

**\* Monthly Meeting – Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February\***

Please join us at our next **Monthly Members’ meeting**.  
It will start at **2pm** on **Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February** at **THE SHEPPEY HALL, QUEENBOROUGH**

***Passports, Assassins, Traitors & Spies***  
**Martin Lloyd**

Former Immigration Service officer Martin Lloyd, the speaker at our upcoming meeting, came to national notice when he ad-libbed on BBC Radio 4's Midweek programme to fill the gap left by an absent guest.



Martin, from Canterbury, enthralled listeners with his account of the history of passports. He should be an expert on the subject, as he worked for HM Immigration Service for 24 years. His brief moment of national fame started him on the path to a new career as a public speaker, regularly giving talks to groups such as our own, and appearing on TV and radio.

He has written several books, including “Neither Civil, Nor Servant: 24 years in the Immigration Service”. In it, he recalls how he rubbed shoulders with thousands of passport holders, from royalty to rascals. No doubt we shall be hearing more about Martin's experiences in his talk, entitled Passports, Assassins, Traitors and Spies.

**\*Save the date for next month: Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March\***

***Suffragettes & Suffragists: Votes for Women – Melanie Gibson-Barton***

**COMING UP...**

<b>David’s Slice of Life</b>	Page 2	This month, David explores the skills of buying presents!
<b>Interest Groups &amp; Activities</b>	Page 3	See what members have been doing recently and what’s coming up. Register for any groups you are interested in joining.
<b>Community Events</b>	Page 4	Notice of upcoming Community events you may wish to support.
<b>Membership Subscriptions</b>	Page 4	Advanced warning that memberships are due for renewal by 1 <sup>st</sup> April.
<b>u3a Radio Podcast</b>	Page 5	Have you listened to the latest podcasts?
<b>National u3a Online Learning Events</b>	Page 5	There’s a wide range of national online talks, included in your membership for FREE!
<b>u3a National Programmes</b>	Page 6	National u3a Learn and share activities cover a wide range of interests for all u3a members to get involved in - from challenges and projects to competitions.
<b>u3aFriends Newsletter</b>	Page 6	Join the “u3a Friends” to access discounts on products and services. Sign up for the newsletter to for all the up-to-date national u3a information.
<b>Keep Smiling</b>	Page 6	A little humour.
<b>Meeting Dates Information &amp; Contact details</b>	Page 7	Let us know if you want to join our members only Facebook Group and/or u3a General WhatsApp Group?

## David's Slice of Life

It's my wife's birthday soon, and, as usual, my mind has gone totally blank when it comes to gift ideas.

It doesn't get any better at Christmas when, I am ashamed to admit, I recruit my daughter to do my thinking for me and even purchase some presents on my behalf.



My wife has a point when she tells me that if it wasn't for her making the effort no one would get any presents at Christmas, or indeed at any other time.

Is a man's inability to buy presents, or even think of an idea, purely a male "thing" or just sheer laziness? Most females have a ready answer to that question!

The psychology surrounding present-buying has always puzzled me. People who are usually quite sane do strange, inexplicable, things.

A lifelong friend of my wife's gave me a very acceptable Barbour scarf last Christmas. Hoping for something equally acceptable, I eagerly unwrapped the second present she gave me, only to find ... a set of scented candles, obviously a must-have gift for any male!

I am still baffled as to why my wife's friend might think that a set of scented candles was an appropriate gift for a man. Mind you, this is the same individual who, a few years back, bought me the same toolbox for Christmas on two consecutive years. But I don't want to sound ungrateful because she is a charming lady, if a little dappy. I write this article in the full knowledge that my wife's friend will not be reading it!

Clearly, some people can be quite brutal about Christmas presents they don't like or want. A survey by the Post Office in 2023 revealed some fascinating statistics. Almost a third of consumers planned to return, re-gift, sell or donate some of their Christmas presents, with a fifth doing so to help cost of living pressures.

I'm glad to say that neither myself nor my wife have ever sold an unwanted Christmas present, though I confess that once or twice some duplicated gifts have found their way to charity shops.

Fortunately, I have had very few avoid when you leave the buying one such disaster nearly 40 years still delights in embarrassing me opportunity arises. I was working usual, I had left such present-moment – you can't get much more



Christmas present disasters, easy to decisions to someone else. But ago still haunts me, and my wife with the story whenever the in an office in Chatham and, as buying as I did until the very last last moment than Christmas Eve!

My boss and I (he was just as lacking in ideas as me) rushed down the High Street into a very crowded M&S store. He grabbed a grotesque black coat for his wife, without even knowing her size, while I settled for a pack of knickers as a last-minute stocking filler after fighting my way through the melee.

Come Christmas Day, my wife unwrapped this present, only to find that I had bought her ... a pack of three Y-fronts. As I said, people who are usually quite sane do strange things at Christmas. It turned out that I wasn't even in the ladies' underwear section when I made my purchase. I put my blunder down to a combination of desperation and an extremely congested store. Four decades later, my wife still jokes about my mad moment in M&S.

Meanwhile, I still have a decision to make about my set of scented candles. But, no worries, I have a germ of an idea forming. Just remembered that we have a raffle at our annual Christmas meeting. In 10 months' time, some lucky ticket holder won't remember how their set of scented candles began its journey to a table at the Sheppey Hall... I hope!

## 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](#)

### SOCIAL HISTORY GROUP – Next Meeting Friday 21<sup>st</sup> March

#### February Newsletter

The Isle of Sheppey u3a's Social History Group has been meeting every third Friday in each month for over a year now. Although small in stature, it has mixed with giants. Oxford University and the grandees of the u3a nationwide have benefitted from the true stories garnered from our own u3a members, about the experiences of their families during the Second World War, now made available on the internet.

In its more localised moods, the Group has researched, deliberated and discussed such wide-ranging topics as **“Ancient Egypt's Everyday Way of Life”** and **“The Development of Medicine and the Treatment of Illness from Tudor Times”** to the ever-present problem through history of **“Getting On and Off the Island”** and **“The Lost Villages and Communities of Sheppey”**.

This month, the Social History Group has tackled its most expansive topic to date: **“What the UK has done for the World throughout History”**. Where does one start? Arguably, this group of Island's greatest offerings to this planet must include the powerful impact of the English Language on so many millions of its inhabitants, and the nourishing individual satisfaction brought about by the humble sandwich. Our Group's members have also delved into the UK's gifts of the telephone and television, radar and penicillin to mankind, down to the simple expedient of painting a series of white lines on the hulls of ships, instigated by Samuel Plimsoll, to save sailors' lives worldwide. The UK's efforts at correcting its own - and the World's - wrongs have also come under scrutiny. After such profound deliberations on these and many other UK 'gifts' to the World, the usual restorative 'cuppa' and biscuits are freely available.

Next month we track down **“Famous Events, Characters and Celebrities Linked, or Associated with, the Isle of Sheppey throughout History”**. So, why not join us at **2.00pm on 21<sup>st</sup> March** at the Sea Cadets Unit at Barton Point to discover for yourself, and to indulge your interest in history in all its varied facets and help to choose the future topics for discussion by the Group. All are most welcome.

### SCRABBLE GROUP – Sheerness East Working Men's Club

Due to the refurbishment of the Sheerness Leisure Centre, the Scrabble group has had to change venue and has moved to the Sheerness East Working Men's Club at Halfway.

The Scrabble has been running for several years and new members, from beginners to the more experienced players are always welcome. The group runs on the first Thursday morning each month and Val is our facilitator for the group, if you are interested, please let us know



### OUTING TO THE CRITERION BLUETOWN – TUESDAY 8<sup>th</sup> APRIL

The planned outing to Criterion Music Hall has now been confirmed and will take place on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April. Members should arrive around 12.45pm, in time to start at 1pm. The event will be a talk by Jenny Hurkett about the Criterion Music Hall & Museum followed by a film about the Bridges of the Swale and tea and Cake. The cost will be £6.



Please let us know if you would like to book a place as soon as possible.

**REFRESHMENTS AT MEETINGS**

Linda, Val and Maggie have been providing our refreshments service since we started in November 2019. Linda has also voluntarily chosen to make our superb cakes several times each year. Linda, Val and Maggie will be continuing to provide this service until our next AGM in May and will then take a well-deserved ‘retirement’. The committee (and I’m sure all our members) would like to say a very grateful thanks for sharing the load of our monthly meetings by organising the refreshments so consistently over the past years.

The committee have decided that a good way to spread the load in future, is to request that members of each interest group take turns to set up and provide the refreshments service, as mentioned at our last meeting. The interest groups were randomly assigned a monthly meeting each at our committee meeting and group facilitators will be asked to liaise with the committee to ensure the refreshments service is continued to be reliably provided.

June	Sunday Lunch @ The Masonic	December	Scrabble
July	Art for Fun	January	Crib
August	Crafty Ideas	February	Book Club
September	Ladies that Lunch	March	Social History
October	Wine Appreciation	April	Flower Arranging
November	Conversational French	May	Monday Walk

Any member who is not part of an interest group but would like to contribute to the running of the refreshment service should let us know, so we can have a list of members to call on in case of a shortage.

**LOCAL COMMUNITY EVENTS**



This event is organised by our members Colin and Mae. There will be a live Jazz band and includes a Sausage & Mash lunch followed by a choice of desserts. If you are interested, please contact them direct on the telephone numbers on the poster.

The Inner Wheel Club of the Isle of Sheppey are holding their annual Disco & Quiz. Phillipa is one of our members who is also involved with the Inner Wheel who raise funds for a different charity each year. Please contact her using the details on the poster if you are interested in attending.



**MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS 2025/2026**

Our membership year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March. Membership for 25/26 will remain at £20 per year and includes entry to the monthly meetings with refreshments and the national u3a magazine ‘Third Age Matters’ delivered to your home, five times a year. The fee for new members joining before 1<sup>st</sup> April will be £20 for the year 25/26, the remainder of the current membership year will be complimentary.

We will be holding a mass renewal at our March meeting where you will be able to pay by cash, cheque or card and we will also be pleased to receive your renewals at any time before then.

Please make **Cheques** payable to: **Isle of Sheppey u3a**

**Bank Transfer:** You can also pay by bank transfer at any time, please enter your name as reference.

**Account Name: Isle of Sheppey u3a      Account Number: 33003361      Sort Code: 20-54-25**

**Reference: Your Name**

Bank transfers are encouraged as they are very convenient for our u3a.

**NATIONAL u3a – RADIO PODCAST**



Have you listened to the latest monthly **u3a Radio podcasts** on YouTube? On the 17<sup>th</sup> of each month a new episode is uploaded. Click here for the latest edition as well as the full list of radio podcasts since they started:

[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 February/March/April : [u3a online events](#)**

- Nanophotonic Devices for `Healthcare Applications
- Penguins: Icons of Antarctica
- Future Lives – Initiatives for Care
- Secrets of the Human Brain: Talk Two
- Philosophy as a way of Life
- The Lifecycle of a Laser: From Prototype to Making Stars on Earth
- Flight Inspirations Aviation Meeting: March
- Apps to Help Seniors being Out and About: A Travel Focus Journey
- The Truth in Ten
- How to Best Use Facebook
- Growing Up Human: The Evolution of Childhood
- The Gothic: Tracing the Genre from Medieval Architecture to The Goths
- Exploring World Faiths: Faith and Water
- Dorothy Levitt: The Fast Lady
- The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare
- Sustainable Travel in Europe
- From Turmoil to Joy: The Sculpture of Auguste Rodin
- Making your Smartphone or Tablet easier to use as you get older
- Recording and Editing a Video on Your Smartphone
- Cryptic Crosswords for Beginners: 6 Session Course
- Artificial Intelligence News: March GPT, Agents and Healthcare
- LEO – The World’s First Business Computer
- How Many Letters in the Alphabet?
- Lung Disease in Advancing Age: Identifying New Treatments
- A Glimpse of Anglo- India
- Secrets of the Brain: Talk Three
- Smart Tech for Older and Disabled People
- Robotics and Automation
- A Sustainable Wardrobe
- How to Get Published with ‘Writers & Artists’
- Social Class?
- The Paradigm of Plate Tectonics – A Lesson in Geology
- The Hard Science of Herbal Medicine
- Illuminating Hope: The Transformative Power of Christmas
- Planning for later life without “someone you trust”
- Exploring the Universe with the James Webb Space Telescope
- Meditation & Mindfulness continuation sessions
- Laughter Yoga with Merrie Maggie
- Laughter Yoga with Judith

**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 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

**Share Your Memories**

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

**Puzzles & Games**

- Logic Puzzles
- Maths Challenge
- Aileen's Game
- Where Am I?
- The u3a Quiz Library

**Writing Competitions**

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

**Connect with Members**

- u3a Air Fryer Community
- u3a Walkers' Exchange

**u3a SOURCES**

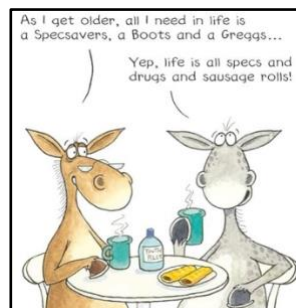
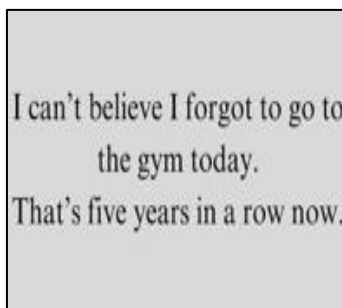
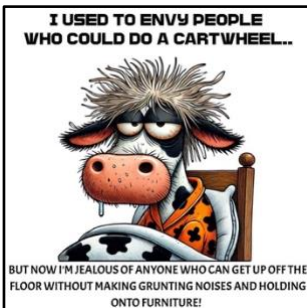
Read the u3a blog dedicated to sharing, inspiring and learning. Interesting and thought-provoking articles from around the country, giving insights into other u3as doing what all u3as do best 'Learn, Laugh, Live'. Find the blog on the national website, click here: [u3a Sources](#)

**"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.

**KEEP SMILING**



**MONTHLY MEETING DATES 2025**

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

<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>
<b>24<sup>th</sup> April</b>	<b>24<sup>th</sup> July</b>	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> October</b>	<b>(Christmas Meeting)</b>
<b>22<sup>nd</sup> May - AGM</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> August</b>	<b>27<sup>th</sup> November</b>	

**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.