

*** Monthly Meeting – Thursday 27th March***

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

Suffragettes and Suffragists: Votes for Women
Melanie Gibson-Barton

Our speaker this month, Melanie Gibson-Barton, is making her third visit to the Isle of Sheppey u3a.

The topics for her previous talks couldn’t have been more diverse; the History of Teddy Bears in June 2022, followed by Eva Braun, Hitler’s mistress, exactly a year ago.

This time, Melanie will be telling us about the Suffragettes and the Suffragists – Votes for Women. Her thought-provoking talk provides an insight into the struggles of both groups, including the early, and often overlooked, pioneers of women’s rights.

It was the Suffragettes who were grabbing most of the headlines more than a century ago because of their often violent and militant tactics. The Suffragists, however, used largely peaceful methods such as lobbying, which is probably why they are less well-known.



Save the date for next month: Thursday 24th April

COMING UP...

Membership subscriptions 2025/2026

Due on 1st April; please see section below for information on how to pay.

David’s Slice of Life	Page 2	This month, David reflects on his recent interaction with Artificial Intelligence.
Interest Groups & Activities	Page 3	See what members have been doing recently and what’s coming up. Register for any groups you are interested in joining.
AGM 2025	Page 4	Advanced notice of our upcoming AGM
Membership Subscriptions		Details on how to pay your membership fee.
Meeting Dates		
u3a Radio Podcast		Have you listened to the latest podcasts?
National u3a	Page 5	There’s a wide range of national online talks, included in your membership for FREE!
Online Learning Events		
u3a National Programmes		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.
u3aFriends Extra	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.
Newsletter		
Keep Smiling		A little humour.
Information & Contact details		Let us know if you want to join our members only Facebook Group and/or u3a General WhatsApp Group?

David's Slice of Life

A fascinating Radio 4 programme earlier this month detailed some of the frustrations experienced by normally placid individuals who have blown a fuse while seeking answers from online customer service departments.

Instead of talking to a human being, they have found themselves having a futile “conversation” with a chatbot, an AI (Artificial Intelligence) creation which suffers from a major flaw. It isn't intelligent.

It seems that AI is about to take over our lives. Jobs will be lost and, equally worrying, a recent survey predicts that by the end of this year, 95% of all customer service inquiries will be handled by AI. We seem already to be well on the way to this statistic.

It's a frightening thought. Only this week I came close to pulling out what little hair I've got left when confronted by a chatbot eager to help me. I might just as well have attempted a conversation with the cauliflower we had for Sunday lunch.

I wanted to ask a question about a forthcoming holiday and filled in the travel company's query box, providing, as requested, all the details of my booking, name, address, holiday ref number and so on. To my horror, a chatbot popped up.

“How can I help you?” it asked. “Please choose an option from the dropdown list.”

I choose the “Holiday Already Booked” option.

“Please supply all the details of your booking,” said the chatbot.

“I've already done that,” I replied, but of course that was too complicated for the chatbot, which responded with: “I don't understand. Please choose another option from the dropdown list.”



Clearly, this ludicrous exchange could have continued all night. By this time, my blood pressure levels were starting to climb and I desperately wanted to respond with a sarcastic or even rude remark. But with a chatbot you can't even do that. Unless you ask one of about half a dozen questions which it has been pre-programmed to answer, you are doomed before you start. Don't even think about some witty repartee. You'll be wasting your time.

Of course, there wasn't another relevant option. I had no intention of providing the same details for the second time, so I deleted the chatbot. It felt good!

I gave up and dialled the customer service phone number and, eventually, spoke to a living, breathing person, who answered my query, along with a few other questions I asked. How long before there are no human beings to speak to? Not long, apparently.

It is, I repeat, a frightening thought.

I don't have a crystal ball and have no idea what impact AI will have on a wide variety of jobs, but what I do know is that at customer service level AI is already a disaster, a cheap option for companies to save money at the expense of the customer.

A five-year-old could do a better job than the current crop of chatbots. I suppose there is a chance that things might get better one day, though I fear the likelihood is that they will get worse, much, much worse, at least as far as customer service is concerned.

In the meantime, we can always study the list of FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) in the hope of finding an answer to our queries. But when was the last time you found a FAQ which answered your query. No one seems to have ever asked the question you want answered. Strange, isn't it?

But that's another story...

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

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 2pm Friday 16th May

March Newsletter

Over the centuries, the Isle of Sheppey has had to deal with more than its fair share of scorn from ‘mainlanders’, when the question of visiting, or maybe even worse, living on this island in the estuary is raised. And yet, over the years, this little landmass has found itself at the heart of history, especially when this country is in crisis.

Characters of consequence have found themselves drawn to this place, called Sheppey, to do what they have to for their own benefit or for the nation. Why? Is it because of its location, its geography or maybe its inhabitants? Is it just their luck – good or bad – that, in spite of its apparent lack of appeal, the Isle of Sheppey has always met the needs of the moment?

Our Social History Group decided to take a look into this enigma by researching Sheppey’s historical visitors and asking: what was the attraction or purpose of their link with the Island, and what individual or mass benefit did it have? For some, like Richard Parker, who led the Nore Mutiny, it was a terminal experience at the end of a rope, while for the likes of Captain James Cook or Horatio Nelson it was the start of worldwide, lasting fame. Even John Cabot, who in 1497 discovered Newfoundland for King Henry VII, lived in Minster Abbey Gatehouse for some time.

The Group’s research also highlighted Sheppey’s own home-grown celebrities, such as; Maud Shaw, President Kennedy’s children’s Nanny, Ernest Cox, the man responsible for raising many of the scuppered German Navy fleet at Scapa Flow after the First World War, Margaret Blatch, award-winning chef and authoress and Dr Richard Beeching of railways reduction fame, among many discussed.

Our next subject for discussion on Friday 16th May is ‘Toys through the ages’. All members are welcome to join us at the Sea Cadets Unit at Barton’s Point, Sheerness, to enjoy a lively discussion, mingled with humour, from which we all feel we have learned something, and refreshed with coffee or tea and biscuits.

There is no meeting in April as the third Friday in the month falls on Good Friday – a Bank Holiday when family gatherings and days out take priority.

OUTING TO THE CRITERION BLUETOWN – TUESDAY 8th APRIL

The planned outing to Criterion Music Hall has now been confirmed and will take place on Tuesday 8th 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.



AGM - May 2025

The committee wish to give advanced notice that the 2025 AGM will be held on Thursday 22nd May at Sheppey Hall at 2pm. This will be followed by the usual member’s monthly meeting.

With our AGM coming up in May, we are in urgent need of new committee members. Our committee members are only in office for a limited period and we need members to replace these positions to keep our committee fresh and vibrant and keep our u3a moving on into the future. Our current committee members have been in post for several years so we need volunteers to join the committee enabling us to have a smooth planned handover as existing committee members stand down. Without more volunteers our u3a is in danger of stalling

U3a are run entirely by volunteers and all members are invited and encouraged to get involved in supporting their local u3a where they can. Our Isle of Sheppey u3a can only continue with the support of the members. Expressions of interest from members who feel that they could contribute to the running of our u3a either by joining the committee or more informally are now required and will be gratefully received.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS 2025/2026

Our membership year runs from 1st April to 31st 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 1st April will be £20 for the year 25/26, the remainder of the current membership year is complimentary.

We will be holding a mass renewal at the 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.

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.

24th April	24th July	23rd October
22nd May - AGM	28th August	27th November
26th June	25th September	11th December - Christmas Meeting

NATIONAL u3a – RADIO PODCAST



Have you listened to the latest monthly **u3a Radio podcasts** on YouTube? On the 17th 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 March/April: [u3a online events](#)

- 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
- Flight Inspirations Aviation Meeting: April
- Smart Tech for Older and Disabled People
- A Sustainable Wardrobe
- How to Get Published with 'Writers & Artists'
- Robotics and Automation
- A Glimpse at the Pre Raphaelites: The Potential of Love
- From Turmoil to Joy: The Sculpture of Auguste Rodin
- Duplicate Bridge Tactics for Improvers
- How AI can save you hours when Researching your Family History
- Using the Web to Learn Something New
- Getting Going with Local History
- Secrets of the Human Brain: Talk Four
- Artificial Intelligence News: April Responsible AI
- The Assassination of President Kennedy
- What the Future Changes in Landlines will mean for you
- Understanding Online Content, Misinformation and Disinformation
- Poverty: A Sociological Perspective
- 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

- Photos of World War II War Memorials

Connect with Members

- u3a Air Fryer Community
- u3a Walkers' Exchange

Puzzles & Games

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

Writing Competitions

- Essay Competition 2025 – Submit your case for a person, policy, invention or idea having a positive impact on society

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 EXTRA

u3a friends is a community open to all our u3a members. As part of this community our members have access to a wide range of offers, discounts and additional services. Friends can make savings on well-known brands, shopping, travel, day out and much more. Find out more here: [u3a Friends Extra Presentation](#)

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. You will also get a link to the FIENDS EXTRA benefits website.

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

As I get older, I don't really sleep anymore. It's more of a doze between pee breaks.

Apparently you can't use 'beefstew' as a password. It's not stroganoff.
😄

I can't remember how to write 1, 1000, 51, 6 and 500 in Roman numerals.
I M LIVID

SENIOR CITIZEN TEXTING CODE
 LOL - Little Old Lady
 BFF - Best Friend Fell
 ATD - At the Doctor's
 BTW - Bring the Wheelchair
 CBM - Covered By Medicaid
 FWIW - Forgot Where I was
 OMSG - Oh my! Sorry! Gas...
 BYOT - Bring Your Own Teeth



I've just bought a Humpty Dumpty toy from Aldi, it's brilliant, it comes with Aldi Kings horses and Aldi Kings men.

I just fired myself from cleaning my house. I don't like my attitude & I got caught drinking on the job



Information & Contact Details

You can contact us here:
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

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>

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.