

*** Monthly Meeting – Thursday 23rd November***

Please join us at our next members’ meeting.
It will start at **2pm** on **Thursday 23rd November** at **SHEPPEY HALL, QUEENBOROUGH**

Acting Can Be Murder

Linda Regan-Murphy

Linda Regan-Murphy is an actor and author who has appeared on TV, film, radio and stage.



Linda made her TV debut in 1970 in the popular TV sitcom, On The Buses and since then, she has appeared numerous times in many well-known TV programmes, on stage and on the big screen. Linda is probably best-known for her role as Yellowcoat April in the TV holiday camp sitcom, Hi-De-Hi. Linda is also a critically acclaimed author; her nine published crime thrillers are all set in London.

Linda is married to actor, Brian Murphy, best-known for his role as the hen-pecked husband George Roper in the TV sitcom, Man About The House and its spin-off series, George and Mildred. Brian sometimes accompanies Linda when she gives talks, so you may bump into him next Thursday. The couple live in Bromley.

Non-members are welcome £3 – Come and see how we “learn, laugh and live”

Save the date for next month: Thursday 14th December

Christmas Party with Sue Golding - Pearly Queen

COMING UP...

David’s Slice of Life	Page 2/3	David ponders the negatives and many positives of our very own “Small Island”
Interest Groups & Activities/Coming Soon	Page 4	New Interest Group added and upcoming activities
Local Services	Page 5	Age UK Sheppey – services available for the over 50s
National u3a	Page 6	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 7	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?

CHRISTMAS MEETING – 14th December

Our Christmas meeting will be a party with a FREE raffle, refreshments and entertainment.
PLEASE NOTE: The Christmas meeting will be on **14th December 2pm** at **Sheppey Hall, QUEENBOROUGH**

INTEREST GROUPS

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](#)

David's Slice of Life

It's almost obligatory for any columnist, as the big day approaches, to write about Christmas - so, feeling slightly contrary this month, I'm not going to.

A few years back, I had an idea for a column, for possible publication in our local paper, the Sheerness Times Guardian, where I did some freelance work after I finally hung up my keyboard after more than 50 years as a full-time journalist.

It was to be called Notes From A Small Island, with profuse apologies to Bill Bryson, in my view one of the greatest, if not the greatest, humorist writers for a couple of generations. Bryson is American but a passionate anglophile. His 1995 best-selling book, Notes From A Small Island, details the eccentricities of us Brits and our way of life. It's hysterically funny. Sorry I was going to pinch your idea, Bill.

My column never saw the light of day because I decided that the time to say farewell to the world of work had finally arrived. By now, you've guessed that my "Small Island" would have been the Isle of Sheppey.

So, what would I have written about our island without it turning into an avalanche of nostalgia? There's both good and bad.

I was born on Sheppey and, apart from a couple of years working away, have lived here for the last 50 years or so.

At the forefront of my mind is the way in which our little island has become uncomfortably crowded over the last two generations. Cars now line side streets bumper-to-bumper where once there were just a few cars, sometimes none at all.

All these vehicles, crammed into a small island, the basic infrastructure of which has changed little over the last half century, all add to the sense of overcrowding which seems to grow worse with every passing year.

Worse still, the number of houses which the planners and developers are determined to dump on Sheppey makes that sense of overcrowding even worse.

And, let's be honest, Sheppey often gets a bad press, much of it undeserved. Hardly a month goes by without some idiot on social media repeating parrot-fashion the same tired old clichés about the island. At least once a year, sometimes more, a national newspaper editor or TV producer "discovers" that there's a ship loaded with bombs a couple of miles from the island and we are treated to yet another "exclusive" feature or documentary about "Doomsday Island."

Another national media variation is the "bleak, deprived island covered with pylons overlooking the Thames Estuary." I wish I had £1 for every time I have read that. Unfortunately, the fact that Sheerness has some of the most deprived wards in Kent doesn't help.

Incidentally, I have never spoken or written the word "Swampy" as a byword for any resident of Sheppey. I think it just fuels the ignorant prejudices about people who live on the island.

Well, so much for the negatives. But what about the positives?

Sheppey's problem is that it's all too easy for "outsiders" to latch on to the negatives, because good or positive news doesn't sell newspapers or boost viewing figures.

We have plenty to shout about, but we don't shout loudly enough – especially those controlling the purse strings.

Yes, there are visitor guides about Sheppey, produced by Swale Borough Council and others organisations, but sometimes I can't escape from the feeling that Sheppey is viewed as the "poor relation" of Swale.

Taking a walk along The Leas and the cliffs at Minster on a beautiful summer's day this July, I thought to myself: "If only those idiots who knock Sheppey could come down and see this. They would have to eat their words."

The calm, blue sea with the sweeping cliffs as a magnificent backdrop looked almost magical, as if a slice of the Med had been transported to the North Kent coast.



This is one asset, in particular, that deserves to be shouted about from the rooftops!

And then, of course, there's the island's rich aeronautical heritage. I wish that those responsible for promoting tourism in Swale, and on Sheppey in particular, would put more effort and money into shouting loudly about those Magnificent Men In Their Flying Machines and their achievements. I stress that I don't mean the volunteers at the Eastchurch Aviation Museum. They do a superb job on a shoestring. More input - and cash - is needed from those organisations and local authorities with deeper wallets.



Not forgetting that we have some wonderful nature reserves, including the National Nature Reserve at Elmley, and magnificent churches like the 12th century St. Thomas the Apostle church at Harty and, of course, Minster Abbey.

We do our best on the island to provide our own "home-grown" positives. There are a number of Sheppey-based organisations working hard on behalf of the island and its residents. They often don't get the recognition they deserve. Here I must mention Sheppey Matters, an award-winning charity set up nearly 30 years ago. It provides around 12 health and well-being community services from the Healthy Living Centre in Sheerness and elsewhere around the island. There are numerous other groups and organisations which contribute to positive life on Sheppey but I can't list them all or this column would turn into a novel!

So, what would Bill Bryson have made of Sheppey? Having read most of his books (all rib-ticklingly funny), I know he would have mixed the positives with the negatives and at the same time been considerably more humorous than I have been. That's why he's got \$10m in the bank and I haven't.

In particular, I know he would have loved writing with tongue firmly in cheek in his own inimitable style about our aviation history, the island's three prisons, and, of course, our very own "bomb ship." The latter two would have been a gift for him. I think he would also have fun writing about a visit to Leysdown in mid-summer. Maybe I should suggest Sheppey to him for Notes From A Small Island Part 2 as his final book.

I doubt he will take up my suggestion, as he has already written his last offering, The Secret History of Christmas, which came out last year and covers everything from religious festivals to the origin of mince pies. Can religious festivals and minced pies be funny? When Bryson writes about it, anything can be!

These are just my views about some of the positives and negatives about life on our little island, just 10 miles long and just over 4 miles wide. You don't have to agree with any of them. How about posting your own on our Facebook group? It might get an interesting debate going. Please remember to stay within the Facebook rules about posts and, in particular, the u3a rules.

Our members only Facebook Group is: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/384159678869515>

INTEREST GROUPS & ACTIVITIES

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.

EASTCHURCH AVIATION MUSEUM & BEE FARM

Our committee member Ken has been busy organising some trips to the Eastchurch Aviation Museum and Bee Farm, he gives us this update:

The first of our two trips to the Aviation Museum was a great success. I met 12 of our u3a members who had signed up for the tour of not only the Museum but the also the Bee Farm, finishing at the Blitz Café for WWII cuisine. Both talks were extremely engaging – I certainly didn't know that the first Wright flying machines were without wheels and were catapulted into the air by an ingenious device! The Bees, however, fare better. Each Hive with one Queen Bee can have up to 50,000 bees servicing her needs. No catapults needed!



The morning's tour was finished off in the Blitz Café, enjoying their speciality Bomber Command burgers and NAAFI tea and coffee.

COMING UP SOON

FLOWER ARRANGING DEMONSTRATION - Sheerness East Working Men's Club

Tuesday 21st November – 2pm

Phillipa Doucy, one of our members is also a professional florist. Earlier in the year she gave us a demonstration of different arrangements of spring flowers, this was so popular that she is returning to provide us with some Christmas themed floral inspiration.

This demonstration is open to all our members it is **FREE** and we still have space left, so why not come along to see how a professional florist creates some beautiful displays suitable for this time of the year. If you would like to join us, please let us know so that we can organise enough seats at the venue. Thanks go to Sharon, our flower arranging group facilitator, who has organised this demonstration. We have been able to make this available to all members for free due to grants we have been able to secure. Donations at the end of the demonstration to charity would be appreciated.

SANTA SAUNTER – Saturday 2nd December – 3pm

We will be joining The Rotary Club of Minster on Sea again this year for their Santa Saunter taking place in the Sheerness Town Centre on Saturday 2nd December 2023. Join us for a gentle stroll through Sheerness dressed as Santa (or any Christmas costume you wish) to raise funds for your chosen group or charity. Meeting point is the former Old House at Home Pub at the end of the High Street, we will finish with Christmas songs around the Clock Tower together with the Christmas



Lights switch on. In support, will be the fantastic St John's Ambulance Band. Ken will be serving on the Mulled Wine stall – where else! Registration is £5 (under 5's free). This includes a Santa suit and a medal. Please let us know at isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com if you wish to be included within our Group Registration Form – we will collect the money on the day or at our members meeting on the 23rd November. The Age UK Centre will, as usual, allow us to use their facilities to change and use their toilets.

LOCAL SERVICES

AGE UK SHEPPEY

Age UK Sheppey is an independent local charity working throughout Sheppey to help support older people, their families and carers. Age UK would like as many members of the community as possible to be a part of a better more modern service that is all inclusive. Age UK Sheppey is no longer a service, just for the elderly and infirm, they are now providing services for people aged 50 and upwards.



<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/sheppey/>

SERVICES OFFERED



Mini maintenance: Cost of £12 an hour, includes small jobs such as installing door chains, shelf and flat pack assembly and safety handle fitting.

Key Safe Installation: Supply and installation of a Key Safe for £12.



Gardening: From £12 an hour, includes lawn mowing, light weeding, planting up pots and other small jobs.



Clubs/Cafes/Befriending: There are numerous dementia support clubs, cafes and befriending services throughout Sheerness, Queenborough and Leysdown.

Drop-In Sessions: Information and advice drop-in sessions are held on the first Monday of every month. These are for anyone who need help with benefits or completing benefit claim forms or any other financial advice.



One You Kent at Age UK Sheppey: NHS Community Support team helps with making healthy lifestyle changes.

Foot clinic: To help keep your feet healthy at £22 .

Activities: They also run various exercise and craft sessions weekly in the activity centre. Details of these can be found on their socials, in the local libraries and GP surgeries or by contacting the centre directly.



Meal Service: Fresh meal delivery is available for £8 or frozen for £6 for 2 courses. You can even now pop into their centre for a bit of lunch for £8 or if you'd like to stay all day and join in with activities its £12.50. Menu choices change each week.

Cost of Living Support: Age UK Sheppey has received some funding from Minster Parish council and Swale Borough Council for support for those over 50 with some free shopping or a fresh hot meal delivered to your door. It is to help people who are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. There are criteria for these services so give the office a call to see if you are eligible.



Home Support: This service is provided by their team of employees who are fully DBS checked and insured. They can provide help with practical domestic tasks, such as shopping, cleaning, laundry, ironing, bed making etc. They can also provide light meal preparation, escorted appointments and companionship. They can help for a short period of time until people are back on their feet or provide a regular service.

LOCAL EVENTS



The Crafty Collective is a unique shop on Sheppey selling handmade produce and gifts by local artisans, all under one roof.

Let's support our many talented local artisans on Sheppey. If you're looking for unique and bespoke gift items, handmade locally, why not pop along and browse the shelves at the Crafty Collective.

Find them at The Silo, Stones Garden Centre, Halfway.



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), Currently available: Future Lives - Protecting Ourselves from Fraud, Staying Safe Online - A u3a Presentation with Q&A, When Art & Literature Meet at Christmastide, Live Cookery Demonstration – Christmas Special (Vegetarian), The Story of Eva Urbach & Ulli Adler, The Art of William Morris, Climate Change & The Oceans, Exploring World Faiths: Christmas, Family History: Where all is not as it seems, along with the on-going series of Mindfulness & Meditation and Laughter Yoga. [u3a online events](#)

NATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Enter your poetry and short stories in the competitions, submit your paintings/drawings and photographs to be featured in the online galleries. Share your stories on the **All Our Yesterdays** page or submit a **Letter to Your Younger Self**. Try out the Maths Challenge or Logic Puzzles. Take part or just browse other members' submissions. Get involved by clicking here: [u3a National Programmes](#)

NATIONAL u3a NEWSLETTER

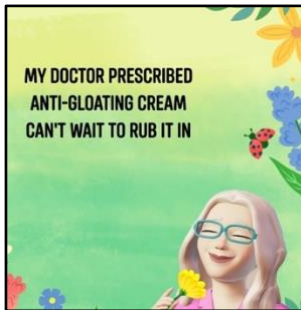
Sign up to get the most up to date news from National Office and find out the latest news and learning events as they are added.



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.