

# FARINGDON & DISTRICT



**Summer 2026**

<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 June : 2.30pm : Faringdon Corn Exchange  
Policing in Oxfordshire**

**Shaun Morley**, a retired Police Superintendent will talk to us about the way Policing in Oxfordshire is run. I am sure he will be happy to answer our questions.

**Thursday, 9th July : 2.30 : Faringdon Corn Exchange  
For those in Peril**

**Wayne Gregory** has previously given interesting talks to us—this one will explain how the evacuation of British nationals and other entitled personnel or those threatened in a foreign country are rescued from areas of crisis to a place of safety. The talk covers the historical development of these operations and examines the processes involved and examples of how they were conducted.

**Thursday, 6th August : Summer Lunch  
19 Coxwell Road, Faringdon**

## **NEW MEMBERSHIP**

We are delighted to welcome the following new members—  
Faringdon—Kate Constable, Kay Nicholson,  
Longworth—Sarah Williams  
Shrivenham—Keith & Mark Farley  
Wantage—Adrian & Wanda Clarke

**New Members will be invited to a  
Meet & Greet on Thursday 23rd July.  
Further details will be sent to  
individual members in due course.**

## **BEGINNERS FRENCH**

**If anyone is interested in joining a Beginners French Group  
please contact Tessa Timms 07980 562331.**

**We will be starting from Gound Zero.**

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTE

### HOBBIES CONNECT

Your Committee thinks that in some ways the format of Groups and Group leaders can be somewhat off-putting and we are going to explore a less formal idea that will run alongside the formal Group structure making it easier to float an idea which may only have a limited number of takers who can easily organise themselves by mutual agreement rather than appointing a Group Leader and perhaps on an ad hoc basis rather than to a fixed timetable. This is not a new idea, as Chairman I picked it up on a Chairmans' Forum Zoom session and it seemed like a good idea.

The way it would work is that Sue Cain who is already the Groups Coordinator would act as Convenor. You send her your idea and on perhaps a monthly basis Sue will email everyone with the ideas that have been put forward and she will send any replies to the person who put forward the idea and that person will take it from there by contacting those interested. We will list the activities on the website with the Groups list as a Hobbies Connect Activity but without any Contact and if you want to join it will be done through Sue Cain as convenor. Get your thinking caps on.

We will send an email round when it is live on the website where it will merely say Hobbies Connect but there will be a link to a page explaining again how it works and a long list of possible suggestions showing you that we want you to interpret the idea as broadly as you wish.

**Diary Notes:-** The Summer Party is coming along soon and we hope to welcome as many as possible to this popular event. IMPORTANTLY it will not be on the second Thursday in August but the first—Aug 6th. There will be Salmon!

New Members Tea Party will be on the 23rd July and it will be followed by our thank you party for Group Leaders in the early evening.

Invitations to both the above will be sent out in due course.

**Peter**

[wolfitha@hotmail.com](mailto:wolfitha@hotmail.com)



## **u3a Faringdon & District Summer Lunch**

**PLEASE NOTE IT'S  
Thursday, 6th August  
12.30 for 1pm**

**Our Summer Lunch will again be held at 19 Coxwell Road thanks to the continuing generosity of Steve and Jenny Braithwaite.**

**This event is open to Faringdon u3a members only—sorry no guests.**

Meat, fish and vegetarian options will be provided together with bread etc. Each attendee is asked to contribute either a salad or a dessert (no serving spoons) which should be 'ready-to-serve' in a dish that you should take away at the end. You will be invited to bring your own drinks.

Late June we will send you all the details about the event and how to book your place. We hope that those without e-mail might have an 'e-mail buddy'.

### **PARKING**

***If you plan to come by car, please park considerately and 'car-share' if possible.***



## FARINGDON & DISTRICT U3A COMMITTEE 2025/26

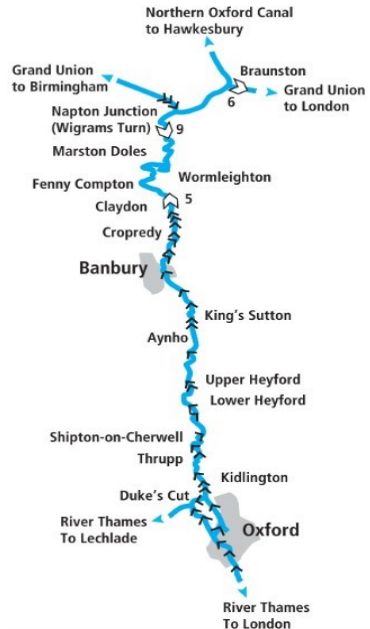
<b>Peter Hoole</b>	Chairman	07385 297571 <a href="mailto:chairman@faringdonu3a.org.uk">chairman@faringdonu3a.org.uk</a>
<b>John Curtis</b>	Vice Chairman	07866 745814 <a href="mailto:vicechairman@faringdonu3a.org.uk">vicechairman@faringdonu3a.org.uk</a>
<b>Neville Brampton</b>	Events & Venue Team	07833 644275 <a href="mailto:events@faringdonu3a.org.uk">events@faringdonu3a.org.uk</a>
<b>Sue Cain</b>	Groups Co-ordinator & Newsletter	07731 675729 <a href="mailto:groupscoordinator@faringdonu3a.org.uk">groupscoordinator@faringdonu3a.org.uk</a>
<b>Ricky Cunningham</b>	IT/Website Coordinator	07841 762575 <a href="mailto:itcoordinator@faringdonu3a.org.uk">itcoordinator@faringdonu3a.org.uk</a>
<b>Carol Jones</b>	Membership Secretary	07955 443529 <a href="mailto:membershipsecretary@faringdonu3a.org.uk">membershipsecretary@faringdonu3a.org.uk</a>
<b>Tessa Timms</b>	Newsletter Editor	07980 562331 <a href="mailto:newslettereditor@faringdonu3a.org.uk">newslettereditor@faringdonu3a.org.uk</a>
<b>David Emmett</b>	Secretary	07879 647263 <a href="mailto:secretary@faringdonu3a.org.uk">secretary@faringdonu3a.org.uk</a>
<b>Tessa Timms</b>	Speakers' Coordinator	07980 562331 <a href="mailto:speakers@faringdonu3a.org.uk">speakers@faringdonu3a.org.uk</a>
<b>Peter Foot</b>	Thames Valley Representative	01367 358046 <a href="mailto:tvnrep@faringdonu3a.org.uk">tvnrep@faringdonu3a.org.uk</a>
<b>David O'Connor</b>	Treasurer	
<b>John Curtis</b>	Publicity	07866 745814 <a href="mailto:publicity@faringdonu3a.org.uk">publicity@faringdonu3a.org.uk</a>

## ACTIVITIES REPORTS

### Meeting - 12th March The South Oxfordshire Canal

*By Alex Higginbottom*

The talk today by Alex Higginbottom from the Canal River Trust gave us an overview of the history of the 36 miles of canal from Claydon to Oxford City Centre that he and his team of volunteers manage. Simplified, a canal is a large ditch in the ground filled with water nicknamed "The Cut" because it was literally cut out of the land by hand. There are 36 locks within two miles one of which is the Shipton Weir Lock which is hexagonal (six-sided). This geometry was engineered to handle water transfer more effectively at the Oxford Canal and the River



Cherwell. The lock includes "stop plank slots"—vertical slots at both ends of the gates—which allow engineers to lower planks and isolate the lock for maintenance. The canal has

Grade II lift bridges; the longest aqueduct in the world; inclined lifts and a boat lift. Prior to the creation of the canal system coal arrived in London primarily by sea from Newcastle and was traded at Billingsgate Market and stored by individual coal merchants in riverside coal yards or cellars along the Thames.

Fisher Row was a riverside community defined by its connection to the water consisting of a huddle of fishermen's houses. Located in Oxford, and built around 1500 be-



Fisher, John. Oxford, looking south from Hyder Bridge, c.1800. London: British Library, 1987. 100 p. 100.

tween two streams of the River Thames, it remains a named location today situated along the Castle Mill Stream. Over the subsequent centuries, it evolved into a hub for bargemen and later, canal boatmen following the construction of the Oxford Canal.

James Brindley (1716–1772), a canal engineer and millwright had a vision to connect all the UK rivers – The Grand Cross. Often called the "Father of English canals," he designed and constructed roughly 360 miles of waterways—including the influential Bridgewater Canal (built in 1761) and Grand Trunk Canal (built between 1766-1777) — the canals revolutionized the transportation of coal and catalyzed the Industrial Revolution. The aristocrat famous for single-handedly funding the Bridgewater Canal was Francis Egerton, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Bridgewater, often called the 'Canal Duke'. The Duke of Marlborough (the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke) was a major shareholder in and supporter of the Oxford Canal, who built 'The Dukes Cut' as his aim of getting coal where he wanted it.

On 8<sup>th</sup> July 1769 the first soil was broken and a 'ditch' was dug at Cropredy; a revolution about investing in private projects erupted and locals raised funds to get the canal to Banbury. Daniel Harris, a civil engineer and Governor of Oxford used prisoners in Oxford as the labourers. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1790 when the canal was opened in Oxford it halved the price of coal.

At the start of this age, canals were built by groups of private individuals with an interest in improving communications. In Staffordshire the potter Josiah Wedgwood saw an opportunity to bring bulky cargoes of clay to his factory doors, and to minimise breakages of his fragile finished goods as they travelled to market.

In 1930 £9million pound was spent on fixing weirs and locks

On 7<sup>th</sup> September 1940 a German bomber dropped a bomb on Banbury hitting the lock; George Bloomfield, the lock keeper at the time, survived the bombing but the lock-keeper's office was badly damaged. The lock gates remained intact, preventing the canal from flooding the town. The war records show that the lock was working again within 24 hours.

Rose and Jack Skinner married in 1946 and lived and raised children on canals throughout the UK. As transport shifted from rail to road, many canals were abandoned or built over and during the 1950s the canals were threatened with closure. Despite being illit-



erate, Mrs Skinner and her husband helped save the Oxford Canal; she also pulled the boat along by hand— much like the horse in the picture here.

The Transport Act 1968 required the British Waterways Board to keep commercial waterways fit for commercial use, and cruising waterways fit for cruising. However, these obligations were subject to the caveat of being by the most economical means. There was no requirement to keep them in a navigable condition; they were to be treated in the most economic way possible, which could mean abandonment. British Waterways could also change the classification of an existing waterway. All or part of the canals could be transferred to local authorities; this allowed roads to be built over them, mitigating the need to build expensive bridges and aqueducts. The last regular long distance narrowboat commercial contract, transporting coal from Atherstone to the Kearley and Tonge jam factory at Southall in west London, ended in 1971. Lime juice continued to be carried between Brentford and Boxmoor until 1981. Substantial tonnages of aggregates were carried by narrowboat on the Grand Union Canal until 1996.

Barbara Castle is widely credited with saving the UK canal network from mass closure through the Transport Act 1968. By legally reclassifying canals from failing freight routes into categories for leisure and recreation, she provided the mandate and funding required for the British Waterways Board to maintain them, transforming them into the thriving national amenity they are today.

The 3-4 mile canal walk from Heyford to Tackley is flat and scenic and you can easily complete the walk one-way and take the train back between the two stations.



On 2 July 2012, all of British Waterways' assets and responsibilities in England and Wales were transferred to the newly founded charity the Canal & River Trust. In Scotland, British Waterways continues to operate as a standalone public corporation under the trading name Scottish Canals.

Prior to 2012 British Waterways contributed £156million per annum to upkeep the canals. A new funding settlement for 2027–2037 was announced, which will see the grant drop to £50 million in 2027 and reduce by 5% each year thereafter, potentially lowering to £31.5 million by 2037, leading to warnings of canal closures from campaigners. The Trust now preserves the infrastructure with the additional help of 200 volunteers, lock keepers and reservoir inspectors. Narrowboats pay £1,200 for an annual licence which helps towards the canals upkeep.

## Meeting - 9<sup>th</sup> April

### The Transatlantic Slave Trade

*By Isaac Crichlow*

The Transatlantic Slave Trade was one of the most horrific periods in human history, lasting from the late 16th century to the early 19th century. It involved the forced transportation of millions of Africans to the Americas, where they were enslaved for labour on plantations. Britain played a major role in the transatlantic slave trade, benefiting economically from the exploitation of enslaved Africans. Although Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807 with the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, the legacy of slavery and the treatment of enslaved people did not end immediately.

**Britain's Role in the Transatlantic Slave Trade.** The transatlantic slave trade was driven by the economic needs of European colonialism. As European nations expanded their empires in the Americas, there was a high demand for labour to cultivate cash crops like sugar, tobacco, cotton, and rice. The indigenous populations of the Americas had been decimated by disease and violence, creating a labor shortage. Europeans began capturing, purchasing, and transporting enslaved Africans to meet this need.

Britain became one of the largest participants in the transatlantic slave trade. Between the 16th and early 19th centuries, British ships transported an estimated 3.1 million Africans to the Americas. British merchants, shipowners, and plantation owners became immensely wealthy from the trade. Ships from British ports such as Liverpool, Bristol, and London would sail to the west coast of Africa, where they exchanged goods like guns, textiles, and alcohol for enslaved people. These Africans were then transported to the Americas, where they were sold to work on plantations and in various industries.

The British government supported the trade, passing laws to protect merchants' interests. The Royal African Company, a British trading company, held a monopoly over the African slave trade from 1672 to 1698, after which private traders entered the market. The profits generated by the slave trade provided the financial foundation for British colonial expansion.

#### **Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade (1807).**

By the late 18th century, opposition to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade began to grow in Britain. The abolitionist movement, led by figures like William Wilberforce, Granville Sharp, and Thomas Clarkson, campaigned to expose the brutal realities of the trade. Abolitionists used pamphlets, petitions, and public meetings to rally public

support for an end to the trade.

Their efforts resulted in the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1807, which made it illegal for British ships to engage in the transatlantic slave trade. While this was a major victory for abolitionists, it did not end slavery itself. Slavery remained legal in British colonies, and the system of exploitation continued, albeit through different means. The legacy of the trade persisted in the lives of millions of enslaved people, even as Britain ended its involvement in the trade.

### **Treatment of Slaves After 1807**

Although the transatlantic slave trade ended in 1807, the fate of enslaved people already in British colonies did not change immediately. Slavery continued in British territories until 1833, when the Slavery Abolition Act emancipated enslaved people in most of the British Empire.

Before the 1833 act, the lives of enslaved individuals were marked by extreme brutality and exploitation. On plantations in the Caribbean and the Americas, enslaved people were forced to work in harsh conditions, often overseen by violent overseers. They faced grueling physical labour, inadequate food, and poor living conditions. Punishments for disobedience or attempting to escape included whipping, mutilation, or even execution. While the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade halted the importation of new slaves, the demand for labour in British colonies remained high. Enslaved people continued to be exploited, and the system of slavery persisted. Moreover, when slavery was finally abolished in 1833, the British government compensated slave owners £20 million (equivalent to billions today), but no compensation was given to the enslaved people who had suffered under the system for so long.

However, after 1807, enslaved individuals in the British colonies began to resist more actively. The cessation of the slave trade meant that enslaved people could form families, and some tried to escape or rebel. Notable slave uprisings, such as those in Jamaica and Haiti, demonstrated the growing resistance among enslaved populations. Haiti, for example, gained independence in 1804 after a successful revolution led by formerly enslaved people, marking the first time a slave-led rebellion created an independent nation.

**Abolition and Continued Struggles Even after the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1807.** The fight for the complete emancipation of enslaved people in the British Empire continued. Abolitionists and enslaved people themselves pushed for the end of slavery, culminating in the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, which emancipated enslaved people in most British territories. However, this did not mean an im-

mediate end to the struggles faced by former slaves. Many newly freed individuals continued to face racial discrimination and economic hardship, and the colonial system of exploitation adapted to new forms of control.

While the abolition of the slave trade was a significant achievement, it was not the end of racial inequality in Britain or its colonies. The economic wealth Britain gained from slavery continued to influence its society and institutions long after the legal end of the trade. Moreover, the compensation to slave owners reflected the deep entanglement of Britain's economy with the institution of slavery.

### Conclusion

The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Britain's role in it had a profound impact on history. Though Britain's abolition of the slave trade in 1807 was an important step toward ending this brutal system, the treatment of enslaved people did not immediately improve. Slavery continued until 1833, and the post-abolition period saw ongoing exploitation and resistance. The legacy of the slave trade, marked by exploitation, racial discrimination, and lasting economic inequalities, continued to shape the history of Britain and its colonies for generations. The British government finally paid off the interest of the loan of £20 million taken out to compensate former slave owners, not the enslaved people, in 2015, some 180 years after slavery was abolished in the 1830's!

## Meeting - 14<sup>th</sup> May

### A Tale of Three Chaucers—their Oxfordshire connection

*By Paul Whitton*



Geoffrey Chaucer is best known as a poet but in fact he was something of a polymath. We heard that he was also a translator, fluent in several languages, soldier, courtier, diplomat and civil servant, friend of the King, MP for Kent. He was also an astronomer and philosopher, able to use an astrolabe, the navigation and astronomical instrument. Quite a profile!

The main points of Paul's talk covered three generations of Chaucers; Geoffrey, Thomas, and Alyce.

They were a “A Family on the Rise”. We heard how Geoffrey grew closer to the Royal Court in 1340-1400, his interest in the Church; about his son Thomas Chaucer (1367 – 1434) and Thomas’s daughter Alyce Chaucer (1404–1475) so he covered 135 years in this talk.

Geoffrey Chaucer was born in London, in the early 1340s during the reign of King Edward III. As a boy of 14 or 15 Geoffrey became a page to Elizabeth de Burgh Countess of Ulster, married to Prince Lionel a son of King Edward III. This brought him into the inner court circles, where he stayed for the rest of his life.

In fact, Chaucer served under three kings; Edward III, Richard II, and Henry IV. King Edward III later sent Geoffrey on diplomatic missions to Spain, France, and Italy. In his travels he came across the work of many authors especially Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch who influenced his later writings. We know Chaucer spoke Italian.

In Chaucer’s day most of the English Court still read and wrote in French even though they understood English. The world of writing and books was mostly using French, as English took a back seat to French after the Norman Conquest of 1066. King Richard II started addressing crowds in English and Henry IV further promoted English language, as seen by his support for an English Bible and his friendship with Chaucer. Chaucer himself knew French, English, Italian, and Latin.

Geoffrey Chaucer married in 1366 Philippa de Roet at Leicester. He had met her when he was 12 and she 10 in household of Elizabeth de Burgh, Countess of Ulster. Philippa Roet’s father came from Hainault now in Belgium and had accompanied Queen Philippa to England to marry Edward III. These associations at royal court proved to be profitable. Philippa was also rather importantly the sister of Katherine Swynford – lover and later wife of John of Gaunt. So, through marriage Chaucer and Gaunt later became brothers-in-law.

At age about 28 Chaucer is believed to have written his first major work *The Book of the Duchess* in honour of Blanche of Lancaster, the late wife of John of Gaunt. Chaucer’s *Parlement of Foules* (1382), is a dream vision portraying a parliament for birds/ eagles to choose their mates. It is thought he wrote it to honour the first anniversary of the engagement of fifteen-year-old King Richard II of England to fifteen-year-old Anne of Bohemia.

Chaucer’s works often mention themes of Christian faith because it was central to most people in medieval times. Even though he was critical of the Church, Chaucer respected and admired Christians and claimed to be one himself, as he wrote in his Retraction at the end of *Canterbury Tales*.

We heard that Chaucer was well acquainted with Oxford and also Osney Abbey; In fact, one of the pilgrims in *Canterbury Tales* is an Oxford student, the ‘clerk of Oxenforde’.

Chaucer describes him as poverty-stricken and devoted to his **books**.

Chaucer taught his son Lewis about the astrolabe when Lewis was living in Woodstock or Oxford.. There is a similar astrolabe in Oxford Museum Science dating from this time, and Paul brought a working model to show us.

Interestingly, Geoffrey lived his last months as a close friend of the Benedictine community of monks. He died October 1400 and because his last house was so near to Westminster Abbey and he was still in royal favour, he was buried at the chapel of St Benedict, in the Abbey, a space normally reserved for monks.

THOMAS CHAUCER 1367 - 1434

Geoffrey Chaucer and his wife Philippa Roet had 3 or 4 children including their son Thomas born probably in 1367.

Thomas became an English courtier like his father but Thomas also had an impressive career as chief butler to four kings, and was an envoy to France. Though he was a commoner he was elected fifteen times to the Parliament of England, and became Speaker of the House of Commons for five Parliaments in the early 1400's. Thomas' marriage to Maud (or Matilda) Burghersh of Ewelme, was probably helped by his contacts to John of Gaunt and brought him large estates in Oxfordshire and Berkshire, including the manor of Ewelme;

Another example of royal influence, Thomas joined John Beaufort as part of an entourage in 1402 with King Henry IV's daughter Blanche, on her way to marry Ludwig of Bavaria.(Ludwig was the Elector Palatine) in Köln (Cologne). Blanche was the daughter of Henry IV's and Mary de Bohun with connections to Hinton Waldrist. Henry IV also appointed Thomas as constable of Wallingford Castle, and steward of the honours of Wallingford and St. Valéry based at Hinton Waldrist and of the Chiltern Hundreds. This connection with Hinton is mentioned in official History of Parliament.

In February 1411 Queen Joan gave Thomas the Hundreds of Wootton in Oxfordshire, and Thomas was also granted the manor of Woodstock.

There is still Chaucer's House and Chaucer Cottages for his staff in Park Street Woodstock. They were built right next to Woodstock Palace (now Blenheim) which was an important royal residence at that time.

As Thomas grew richer and more powerful through all these connections, he acquired five more manors and extensive possessions in Oxfordshire including the castle and manor of Donnington near Newbury in Berkshire.

It is in this period in the 1420's that Thomas bought the manor at Buckland.

It is also recorded that Thomas held Hatford Manor (near Stanford-in-the-Vale)

Thomas was a member of the Fraternity of the Holy Cross in Abingdon which had helped rebuild the bridge and alms houses. Shortly before his death, he is said to have designed the town's famous Market Cross that was eventually erected in 1438.

***Continued on back page.....***

## FARINGDON GROUPS

<b>Accessible Ukuleles</b>	Jenny Braithwaite	01367 240929
<b>Art</b>	Julie Forth	01367 242472
<b>Ashmolean</b>	Shela Rowan	01367 243636
<b>Board Games</b>	Mairi Clare Dunlin	07424 966872
<b>Books</b>	Kay Chamberlain	01367 242647
<b>Bridge - Beginners</b>	Jill Ridley	01367 240929
<b>Bridge Lessons (Steve B)</b>	Steve Braithwaite	01367 240929
<b>Cryptic Crosswords</b>	Peter Smith	pdes_smith@hotmail.com
<b>Current Affairs</b>	Joy Jermy	joyhjermy@outlook.com
<b>Embroidery</b>	Suellen Pedley	01367 710680
<b>Folk Dancing</b>	Val Hudspeth	01367 241035
<b>Foreign Language Films</b>	Julie Forth	01367 242472
<b>French Advanced</b>	Carolyn Williams	01367 241208
<b>French Conversation</b>	Francoise Stacey	01367 241813
<b>Gardeners</b>	Christina Field	01367 241265
<b>Golf Croquet</b>	Steve Braithwaite	01367 240929
<b>Guitar Group</b>	David Emett	david_emett@hotmail.com
<b>Hablemos!</b>	Richard King	richard@kingsrus2.com
<b>History</b>	Mike Iremonger	01367 241361
<b>History of Art</b>	Susan Thrower	01367 240848
<b>Hola, bienvenidos</b>	Sue Cain	sue.cain2@gmail.com
<b>Italian Improvers</b>	Marion Turner	01793 710302
<b>Jazz</b>	Rachel Holt	07870 370139
<b>Lingo</b>	Jenny Braithwaite	01367 240929
<b>Lunch</b>	David Milne	07824 157491
<b>Military History</b>	Bjorn Watson	01793 782748
<b>Opera</b>	Tessa Timms	07980 562331
<b>Patchwork and Quilting</b>	Sue Cain	sue.cain2@gmail.com

<b>Photography</b>	Mairi Clare Dunlin	07424 966872
<b>Poetry</b>	Sandra Cooper	07812 680223
<b>Qigong</b>	Peter Hoole	07759 820311
<b>Quiz</b>	Danielle Mills	01367 718625
<b>Recorder Consort</b>	Peter Smith	pdes_smith@hotmail.com
<b>Sewing</b>	Tessa Timms Elaine Gathercole	07980 562331 elaineg173@gmail.com
<b>Social History Walks</b>	Margaret Smith	01793 710800
<b>Spanish Intermediate</b>	Carolyn Taylor	01367 242490
<b>The STEMM Cell</b>	Shaun Forth	shaun4th@gmail.com
<b>Walkers</b>	Michael Griffiths	01367 242714
<b>Wine Appreciation</b>	Peter Robinson	01367 718566

### **Notes for Members**

*If you have any questions about groups contact the Groups Co-ordinator **Sue Cain** or email: [groupscoordinator@faringdonu3a.org.uk](mailto: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

This Group is running on a rather ad hoc basis, with members of the group facilitating the creative process.

We have explored Klee + Kandinsky as inspirations for our own practice.

Currently, we are exploring Colour Theory.

The group meets at 6 The Pines, SN7 8AU. Day: Monday. Time: 130 -430pm.

Future dates (and group facilitators) are usually decided from one meeting to the next.

Communications are delivered via The Beacon email system. If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please let me know.

**Julie Forth : 01367242472** (leave a message)

Or email [juliekarenforth@gmail.com](mailto: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.

#### Programme for 2026

4th June                      Ashmolean Paintings: Conservator Jevon Thistle wood

2nd July                      Rembrandt - Print Room with Lynne Ward

#### **No visit in August**

3rd September          Chinese Paintings-Billy Beswick

1st October                Van Dyke-Print Room with Lynne Ward

5th November Christopher Dresser and Decorative Arts in the  
Pre Raphaelite Gallery  
3rd December Costume in Art with Anna Steven

**Contact Shela Rowan email:** [smr280652@gmail.com](mailto:smr280652@gmail.com)

## BEGINNER'S BRIDGE

**Dates:** 1st & 3rd Monday of the month.

**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](mailto:jill.ridley.22@hotmail.com)

Kim Townsend 07765 460174 or [kimma\\_a@tiscali.co.uk](mailto: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

Mon Jun 8th Wed Jun 10th  
Mon Jul 13h Wed Jul 15th

### Experienced

Wed Jun 24th  
Wed Jul 29th

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

## BOARD GAMES

Please contact **Kay Chamberlain** - [kaycham64@gmail.com](mailto:kaycham64@gmail.com) or  
**Mairi Clare Dunlin** - [mairiclarephotography@gmail.com](mailto:mairiclarephotography@gmail.com)

## CRYPTIC CROSSWORDS

We usually meet on the third Friday of the month in Faringdon, starting at 2.00pm. Meetings 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 'CrossPurposes' solving game.

Here's a recent entry for the monthly clue-writing competition for the word EXPAT: Maybe a Brit in Dubai initially evading punitive tax somehow [Explanation: E+P+TAX anagram].

If you would like to know more, contact the group leader, **Peter Smith** at [pdes\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:joyhjermy@outlook.com)

## EMBROIDERY

The group continue to explore the many different aspects of this rich art form, each member working on their own preferred style, and include beginners and more experienced workers.

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](mailto:suellenpedley@aol.com)

## FOLK DANCING

Numbers are fluctuating but still a viable group. Those attending say it is most enjoyable and we do get to laugh a lot! If you would like join us, we meet on the FIRST Thursday of every month at the Catholic Church Hall at 2.30 p.m. (car park available). The next dates for this group are:- June 4th July 2nd We do not meet in August September 3rd

October first (often forgotten, so make a note now!)

As they say on Strictly- Keep Dancing!

Contact: **Val Hudspeth** (01367 241 035 or [valhud@gmx.com](mailto:valhud@gmx.com)).

## FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILMS

This group is currently taking a Summer Break.

We will reconvene in September.

It is currently full. However, if you would like to join the group ( perhaps on an occasional basis...?) Please do let me know and I will put you on the Reserve list.

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

[Juliekarenforth@gmail.com](mailto: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

**Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2026** : A visit to Mill House Gardens, Fernham Road, Uffington. A garden overlooking the White Horse and with wonderful views of the Downs.

Open under the NGS. Admission £5.00. Suggest we arrive there at 2.15pm.

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2026** : Visit to Lydiard Park, Swindon to view the walled garden or maybe a visit to Buscot Park to see their Summer displays.

**Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> August 2026** : Visit to the Kitchen Garden at Thyme, Southrop Estate, Southrop which is open under the NGS. The garden is situated on the edge of water meadows and the managed garden ensures abundance from the land while maintaining the fertile soil. Admission £10.00.

For these visits, please let Christina know if you will be visiting and whether or not you can give someone a lift. For more information contact Christina on 07884372896 or email her at [christinafield04@aol.com](mailto:christinafield04@aol.com)

## GOLF CROQUET

Will be held on the following dates: (weather permitting)

Mon Jun 8<sup>th</sup> : Mon Jun 22<sup>nd</sup> : Other dates to be arranged.

At 19 Coxwell Road, Faringdon, starting at 2pm. No previous experience is required.

Contact: Steve Braithwaite [steve.bridge1@gmail.com](mailto:steve.bridge1@gmail.com) or **077 40 30 60 55**

## GUITARS

The Guitar group is aimed at anyone who has an interest in playing the guitar. All ability levels are welcome – 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 or so followed by coffee and a chat.

If you own a guitar – we have spares if you don't – and are interested come and join us. Please get in touch with **Dave and Dawn Emmett** at [david\\_emett@hotmail.com](mailto:david_emett@hotmail.com).

## HABLEMOS!

Status : Active, full, but take new members when possible

When: Monthly on Thursday mornings 10.00-11.30 First and Third Thursday of the month

Venue: Members' homes in Faringdon area

We are a relatively new group for Spanish "improvers" - those with some existing skills in reading, writing and speaking in Spanish (Castellano). Our group is called **Hablemos!** ... Let's talk. Our emphasis is on conversation, on a wide range of topics selected by members. We often use topics from current English & Spanish media reports. Although we have no formal teacher, we support each other with grammar, spelling and pronunciation.

We wish to remain a small group (8 people max.) so that everyone has a chance to speak. We meet in members' houses on a rota basis. We are nearly full, but if you would like to join us and have suitable skills, there is a waiting list, from which we take additional members in order and as soon as we can.

**Richard King:** [richard@kingsrus2.com](mailto:richard@kingsrus2.com)

## **HISTORY OF ART**

During the summer our only meeting will be on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June at 2.30pm in the Old Town Hall. We shall be watching the first part of Simon Schama's "Power of Art", a series of eight works revealing the history of visual imagination through the ages. This part looks at the impact of Caravaggio.

We have no meetings in July and August and will restart on **Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September**. Details of this meeting will be sent out to Group members nearer the time.

New members always welcome. For more information please contact Sue Thrower on 01367 240 848 or [smthrower@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:smthrower@tiscali.co.uk).

## **HOLA, BIENVENIDOS—SPANISH BEGINNERS**

This is a new Spanish group for beginners, which has been set up by those responding to the advert in the last newsletter.

We are meeting weekly on a Thursday in a member's home and following a beginner's course.

We have reached our maximum number so are unable to take on anyone else at the moment. However, if you wish to start a small group yourself we are more than happy to offer help and guidance.

Please contact: [groupscoordinator@faringdonu3a.org.uk](mailto:groupscoordinator@faringdonu3a.org.uk)

## **ITALIAN IMPROVERS**

The Italian Improvers group continues to meet on a fortnightly basis at the homes of the members. Currently the group is full.

We are concentrating on speaking more and listening for comprehension. Some of us are fortunate in having trips to Italy lined up for the summer. Please phone **Marion Turner** on **01793 710 302** if you are interested

## JAZZ

June. Val Hudspeth is going to surprise us with "The Jazz Rainbow"

July & August : No meeting : summer break

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. Contact : **Jan Hall** or **Rachel Holt** : [rholt29@hotmail.com](mailto:rholt29@hotmail.com) : **01367 241913**

## LUNCH CLUB

The Lunch Group continues to meet, at a different pub, on the third Wednesday of each month. Our lunches are all very informal and friendly, and are always enjoyable. Usually, between 20 and 30 members attend. Pre-ordering our meals is usually required, and so please always book your attendance with David. In June we will be going to the Maybush at Newbridge, and in July, the Windrush at Witney. Please contact David Milnes for more details on: mobile 07824 157491; email [david.milnes@hotmail.com](mailto:david.milnes@hotmail.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](mailto:bjornwatson@btinternet.com)

## OPERA GROUP

The Opera Group meets 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:** 15 June : Midsummer Night's Dream (Glyndebourne); 20 July : La Clemenza de Tito (Zrich Opera); August—Holiday; 20 September : Orphee aux

Enfers (Opera National de Lyon)

## PATCHWORK & QUILTING

We continue to meet most months in the Small Hall, at the United Church on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday from 2pm – 4pm.

In April Karen kindly talked us through the use of colour and the colour wheel. We are a mixed ability group, so beginners definitely welcome. We aim to have time to troubleshoot any issues you might have with your quilting as well as learn new techniques.

If you would be interested in joining us or finding out more please contact **Sue** on [sue.cain2@gmail.com](mailto:sue.cain2@gmail.com)

## PHOTOGRAPHY

*Learning more about photography to produce better images*

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

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 interest-

ing 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](mailto: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.

If you would like to know more, contact the Consort leader, **Peter Smith: 01367 241 241** or [pdes\\_smith@hotmail.com](mailto:pdes_smith@hotmail.com)

## THE STEMM CELL

Shaun Forth and Graham Turner have taken over running the Science and Technology group. If you would like to know more, contact **Shaun Forth** on [shaun4th@gmail.com](mailto:shaun4th@gmail.com)

## SEWING

This group meets on the first Tuesday of every month from 2pm—4.30pm

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

## SOCIAL HISTORY WALKS

In March we were in Highworth where we met the ghost who lives under a bedroom window and the ghost who haunted the farmer's stable, not to forget the ghostly monks. We were enchanted by The Elms, once known as Puzzle Court. We discovered the main ABBA fan club which in its heyday received up to 1000 letters a day. Finally we paid homage to an old Secret Agent who ran the Post Office - Mabel Stranks (see photo below). Mabel sent Churchill's auxiliars to Coleshill for training and she passed secret messages on through a cycling girl guide and a roller skating young boy.

Our visit to Langford in April included an 8thC sculpture of Christ, and an ancient sculpture of St John, Mary and Jesus but St John and Mary are the wrong way round and Jesus' arms are on back to front - some very poor sighted restorers! Apart from the beautiful houses the highlights were the newsagent showing us very old photographs of her ancestors - five generations of the family have lived in the same cottage and still going. The Tuesday group had a surprise visit to a garden designed by Hardy Amies (the Queen's dresser) and the Thursday group had both a tour of the garden and of the house, for which we thank the current owner.

## SPANISH - INTERMEDIATE

The Intermediate Spanish Group is still at full capacity and continues to meet on Tuesday afternoons.

## 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](mailto:Michael@ukfsn.org) to discuss options.

## WINE APPRECIATION

Members are still recalling with pleasant memories, April's excellent presentation of top wines from northern Italy's Piemonte region – accompanied by appropriate nibbles of Parmesan cheese, Salame and bread sticks – from *Italophile* Dave North and his wife, Anna. We are now looking forward to the next three events in 2026.

On **16 June**, we welcome back the head of the wine department at Faringdon's Waitrose store, **Glenn Anderson**, to talk about, and taste, the wines of **The Loire**.

**20 October** brings us a tasting and illustrated talk on **The Wines of Chile**. This will be produced and presented by WAG member, **Peter Barter**, who has recently spent an extended holiday in that beautiful country.

Finally, for 2026, on **25 November** we shall be holding our annual, and eagerly anticipated **Festive Lunch** in the Corn Exchange, again catered for us by Sadlers.

Members – existing and new – will be very welcome to attend all of these events.

For details on how to become a member, please contact **Peter Robinson, 01367 718566**



## THAMES VALLEY NETWORK NEWS



The Southeast Region of the u3a have their annual residential festival 7 - 10 September at the University of Chichester. The outline is here: <https://southeastu3aforum.u3asite.uk/2026-2/>. It promises to be a very varied programme and any member of Faringdon & District u3a can apply to be part of it. Have a look at the website and see if there is anything there that might be 'your cup of tea'!

TVN itself continues its programme on Zoom each month. All members of Faringdon & District u3a are entitled to book via the TVN website, <https://u3atvnetwork.org.uk/>.

Booking now - June 5th at 10.30, The First Blitz: Zeppelins and Giants 1914. - 1918  
June 19th at 14.30, The TVN Summer Quiz

Details to follow - October 23rd at 10.30, a talk on China

Enjoy the. Summer!

**Peter Foot** [p.foot47@gmail.com](mailto:p.foot47@gmail.com) is your TVN Rep.

### **DEADLINE FOR AUTUMN NEWSLETTER**

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

by **Friday, 10th July**

The Autumn Newsletter will cover August, September, October

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

***Continued from May 14th Talk.....***

**ALYCE CHAUCER/ DE LA POLE 1404–1475**

Thomas Chaucer left only one child, Alyce, so Alyce is the granddaughter of Geoffrey. St Mary the Virgin Church in Ewelme is still closely connected with her.

Her third husband William de la Pole, became a favourite of the young King Henry VI, and as his chief adviser was made Duke of Suffolk in 1448.

Alice and her husband benefitted from his position and influence, acquiring valuable rewards and even portions of royal land. From 1447 de la Pole was the leading political figure in England but he was publicly blamed for the arrest and sudden death of Humphrey of Lancaster, Duke of Gloucester, at Bury St Edmunds in 1447. This was one of the sons of Mary de Bohun! It was interesting that Paul mentioned that Duke Humphrey was probably the last person of royal descent who lived in Hinton Manor. Alyce lived for another 25 years after William's death, and died in Ewelme in May 1475.

**FARINGDON GROUPS IN ACTION**



**Jazz Group**



**Social  
History  
Walks  
Group**



**Golf Croquet  
Group**