

**\* Monthly Meeting – Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December\***

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

It will start at **2pm** on **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December** at **THE SHEPPEY HALL, QUEENBOROUGH**

***Christmas Party Meeting - Featuring Isle of Sheppey Singers***

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 accessories.

Join us for an afternoon tea and a sociable afternoon with your fellow members. Collect your FREE raffle ticket when you arrive, there will be several prizes on offer including a homemade Christmas cake and a Christmas hamper. Santa Claus will be making an appearance to hand out the raffle prizes.



Members of that excellent group, The Isle of Sheppey Singers, will be entertaining us with a selection of carols and, of course, we want you all to be in fine voice to sing along with some traditional favourites.

It’s beginning to sound a lot like Christmas, so there will be a festive flavour to our Christmas get together to get everyone in the mood for the run-up to the 25<sup>th</sup> December.

**\*Save the date for next month: Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2026!\***

***Maunsell Forts: From Wartime Defence to Pirate Radio – Frank Turner***

**COMING UP...**

<b>David’s Slice of Life</b>	Page 2	Christmas is on David’s mind this month as he looks back on how Christmas has changed over the last few decades. He also gives us his humorous take on what Christmas might mean to people in other countries around the world
<b>Interest Groups &amp; Activities</b>	Page 3	Information about our groups and activities
<b>National u3a Online Learning Events u3a National Programmes u3a Radio Podcast u3aFriends Extra u3a Friends Newsletter Kent u3a Network</b>	Page 4/5	There’s a wide range of national online talks, included in your membership for FREE! Why not check out what’s on offer during the cold dark winter days. 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>A Little Light entertainment</b>	Page 6	Some interesting facts about Christmas
<b>Information &amp; Contact details</b>	Page 6	Let us know if you want to join our members only Facebook Group and/or u3a General WhatsApp Group?

## David's Slice of Life

Well, Santa's on his way... again! Where did those 12 months go? Only seems like yesterday that we were gearing up for last Christmas. They say time appears to pass more rapidly as you get older, and how true that is.

Christmas has changed dramatically since I was in shorts. It's gone from a frugal event with basic festive fare to a massive, blatantly commercial, operation. Back in the day, if you strolled down most streets, you wouldn't even know it was Christmas, in sharp contrast to today's over-the-top front garden lights displays. Turkey Christmas dinners were the exception rather than the rule and a chicken from the local butchers was as good as it got for many families. Try explaining to today's youngsters that there was a time when supermarkets didn't exist!

What a difference 70 years makes! We are now spoiled for choice by a bewildering array of festive goodies.

We tend to think of Christmas family celebrations as a uniquely British tradition, which, of course, it isn't. I took a quick internet trip around the world to see how other countries celebrate. In the Philippines, they start celebrating Christmas "as early as September." I've got some news for those good folk in the Philippines. They ought to visit the UK, where some supermarkets start "celebrating" Christmas around the end of August.

In Japan, turkeys don't feature on the Christmas menu at all, but chickens do, in a way. There, families celebrate the event with a visit to their local KFC. Strange but true. There are numerous other oddities around the world. Some 90 countries celebrate Christmas at various times in their own way, before or after 25<sup>th</sup> December and some in the first week of January.

But here's a real curiosity. My son had a German girlfriend a few years back. One Christmas she told us about an old English comedy sketch called Dinner For One, which bizarrely has become a Christmas/New Year's Eve TV viewing institution in Germany and a number of Scandinavian and Baltic countries.

This 18-minute masterclass in comic acting and precision timing features veteran English comedians Freddie Frinton and May Warden. It is unheard of in the UK but has also become compulsive festive viewing in Australia and South Africa. It was filmed in one take in a West German studio (don't ask me why!) in 1963.

It's Miss Sophie's (May Warden) 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and for years she has invited her four closest friends to her sumptuous birthday dinner. They're now all dead but the dinner goes ahead anyway. Her butler James (Freddie Frinton) serves them drinks as usual, even though the chairs are empty. He consumes each drink himself in turn while becoming steadily more inebriated while trying hard to avoid tripping over a tiger skin rug as he fetches each course.

I recommend it to you. It can be found on You Tube. So much funnier than many of the alleged comedies on TV these days. I defy you not to laugh! [Dinner for One](#)



Merry Christmas to you all. Have a good one!

**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)

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

**U3A EXCURSIONS**

**LONDON LIGHTS WITH FISH & CHIPS**

Thirty members had a wonderful London. Having only two pick up Covent Garden for about an hour lovely Christmas atmosphere. shopping, browsing and beverages on offer. There was



time on the trip to see the Christmas Lights in points meant we quickly left the Island and arrived in and a half to take in the We managed some sampling of the food and also plenty of



entertainment to watch. After that we were taken to the fish and chips shop, the food was delicious, the tea was hot and the staff attentive. We then proceeded to be driven around the main streets to see the fabulous Christmas decorations.



**SUNDAY CHRISTMAS CARVERY LUNCH @ The Masonic**

Forty-five members and friends gathered at the Masonic Club in Sheerness for a lovely Sunday Christmas Lunch and social get together on 30<sup>th</sup> November. The carvery meal was followed by dessert (including Christmas pudding with brandy sauce), cheese and biscuits, mince pies/satsumas, tea/coffee and mints. The tables were dressed with a sparkly mini-Christmas tree, surrounded by Christmas baubles and bars of chocolate as well as crackers. The red Santa hats make a very festive photo.



We will continue the very popular Sunday Lunch group next year so, if you would like to be added to the communications list just let us know.

**SOCIAL HISTORY GROUP**

Members of the Social history Group gather beside their monthly discussion topic display panels. Meetings are held every third Friday in the month.

*There is no meeting in December.*



**MONTHLY MEETING DATES 2026**

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.

22<sup>nd</sup> January  
26<sup>th</sup> February  
26<sup>th</sup> March

23<sup>rd</sup> April  
28<sup>th</sup> May (AGM)  
25<sup>th</sup> June

23<sup>rd</sup> July  
27<sup>th</sup> August  
24<sup>th</sup> September

**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](mailto:isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com). Deadline for inclusion in the January newsletter is **Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January**.

**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 December/January/February: [u3a online events](#)**

- Secrets of the Human Brain: Talk Eleven
- The Importance of Fungi for the Environment & Humans
- Making your smartphone easier to use – Apple
- Ways we can be happier
- What the future changes in landlines will mean for you
- Radiant Celebrations: How Festivals of Light Inspire Society
- AI News December – The Role of AI in our Social & Emotional Wellbeing
- Flight Inspirations Aviation Meeting: January
- How do your medicines work? – An Introduction
- Exploring World Faiths: January
- Mindfulness & Compassion meets Poetry
- Understanding Online Content and Misinformation
- How to Build Confidence in Later Life
- From Roman Britain to the Dark Ages
- How do your medicines work? Asthma
- Smart Cities with u3a Let's Talk Tech
- The World's Most Enchanted Archipelagos – A Voyage through the Scottish Hebrides
- Artificial Intelligence News: January
- Why Snails might hold some answers to age-related memory loss
- After Alzheimer: Memory, Ageing and What Comes Next
- How do your medicines work? Hypertension
- Boost your Festive Batteries with Qigong
- Wellbeing Taster Morning with u3a Subject Advisers
- Meditation & Mindfulness continuation sessions
- Laughter Yoga with Merrie Maggie – January
- Laughter Yoga with Judith – January

## 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**

- The "Still Got It" Photography Project \*
- 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**

Short Story 2025 – Competition closed

Essay Competition 2025 – Competition now closed

Read the winning entries on the u3a website

\* *New projects*

### **Connect with Members**

- Virtual Visits \*
- 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? A new episode is uploaded during the third week of the month. 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](#)

### SOME INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT CHRISTMAS

- 🎄 The first commercial Christmas cards were commissioned by civil servant, Sir Henry Cole in London in 1843. Featuring a family drinking wine, one sold for £8,469 in 2014
- 🎄 Robins on cards started as a joke 150 years ago when postmen wore red tunics and were named after them
- 🎄 According to tradition, you should eat one mince pie on each of the 12 days of Christmas to bring good luck
- 🎄 Traditionally, families got together to mix and steam their Christmas pudding on Stir-up Sunday, the last Sunday before Advent. Everyone takes a turn to stir the pudding and make a special wish for the year ahead
- 🎄 Holly and Ivy have been used to decorate homes since the 9<sup>th</sup> century because they symbolise everlasting life
- 🎄 The chances of a white Christmas are just 1 in 10 for England and Wales and 1 in 6 for Scotland
- 🎄 It is estimated that 6 million rolls of cellotape are sold in the UK in the run up to Christmas
- 🎄 Many parts of the Christmas tree can be eaten, the needles are a good source of vitamin C
- 🎄 A world record number of Christmas cards sent by a single person was 62,824
- 🎄 According to the Guinness World Records the tallest Christmas tree ever cut was a 221 foot Douglas fir that was displayed in 1950 at Northgate Shopping Centre in Seattle, Washington
- 🎄 In 1999, residents of the state of Maine in USA built the world's tallest ever snowman at 113ft tall
- 🎄 The largest ever Christmas cracker was 63.1m (207ft) long and 4m (13ft) in diameter and was made by parents of children at Ley Hill School and pre-school, Chesham, Buckinghamshire on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2001.
- 🎄 The most valuable Christmas card was sold at an auction in the UK in 2001 for £20,000

### Information & Contact Details

You can contact us here:

[isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com](mailto:isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com)

Email us to join our WhatsApp Group:

[isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com](mailto:isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com)

Find our website here:

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

Interact with u3a members around the country:

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

Our Facebook Page is:

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

[Kent u3a Network Website](#)

Our members only Facebook Group is:

[Members Only Facebook Group](#)

[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.