

INFORMATION ABOUT ISLE OF SHEPPEY U3A

Across the UK, u3a members are learning, staying active and having fun in later life. It's local, social, friendly, low-cost and open to all

Message from our Chair – Heather

I am so pleased you have contacted us to find out more information about our Isle of Sheppey u3a. It is great to see our local u3a being supported so well in these difficult times. Joining a u3a is a wonderful way to make new friends whilst being inspired to learn new skills, study or experience activities that are unfamiliar. The challenge is there. In this bulletin you will find information on what membership includes and what groups we currently have running, so, if you decide to join, please take advantage of all that is on offer, both through our local Isle of Sheppey u3a activities or through projects and tutorials provided nationally via the National u3a website. The u3a movement, as a whole, has gradually managed to open up its operation since the lockdown measures and long may it continue. The path may be slow but there is certainly no need not to challenge “those little grey cells”. We may be a relatively small u3a but there are over 1,000 u3a's throughout the UK with more than 400,000 members and there are opportunities to interact with u3a members across the country. The National u3a website provides a breadth of opportunities to learn, laugh and have fun and this has increased significantly over the past few months. So, now is the moment when you can pursue your interests at leisure and really make the most of life

The u3a movement is a unique and exciting organisation which provides, life-enhancing and life-changing opportunities. Retired and semi-retired people come together and learn together, not for qualifications but for its own reward: the sheer joy of discovery!

Make the most of life once you're no longer in full time work by exploring new ideas, skills and interests with your local u3a

HISTORY OF THE ISLE OF SHEPPEY U3A

Isle of Sheppey u3a was founded in 2019 as a project driven by our Chair – Heather and with the help of the Steering Committee. Our inaugural meeting was held in October 2019 where our first 100 members signed up and we currently have around 140 members. We hold monthly meetings at the Minster Club on the fourth Thursday afternoon between 2pm and 4pm, each month we have a speaker on a wide range of diverse subjects or some other entertainment. At our special Christmas meeting we held a social get together with a buffet and were entertained by a visiting u3a guitar group, all included in the membership fee. During the pandemic, all our face-to-face meetings had to be suspended, however, we continued to look for ways to stay connected and keep entertained. We took our monthly meetings and some of our interest groups online using zoom, an easy-to-use video conferencing platform. Learning how to get online using zoom and helping each other has certainly tested our u3a ethos of “learn, Laugh, Live”!

As covid restrictions have now been lifted we have, once again, started to meet in person and have been able to return to our normal activities. We held a great “Picnic in the Park” in August 2021 where we were finally able to see many of our members together again. We had our first meeting back at Minster Club in October 2021 for our AGM and we have continued to run our normal monthly meetings since.

U3as are run on the principle of self-help and mutual learning. It's all voluntary, members share their knowledge and experience with others through interest groups, rather than pay people to teach, members share their skills and talents with other members. Any member can create a group based on their interests and our committee will provide all the help and advice required. You don't need to be an expert on the subject, we've even had a group of members get together to learn something completely new to them all.

Most of our groups have a limited number of participant places available, however, we run a waiting list where groups are currently full and would encourage and support members to create more groups where there is sufficient interest. Once you are a member you can simply email us to let us know if you are interested in joining any of these groups or sign up at our meetings.

INTEREST GROUP INFORMATION

Here is a list of some of the groups that might be available

Art – Facilitated by Jan – Meets weekly in Sittingbourne.

Conversational French – Facilitated by Helen. Meets at various locations

Flower Arranging – Facilitated by Sharon – Meets monthly/fortnightly on Tuesday afternoon each month at Minster Club

Monday Walks – Facilitated by Heather – Meets weekly on Monday morning at various places both around the Island and further afield

Scrabble – Facilitated by Val. Meets monthly Thursday morning at Sheppey Leisure Centre

Book Club – Facilitated by Val. Meets monthly, Third Tuesday afternoon at Minster Library.

Tuesday Walking for Health – Facilitated by Sharon – Meets weekly on a Tuesday morning at various places around the Island

Wine Appreciation – Facilitated by Ken – Meets on Friday evenings at various locations

Drama – Facilitated by Wendy. Currently meeting at Minster Club for rehearsals.

Play Reading – Facilitated by Wendy

Sew & Mend – Facilitated by Stella. This group meets in Eastchurch.

Crafty Ideas – Facilitated by Linda and Jean. This group meets monthly on the second Friday Afternoon.

Smart Devices – Facilitated by Sally. This new group will be starting in the new year

This information is subject to change

USA MAGAZINE – “THIRD AGE MATTERS” (TAM)

The Third Age Trust produces a monthly magazine for u3a members. This magazine is published five times a year and is a great source of information with stories of what is happening in u3as around the country. Inside you'll find a section 'Sources' where learning projects and subjects are showcased to inspire and educate. The magazine is included in your membership subscription and will be sent to your home address (you will need to opt in on the membership application form).

ISLE OF SHEPPEY U3A WEBSITE

<https://u3asites.org.uk/isle-of-sheppey/home>

Click onto our website to find out more information about our groups, many articles submitted by members, some virtual quiz questions and answers and to check out our gallery of photographs. You will also find lots of information and links to online entertainment venues and virtual tours of venues around the UK. New content is uploaded frequently. Members and non-members can also use the website to contact us directly by email.

Information and Contact Details

You can contact us here:

[Isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com](mailto:isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com)

Find our website here:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/isle-of-sheppey/home>

Our Facebook Page is:

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

Members can join:

Our members only Facebook Group

Our members only WhatsApp Group

The national u3a Facebook Group: Keeping In Touch Interact with u3a members around the country

THE NATIONAL U3A - 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Founded in 1981, the UK u3a aim is to encourage groups of people in their third age to come together and continue their enjoyment of learning in subjects of interest to them.

From the start, the guiding principles were to promote lifelong learning through self-help interest groups covering a wide range of topics and activities as chosen by their members.

The 'third age' is defined by a time in your life (not necessarily chronological) where you have the opportunity to undertake learning for its own sake. There is no minimum age, but a focus on people who are no longer in full-time employment or raising a family.

The u3a founders envisaged a collaborative approach with peers learning from each other. The u3a movement was to be self-funded, with members exploring new ideas, skills and activities together and learning purely for pleasure. There would be no distinction between the learners and the teachers – everyone could take a turn at being both if they wished.

Each u3a group is operationally independent but a member of The Third Age Trust, which requires adherence to the guiding principles of the U3A movement. Membership of the Third age Trust includes support for the running of local u3as and access to a vast and wide range of learning resources and online content.

There are over 1000 u3as more than 450,000 members; membership costs are kept low and is open to everyone who's no longer in full-time work.

Across the UK, u3a members are learning, staying active and having fun in later life. It's local, social, friendly, low-cost and open to all.

There's so much out there to experience – what's stopping you?

U3A NATIONAL WEBSITE

<https://www.u3a.org.uk>

National Newsletter: Keep up to date with what is happening nationally. You will find a wealth of resources, information and activities available on the national u3a website.

Once you are a member of the Isle of Sheppey u3a you can **subscribe to the National u3a newsletter** to get all the latest news, information and updates straight into your inbox. Create an account to get full access to the website and click on the link to see the most recent national newsletters: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/newsletter>

u3a Radio podcast – The u3a has its own channel on the YouTube platform. New episodes are uploaded on the 17th of each month. Why not have a listen to some recent episodes?

National Online Learning Events – The website also offers a number of workshops, webinars and interactive sessions delivered by members for members, which are free to join. Many of these are in high demand and spaces are limited, particularly for those with an interactive element. Check out what is currently available: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

National Programmes - Find out what national programmes, activities and competitions are available. Click here to find out what is currently available <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes>

Resources for starting your own interest group

If you would like to start your own interest group, there is a section of the national website dedicated to providing subject advice and support on both setting up a group in a particular speciality and encouraging the sharing new ideas and approaches.

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.