are my biological parents? Do I have biological siblings and am I like them? Why was I given away?

As Hilary grew up she learned she had another family with sisters and a brother; when she moved to Senior School her parents showed her a photo of her biological sisters and was asked whether she would like to meet them; at this stage Hilary declined because she didn't want to upset her parents and hurt their feelings. Like all teenagers she grew up with worries, hiding them from her parents.

Hilary was told she was handed over on a street corner at 9 days old but when she eventually found her biological family she learned that wasn't the case and she was in fact, handed over a pub counter by her father who was the publican of the Bristol pub. Fifty years later when she found her biological family, 4 sisters and 1 brother, her oldest sister had died.

Hilary eventually grew up and had her own three children and whilst reading a book about adopted children to her 3 year old she was asked by her daughter, 'Why don't you know much about your real mum?' 'She couldn't have loved you like you love me.' People can be upsetting without meaning to be and Hilary recalls comments such as 'You must have been an ugly baby to be given away' and 'Why were you given away'. Such comments made Hilary want to write about her life to empower readers to have empathy and sympathy for the adoptee and so she began the search for her parentage; this took her 10 years. She started in Bristol researching electoral rolls, church records and council offices and when that failed she stayed with her daughter in London and spent months in the London Records Office. She recounts it being a complicated process and after requesting a number of birth and death certificates she identified someone with the surname of Pocket – her mother's surname – living in Cheltenham. This search failed after writing a letter to everyone in Cheltenham.



ham with the surname Pocket but Hilary found a witness on a Scottish Marriage Certificate with the name of Pocket which she investigated and received a reply from the groom on the 1966 Marriage Certificate who told Hilary about the witness who turned out to be Hilary's sister.

Hilary and her sister wrote to each other for about a year before they actually met in a restaurant in Cheltenham. Hilary recalls it was a difficult meeting how they couldn't look each other in the eye and where neither of them knew what to say; eventually Hilary says she will never forget the words the sister said when she declared, 'Shall I take you to meet mother?' There at another table in the restaurant sat a little lady – Hilary's mother.

Hilary wrote about adoption in Kit's Story after this meeting which is a story of fiction about an adoptee on a cruise ship but weaves her own experiences into the story. Hilary told us that making her experience fictional has made it easier for the extended family.

She knows now why she was handed over in the pub – her father didn't want another baby – there were already 4 children in the family and Hilary was number 5.

This must have been a difficult revelation and it has made me think that perhaps I/we should tread more carefully when asking direct questions or discussing topics of a sensitive nature.

Hilary's books are available from Amazon or The Wantage Book Shop.

Meeting - 9th October

Celebrity, Ceremony & Corruption

By Dr. Tom Crook

Our talk by Tom Crook today was titled The Honours System in Twentieth-century Britain : Ceremony, Celebrity, Corruption.

Tom is a lecturer on modern history at Oxford Brooks and explained that our current honours system is based on the feudal system established after the Norman invasion in 1066 when William the Conqueror introduced a more structured version of the system that has roots following the collapse of the Roman Empire, when powerful local lords offered protection in exchange for service, a practice that developed over centuries. It was a social, political, and economic system in medieval Europe that was based on land ownership and a strict hierarchy of obligations. At the top was the king, who granted land to nobles in exchange for military service and other support. Nobles, in turn, granted portions of their land to lesser lords or knights, and peasants worked the land for the lords in exchange for protection. The infrastructure

of this system was designed to create money.

The following hierarchy of honours shows the titles and the dates they were established :

Peerage (Lords)
 Dukes (1337)
 Marquess (1385)
 Earl (1066/1442)
 Viscount (1440)
 Baron (1066/1387)
 Baronet (1611)



Chivalric orders

Order of the Garter (1348, limited to 24)
 Order of the Bath (1399/1725, more expansive)
 Order of the Thistle (1687, Scotland, limited to 16)
 Order of St Michael and St George (1818, expansive)
 Royal Victorian Order (1896, for royal household)
 Order of Merit (1902, limited to 24)
 Order of the British Empire (1917, very expansive!)
 Order of Companions of Honour (1917, limited to 65)
 Order of St Patrick (1783-1934, Ireland)
 Order of the Star of India (1861-1948)



And there are more hierarchies within each – and then Knights Bachelor

Medals and decorations

Victoria Cross (1856 – see pic)
 Royal Red Cross (nursing) (1883)
 Military Cross (1914)
 George Cross (1940 – see pic)
 Conspicuous Gallantry Cross (1993)
 Queen/King's Police Medal (1909)
 Queen/King's Fire Service Medal (1954)
 Queen/King's Ambulance Service Medal (2011)



Among others ...

The honours system has become more not less complex over time!

In the early 18th century there was a shift in power and early in the 19th century the power shifted to the PM and government. The end of the 19th early 20th century was the birth of the honour system by way of New Years' honours and the Queen/King's birthday honours. Bureaucracy evolved further at the time of the 1st World War with the establishment of a Cabinet Office and in 1923 a Political Honours Security Com-

mittee was established to vet the calibre and integrity of candidates being honoured. Initially awards were only for high-ranking military officers and aristocracy but glimpses of change occurred in the Victorian period with the first black man, being knighted in 1889.

A continued change in the system has continued and in 1965 the pop group The Beatles were awarded an MBE however John Lennon later returned his MBE in 1969 in protest against the government's involvement in Biafra, Nigeria and Vietnam.

2010-2020

On average 1,000 awards per bi-annual ceremony are awarded

40 Knight/Dame-hoods or above (Lords) (4%)

90 CBEs (9%)

200 OBEs (20%)

400 MBEs (40%)

270 British Empire Medals/other decorations (27%)

Life peerages in 1958 paved the way for women: first female Peer was Baroness Barbara Wootton

Currently there are 242 female peers (out of 804)

Sir Learie Constantine was the first Black person to become a peer in Britain, taking his seat in the House of Lords in 1969

Currently, 55 ethnic minority members sit in the House of Lords

Since the 1960s, an increasing number of women and Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people have accepted knighthoods and other honours and medals.

Over the years there have been a number of controversial honours awarded; Joseph Robinson, a gold miner convicted of fraud, was made a Baron because he made large contributions to Lloyd George's personal wealth. Johnathan Harmsworth, who was the owner of The Daily Mail was made a Viscount by King George V and this title has been handed down through the family; there is now a 4th Viscount Rothermere. Other dodgy honours have been awarded to James Goldsmith, Eric Millar, Joseph Cagan and Tony Blair bestowed honours on a number of people until they were rejected by the House of Lords Appointments Commission due to the 'Cash for Honours' scandal when it was revealed they had loaned large sums of money to the Labour party.

Between 2005 and 2014 MPs, ministers and party workers made up 69% of the peerages and 2.1% of donations (£735,000) to the three major parties. 'Others' – mostly businessmen – made up 31% of peerages and 98% (£33.8m) donations. Investigations have been undertaken but it is almost impossible to prove that hon-

ours have been given in exchange for cash. In July 2007 the CPS stated, "If one person makes an offer, etc., in the hope or expectation of being granted an honour ... that does not of itself constitute an offence ... For a case to proceed, the prosecution must have a realistic prospect of being able to prove that the two people agreed that the gift, etc., was in exchange for an honour." Robert Peston, the ITV journalist wrote the book "Who Runs Britain" in which he stated "Or, to put it another way, it is fine to sell honours as long as you are not explicit about it." And so it continues.....

Meeting - 13th November

Mary de Bohun Royal Lady of Hinton

By Paul Whitton



Our talk today about Mary de Bohun Royal Lady of Hinton was by Paul Whitton, a local historian who lives in Hinton Waldrist where Mary de Bohun resided in Hinton Manor; it had been given to the de Bohun family by Edward III in 1300.

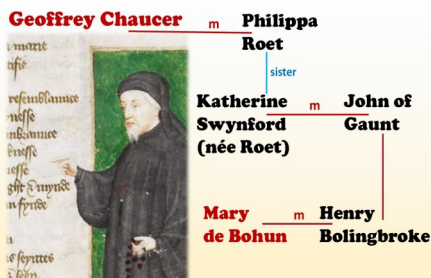
Mary's family came from a Norman French family dating back to William the Conqueror. Mary was a descendant of Kings from both her father and mother's side of the family; they owned about 11 homes across England and Wales from Arundel to Leicester and Pleshey in Essex to Monmouth in Wales; Paul told us that the Swan was the family symbol and had a Bohun model swan in a box.

Mary was 5 years old when her father died and she was made a ward of the King. At the age of 11 she was married to Thomas of Woodstock who was 23. Shortly after her betrothal to Thomas she was removed to Arundel Castle as a result of a plot by her mother and John of Gaunt; a plan was hatched to re-marry her to Henry Bollingbroke who was a tough military man and travelled a lot. It is thought the marriage was a happy one and Henry sent many presents home to Mary such as a camel, a leopard and a carrot. The couple lived in Rochford Hall, Essex which later belonged to the Bolyn family. When Henry was travelling Mary managed the estate; she enjoyed composing music and played the citole, a medieval guitar.

Mary would have read her Book of Hours daily which was presented to her on her marriage to Henry; it is unique in one way or another, but most contain a similar collection of texts, prayers and psalms, often with appropriate decorations, for Christian devotion. Illumination or decoration is minimal in many examples, often restricted to decorated capital letters at the start of psalms and other prayers, but books made for wealthy patrons may be extremely lavish, with full-page miniatures. These illustrations would com-

bine picturesque scenes of country life with sacred images and were the beginning of the times and names for prayers in monasteries in later years such as Compline and Vespers. The blue colouring in the pages is lapis lazuli which has been mined in Afghanistan for thousands of years. Mary's Book of Hours has miraculously survived and is in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Mary worshiped regularly in St. Margaret's church in Hinton with her 2 year old son, Henry who became King Henry V. At 20, Mary wrote the prayer :

To the voice of your love,
A comfort in adversity
A counsel in time of doubt
A caution in time of prosperity
And a cure in time of sickness. Amen



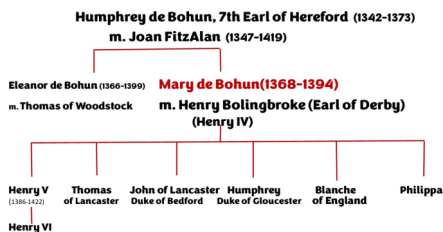
Mary's husband Henry IV was good friends with John of Gaunt and Geoffrey Chaucer who was rewarded by Henry with a pension. This slide shows how their families were intertwined. Another chum of Henry IV's was John Wycliffe whose powerful ally, John of Gaunt provided a protective shield for the theologian when his ideas came under fire from the Catholic Church.

John of Gaunt's wife Constanza and Mary du Bohun were also good friends and are buried together in the vault of Peterborough Cathedral, the last remaining part of Peterborough Abbey.

Mary du Bohun died in childbirth in 1394 giving birth to her 6th child Philippa who became the Queen of Denmark, Norway & Sweden as a result of her marriage to Eric of Pomerania in 1405 in Westminster Abbey which was arranged by her father Henry to make an alliance with Scandinavia – a sort of EU.

Mary's 5 other children are shown in the Family Tree. As a sign of respect and love for his mother, Mary's eldest child, King Henry V, commissioned a window which can still be seen in St. Margaret's church in Hinton Waldrist. Henry paid for the completion of Peterborough Abbey where his mother was buried; he also commissioned a bronze effigy – now lost.

MARY DE BOHUN'S FAMILY TREE



This slide provides the names and dates of
Mary's sons and daughters

6. Sons and daughters



Henry V
1386-1422



Thomas
Duke of Clarence
1387-1421



John of Lancaster
Duke of Bedford
1389-1435



Humphrey
Duke of Gloucester
1390-1447

Blanche of
England
1392-1409



Philippa Queen of
Denmark, Norway and
Sweden
1394-1430

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP 2026

For our u3a purposes, your renewal is due on 1st January, and payment must be received before the end of January 2026 so that your u3a membership will not lapse at the end of January. We hope that you will use our Beacon Administration system to do self-renewals. You will have received an email at the end of November inviting you to renew your membership. If you do not have an email address, we will post you a form at the beginning of December which you can return with a cheque.

We are pleased to say that the membership fee will remain the same for 2026 at £18 for Single membership and £36 for Joint membership.

Finally, if you are a UK taxpayer, we would appreciate it if you could tick the Gift Aid box when renewing, as this is a valuable source of income for your u3a.

FARINGDON GROUPS IN ACTION



**Patchwork Quilts being donated to
The Linus Project by the Patchwork Group**



FARINGDON GROUPS

Group	Leader	Email
Accessible Ukuleles	Jenny Braithwaite	jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk
Art	Julie Forth	juliekarenforth@gmail.com
Ashmolean	Shela Rowan	smr280652@gmail.com
Board Games	Mairi Clare Dunlin	mairiclarephotography@gmail.com
Books	Kay Chamberlain	kaycham64@gmail.com
Bridge - Beginners	Jill Ridley	jill.ridley.22@hotmail.com
Bridge Lessons (Steve B)	Steve Braithwaite	steve.bridge1@gmail.com
Cryptic Crosswords	Peter Smith	pdes_smith@hotmail.com
Current Affairs	Joy Jermy	joyhjermy@outlook.com
Embroidery	Suellen Pedley	suellenpedley@aol.com
Folk Dancing	Val Hudspeth	valhud@gmx.com
Foreign Language Films	Julie Forth	juliekarenforth@gmail.com
French Advanced	Carolyn Williams	williamsdjuk@yahoo.co.uk
French Conversation	Francoise Stacey	b.f.stacey@outlook.com
Gardeners	Christina Carol Field	christinafield04@aol.com
Golf Croquet	Steve Braithwaite	steve.bridge1@gmail.com
Guitar Group	David Emett	david_emettd@hotmail.com
History	Mike Iremonger	mikei@enyc.org.uk
History of Art	Susan Thrower	smthrower@tiscali.co.uk
Italian Improvers	Marion Turner	marionlturner@me.com
Jazz	Janis Hall	janishall148@btinternet.com
Lingo	Jenny Braithwaite	jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk
Lunch	Tessa Timms	tessaatimms@gmail.com
Military History	Bjorn Watson	bjornwatson@btinternet.com
Opera	Tessa Timms	tessaatimms@gmail.com
Patchwork and Quilting	Sue Cain	sue.cain2@gmail.com
Photography	Mairi Clare Dunlin	mairiclarephotography@gmail.com

Poetry	Sandra Cooper	sand.co15@rocketmail.com
Qigong	Peter Hoole	wolfitha@hotmail.com
Quiz	Danielle Mills	danielle.mills1948@gmail.com
Recorder Consort	Peter Smith	pdes_smith@hotmail.com
Sewing	Tessa Timms	tessaatimms@gmail.com
Social History Walks	Margaret Smith	mbsmith5@hotmail.co.uk
Spanish Intermediate	Carolyn Taylor	carolyna.taylor1011@gmail.com
The STEMM Cell	Shaun Forth	shaun4th@gmail.com
Walkers	Michael Griffiths	mpg9000@gmail.com
Wine Appreciation	Peter Robinson	peterrobinsonnew@aol.com

Notes for Members

*If you have any questions about groups contact the Groups Co-ordinator **Sue Cain** or email:*

groupscoordinator@faringdonu3a.org.uk

Not all groups submit a news item for each Newsletter - a full list of groups is provided on pages 15 & 16.

Groups are open to all U3A members but you should check with the Group Leader beforehand about the level of the Group and that it has room for new members. All U3A members are encouraged to start new interest groups, but before taking the matter too far please contact the Groups Co-ordinator to discuss the idea and for a copy of "Guidelines for Interest Groups", and to check the proposed meeting day(s) and time(s).

For members not familiar with Faringdon, GSCP stands for Gloucester Street Car Park, entered past the Library in Gloucester Street. The second Car Park in Faringdon is in Southampton Street. Both Car Parks offer a period of free parking.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

ART WORKSHOP

Monday 19 January 2026 : 6 The Pines : 1-4pm.

We hope to start a new u3a Art Group. In order to gauge interest, a workshop is offered. The focus for this month is on Abstract Art.

Many people expressed interest at the October Open Morning. I have your numbers! Any other potential group members are invited to contact the group leader to discuss attendance.

Julie Forth : 01367242472 (leave a message)

Or email juliekarenforth@gmail.com

ASHMOLEAN

This group visits the Ashmolean Museum every month and has a guided talk in a gallery which is always interesting. The visits take place on the first Thursday in the month. Members make their own way to the Ashmolean Museum. The meeting starts with the group gathering at 10.55 for 11am start in the Greek & Roman Sculpture Gallery. Each talk lasts for one hour. There is a non-returnable fee of £10 per person attending, which is required at least a week before each visit. If for any reason members are unable to attend there will be no refund as we notify the museum in advance of our group numbers.

There is no limit to the number of members in this group as if the number for a particular visit is high then there are two groups. The second visit would be on the same day and is at about 12noon. New members are always welcome to attend and should email me for further information and payment details. Members usually travel to Oxford by bus or use the park and ride. The walk from the S6 bus is about 25 minutes during the Botley Road works.

Thursday 4th December, The Roman 'Statue Habit' with Dr Alison Pollard

No visit in January as the guides are still on holiday.

Thursday 5th February 2026 Topic to be arranged.
Contact Shela Rowan email: smr280652@gmail.com

BEGINNER'S BRIDGE

The next beginner's course will start on the 5th January 2026.

It is aimed at those who would like to learn to play bridge. We are teaching Basic Acol. The Beginners' Bridge course covers all the basics of bidding and will take around 4 terms about 30 lessons – there's a lot to learn! No knowledge of bridge is necessary, however some experience of card playing (Whist in particular) is definitely desirable. The course is also suitable for those who haven't played in a long while and feel they are in need of a refresher.

Dates: 1st & 3rd Monday of the month (from January).

Venue: The Blessed Hugh Church Hall, Faringdon.

Cost: This will depend on the number of people in the group. The charge is to cover the cost of the hall and tea/coffee

Contacts: Jill Ridley 07464 626188 or jill.ridley.22@hotmail.com
 Kim Townsend 07765 460174 or kimma_a@tiscali.co.uk

BRIDGE : INTERMEDIATE AND EXPERIENCED

All Intermediate and Experienced lessons take place in Faringdon Catholic Church Hall (rear entrance from Portway behind Southampton Street car park) from 9.50am to 12 noon.

Provisional dates are given below. Members will be notified of any changes.

Intermediate

No lessons in December
 Mon Jan 14th Wed Jan 16th
 Mon Feb 9th Wed Feb 11th

Experienced

No lessons in Dec
 Wed Jan 30th
 Wed Feb 25th

For further details contact **Steve Braithwaite** on:
steve.bridge1@gmail.com or 077 40 30 60 55

BOARD GAMES

27 November : 14.00 : 24 Nursery View. We will play a selection of

board games trying some new and returning to old favourites (including Scrabble).

TBC December : 14.00 : It will be decided at the November meeting if we will proceed with a December meeting with tasty seasonal treats to accompany various board games and where that will take place. New members are welcome.

Please contact **Kay Chamberlain** - kaycham64@gmail.com or **Mairi Clare Dunlin** - mairiclarephotography@gmail.com

CRYPTIC CROSSWORDS

We usually meet on the third Friday of the month in Faringdon, starting at 2.00pm. Sessions are about two hours long including a refreshment break. The sessions involve the competitive solving of cryptic crosswords of 'The Times', 'Sunday Times' or 'Observer Everyman' standard. We generally start with a quick game using an 'Everyman' puzzle before the main solving 'Cross Purposes' game. There is also a monthly clue-writing competition. Here's a recent entry from a group member for the word HORTICULTURE: Court luthier playing 'Gardener's World'.

If you would like to know more, contact the group leader, **Peter Smith** at pdes_smith@hotmail.com

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Current Affairs takes place on the second Thursday of the month from 10.30 to 12.00.

The venue is The Crown Hotel, in Faringdon market square, where participants can also enjoy hot or cold drink. This is a deliberately informal and convivial setting for what is in essence a friendly chat about what's going on in the world - and inevitably attempting to put that world to rights at the same time!

We endeavour to keep our chat as current as we can, based on what is of particular interest that week. However, members are invited to submit in advance *any* topics that they are interested in, feel strongly about, or importantly that they feel the group as a whole would appreciate. Any kind of local, national or global subject is great and topics don't *necessarily* have to be of the serious kind, although these are clearly going to be the ones that spark most debate. Views will

vary of course, but the intention is very much to let everyone have their say, within the framework of tolerance and understanding.

If you are interested in joining an upcoming meeting please contact **Joy Jermy** on joyhjermy@outlook.com

EMBROIDERY

Embroidery is not just cross stitch! Join the group and learn the wealth of stitches and techniques in this ancient art form.

The group meets on every second Tuesday of the month at 2.00pm.
VENUE. 44, Huntersfield, Stanford-in-the Vale, Faringdon, SN7 8LX.

For more details contact **Suellen Pedley** tel. 01367 710 680 or e-mail. suellenpedley@aol.com

FOLK DANCING

This group has had an unusual year and is now in a state of "flux". We met in Jan. Feb and March. Following session was cancelled due to low numbers. The group agreed to reconvene in September but numbers too low yet again. I made a decision (regretfully) that we should fold. I attended the Open Day hoping for some new recruits and did get a few names. So we are meeting in November and, fingers crossed we can continue?

Therefore the dates for the next quarter are as follows:

December 4th ; January will have to be cancelled as it is New Year's Day. February 5th; March 5th ; April 2nd.

We meet in the Catholic Church Hall on the first Thursday of the month at 2.30 p.m.

If you fancy some light exercise and good company, come and join us. Contact: **Val Hudspeth** (01367 241 035 or valhud@gmx.com).

FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILMS

This group continues to meet to watch and chat about films from other cultures and in non-English languages.

The schedule for 2026 is:

Wed Feb 25: French Lover (French romance)

Wed March 25: The Substitute (Argentinian drama)

Wed April 29: Nobody Knows I'm here (Chilean drama)

Julie Forth, 6 The Pines, SN7 8AU ; **01367242472** :

Juliekarenforth@gmail.com

FRENCH ADVANCED

The group of fluent Francophiles meet on Tuesdays. We read for enjoyment, not as an academic exercise, and also spend time chatting in French.

Unfortunately we do not have any vacancies.

GARDENERS

For further information contact **Christina Field** on **01367 241265** or

christinafield04@aol.com

GOLF CROQUET

A Summer activity Group and so dormant for the winter.

GUITARS

This recently established group is aimed at anyone who has an interest in playing the guitar.

All ability levels are welcome - new players will be given tuition in our 'beginners group' led by Dawn, with a view to joining our 'improvers group' in due course where they will play and sing a range of well known songs.

With a broad range of ability levels in the group, the aim is that we should all learn from each other in the spirit of U3A.

We meet at 10.30am every Thursday morning at the Quaker Meeting House, 4 Lechlade Road, Faringdon and play for an hour followed by coffee and a chat.

If you own a guitar and you would like to play on a regular basis, please get in touch with **Dave and Dawn Emmett**

at david_emett@hotmail.com.

HISTORY OF ART

We meet in Faringdon Old Town Hall at 2.30pm. New members will be very welcome to join us. For further information please don't

hesitate to contact **Sue Thrower** on **01367 240 848** or smthrower@tiscali.co.uk.

ITALIAN IMPROVERS

We have managed to have our separate breaks in Italy this summer and tried out our Italian with varied success! We have very recently added two new "improvers" to the group and are now at the limit for numbers. Additionally we have had the pleasure of meeting an Italian visitor to Faringdon who unravelled the significance of some apparently obscure vocabulary for us and gave us a lesson in history.

Please phone **Marion Turner** on **01793 710 302** if you are interested in coming.

JAZZ

Our meetings are on the second Monday of the month. We meet from 10 - 12 with a short break for tea/coffee and lemon drizzle, there is a charge of £1.

Jan 12. The Kansas City Story.

Feb 16. One off change to third Monday to facilitate a guest drummer who will bring his kit and offer tales and demonstrations.

March 9. Mr Jazz. "He's not a performer, he's not a composer, he's not even a musician but he is Mr Jazz....."

Contact : **Jan Hall** or **Rachel Holt** : rholt29@hotmail.com : **01367 241913**

LUNCH CLUB

The lunch group continues to enjoy our monthly social gatherings. Pre-ordering our meal is usually required so please always book your attendance with Tessa. We meet at 12.30 at a different restaurant or pub each month on the third Wednesday. 17 Dec—The Greyhound, Besselsleigh; 21 Jan— The Dog House, Frilford; 18 Feb— The New Inn, Lechlade. Please contact **Tessa Timms** on **01367 358 613** for further details tessaatimms@gmail.com

MILITARY HISTORY

The Military History Group normally meets on the first Thursday of the month and we consider an eclectic range of topics.

You are welcome to join us and if you would like any more information, please contact Bjorn Watson at

bjornwatson@btinternet.com

OPERA GROUP

The Opera Group is now meeting in The Old Town Hall on the third Monday of every

month. We screen a different Opera each month which is shown 'On The Big Screen' by DVD. We each bring a plate of snacks to share and break mid-evening to socialise with a glass of something interesting. The evening starts at 5pm and finishes around 9pm depending on the length of the opera. All are welcome. Please contact **Tessa Timms – 01367 358613** for further details.

Dates for Viewings: DEC 15– The Snow Queen; JAN 19—L'Elisir d'Amore (Glyndebourne); FEB 16- Ariadne auf Naxos (Zurich Opera); MARCH 16—La Traviata

PATCHWORK & QUILTING

We are almost at the end of our block a month project. Once all 12 blocks have been made we will be working on:

- How best to arrange the blocks in terms of colour.
- How to sash a quilt
- How to put the layers of the quilt together
- Ways of quilting
- And finally, binding

We donate our finished quilts to Project Linus.

We also knit Teddies and Hearts to be donated to the JR in Oxford. If you would like the patterns please contact Sue.

We are a mixed group of beginners and experienced quilters. We usually meet on the fourth Tuesday, each month between 2pm and 4pm in the Small Hall at the United Church Faringdon. We make a small charge to cover the cost of the hall hire and any joint resources we may need.

Dates: Dec - no meeting; Jan 27; Feb 24; Mar 24.

If you would be interested in joining us or finding out more please contact **Sue** on sue.cain2@gmail.com

PHOTOGRAPHY

Learning more about photography to produce better images

There are planned outings during Nov & Dec to various locations on the theme of Trees & Leaves.

"Photographic day": 10th December at 14.00 : Christmas Treats : Bring along homemade, or store bought, seasonal edibles to photograph, and share after! Please also bring props to accompany the treats as we learn some food photography skills, eg tinsel, holly sprigs, Christmas crackers, etc. Venue for this event is 2 Fernham Road, Faringdon.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1K7yQEIP1WYFwhnNRTBQOFYeDbDkUjmQD/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=116861442700735743489&rtopf=true&sd=true>

Anyone who wishes to learn more about photography to produce better images and would enjoy expeditions with like minded U3A members, would be most welcome to join us.

New members are always welcome. Please contact **Mairi Clare Dunlin** : mairiclarephotography@gmail.com

POETRY

Meetings of the Poetry Group are held in Faringdon Library on the first Monday of the month, starting at 10.30am.

Subjects chosen for the next three months are:

January - Dissolution

February - Friendship

March - Bones

Do come along - we have a variety of ways to appreciate Poetry - writing our own, reading others' work, just listening and discussion.

Sand Cooper is group co-ordinator. Contact: **Sand Cooper 07812 680223**

QUIGONG

If you would like some gentle exercise - it's what you see Chinese people doing in the public parks of a morning (in China mainly). 10.30 every Friday morning by the Sports Hall on Watchfield Recreation Ground. We have a qualified instructor who does it for free for the love of it. Anyone welcome, no kit required, Whatsapp group for cancellations. Contact: **Peter Hoole : 07385 297 571**

QUIZ

We meet in the Faringdon United Church. Do you like to find out all sorts of interesting facts and, maybe tell us some more? Our quizzes are very varied (devised by different quizmasters) and we try not to have too many about celebrities! There is a small charge to cover rental and refreshments.

We meet on the second Friday of the Month, other than August.

Time: 10.30—12.30. There is free car parking available for us, behind the Hall!

Contact **Danielle Mills** for details **01367 718625** or email danielle.mills1948@gmail.com

RECORDER CONSORT

The Recorder Consort usually meets on the third and fourth Thursday of the month in Faringdon Library starting at 2.00pm with sessions lasting about two hours. The Consort - which started in 2013 - plays a wide range of music in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere on

instruments generally ranging from soprano to bass. In November, Fairford u3a Recorder Group were invited to join us following our visit to them earlier this year, to play music ranging from the 15th to the 20th century.

If you would like to know more, contact the Consort leader, **Peter Smith: 01367 241 241** or pdes_smith@hotmail.com

THE STEMM CELL

Shaun Forth and Graham Turner have taken over running the Science and Technology group from Peter Hoole, who was caretaker leader following Ron Colyer stepping down. Shaun and Graham have retitled the group as The STEMM Cell, as STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) more accurately reflects the breadth of topics the group has, and continues to, cover.

2pm Thursday 15th January 2026 (TBC), Presentation *100 Years of Television*, Graham Turner (Faringdon U3A), The Barber Rooms, All Saints', Faringdon.

2pm Thursday 12th February 2026 (TBC), Book Review and Discussion, *Thinking Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman (2011) led by Shaun Forth (Faringdon U3A), The Barber Rooms, All Saints', Faringdon. This is a classic book on the psychology of decision making. Please read at least Part 1 before the meeting. The library has 2 copies and 2 e-copies and the book may be purchased (second hand or new) or downloaded.

Thursday 12th March 2026 (TBC), Outing, *University of Oxford, History of Science Museum*. We will travel by public transport and take the opportunity to socialise in the city. We apologise to those with restricted mobility who may find this outing difficult. If you would like to know more, contact **Shaun Forth** on shaun4th@gmail.com

SEWING

This group meets on the first Tuesday of every month at 2pm. Our current project is to make our own pattern for a blouse; cut out and sew the blouse to our own measurements.

Contact **Tessa Timms** at tessaatimms@gmail.com : **01367 358 613** or **Elaine Gathercole** at elaineg173@gmail.com : **01367 248013** for information about the group.

SPANISH - INTERMEDIATE

The Intermediate Spanish Group is still at full capacity and continues to meet on Tuesday afternoons. A couple of people have asked about starting a new beginners Spanish group and we have plenty of resources for anyone wishing to do this. Please get in touch if you're interested. **Carolyn Taylor 01367 242490**

WALKERS

Any new members of the Ramblers' Groups interested in joining a new, medium-level Walkers' Group are invited to contact **Mike Griffiths—01367 242 714** or Michael@ukfsn.org to discuss options.

WINE APPRECIATION

The Wine Appreciation Group (WAGs) is a group of like-minded people who enjoy wine and have a varying range of knowledge. Our meetings are held approximately every two months, usually at the Barber Rooms, All Saints' Church in Faringdon, from 2.00pm to 4.00pm, but with occasional trips to interesting venues. Charges vary by meeting but are set just to cover the cost of guest speakers and the wines we taste and talk about. More details on the Faringdon u3a website.

Upcoming meetings for 2026:

- Tuesday 3 March (Note change of date)
- Tuesday 21 April
- Tuesday 16 June
- Tuesday 20 October

The topics for each meeting still need to be planned. We look forward to seeing all of our existing and future members over the next few events.

Peter Robinson – 01367 718566 – to enquire about availability.

DEADLINE FOR SPRING NEWSLETTER

Please send news of group activities, articles, photographs, etc to the Editor: newslettereditor@Faringdonu3a.org.uk

by **Wednesday, 11th February**

The Spring Newsletter will cover March, April, May

It will be posted to members in **late February**



THAMES VALLEY NETWORK NEWS



Thames Valley Network has arranged the following programme for you for the next few months:

The Winter Quiz, Friday, 5th December 2025, 2.30 pm. Set by Avis

Art on the Underground, Thursday, 15th January 2026, at 10.30 am. A talk by Mike Grundy

Pop Go the Classics, Wednesday, 10th February 2026, at 10.30 am. A Presentation by Clive Aronson

The Spring Quiz, 6th March 2026, at 2.30 pm. Set by Avis

Sutton Hoo, 10th March 2026, at 10.30 am. A talk by Dr Jennifer Foster

Pandemics, 13th April 2026, at 10.30 am. A talk by Dr Jeff Arnold.

When booking opens for these events, details will be sent directly to your email account if registered on the u3a Faringdon & District list.

Peter Foot p.foot47@gmail.com is your TVN Rep.

READ THIS IF YOU HAVE A TELEPHONE LANDLINE!

If you rely on a landline and particularly if you hate modern technology you need to read this article by our member Graham Turner who has a long-standing professional interest in telephony and is very aware of the shape of things to come, very soon, to Landlines.

Do you only have a Landline?

Do you have a mobile phone but rarely if ever use it? After the switchover you may be lucky enough to get the "support" package from BT, if not, in the case of a power cut you will have to rely on your mobile phone so make sure it is always charged and somewhere you can find it in the dark!

Do you rely on any sort of pendant or bracelet to keep you safe?

Do you know vaguely about the "Great Digital Switchover" but need more information?

"The UK's PSTN network is going to be switched off"

You may have seen headlines like this, or otherwise heard that the UK's existing telephone network is going to be switched off. This article explains what is actually happening, what it may mean for you, and what, if anything, you may need to do.

First of all, the term PSTN. This stands for Public Switched Telephone Network, and refers to the existing landline system where wires run from your home to BT telephone exchanges.

Secondly, the reasons for the switch-off. It is getting more and more difficult and expensive for BT to maintain this network, now 50 years old in its current form. Also, the existing network limits the features that can be provided to customers.

The PSTN is being replaced by a digital network using broadband, rather like the change from analogue to digital television a few years ago. You may see the digital phone service referred to as Digital Voice, or as VoIP, which stands for Voice over Internet Protocol.

Exchanges are being switched off in stages, rather than all at once. The local exchanges are expected to be turned off in 2025. All exchanges are due to be turned off by January 2027.

What does this mean for me?

28 [If you already have broadband](#)

If you already have a broadband connection, then that will be used to provide your telephone service. BT will get in touch with you about the change ahead of time. You will either need a new broadband router with one or more telephone sockets into which you can plug your existing telephones, or your existing telephones will need to be replaced with ones that work with your in-home network.

In some cases your existing router may already include telephone sockets, in which case no equipment need be changed. If you are a BT telephone and broadband customer there should be no charge if you need a new router. If you have a BT telephone account and a separate non-BT broadband account, then the situation is not so clear cut, but information should be readily available from BT and your current broadband provider.

You do not need to stay with BT as your telephone service provider. Many of the companies that provide broadband services will also be offering a telephone service, and you may wish to change to one of these. In this case you do not need to wait until you hear from BT about switch-off, you can arrange to change to your new provider at any time. Also, it is possible to get bundled deals for VoIP, broadband and mobile phone services from BT and some other suppliers, and these normally offer some cost reduction compared to paying for the services separately.

Whoever provides your service, you should be able to keep your existing telephone number. You will probably be offered a choice, so if you want to keep your number make sure you tick the box to say so!

[If you only have a telephone but no broadband](#)

BT will get in touch and arrange for a broadband connection to your home, and will provide suitable equipment for you to plug your telephone into.

You will not be charged for this, unless you decide you would like to make use of the new broadband connection for other uses (such as connecting a computer to the internet).

[Is there anything else I need to be aware of?](#)

If you are vulnerable, you need to let your telephone provider know that.

The current landline system provides power to telephones plugged into sockets in the home. This means that if you lose power, you can still use the telephone. The VoIP system relies on the in-home router being powered, so if you lose power, you will lose your telephone service.

So, as a back-up you either need a mobile phone, or some way of keeping the router powered even if your home loses power.

If you are vulnerable your supplier should provide a back-up power supply for the router, or some other means to ensure that your telephone service will continue to operate (normally for up to an hour, or more) in the event of a power cut. In the case of vulnerable customers, BT will offer a back-up power supply or a dual-mode telephone that becomes a mobile phone (without needing a mobile phone contract) in the event of a power cut. In some areas, where BT judge it to be cost-effective, they may leave a small number of customers on their existing PSTN connection, at least until 2029.

It is better not to assume that BT or other suppliers will check whether customers are vulnerable – make sure that they know ahead of time by proactively contacting them.

If you have a telehealth or emergency call button system, then you will need to check with whoever provides you with this service whether it will continue to operate over the VoIP telephone network. If not, they should be able to offer you equipment that will work correctly.

Similarly, if you have a burglar alarm system that uses the telephone network (rather than the broadband network) you will need to check that this will still operate correctly. Old style fax machines will not work over the VoIP network.

[So what do I need to do now?](#)

At the moment you do not need to do anything, unless you have a telehealth or call button system, or a burglar alarm, in which case you may want to check ahead of time whether these will continue to work correctly after the change to the new VoIP telephone system. You may however want to investigate which supplier will offer you the best deal.

Graham has kindly agreed to answer any questions that you have not been able to resolve with your various suppliers. mobile (07970 208742) or (VoIP) landline (01793 710302). VoIP is only referenced to show that he actually uses a virtual Landline as in his article and it looks exactly like a local number.