

*** Monthly Meeting – Thursday 26th February***

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

It will start at **2pm** on **Thursday 26th February** at **THE SHEPPEY HALL, QUEENBOROUGH**

Wartime and Romance – Andy Smith

Love can blossom even in the most difficult of circumstances. Perhaps that’s where the saying “All’s fair in love and war” comes from!



Despite the obvious horrors of conflict, romance doesn’t come to a grinding halt when the bombs are falling. In both peace and war, love soldiers on.

While love and war might seem like opposite concepts, throughout history the two have been intertwined

Our speaker, Andy Smith, pictured with his canine companion, will be sharing real-life perspectives of two world wars gleaned from family and friends over several decades. In his talk, Wartime and Romance, Andy will be weaving history and humour into an entertaining yet poignant presentation.

Save the date for next month: Thursday 26th March 2026!

The Crop Circle Mystery – Andy Thomas

COMING UP...

David’s Slice of Life	Page 2	In this edition, the weather is on David’s mind. David then takes a look at climate change and the concerns of polar bears in the arctic.
Interest Groups & Activities	Page 3/4/5	2026 Excursions list – If you’re interested let us know Information about our groups and activities and the upcoming u3a Festival
Community Events	Page 6	A range of local community events
National u3a Online Learning Events u3a Learn & Share	Page 7	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.
u3aFriends Extra u3a Friends Newsletter	Page 8	Join the “u3a Friends” to access discounts on products and services. Sign up for the newsletter for all the up-to-date national u3a information
u3a Radio Podcast		February’s edition discusses the Born Free Foundation, The Meopham Windmill and Creating AI Music
Kent u3a Network Meeting Dates for 2026		Put these dates in your diary
Just for Fun	Page 9	Do you remember the Royal Mint’s “2005 Design Competition”?
Information & Contact details	Page 9	Let us know if you want to join our members only Facebook Group and/or u3a General WhatsApp Group?

David's Slice of Life

For the first time in three weeks recently, the good folk of Aberdeen spotted a large orange ball in the sky. Those with good memories recalled that it used to be called the sun.

Down south, that large orange ball has appeared a few more times, but it has still been a rare sight since Christmas. What we have had instead is a miserable two months of record rainfall. It's raining heavily yet again as I write this column.

Something odd is going on and, inevitably, debates about climate change being the culprit are back on the agenda.

You know how it is; you're just tucking into your chicken dhansak at a Saturday night meal out when the "putting the world to rights" conversation gets around to Donald Trump, as it usually does. Then one of your friends starts banging on about climate change and even an interruption that the poppadoms have run out can't shut him up.

A good friend of mine believes climate change is nothing more than a conspiracy theory put about by the BBC. This is going a bit far, but he has a point - though not about the BBC. His view is that climate change happens too slowly to be noticed in a single generation.

Earth's climate has changed periodically throughout history. Over the last 800,000 years there have been eight cycles of ice ages and warmer periods. If it only happens around every 100,000 years or so, it could be argued it's unlikely any of us can claim during one lifetime that that it's definitely getting warmer.

On the other hand, polar bears are having an increasingly hard time surviving in the Arctic as the sea warms up, the ice melts, and the seals on which they rely for food are getting further away. Can 30,000 polar bears be wrong? Even fish from the Mediterranean are getting confused and turning up in the North Sea.



It seems to me that there are one or two solid facts which give credence to the climate change theory. It's getting warmer (last summer was the hottest on record) and we are getting soaked with increasing regularity. If only we could all live for 100,000 years we might be able to have a much more meaningful conversation over the chicken dhansak.

More worryingly, as I mentioned in this column before, some experts predict that parts of Sheppey face significant flooding risks in only about 25 years' time. This is what could happen when melting water from the Arctic eventually reaches Elmley or Harty.

We could always ask AI (Artificial Intelligence) for its opinion. Not that I have any faith in anything AI says. Last week, I tried to check if there were any traffic problems on the M20. It helpfully replied that traffic was flowing freely along the M20 on Sheppey! So, I won't be asking for its views on climate change any time soon!

Meanwhile, I think it will be wise for us all to invest in some new umbrellas and wellies over the next few years. I think we're going to need them.

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](#)

EXCURSIONS PLAN FOR 2026

Julie and Sue have recently sent out an email with a list of suggestions for excursions for 2026. They require feedback from members to decide which of these excursions should be chosen and booked. As these trips usually require at least 30 members to sign up, it is important to have an idea of the possible take up of these trips. They would like to thank all those members who have already provided their feedback.

Dates and ticket prices will be confirmed once there is sufficient feedback to gauge the interest.

Kentish Lady with Fish & Chips

We tried to organise this previously, hopefully this time we will be successful. This includes coach to Maidstone, a three-hour cruise on the river with included fish and chips/vegetarian option.

Polehill Garden Centre

Potentially a few hours at this impressive garden centre/shopping area where you can purchase your spring flowers, have lunch and some retail therapy.

London with a Hotel Carvery Lunch and River Cruise

Cruise from Greenwich to Westminster Pier. Proceed to Rembrandt Hotel for a carvery lunch. Then free time to visit the V & A, Science or Natural History Museums, or some shopping at Harrods.

Battersea Power Station and Optional Ramses Exhibition

Coach to Battersea Power Station, includes Lift 109, with spectacular 360 London Views.

There is an option (price not included) to the Ramses Exhibition.

Alternatively shopping at 100 shops and places to eat.

Eastbourne Airborne

A day in sunny Eastbourne, with a view of the airshow from the beach. You can walk as little or as much as you choose along the promenade, or visit the town centre, the choice is yours.

Hever Castle Craft Fayre

This is on the weekend of September 11th. This includes coach fare to Hever, and admission to the craft fayre and the castle.

British Museum and Bayeux Tapestry

Take the coach to London and be dropped off at the British Museum, where the Bayeux Tapestry will be on display. If you prefer not to go into the British Museum you can spend the time as you wish. I understand we will be having a speaker at one of the Member's meetings talking about the Bayeux Tapestry, so this will be arranged for after that date.

Hever Castle Christmas Lunch 2nd December.

Includes coach fare to Hever Castle, a 2-course lunch (dinner and dessert, this cannot be altered), admission to castle and a themed holiday trail.

This a popular event and we will need to book this early. Based on 30 people the cost of this will be approximately £65.00, but if there is more interest the price will be reduced accordingly.

Hopefully there will be something amongst the above to pique your interest. Please let us know if you would be interested in any of these, by return email so we can make out decisions on which to run, based on popularity.

Kind regards - Julie & Sue

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Sheppey Hall: As a result of the recent issues surrounding the Hall's suitability considering the ongoing renovations, I have made a visual inspection of the ceiling and noted that the extensive building work seems to have rectified the situation. However, ongoing work is taking place in the corridor and as a result our entrance into the hall is to be modified, but toilets and kitchen access will not be jeopardised.

I have made enquiries for the use of other halls on the Island, but all are unable to accommodate us on the fourth Thursday of the month or do not have the facilities. The Committee and I have agreed unanimously that to move the date would disrupt existing group activity schedules and perhaps compromise losing our strong membership base. I appreciate it's not an ideal scenario; slow progress to renovations is unfortunately dependent upon access to project funding, and that doesn't always happen when you need it!

Group Activities: We are fortunate in having some wonderful Group Facilitators and we firmly believe that our groups are the main foundation in supporting us to "learn, laugh and live".

Although we do have some options available to us to improve our offering, we do need other members to come forward to share their hobbies, knowledge or experience in forming new groups. It could just be one afternoon a month in your dining room, the library or pub enjoying a social activity, going out into nature bird watching, or arranging outings with your senior rail pass or even perhaps getting a few members/friends together to play badminton, table tennis, indoor bowls. Again, I have done some research and there are several opportunities to hire Eastchurch Village Hall and Sheerness East Working Men's Club to start our own u3a groups or join their extensive activities which they put on throughout the week. U3a's throughout the country are run by the members for the members, I am always willing to listen to any suggestions so, please contact me on isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com should you wish to pass something by me. In the meantime, Sheppey Leisure Centre should be opening in July when other fitness opportunities may become available and I will collect the information of activities locally that I have gathered from other sources for your information, however these will not be u3a registered groups.

Finally, please tell your friends about our u3a and pick up some advertising leaflets at the next meeting to leave at any local outlets in your area.

Many thanks - Heather

ONLINE LEARNING EVENTS – KATHERINE SWYNFORD, MYTH AND REALITY – 12th MARCH

One of our members Betty Allsworth asked me to include a mention for this particular online learning event that will be held on Thursday 12th March 2pm – 3pm. She says:

"I have booked for this Zoom event advertised in the recent "Online learning events" email. I feel sure others on the Isle of Sheppey would be interested. Katherine was educated on the Island, was mistress of John of Gaunt, at Queenborough Castle, mother of his children. They were later legitimised and are the forebears of our current Royal Family."

Overview - Who was Katherine and what do we know of her true story? Baz Aveyard, a descendant of Katherine and John of Gaunt, tells us about her life.

This event is part of the u3a British Women's History Day series of talks, hosted by British History Subject Adviser, Ian McCannah. Our speaker for this event is Baz Aveyard of Lincoln Bailgate u3a. In this talk, Baz describes the life and legacy of Katherine Swynford. Being a direct descendant of Katherine and John of Gaunt sparked his interest in their famous relationship. Who was Katherine and what do we know of her true story? In this talk, Baz attempts to separate what may be romantic fiction and what are the true facts of her fascinating life.

About the speaker - Baz Aveyard is an independent historical researcher, writer, and speaker whose work focuses on medieval England, with a particular focus of the 14th century. He is a retired university lecturer, spending the last few years, studying and researching medieval history. Barry regularly shares his findings through talks, walking lectures, and written articles, inviting audiences to reconsider what they think they know about the medieval past.

SOCIAL HISTORY GROUP

Social History Group
February Meeting
Jewellery Throughout the Ages

In the early dawn of mankind the hunter/warrior confronted his wild prey and, by his skill and physical tenacity, turned it into his family's next meal. To acknowledge his prowess, and to share the natural powers and cunning of his recent adversary, he adorned himself with parts of its skeletal remains as a trophy to show off to all who meet him, and as a protective amulette and good luck symbol in his future hunting trips. And so the earliest jewellery was invented and its purpose made clear.

A little over 110,000 years later, the Social History Group of the Isle of Sheppey u3a met to consider and research the consequences of our intrepid Neanderthal hunter's vanity in displaying his status. The need to advertise one's achievements and position in one's social group also incorporated the desire to show off one's women by adorning them in similar decorations to accentuate their beauty, importance and status alongside their man. Eventually, of course, women became more than able to do this for themselves, without reference to any man. Pins and clasps, for retaining in place clothing and hair, became main display points for such bodily ornamentation, to become known as jewellery.

Over the centuries, as gemstones, gold and silver were discovered and skills in mining, refining, working and displaying these minerals improved, so jewellery took on greater meaning and significance. It became a definition of class, status and wealth. It signified membership or ownership in the form of badges. The military used jewellery, in the form of medals, to display valour, loyalty and achievement, while the church and ruling classes took advantage of the ever-increasing magnificence and beauty of jewellery to demonstrate and enforce their power and dominance over their lesser fellow mortals.

In Victorian times, in addition to its reflection of status, jewellery became more personal and representative of a state of mind or devotion. Such items as the wedding ring and mourning jewellery took on great significance as a visual display of one's present situation. The quality of the metals and decorative stones still, nevertheless, expressed one's position in the inevitable class structure.

The 20th and 21st centuries have seen a rapid change in the jewellery world, influenced by historical events (two world wars), technological advancements and shifts in fashion. Cultural changes and consumerism are now major factors that have brought costume jewellery to the fore, allowing access to fashionable pieces without the hefty price tag of fine jewellery. New technologies and non-precious materials (plastic, paper and textiles) have overturned notions of status traditionally implicit in jewellery. Interaction of jewellery with the body is readily being explored, making it now Wearable Art. It is the overall impression conveyed by the wearer, rather than the individual item of jewellery, that has maximum impact in today's world.

Future Topics of Research and Discussion

20th March: **Farming Through The Ages**

17th April: **Travel Through the Ages**

15th May: **Humour Through the Ages**

19th June: **Viking and Norse influences on the British Isles**

U3a Festival 2026 – Book your place at u3a Festival 2026 – University of York – 1st - 3rd July

Join with u3a members from around the country for a celebration of fun, learning and the community that makes u3a so special.

Explore an existing interest or take the leap and try something completely new in member-led workshops and sessions. Surrounded by other members, you will have opportunities to move your body, be creative and explore new ideas.

Find out more here: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/festival-2026>

Accommodation and Tickets go fast



COMMUNITY EVENTS

QUIZ NIGHT FOR MAKE A WISH UK

Julie's granddaughter Caitlin will be running the London Marathon in April in aid of Make a Wish. In order to raise more funds, Caitlin has organised a Quiz Night at Sheerness East Working Mens Club on the Friday 20th March. Some u3a members have already got together to make up some teams. If you would like to take part but don't have enough for a full team please let Julie know so we can try to get those interested together.



MINSTER LIBRARY

Minster Library have a group called "TEA SET". This is a group primarily for the over 60s to get together to **Meet People - Make friends - Reminisce** over a cup of tea/coffee.

Please speak to a member of staff at the library or call 03000 413131 for more details.



SHEPPEY MATTERS - RETRAIN THE PAIN

RETRAIN THE PAIN
Are you living in pain from a health condition, or injury?

Are you looking for holistic and educational support to help improve your mental and physical health?

We are a friendly social group with a purpose!

For 2026, we have some great activities and sessions planned for you - including how Neuroscience can improve your mental and physical health impacted by pain, vibration therapy - sound bath and movement, meditation, Qi gong (adapted Tai Chi) and much more...

Dates for your diary - Friday
30th Jan, 27th Feb, 27th March, 24th April, 29th May, 26th June, 31st July, 25th Sept, 30th Oct, & the 18th Dec
10:30-12noon at the Masonic Hall, Sheerness ME12 1QX

Better together - let's change the narrative around pain!
for more information call or text Indre on 07541 995740 or Email juliec@sheppeymatters.org.uk

joy logo and logos for Retrain the Pain, Sheppey Matters, and others.

Are you living in pain from a health condition or injury? Then why not come along to our Retrain the Pain meetings on the last Friday of each month.

The next meeting is Friday 27th February at 10.30am -12pm
Location: Masonic Club, 1-3 St Georges Avenue, Sheerness ME12 1QX

For more information call or text Indre on 07541 995740 or e-mail: juliec@sheppeymatters.org.uk

Retrain the Pain
You asked, we listened!
Friday 27th February
10:30-12noon at the Masonic Hall, Sheerness ME12 1QX

Supporting Mental Health
Introducing our neuroscience workshops on understanding the nervous system with Teresa

Discover how stress a pain are shaped by the nervous system
Discover how understanding this can change how your body responds
Discover methods you can use straight away to help your nervous system work with YOU!

joy logo and logos for Retrain the Pain, Sheppey Matters, and others.

SHEPPEY LITTLE THEATRE – Entertaining Sheppey for more than 50 years

The theatre is run by the Sheppey Entertainment Association which is a registered charity. They rely on income from their shows and donations to continue to operate and the theatre is run by volunteers from the community for the benefit of the community. Here are some of the upcoming events. For more information: <https://www.sheppeylittletheatre.co.uk/events-2/>

SHEPPEY LITTLE THEATRE
MEYTRICK ROAD SHEERNESS ME12 1QX
Charity No 117475 Visit our website: www.sheppeylittletheatre.co.uk

SUITS, SHADES AND SOUL

A spectacular night of live entertainment at Sheppey Little Theatre.
Featuring Suits, Shades & Soul, Blues Brothers, Elvis, Imagine Dance Company and a special Barry Manilow & Buddy Holly tribute by Mike Chown.

Sheppey Glass logo
Sat 14th Mar 2026
7.30pm £15.00

Contact Us: info@sheppeylittletheatre.co.uk

SHEPPEY LITTLE THEATRE
MEYTRICK ROAD SHEERNESS ME12 1QX
Charity No 117475 Visit our website: www.sheppeylittletheatre.co.uk

Cilla
& THE SWINGING SIXTIES
A wonderful Captivating Show

what's it all about?
A HIGHLY ENTERTAINING SHOW
CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF THE LEGENDARY CILLA BLACK
Plus DUSTY SPRINGFIELD, LULU, PETULA CLARK, THE BEATLES & MANY MORE

Sheppey Glass logo
Fri 27th Mar 2026
7.30pm £15.00

Contact Us: info@sheppeylittletheatre.co.uk

SHEPPEY LITTLE THEATRE
MEYTRICK ROAD SHEERNESS ME12 1QX
Charity No 117475 Visit our website: www.sheppeylittletheatre.co.uk

THE JERSEYS
FRANKE VALLI
and the FOUR SEASONS

Sheppey Glass logo
Fri 17 & Sat 18 Apr 2026
7.30pm £28

Contact Us: info@sheppeylittletheatre.co.uk

SHEPPEY LITTLE THEATRE
MEYTRICK ROAD SHEERNESS ME12 1QX
Charity No 117475 Visit our website: www.sheppeylittletheatre.co.uk

On Thin Ice
Echoes of Pink Floyd
A Journey through the studio albums of Pink Floyd

Sheppey Glass logo
Sat 25th April 2026
7.30pm £20

Contact Us: info@sheppeylittletheatre.co.uk

HARMONY WELLBEING TRUST



An award winning Sheerness based charity giving free, holistic, supportive therapy for people all over Kent. Funded complimentary therapies to improve the well-being of people dealing with serious and life-limiting conditions.

For more details click here: <https://theharmonytherapytrust.org.uk/contact-us/>

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

- Cures from within: Can we use chemistry to teach the body to heal
- Introduction to cryptic crosswords
- AI news February: AI in government
- How AI can save you hours when researching your family history
- Flight Inspirations Aviation Group: March
- Me and my carbon footprint
- Beyond the beam: What we do with lasers
- Novel writing with Jenny Newman
- Exploring World Faiths: March
- The evolution of AI and our changing world
- The Match Girls' Strike and how it changed British labour history
- Katherine Swynford: Myth and reality
- Empress Matilda: The first queen England never had
- The Lancashire witches
- London Thames bridges
- AI news March: AI in education
- The truth in ten – The climate crisis and some solutions
- The cancer research evolution and reasons for optimism
- Deafness and beyond: The tribulations and triumph of Ludwig van Beethoven
- The magic of magic squares
- Cryptic crosswords for beginners
- U3a Yoga Network: Subject Surgery
- Spring-clean your vitality with qigong
- Brew Monday – Bollywood Laughter Yoga Dance
- Meditation & Mindfulness continuation sessions
- Laughter Yoga with Merrie Maggie – February
- Laughter Yoga with Judith – February

NATIONAL LEARN & SHARE ACTIVITIES

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: [Learn & Share Activities](#)

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

Writing Competitions

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

Puzzles & Games

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

Connect with Members

- Virtual Visits
- u3a Walkers' Exchange
- Find a u3a Speaker

SAVE MONEY WITH 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.

u3a SOURCES BLOG

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 each month. Click here for the latest edition as well as the full list of radio podcasts since they started: [u3a Radio Podcast Playlist](#)



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](#)

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 the February newsletter is **Friday 20th March**.

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.

26th March	23rd July	26th November
23rd April	27th August	10th December
28th May (AGM)	24th September	
25th June	22nd October	

JUST FOR FUN – DO YOU REMEMBER THIS?

Do you remember in 2008, the UK decimal coins were updated with a fresh set of designs?

The Royal Mint held a competition for people to submit designs for the six coins 1p, 2p, 5p, 10p, 20p and 50p pieces. The £1 was originally left out of the competition. The competition was open to specially chosen artists and coin designers as well as the general public. They received over 4,000 designs by more than 500 people.

The Royal Mint Advisory Committee took a year to examine each entry. Looking for a set of designs that symbolised Britain whilst also being contemporary, a clear winner emerged.

Matthew Dent, a British graphic designer, was awarded a one-off payment of £35,000 for his winning entry. His designs were inspired by heraldry. He divided the shield of the Royal coat of arms of the United Kingdom amongst the pence coins so that when they show the entire shield. The full shield appears on the £1 coin, which before the competition had no fixed design.



Photo courtesy of my grandson Jacob (12) who reminded me of this and hunted down the required coins to make this representation of the shield.

Find out more about the Royal Mint's history and its evolving story on the Royal Mint Museum website here: <https://www.royalmintmuseum.org.uk/>

Information & Contact Details

You can contact us here:

Isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com

Email us to join our WhatsApp Group:

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.