

## \* Monthly Meeting – Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December

Please join us at our next **Member's Monthly** meeting.

It will start at **2pm** on **Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER** at **SHEPPEY HALL, QUEENBOROUGH**

### *Christmas Party Meeting*

Our Christmas meeting will be a party with a FREE raffle, refreshments and entertainment. As in previous years, we will be providing a "Light Christmas Tea" including a selection of sandwiches, crisps, and mince pies. Why not dress up in your Christmas jumper, hats and tinsel. This meeting will also include our speaker for the month.

### *The History of Champagne*

**Peter Griffiths**

Our talk about the History of Champagne is the appropriate topic for our Christmas meeting this month.

Our speaker, Peter Griffiths, retired in 2013 after a 45-year career in aviation. He started flying in 1967 for BOAC (the British Overseas Airways Corporation), the forerunner of today's British Airways. He left BOAC as a first officer and flight navigator, and in 1975 he joined Cathay Pacific, based in Hong Kong for 29 years. After leaving Cathay, he flew executive jets until his retirement. His other career highlights include evacuating people from China after the Tiananmen Square Massacre and flying a freighter during the first Gulf War.



While aviation has occupied a large part of Peter's working life, he has another interest, champagne – not just drinking it, but talking about it.

Peter is a fount of knowledge about Champers and he will be telling us all about the origins of bubbly, not as you might think, all down to a monk called Dom Perignon.

Sorry to disappoint you, Peter won't be bringing Champagne for us all, it's going to have to be tea, coffee, or just possibly a glass of Prosecco for our festive get-together.

Lynda Jones, our speaker secretary, has given Peter directions to the Sheppey Hall, but a man who has flown around the world more times than he cares to remember is unlikely to get lost on his way to Queenborough!

**\*Save the date for next month: Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> January\***

**Hogarth's Peregrination – Chris Read**

## *Merry Christmas 2024*

*To all our members  
from the Isle of Sheppey u3a*

*This card was designed and painted for us by  
Jan Britton-Mosley  
who is our Art group organiser*



**COMING UP...**

<b>David's Slice of Life</b>	Page 2	This month David looks back over the years on the cost of Christmas
<b>Interest Groups &amp; Activities</b>	Page 3	See what members have been doing recently. Register for any groups you are interested in joining.
<b>National u3a</b>	Page 4	There's a wide range of national online talks, workshops and courses available, included in your membership for FREE! These change monthly so register for the u3a Friends newsletter for all the up-to-date information
<b>Keep Smiling</b>	Page 5	A little humour.
<b>Information &amp; Contact details</b>	Page 5	Let us know if you want to join our members only Facebook Group and/or u3a General WhatsApp Group?

**David's Slice of Life**

When I was writing my first weekly newspaper columns way back in my twenties, my editor used to say: "Don't waste too much time on it. Nobody reads the last issue before Christmas."

Hopefully, that doesn't apply to this newsletter, but as most people have other things on their mind as the Big Day approaches, I'll try not to ramble on for too long, always difficult for me!

I've gathered together one or two interesting statistics about Christmas, in particular how much we spend on food, presents, socialising etc. The most recent figures, from last year, vary wildly, from an average family spend of around £700 up to a rather eye-watering £1,800.

What is clear is that the average family is spending massively more on the festivities now than they did in 1993, 30 years ago.

Let's say the average family spent £900 on the festivities in 2023, the latest year for which figures are available. This equates to roughly 40 per cent of the average adult's monthly UK income, whereas in 1993 the average spend was a much smaller percentage of the average UK income. This rather dramatic increase in festive spending way outstrips the rate of inflation.

The cynic in me says that the bigger family bills for the festivities, now outstripping inflation, are entirely due to us all being ripped off by every retailer. But this may not be entirely accurate. Cast your mind back 30 years. Christmas now is a far bigger commercial opportunity for retailers than it was in 1993. Now, the "festivities" start around the middle of November, sometimes even as ludicrously early as mid-October. The gap between the "commercial" start of Christmas and the "real" Christmas grows longer with passing year.

There is a myriad more ways in 2024 for us to spend our hard-earned money. The range of festive products now available is huge. There are far more expensive electronic gizmos on the market for our kids or grandkids to pester us for, expensive outdoor Christmas light displays, even expensive Christmas crockery. "Expensive" seems to be the key word throughout. And, of course, shopping habits have changed. It's much easier now for us to spend a small fortune by pressing a few buttons on the internet, instead of tramping around a cold and wet high street on a miserable December day.

This always was a deterrent to spending excessive amounts of cash – anyway, it was for me!

The cost of some festive traditions has also become absurdly high – the centuries-old tradition of sending Christmas cards springs to mind. Like many other families, we have cut back dramatically on the amount we send out because the cost of stamps now far outweighs the cost of the cards. To send out about 60 cards with second-class stamps now costs around £50, much more expensive than the cards. No wonder our Christmas spend is getting bigger every year.

As always, every Christmas, those of us with a sweet tooth (me included) are in the manufacturers' sights for "special" treatment. By this, I mean the now well-established practice of hiking prices but reducing the size of the product. It's called "shrinkflation" – what a wonderful word! I am grateful to the anonymous chocoholic who



posted this photograph of three tins of Celebrations, taking in successive years over the last three years. No words are necessary!

Thinking back to my childhood, or even comparatively recently, say 30-40 years ago, it's clear that Christmas has now become a tacky, full-blown commercial opportunity in a way it never was before. I'm not at all religious, but I can't help wondering how many of today's children even know what Christmas is all about, other than family get-togethers, presents and tables groaning under the weight of festive food.

In an idle moment, I also wondered when the Christmas "celebrations" will start in 50 years' time. In August? No, I'm just being daft. Or am I?

**Merry Christmas, everyone.**

**INTEREST GROUPS & ACTIVITIES**

Each interest group has its own communications list so, if you are interested in joining any of our interest groups, please sign up at one of our meetings or email us at: [isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com](mailto:isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com)

If you would like help to start up a group or arrange an outing, please let us know.

Find out more about our groups on our website: [Isle of Sheppey u3a Interest Groups Information](#)

**U3A CHRISTMAS SUNDAY LUNCH @ MASONIC CLUB**

Thirty-Nine u3a members and friends got together for a festive Sunday lunch.



**LADIES THAT LUNCH – CHRISTMAS LUNCH**

Sixteen members of the Ladies That Lunch group got together for their festive lunch at the Red Lion, Bluetown

**FLOWER ARRANGING GROUP**

The flower arranging group decorated lots of large and small oasis balls with flowers to decorate a wooden Christmas tree - it was displayed in Queenborough Church during their Christmas Tree Festival weekend.



**NATIONAL u3a – RADIO PODCAST**



The **u3a Radio podcast** broadcast team have now returned from their summer break. Each month on 17<sup>th</sup> a new episode is uploaded so listen to November's edition here: [u3a Radio Podcast Playlist](#)

**NATIONAL u3a**

*Have you looked on the National u3a website? There's so much u3a members across the country are getting involved with*

**ONLINE LEARNING EVENTS**

There are numerous and wide-ranging learning events and short courses (usually free online using zoom), **Coming up soon in December/January:** [u3a online events](#)

- Illuminating Hope: The Transformative Power of Christmas
- The Paradigm of Plate Tectonics – A Lesson in Geology
- Secrets of the Human Brain: How can we age better?
- Secrets of the Human Brain: Talk One
- An Introduction to AI for Older People
- Staying Safe Online – A u3a Presentation with Q&A
- Five Essential Tips for Online Safety & Support
- Flight Inspirations: December meeting
- Flight Inspiration Meeting: January
- Artificial Intelligence News: December – Review of 2024 and looking forward to 2025
- The Hard Science of Herbal Medicine
- Melancholy as a Creative Force: Joni Mitchell's Blue Album
- Exploring World Faiths: Religious Education in Schools
- Introduction to Duplicate Bridge for Bridge Improvers
- Sculpting after the Holocaust – The Story of Naomi Blake
- Cryptic Crosswords in Context
- Meditation & Mindfulness continuation sessions
- Laughter Yoga with Merrie Maggie
- Laughter Yoga with Judith
- Bollywood Laughter Yoga Dance

**NATIONAL PROGRAMMES**

Enter your poetry and short stories in the competitions, submit your paintings/drawings and photographs to be featured in the online galleries. See what other members across the country have already submitted and see if you can spot anything from our of our Isle of Sheppey u3a members. Take part or just browse other members' submissions. Get involved by clicking here: [u3a National Programmes](#)

**Enter Your Photography & Art**

- Paint or Draw – New theme each month
- u3a Eye – Themed Photography Project
- Found in Nature – Photo Gallery of all things weird and wonderful in nature

**Puzzles & Games**

- Logic Puzzles
- Maths Challenge
- Aileen's Game
- Where Am I?

**Share Your Memories**

- Write a Letter to your Younger Self
- All our Yesterdays
- Photos of World War II War Memorials

**Writing Competitions**

- Poetry Competition 23-24
- Short Story Competition 24 – Theme 'Escape'

**Connect with Members**

- u3a Air Fryer Community
- u3a Walkers' Exchange

**u3a SOURCES**

Read the u3a blog dedicated to sharing, inspiring and learning. Interesting and thought-provoking articles from around the country, giving insights into other u3as doing what all u3as do best ‘Learn, Laugh, Live’. Find the blog on the national website, click here: [u3a Sources](#)

**“u3a Friends” NEWSLETTER**

Sign up to get the most up to date news from National Office and find out the latest news and learning events as they are added.

Click here to find out more about what there is on offer nationally [National u3a](#). New events added monthly so, have a look and see if there’s anything interesting that you’d like to join with in the next few weeks.

**MONTHLY MEETING DATES 2025**

Meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of each month at 2pm until 4pm (except in December) at the Sheppey Hall in Queenborough. Refreshments are included Doors open 1.40pm.

<b>23<sup>rd</sup> January</b>	<b>24<sup>th</sup> April</b>	<b>24<sup>th</sup> July</b>	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> October</b>
<b>27<sup>th</sup> February</b>	<b>22<sup>nd</sup> May</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> August</b>	<b>27<sup>th</sup> November</b>
<b>27<sup>th</sup> March</b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> September</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> December</b>

**KEEP SMILING**



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## Information & Contact Details

You can contact us here:

[Isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com](mailto:Isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com)

Find our website here:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/isle-of-sheppey/home>

Email us to join our WhatsApp Group:

[Isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com](mailto:Isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com)

Our Facebook Page is:

<https://www.facebook.com/isleofsheppeyu3a>

Our members only Facebook Group is:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/384159678869515>

Interact with u3a members around the country on the

u3a: Keeping in Touch Facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/U3AKeepingInTouch>

u3a YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/user/TheU3a/videos>

## Diversity & Inclusion Statement

Isle of Sheppey u3a recognises that everyone is different and aims to create an environment that values and treats all members fairly. We are committed to promoting equality and diversity and to ensure that u3a membership is as accessible as possible to different groups within the community.