

*** Monthly Meeting – Thursday 25th September***

Please join us at our next **Monthly Members’ meeting**.

It will start at **2pm** on **Thursday 25th September** at **THE SHEPPEY HALL, QUEENBOROUGH**

The Secret History of Drug Smuggling – Frank Hirst

Our speaker this month is author and former drugs intelligence officer Frank Hirst. He has travelled widely during his career, which included working for HM Customs & Excise, Scotland Yard and the Foreign Office. No doubt we shall be hearing about some of Frank’s encounters with drugs gangs in his talk, “The Secret History of Drug Smuggling”.



Frank is also an acclaimed author, his first book, “The Postmistress of Nong Khai”, is the first of three in his “Golden Triangle” series. They follow the adventures of fictional drugs intelligence officer Mike Rawlin as he tries to capture a dangerous international drugs trafficker in Southeast Asia.

Sounds a bit like a plot based on Frank’s career!

Save the date for next month: Thursday 23rd October

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COMING UP...

David’s Slice of Life	Page 2	This month, David looks over the past of property selling and the future of the increasing housing on “England’s coastal treasure”, with “relaxed coastal living” and “excellent transport links”
Interest Groups & Activities	Page	Information about our groups
u3a Excursions	3/4/5	Sign up for our next excursion and our upcoming Sunday lunch
Community Events	Page 5	A rare chance to experience and Opera Gala locally
National u3a	Page	
Online Learning Events	6/7	There’s a wide range of national online talks, included in your membership for FREE!
u3a National Programmes		September’s edition of the radio podcast is out.
u3a Radio Podcast		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
u3a Friends Extra		Find out more about our Kent Network
u3a Friends Newsletter		
Kent u3a Network		
A Little Light entertainment	Page 8	A little humour
Some Interesting Facts		What happened on 25 th September in the past
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

In my early years as a journalist, when I was at the bottom of the pecking order, I was given the menial task of writing up details of houses for sale on my paper's property pages.

I had to make some sort of sense of the "particulars" supplied by estate agents. Almost every sentence contained a euphemism or some other absurdity.

"Laid to lawn" meant a postage stamp-sized area of grass, while "in need of modernisation" meant a total wreck and "low maintenance garden" meant no grass and concrete everywhere. My special favourite was "viewing advised," as if anyone in their right mind would buy a house without seeing it.

My few months of forced labour as a property writer came flooding back to me recently when I spotted the marketing spiel for a big housing development (700 homes) now springing up in fields not far from Cowstead Corner. Sixty-plus years on, estate agents' euphemisms are still flourishing.

I was amused to read that I am living on "England's coastal treasure" (aka Sheppey). Buyers of these new homes will be able to enjoy "relaxed coastal living" and a "welcoming community." They must be kidding. There were more than 200 objections to this planning application, which was refused by Swale Borough Council but eventually approved by a government inspector. So much for the "welcoming community!"

I was also fascinated to learn that Sheppey has good connections to "key towns and cities," such as Sittingbourne. News to me that Sittingbourne is a "key town."

The best bit of all is the reference to Sheppey's "excellent transport links." The new arrivals won't be aware yet that they will have to negotiate the now daily bumper-to-bumper traffic queue between Cowstead Corner, their new homes and all points east. This development will add at least 1,000-plus cars to the queue along a narrow stretch of road which hasn't changed for at least 70 years.

I have picked on this particular development because its marketing guff contains more than the usual amount of disingenuous nonsense, but the same arguments could be applied to all of the past or planned large housing developments on Sheppey. Just a three-minute drive away along the same road, plans for another 650 homes have been approved. Another 1,000 cars to join the Cowstead Corner chaos. Insane!

Meanwhile, back to the delights of living on "England's coastal treasure." In 25 years' time, according to a disturbing new report, a boat will be an essential requirement for a large chunk of the island's population.

Experts at Climate Central, an independent group of scientists, have put together a map showing the coastal areas of the UK likely to be under water by 2050 because of climate change. Sheppey is on the list. The areas shaded in red on the map show Sheerness and large parts of the island totally submerged.

I'll only be 104 by then and, if I'm still here, I shall consider moving to the top of Wards Hill, where several other members of our u3a live. In the meantime, I shall start looking at the cost of rubber dinghies.



One of David's Slice of Life articles will be making an appearance in the Autumn edition of "u3a Matters" magazine, so watch out for it.

INTEREST GROUPS & ACTIVITIES

U3A EXCURSIONS

LONDON LIGHTS WITH FISH & CHIPS

Wednesday 3rd December

Excursion group organisers, Julie & Sue, are hoping to run an excursion, through NK Holidays, to London Christmas Lights, with a Fish and Chip Supper, included in the price, on Wednesday 3rd December. The cost is £45.00 per head, subject to change depending on numbers.



This will be exclusive to members of the Isle of Sheppey u3a and will pick up at the Abbey Hotel and Sheerness East Working Men’s Club only. We will leave the island at approximately 1pm and expect to get back at approximately 10pm.

We still have spaces available so you will be able to sign up at our meeting on Thursday, where a non-refundable deposit of £10 will be required. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please let us know by email so we can add you to the list, the deposit can be paid by bank transfer or sent by cheque as usual. If we have received sufficient bookings the final balance will be due by the October meeting.

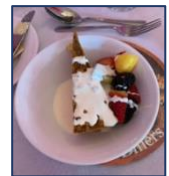
SUNDAY CARVERY LUNCH @ The Masonic Club – Sunday 12th October



Sally has restarted the Sunday Carvery Lunch group and has booked the Masonic Club for Sunday 12th October - 12.30pm to sit down at 1pm. Last year these lunches proved very popular with our members. The meal will be a carvery with a choice of meats, a wide range of vegetables including cauliflower cheese and the usual accompaniments of Yorkshire pudding, stuffing



and pigs in blankets. Vegetarian/Vegan diets can be catered for. There will be a variety of desserts to choose from, plus cheese and biscuits followed by tea/coffee and mints. We think you will agree that this is excellent value for money at £22 per person. Wine and drinks can be purchased at the bar. This group is exclusively for Isle of Sheppey u3a members and their partners/friends.



If you have already put your name down for the group, you will receive an email to book your place. There is plenty of space so if you would like to go, please email us to be added to the Sunday Lunch group and to confirm your place.



CHRISTMAS SUNDAY CARVERY LUNCH @ The Masonic Club - Sunday 30th November



Save the date. Let us know if you want to be added to the Christmas Lunch list.

Sally has booked the Masonic again this year for the Christmas Sunday Lunch – as you can see this was a jolly festive affair last year. The Christmas Carvery Lunch will be £27 per person.

PICNIC IN THE HALL – August Meeting

Great fun was had by those who attended the August Picnic in the Hall event. Soon after everyone arrived – the heavens opened so we were all very grateful that we were indoors. Some of the tables were well decorated and the food was plentiful and varied.

Some of the members who joined in the games were quite competitive and much hilarity was had regardless of whether the attempts were successful or perhaps not so much. New games were tried out – Molkky and Ladder Golf were both very popular as were the table Jenga and the Quoits.

Lynda, our speaker secretary, had a long-standing Bucket List wish, to tread grapes. So, with thanks to David, who brought along some of his own home-grown grapes plus a bowl and towel, Lynda was able to fulfil this wish, although possibly not quite in the tradition she might have expected.



EXCURSION – HASTINGS & TENTERDEN



Forty-two members had a great time on their recent outing to Hastings, where they spent a couple of hours browsing the independent shops, walking along the seafront, checking out the lunch venues or taking a trip on the East Hill Lift the steepest funicular railway in the UK. Once back on the coach, after lunch, the group made a rather eventful journey to Tenterden's Kent & East Sussex railway where they boarded a Steam Train to Bodiam and return. Onboard they enjoyed a cream tea with tea/coffee. Everyone thought Julie and Sue did a fab job of organising the trip.



SOCIAL HISTORY GROUP

Social History Group

Can you remember back to when a policeman on his rounds, or on point duty at a busy crossroad junction, was a common site. And how about the coalman delivering coal in hundredweight sacks, and dropping each sack load into a coal hole into the cellar, or the doctor on call to make home visits? Yes, I'm sure I'm not alone in having these memories of long-gone scenes of everyday working life.

At its meeting on Friday 19th September, the members of the Social History Group indulged themselves in a spot of reminiscence, recalling the times when service to the public was the sole purpose of many everyday occupations. Such common sights as the station porter, the bus conductor (clippie), the AA/RAC motorcycle patrolman (who saluted members cars displaying their badge) or the petrol pump attendant.

Going back a little further into the past, members viewed the passing of shorthand typists, lift attendants, switchboard operators, coal miners, chimney sweeps on bicycles and knife/scissor sharpeners (with their mobile grinding wheels).

Digging even further into history, the long-lost jobs of the street lamplighter, the night cart sewage collector, the fishwives (processing herring on the quayside) and even the post of Witch-finder General, including those unfortunate ladies he sought, were given an airing. Members' research on the topic of lost jobs also highlighted historic occupations such as the "Sluggard Waker", which just goes to show that one can learn something new every day. Oh! By the way, a sluggard waker was a man, usually a church warden, who was armed with a brass-ended rod with which he prodded churchgoers who fell asleep during the church service up to early Victorian times.

By the end of the two-hour gathering, those present agreed that their journey down memory lane and beyond had been a very satisfying and delightful shared experience duly enhanced by the tea, coffee and biscuits provided to assist their passage into the past.

September Social History group newsletter provided by David Goodin

COMMUNITY EVENTS



Holy Trinity Church in Queenborough will be holding an Opera Gala performance on Saturday the 4th October at 7.30pm, to raise money towards the Vestry Rebuilding Fund.

This is a rare chance to see a performance by professional opera singers. Colin Morris is The Isle of Sheppey's own local baritone and collaborates with other professional performers to produce this Opera Gala. Colin's concert and recital career has taken him around Britain and The Netherlands - he is particularly noted for his CARMINA BURANA - and he has recorded lighter repertoire for the BBC.

Colin has performed many operatic roles, predominantly buffo characters in Telemann, Mozart, Rossini, Donizetti and operetta, but also dramatic roles by Verdi and verismo composers. He has sung with Kent Opera, London Opera Players, PAVILION Opera in the UK and the USA, Regency Opera and The New Savoyards.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

Thank you again to all those who have provided contributions this month.

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 October newsletter is Friday 17th October.

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.

2025	2026	
23rd October	22nd January	23rd April
27th November	26th February	28th May
11th December - Christmas Meeting	26th March	25th June

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 September/October/November:** [u3a online events](#)

- Ageing without Limits: Celebrating Ageing
- Eating Well for Health and Vitality in Later Life
- What the future changes in landlines will mean for you
- What do official statistics reveal about positive aging
- Secrets of the Human Brain: Talk Eight
- My Gardening life: Decades on the plot, screen and airwaves
- Introduction to Cryptic Crosswords
- Still got it! Positive Ageing Photography
- Get the Latest Update on Accessing Support for Windows 10 Devices
- Sex DNA and the chemistry in microscopic animals: The Strange tale of rotifers
- Ice Age to Iron Age – Britain in Prehistory
- The Ultimate Guide to Editing Your Creative Writing
- Flight Inspiration Aviation Meeting: October
- The Climate Crisis and Some Solutions – The Truth in Ten
- Preparing for an AI World
- Blacklisted! Corporate Crime and State Conspiracies
- Wearable Technology and Healthy Ageing
- AI Data Centres – Their Complexity and Environmental Impact
- Modern Chemists' Toolkit to Investigate and Elucidate Molecular Structure
- The UK and the US Constitutions – Part 1
- Secrets of the Human Brain: Talk Nine
- Artificial Intelligence News: October
- Flight Inspirations Aviation Meeting: November
- The Historic Towns Trust – London on the Eve of the Great Fire Preview
- Cryptic Crosswords for Beginners: six session course
- Meditation & Mindfulness continuation sessions
- Laughter Yoga with Merrie Maggie
- Laughter Yoga with Judith
- Bollywood Laughter Yoga Dance
- u3a Yoga Network: Talk and Q&A with Alzheimer's Society
- u3a Yoga Network: Subject Surgery

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

Writing Competitions

Short Story 2025 – Enter now

Essay Competition 2025 – Competition now closed

Read the winning entries on the u3a website

Share Your Memories

- Photos of World War II War Memorials

Puzzles & Games

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

Connect with Members

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

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.

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](#)

A LITTLE LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT



SOME INTERESTING FACTS

On this Day in History – 25th September

- 1066** The Battle of Stamford Bridge: The English Army under King Harold II defeated the invading Norwegians led by King Harold Haedrada and Harold's brother Tostig, who were both killed.
- 1237** The Treaty of York was signed between Kings Henry III of England and Alexander II of Scotland, establishing a boundary between the two countries (mostly unchanged in modern times).
- 1878** British physician Dr Charles Drysdale warns against the use of tobacco, in a letter to the Times newspaper, in one of the earliest public health announcements of the dangers of smoking.
- 1924** Malcolm Campbell sets the world automobile speed record at 146.16 miles per hour.
- 1926** Henry Ford announces an eight hour, five day work week for workers at Ford Motor Company.
- 1959** Hammer horror film "The Mummy" starring Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing is first released in the UK.
- 1979** Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's musical "Evita" opens on Broadway and runs for 1568 performances and wins seven Tony Awards.

Information & Contact Details

You can contact us here:

Isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com

Email us to join our WhatsApp Group:

[Isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com](https://www.whatsapp.com/join/group/Isleofsheppeyu3a)

Find our website here:

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

Interact with u3a members around the country:

[u3a:Keeping in Touch Facebook Group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/u3a.Keeping.in.Touch)

Our Facebook Page is:

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

[Kent u3a Network Website](https://www.kent.u3a.org.uk/)

Our members only Facebook Group is:

[Members Only Facebook Group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/membersonlysheppeyu3a)

[Kent u3a Network Facebook Group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/kentu3anetwork)

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.