

*** Monthly Meeting – Thursday 14th December***

Please join us at our **Christmas Party** meeting.
It will start at **2pm** on **Thursday 14th December** at **SHEPPEY HALL, QUEENBOROUGH**

Christmas Party Meeting

Our Christmas meeting will be a party with a FREE raffle, refreshments and entertainment. As in previous years, we will be proving a light tea with a selection of sandwiches, crisps, mince pie and cake. Why not dress up in your Christmas jumper, hats and tinsel. This meeting will also include our speaker for the month.

London Pearly Kings and Queens Society

Sue Golding – The Pearly Queen of Silvertown, East London



This month, Sue will be telling us all about the history of the London Pearly Kings and Queens Society.

In a tradition stretching back at least 150 years, Pearly Kings and Queens have come to represent an iconic image of London, easily recognised by their distinctive suits and accessories covered with patterns of mother-of-pearl buttons.

There is, however, a lot more to these “Royal” families than simply dressing up. Come along to find out more - and you’ll also get the chance to join in a sing-along.

Save the date for next month: Thursday 25th January

COMING UP...

David’s Slice of Life	Page 2/3	David gives up his take on the run up to Christmas
Interest Groups & Activities	Page 3	New Interest Group added and upcoming activities
Recent Activities	Page 4	See what our members have been up to lately
National u3a	Page 5	Listen to the November podcast and find out more about wide range of national online talks, workshops and courses available, included in your membership for FREE!
Keep Smiling	Page 6	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?

MONTHLY MEETING DATES 2024

Meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of each month at 2pm until 4pm (except in December). Our April 2024 meeting has been moved to the following day (Friday 26th April) due to the hall being unavailable on our usual day. Refreshments are included. Our meetings will be held at the Sheppey Hall in Queenborough for the next six months.

25 th January	26th April – Please Note this meeting will be on a Friday
22 nd February	23 rd May
28 th March	27 th June

David's Slice of Life

There are several questions to which grandparents and parents should always have pre-prepared answers. One is: How are babies born? And the other is: How does Santa get into our house when we don't have a chimney?

We have five grandchildren between 18 months and eight but so far, thankfully, we have not been asked either question. That day may well arrive soon. I'll be ready.

The question about Father Christmas is less tricky to answer. It's obvious. Santa has "Special Powers," which means he and his reindeer can go anywhere they like, even down radiator pipes !

Unfortunately, the reality these days is that it's getting harder to preserve the mystery and the wonder of Santa Claus. In my childhood, there were no computers, no social media, no mobile phones and, except for a lucky few, no televisions. It was easy for mum and dad to place a defensive ring around Santa and his fantastic feat of visiting every household in the world with children.

How different now. Kids are bombarded on all sides with information about Christmas, with so much blatant commercialism that it's becoming near-impossible to convince children that Santa has not forsaken Rudolph and his reindeer pals to get behind the wheel of an Amazon Prime delivery van.

Even if your grandchildren are not particularly streetwise, there will be others in their classroom who are. You will be fortunate if your grandchild gets past the age of eight still believing in Father Christmas.

Casting my mind back around 35 years, I can remember that one Christmas, about a week before the big day, we were driving home from a family shopping trip pre-online shopping when I spotted a comet or meteor in the sky leaving a bright trail behind it. "There goes Santa," I said, "starting his journey around the world." How long they believed that, I don't know, but that comet arrived just at the right time.

Meanwhile, as if you hadn't noticed, Christmas is approaching fast. It's that time of the year when I get dragged around a shopping centre by my wife after exhaustive searches for presents online have failed to produce the right gifts.

Like most males, I am totally clueless when it comes to ideas for presents, so like most husbands I leave it to my wife. I know this is selfish, sexist, lazy, cowardly or whatever insult you would like to heap on me, but the truth is that a kind of paralysis grips me when Christmas present time arrives. My mind goes blank. More than once, in desperation, I have sought inspiration from our daughter, who lives 300 miles away, the same daughter who was in my car when we spotted that comet or meteor 35 years ago. She now has three children of her own, so she has her own answers to those tricky questions.

My wife always tells me that if it was down to me, no one would ever receive any Christmas cards or presents. Harsh but definitely true.

I'm always complaining that the cost of posting Christmas cards is becoming prohibitively expensive. It won't be long before even a second-class stamp costs more than the card, but I can't think of any alternative. Sending a Christmas greeting via WhatsApp, a text or email would be a great deal cheaper (costing nothing in fact) but even this Scrooge has to concede that this would be impersonal to the point of rudeness.

Like many other people, I get irritated by the ever-increasing commercialism of Christmas, which now seems to start mid-way through October, if not earlier. In some ways, I can understand why. Businesses both large and small rely heavily on the run-up to Christmas and in some cases it's their key to survival, especially with the ongoing cost- of- living crisis.

One thing my 60 years as a journalist have taught me is that in the run-up to Christmas, nobody reads anything. Minds are on other things. So, I am going to keep this Slice of Life slightly (though not much



shorter) than usual, especially as my wife has more than once joked that some of my columns have been long enough to be published in a hard-backed edition.

I'll just say one more thing. My readers (if there is more than one) will remember that last year I agonised at some length on the bargain-price giant-sized turkey I bought (Feeds 20, it said on the label), forgetting that it had to fit in our freezer's limited space along with all the other Christmas foodstuffs. Somehow, I managed to shoehorn it in, but it was much, much harder getting it out again, a struggle between Yours Truly and a mega turkey which turned into a tug-of-war I almost lost.

This year, I have played it safe. We have settled for a much smaller turkey crown. The farcical tale of the turkey which almost refused to take part in Christmas will not be repeated, nor will we be eating de-frosted turkey curry for six months after the festive season.

All that remains is for me to wish all our members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, along with my forecast that our vibrant Isle of Sheppey u3a will go from strength to strength in 2024 after what, I think we can all agree, was a highly-successful 2023.

Stay safe and healthy, everyone.

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](#)

CRIB GROUP

We are pleased to announce that one of our members Colin has offered to start a Crib group. This group will be for all abilities and is expected to be held at the Abbey Hotel and to start in the New Year. If you are interested and would like to be added to the group, please email us as usual or sign up at the next member's meeting.

SINGING FOR FUN & A LITTLE BIT MORE

This group has now restarted and they have had a lot of fun getting together again. Please let us know if you are interested in this group so we can add you to the group list.

SUNDAY LUNCH

Are you interested in getting together with other members for an exclusive Isle of Sheppey u3a Sunday Lunch? We will be offering a Sunday Lunch for £20 per person to be held at the Masonic Club in Sheerness. This will be a Carvery Lunch with a choice of meats, dessert, cheese board and tea/coffee. Date to be decided.

HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT VISIT

Ken has arranged an outing for a visit to the Houses of Parliament for 25 of our members, he has confirmed that it will take place on Monday 18th March. This outing is currently fully subscribed and we have a waiting list.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

FLOWER ARRANGING DEMONSTRATION

This second demonstration presented by Phillipa, was again very popular with around 30 members attending. Phillipa who is a professional florist and provided her services without charge, demonstrated a Christmas wreath, a red table decoration and a white table decoration with candles.



The arrangements were raffled off at the end of the demonstration.

To thank Phillipa for her demonstration, the group had a collection for a charity of her choice which raised £83. Phillipa is also a member of the local Inner Wheel who raise money for charity each year and will donate the money to their chosen Kent charity which, this year is Hospices of Hope, who provide support for palliative and end of life care across Eastern and Southern Europe, including Ukraine. Thanks also goes to Sharon, one of our hard-working group facilitators who suggested and organised this well received demonstration.

Christmas Wreath



White Table Decoration with Candles



Red Table Decoration



SANTA SAUNTER

This year, again, some members joined in the with the Santa Saunter in Sheerness, run by the Minster Rotary Club to collect money for charities and to provide a festive atmosphere in advance of the Sheerness lights switch on and Lantern Parade. The Saunter was followed by Mulled Wine and a Christmas sing along around the clock tower.



CHRISTMAS RIDDLE

Can you work out what the connection this photo has to Christmas?
Send your answers to isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com



NATIONAL u3a

Have you looked on the National u3a website? There's so much u3a members across the country are getting involved with.

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 take part in coming up in the next few weeks.

ONLINE LEARNING EVENTS

There are numerous and wide-ranging learning events and short courses (usually free online using zoom),

Coming up in January: [u3a online events](#)

- How to Better Insulate your Home
- Toulouse-Lautrec and the Music Halls of Paris
- Chinese Wand Exercises for Mobility, Fitness & Fun
- Mindfulness & Meditation
- Monthly 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 any of our Isle of Sheppey u3a members. Get involved by clicking here: [u3a National Programmes](#)

Take part or just browse other members' submissions.

- Write a Letter to your Younger Self
- All our Yesterdays
- Poetry Competition 23-24
- Paint or Draw
- Found in Nature
- U3a Eye – Themed Photography Project
- Cake Decorating
- Repurposing & Upcycling
- Crafts
- Extreme Crochet & Knitting
- Short Story Competition 23 – Shortlisted Stories
- Hadrian's Wall Postcard Art Competition
- Battle of Britain & the Blitz
- Kindertransport
- Bird Track - Results
- Logic Puzzles
- Maths Challenge
- Aileen's Game

NATIONAL u3a 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.

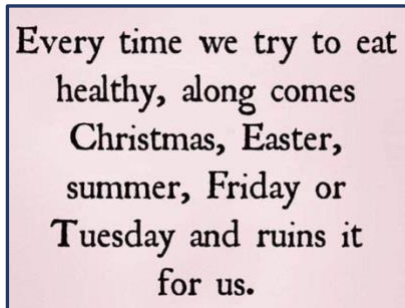
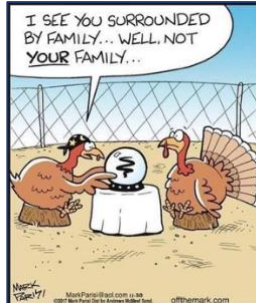


RADIO PODCAST

Have you listened to the latest monthly **u3a Radio podcasts** on YouTube? Each month on 17th a new episode is uploaded. Click here for the full list of radio podcasts since they started:

[u3a Radio Podcast Playlist](#)

KEEP SMILING



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>

u3a YouTube Channel
<https://www.youtube.com/user/TheU3a/videos>

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.