

*** Monthly Meeting – Thursday 24th July***

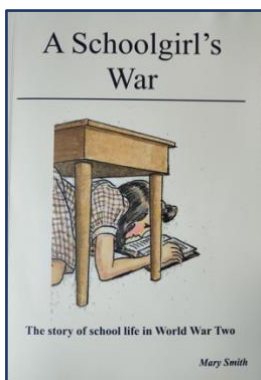
Please join us at our next **Monthly Members’ meeting**.
It will start at **2pm** on **Thursday 24th July** at **THE SHEPPEY HALL, QUEENBOROUGH**

A Schoolgirl’s War

Mary Smith

In the dark days of the Second World War, an art teacher at a Kent grammar school kept a meticulous scrapbook, complete with paintings and drawings, detailing the wartime challenges of life in the classroom.

The teacher was Helen Keen and the school was Maidstone Grammar School for Girls.



Now fast forward around 70 years. The speaker at our meeting is Mary Smith, who was head teacher and English teacher at that same school between 2006 and 2014.

Trawling through some dusty artefacts at the school, Mary came across a cardboard box containing Helen Keen’s scrapbook. Using Helen’s sketches and detailed notes, Mary was able to create a book: *A Schoolgirl’s War: The Story of School Life in World War Two*.

But that was just the start. Mary had to carry out a huge amount of research before she was ready for her book to be published. The title of Mary’s talk is the same as the title of her book. It promises to provide a fascinating record of the lives of pupils and their teachers as the war unfolded.

There may be a test at the end. Anyone who scores less than seven out of 10 will get a detention!

Save the date for next month: Thursday 28th August

Picnic in the Hall – Sheppey Hall, Queenborough

COMING UP...

David’s Slice of Life	Page 2	This month, David reflects on his schooldays and growing up in the Fifties.
Interest Groups & Activities u3a Excursions	Page 3/4	Interest Groups articles REMINDER TO PAY BALANCE for our upcoming excursion to Hastings & Tenterden.
Kent u3a Network	Page 5	Find out more about our Kent Network
National u3a Online Learning Events u3a National Programmes u3a Radio Podcast u3a Friends Extra u3a Friends Newsletter	Page 6	There’s a wide range of national online talks, included in your membership for FREE! July’s edition of the radio podcast is out. 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.
A Little Light entertainment Some Interesting Facts	Page 7	A little humour Did you know this?
Information & Contact details	Page 8	Let us know if you want to join our members only Facebook Group and/or u3a General WhatsApp Group?

David's Slice of Life

Phew! What a scorcher it's been recently. Oddly enough, the soaring temperatures have coincided with a trip down memory lane to my primary school days when warm weather was not always welcome.

I regularly receive Facebook posts from a website called "Do You Remember?" The content always provides a fascinating bit of nostalgia.

One recent post was entitled: "Do You Remember free school milk in the playground?" I certainly do. In my case, around 70 years ago, at my primary school. Seven decades on, I can still remember those playground days as if time had stood still.

The milk was in third of a pint glass bottles piled up in crates near a door which led from the playground into the school. It had been left there by the milkman at the crack of dawn. On hot days, by break time around 11am, the milk would be almost rancid after four or five hours in full sun. There was never any attempt to keep it in the shade. In winter, it would be ice cold or even frozen solid and, once again, often undrinkable.



Today, the very thought of children running around a playground clutching glass bottles or drinking rancid milk would be enough to give teachers and education officials apoplexy. But, of course, health and safety hadn't been invented then.

Broken glass and rancid milk weren't the only dangers. In class (including my early years at grammar school), it was wise to be alert at all times, especially if you needed to dodge the blackboard rubber the teacher was liable to hurl at your head if your attention was wandering. Prosecution for assault didn't seem to have been invented, either.

Looking back to my primary school days, we weren't wrapped in cotton wool, as much of today's generation is. Whatever the weather, we would walk to school at 8.30am - on our own - and walk home again around 3.15pm. Most families in the mid- Fifties did not own cars, so if walking was not an option there was always the bus. Only the lucky few possessed a bike.

Not only were there fewer cars around, there were also far fewer people to be seen during the working day, in sharp contrast to today when vast swathes of the population seem to be retired, working from home, or not working at all.

This, of course, is one reason why so many of today's parents are ultra-cautious. More people, more cars and more possible permutations of things which could go wrong.

It didn't mean our parents were irresponsible. We were expected to make these journeys without adult supervision because the risks which exist today, either real or perceived, were not at the forefront of people's minds. Perhaps social media has a lot to answer for here.

There were no computers, no mobile phones, no iPads, no Xboxes. We made our own fun, especially in the summer, leaving home after breakfast to meet our friends and returning at tea-time. We managed to get through the whole day without vandalising anything.

It was a different world then, when everyone (except some teachers!) knew what the rules were and showed respect for others and their property.

As kids, we had to fend for ourselves to a degree that would be unimaginable today. It made us aware of everything going on around us, including the dangers, and prepared us for adulthood. Our learning curve was in the real world, not the fantasy world of social media and electronic games.

The past is a foreign country, wrote LP Hartley in the opening sentence of his acclaimed novel, *The Go-Between*. He was right - but it is also a country well worth re-visiting occasionally.

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

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

U3A EXCURSIONS**HASTINGS & TENTERDEN - Tuesday 26th August**

There are only a few places left on this trip.

REMINDER - The cost is £47 per person.

PAYMENT OF BALANCE: The balance of £37 is required by Thursday 24th July, our next meeting.

The balance can be paid at the July meeting by cash or card as well as by cheque or bank transfer.

If you are not attending the meeting, please send your payment to:

Isle of Sheppey u3a, 4 Lynmouth Drive, Minster, ME12 2HS

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

Bank Transfer: You can also pay by bank transfer

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

Reference: H&T Trip

Please include the names of the travellers and any allergies with your payment. If you pay by bank transfer, please send an email confirming names of the u3a members travelling.

If you have booked a place and are later unable to attend, there is no refund but you can transfer your booking to another u3a member and get the cost of the excursion back from them, but you will need to give us their information.

PICNIC IN THE HALL – Thursday 28th August

As notified in last month's newsletter, we have decided to move the annual August picnic inside due to the unreliable summer weather. It will remain a picnic and games afternoon and we have extended the afternoon to 5pm.

There will be prizes for the best decorated table and the best summer hat

- ❖ We will have long tables set out in a street party fashion.
- ❖ Members are invited to decorate their tables and to organise groups together to share their food if they wish. If you wish to reserve tables in advance so your group can be seated together, please let us know.
- ❖ There will be plenty of room for those who don't want to book/decorate a table or wish to just turn up on the day as usual.
- ❖ We expect to be able to provide plenty of games to play for example, Quoits, Giant Jenga, Mollky
- ❖ We will have our usual quiz courtesy of Val Spoor
- ❖ Ken Pugh will be holding a blind wine tasting event
- ❖ **Other suggestions are welcome.**

We would love a new name for this event so please send your suggestions to us at isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com

SOCIAL HISTORY GROUP

“History of the Unification of the United Kingdom”

With a mix of English, Scottish and Welsh members in the Isle of Sheppey u3a’s Social History Group, a discussion on the “History of the Unification of the United Kingdom,” was always going to be a lively debate; and so it turned out to be. The conversation was, at times, personal to the extent of involving family instances to carry a point, but never partisan to the point where we might start throwing our biscuits at one another.

Consider the fact that the Romans ruled the whole of what is now England and Wales within forty years of stepping ashore at Richborough. Left to their own devices, after the Romans got homesick and left, why did it take the locals another six hundred years to reunify this same stretch of land?..... and then, it was under the rule of a Danish King, Cnut! Even after the inclusion of a touch of Norman organization and technique in 1066, the approach to the unification of the four countries didn’t improve much. The sword and the battleaxe (No! Not the mother-in-law!) still decided the issues in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. In fact, in Ireland unity would seem to be a very divisive word.

So, what has brought the United Kingdom to this singular state of affairs? What has history to say for itself on this union? These still very topical questions were debated with vigour within the group. The consensus was in favour of the union of the United Kingdom but dubious of the means used to bring it about. Doubt abounded as to any current leaders’ abilities to use the union to its best advantage and to appreciate its value. Having said that, the members of the Social History Group were equally uncertain as to what useful advice they could give, either.

So, why not join this u3a Social History Group to help us sort out the history of whatever topic we choose to cross our path. We meet every third Friday in the month at 2.00pm at the Sea Cadets Unit at Barton’s Point, Sheerness. Your presence and input would be greatly appreciated and enjoyed. Just turn up.

Future Discussion Topics are:

- Friday 15th August The History of the Lifeboats**
- Friday 19th Sept Jobs that No Longer Exist**
- Friday 17th October Games & Entertainment Throughout History**

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

Thank you to all those who have provided contributions this month from David Jones for his David’s Slice of Life and the explanation of our speaker meeting, David Goodin’s contribution from the Social History group and Julie Alderman for our excursion information. Please let us know if you have any other contributions, including from Interest Groups or for local community events. Send them to isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com. Deadline for inclusion in August newsletter is Friday 22nd August.

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.

- 28th August**
- 25th September**
- 23rd October**
- 27th November**
- 11th December - Christmas Meeting**

KENT u3a NETWORK

The Kent u3a Network comprises of the 32 u3as across the Kent region. Representatives from each u3a meet periodically to share ideas, events, speakers and training session, to discuss issues and to support each other. Our committee members attend and keep in touch with the Kent u3a Network which has been an invaluable help in setting up and maintaining our u3a over the past few years.

You can find more information on their website: [Kent u3a Network Website](#)

As a member of Isle of Sheppey u3a you can also join their private discussion Facebook group: [Kent u3a Network Facebook Group](#)

This year the Network co-ordinated members of Kent u3as to organise a stand at the Kent County Show earlier this month. Here is a review of the event:

Kent u3a Network at Kent County’s Biggest Event! 4–6 July 2025 | Kent Showground

The Kent County Show excelled once again this summer—and the Kent u3a Network was right at the heart of it! Across three thrilling days, over 60,000 visitors flocked to the county’s premier celebration of farming, countryside, and community—and many made their way to our vibrant u3a stand.



◆ **Months of Planning, Powered by Volunteers**

Our journey began in January, driven by the energy of our amazing volunteers. With a Third Age Trust grant, we proudly purchased a bright new gazebo, printed 10,000 flyers, and displayed three striking banners.

Support came in from u3as across Kent—providing tables, roller posters, flag banners, bunting, and even balloons to help create a standout presence. Volunteers worked tirelessly to set up the stand, staff it for 10-hour days, and pack it all away with impressive teamwork.

◆ **A Stand to Remember**

Surrounded by over 400 trade stalls, our stand drew the attention from curious passers-by to lifelong learners. Visitors explored the depth of u3a activities—from history and languages to walking groups and ukulele ensembles—and left inspired by what u3a can offer in retirement.

◆ **Part of a County Celebration**

The Show sparkled with horse dressage, sheepdog displays, showjumping, music gigs, vintage tractors, food stalls, and more. Amidst the festivities, our team championed the joy of learning, the power of community, and the vibrancy of later life.

◆ **Sparking Interest Across Kent**

We didn’t just hand out flyers—we sparked conversations, inspired ideas, and connected with potential members and future group leaders. The enthusiasm was catching.

Thank You!

To everyone who gave time, energy, and ideas—you made it happen. The Kent County Show 2025 was a milestone for the Kent u3a Network

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 July/August: [u3a online events](#)

- Secrets of the Human Brain: Talk Six
- Staying Safe Online – A u3a Presentation with Q&A
- Flight Inspirations Aviation Meeting: August
- Exploring Alternatives to Mainstream Social Media
- George Mallory 1886 to 1924
- Mindfulness & Compassion meets Poetry
- Vengeance or Vision? Artemisia Gentileschi and the Art of Survival
- Climate Change and Artificial Intelligence
- Secrets of the Human Brain: Talk Seven
- Flight Inspirations Aviation Meeting: September
- Riner Marie Rilke: The Journey Within
- Meditation & Mindfulness continuation sessions
- Laughter Yoga with Merrie Maggie
- Laughter Yoga with Judith
- U3a Yoga Network: New Leaders' Workshops

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

Puzzles & Games

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

Writing Competitions

Essay Competition 2025 – Competition now closed
 Read the winning entries on the u3a website

Connect with Members

- u3a Air Fryer Community
- u3a Walkers' Exchange
- Find a u3a Speaker

Share Your Memories

- Photos of World War II War Memorials

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](#)

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](#)



u3a FRIENDS EXTRA

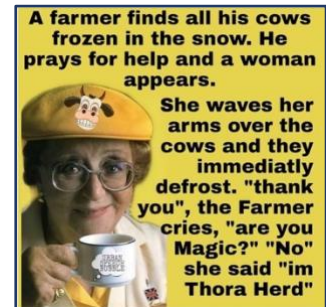
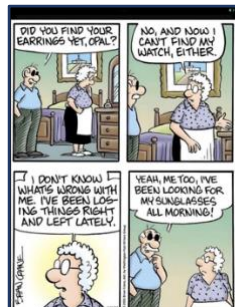
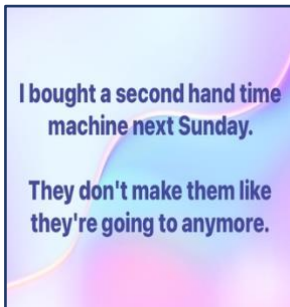
u3a friends is a community open to all our u3a members. As part of this community our members have access to a wide range of offers, discounts and additional services. Friends can make savings on well-known brands, shopping, travel, day out and much more. Find out more here: [u3a Friends Extra Presentation](#)

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 FRIENDS 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.

A LITTLE LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT



SOME INTERESTING FACTS

There's an underwater post office in the South Pacific

Situated off the coast of Hideaway Island Resort and Marine Sanctuary is the Vanuatu Post; the world's only under the sea post office. Vacationers who want to send a waterproof postcard home can snorkel or scuba dive ten feet below the ocean's surface. A special flag is raised above the water to indicate when postal workers are in the water.

The Beatles officially broke up at Disney World

Although they had unofficially gone their separate ways in 1970, the Beatles' legal dissolution didn't occur until 29th December 1974, when John Lennon signed the official paperwork whilst holidaying at Walt Disney World.

The oldest goldfish lived to be 43 years old

In the UK, a goldfish named Tish was longest living goldfish, according to the Guinness book of records, when she died in 1999. The beloved pet of Hilda and Gordon Hand was won at a fair by their son Peter in 1956.

Women in Allied countries wore red lipstick because Hitler hated it

According to British journalist Madeleine Marsh, author of *Compacts and Cosmetics: Beauty in Victorian Times to the Present Day*, Hitler hated makeup and specifically red lipstick. In response women in allied countries and the Resistance wore red lipstick as a sign of defiance.

Information & Contact Details

You can contact us here:

Isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com

Find our website here:

<https://isle-of-sheppey.u3asite.uk/>

Our Facebook Page is:

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

Our members only Facebook Group is:

[Members Only Facebook Group](#)

Email us to join our WhatsApp Group:

Isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com

Interact with u3a members around the country:

[u3a:Keeping in Touch Facebook Group](#)

[Kent u3a Network Website](#)

[Kent u3a Network Facebook Group](#)

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.