

*** Monthly Meeting – Thursday 28th September***

Please join us at our next members’ meeting.
It will start at **2pm** on **Thursday 28th September** at **MINSTER CLUB**

Hopping in Kent

Sue Duckworth



Although hop fields in Kent have undergone something of a revival lately, in their hey-day, train loads of Londoners, often complete families, would come down to our county to pick the hops.

Sue Duckworth works as a professional Blue Badge Guide for the South/Southeast of England, Canterbury Cathedral and a Green Badge Guide for Canterbury City since 2012 and lives near Ashford.

Before becoming a guide, Sue worked as a librarian in Kent for almost twenty years and says she enjoys bringing her talks to life through her presentations.

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

Save the date for next month: Thursday 26th October

Keith Whitnell - Murders in Kent

COMING UP...

David’s Slice of Life	Page 2/3	See what David has to say about life this month!
Interest Groups	Page 3/4	See what the new groups have been up to
Update/Activities		Photos from the Picnic in the Park event
National u3a	Page 4	There’s a lot of interesting things available on the national u3a website, included in your membership fee. Listen to the latest Radio Podcast See what Learning Events are taking place for members around the country
Interest Groups Online (IGO)	Page 5	Interest Groups Online is a separate group (membership fee required) that members of our u3a can join to increase the range of groups they can participate in, online, with other members from around the UK . Read about the upcoming Interest Groups Online fair where you can sample several of their interest groups for free.
Keep Smiling	Page 5	A little humour
Information & Contact details	Page 5	Let us know if you want to join our members only Facebook Group and/or u3a General WhatsApp Group?

MONTHLY MEETING DATES 2023

Meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of each month at 2pm until 4pm at Minster Working Men’s Club, (except in August & December). Refreshments are included.

26 th October	14th December	25 th January	28 th March
23 rd November	Christmas Meeting	22 nd February	25 th April

David's Slice of Life

Why do so many organisations, businesses and utility companies we use on a regular basis or pay bills to insult our intelligence by pretending that the bad news they are giving us is actually good news?

They just wrap up the bad news in flowery language or jargon until, eventually, they have no alternative but to come to the point.

What annoys me most about letters from banks, energy suppliers, mortgage providers, internet providers or just about any other supplier you care to name is the way in which they carefully avoid mentioning the unpalatable content of the letter until as late as possible.

Beware the letter or email headed "We're revising our charges." Translation: We want you to pay more.

Other introductory sentences or letter headings often read something like "Important news about your direct debit," or "It's been a while since we contacted you" or "We're reviewing," or "We're giving you more -" the most devious of the lot – when, in fact, you're about to get less.

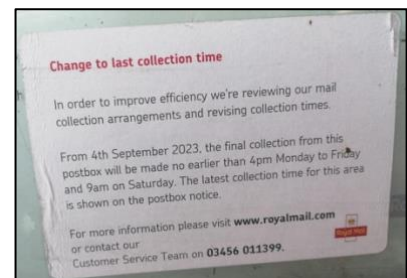
Almost without exception, the "change" the letter informs you about means the amount you pay is going up, not down; that any associated benefits you receive are about to be reduced, or disappear altogether, or that the service you received previously is going to get worse.

I had an email just the other week from one of the UK's biggest supermarket chains, which offers reward points for purchases. It was headed: "Important news about some changes we are making." After half a dozen paragraphs extolling the virtues of its rewards system, I was informed that I would in future be getting less "rewards" for my points.

Just a day later, I had letter headed "Important news about your subscription." The subscription in question was for a monthly magazine I read. And, guess what, the "important news" was the revelation that my monthly direct debit was increasing by another 10%.

One of the best examples I have seen recently was right on our doorstep. Not a letter, but a notice attached to the post box outside Tesco's in Sheerness. It said: "In order to improve efficiency we're reviewing our mail collection arrangements and revising collection times."

Have you spotted two of my favourites in just one sentence? Yes, it's my old friends "Reviewing" and "Revising."



Predictably, the "review" means a worst deal for the customer. From September 4th the last collection times from this much-used post box are two hours earlier Monday to Friday, 4pm instead of 6pm, and 9am on Saturdays, instead of 11.45am.

Improved efficiency designed to benefit Royal Mail, of course, but hardly an improvement for its customers, who now have to lose two hours posting time on weekdays and 2 hours 45 minutes on Saturdays.

Do you think that these businesses have a special department where experts in euphemisms train staff to say the opposite of what they really mean at the start of every letter they send out?

Why don't these businesses come straight to the point? All they succeed in doing is antagonising their customers. We're not fools and I'm sure I am not alone in being irritated by these patronising and disingenuous communications.

I'm thinking of starting a new campaign group called PAW – Pensioners Against Waffle.

Will you join me?

A few months ago, I wrote a Slice of Life article on the subject of “shrinkflation,” the sneaky practice by which food and drink manufacturers reduce the size of their products but keep the price the same. They hope that customers won't notice!

It was interesting to read last week that the French supermarket giant, Carrefour – which, incidentally, has more than 5,700 stores, double the Tesco UK total - has put stickers on its shelves warning shoppers which products have been subjected to shrinkflation.

The stickers read: “This product has seen its volume fall and the effective price charged by the supplier rise.”

Lipton Iced Tea, Lindt Chocolate and Viennetta Ice Cream are among the products being named and shamed by Carrefour, along with 23 others. The company says it wants to put pressure on the firms making the products to keep prices down.



Full marks to the French for tackling this underhand trick head-on, without worrying about the consequences.

What a pity we don't follow the French lead. Sadly, it's not likely to happen. According to retail analysts, our supermarkets would be reluctant to take the same approach in case it “poisoned” their relationship with their suppliers. There is another aspect to this. Most, if not all, UK supermarkets use the “shrinkflation” dodge with some of their own brand products, either by reducing the volume or by using cheaper ingredients and they fear being accused of hypocrisy.

The customer comes first is the mantra of all supermarkets – unless, of course, it gets in the way of profits.

INTEREST GROUPS UPDATE

Group meetings are subject to change at short notice so please contact us to be included in the contact list for any group you would like to join

CARD MAKING/SCRAPBOOK CRAFT

This new group, facilitated by Sally, have enjoyed making their own beautiful bespoke cards, using a variety of papers/card and die cutting techniques. If you would like to join the group or find out more, please email us. You won't need any equipment; we have plenty of resources. Meetings take place at the Rushenden Wellbeing Hub on the first Friday morning of each month.



MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR SMART PHONE

This new group, facilitated by Sally, our Membership Secretary has now been running for several meetings. The group has covered numerous topics exploring WhatsApp, notes, calendar and creating photo folders. The group runs on a collaborative basis, helping each other to become more confident in using those features each member would find useful. The group is held on the second and fourth Fridays each month at the Rushenden Wellbeing Hub.

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

Each interest group has its own communications list so, if you are interested in joining any interest groups, please sign up at one of our meetings or email us at: isleofsheppeyu3a@gmail.com

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY (ICE)



The Smart Phone group recently looked at the options available on mobile phones to enable a function, whereby others can access your emergency contacts in the case of an emergency. In the unfortunate circumstances that you should have an accident where you are unable to communicate, this feature allows the emergency services to contact your registered emergency contacts and access any important medical details that you have entered. In normal circumstances, mobile phones can only be accessed by the user using a PIN or fingerprint/face recognition; enabling this feature allows others to access this important information whilst the phone remains locked.



You can enter this information on an iPhone using the “Health App’ that is standard on the iPhone, other mobile phones will have similar settings to use.



ACTIVITIES



August saw our annual Picnic in the Park event. The weather could have been a bit kinder, but we were lucky enough for the rain to hold off until the end of the event. We would like to thank all our members for the support we have when putting on these events, our volunteers help us to increase the number of events and help them to be more interesting and vibrant.

As always, thanks go to our hard-working committee members but also to Mike who took charge of the quoits game and to others who helped with the setting up and taking down of the displays and the group organisers who provided some displays. Thanks also go to Val who did a wonderful job, as usual, with the quiz.



NATIONAL u3a

*Have you looked on the National u3a website? [National u3a](#)
There's so much u3a members across the country are getting involved with!*

RADIO PODCASTS

Have you listened to the monthly **u3a Radio podcasts** on YouTube? They are now back from the summer recess with September's edition. Click here for the full list of radio podcasts since they started in September 2020:

[u3a Radio Podcast Playlist](#)



LEARNING EVENTS – INCLUDED

As a member of our u3a, you can join a wide range of online talks, workshops and courses for free with your membership.

Most of these opportunities are presented by members themselves, sharing their knowledge and skills with members from across the UK. They also provide a wide range of talks from well-known speakers and organisations, plus in-person events at venues like the Royal Institution.

There are numerous learning events and short courses (usually free online using zoom) from Mindfulness & Meditation, Laughter Yoga to History, Science, Maths and Arts. Click here for the current listings: [u3a online events](#)

INTEREST GROUPS ONLINE - ADDITIONAL

Interest Groups Online (IGO) is a separate online community of u3a learners, who meet mostly via Zoom. You can join IGO as a complementary service to our local, in person, u3a membership. From October, membership is just £6 for 6 months, with access to over 75 different groups across a wide range of topics, visit the [interest groups online groups page](#) to browse all groups.

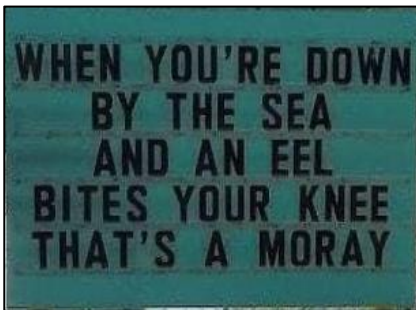
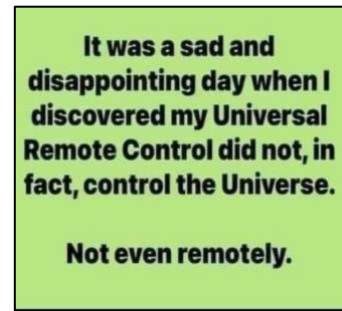
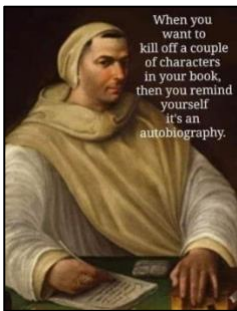
If you would like to try out the group, they have recently announced that the Interest Groups Online (IGO) Fair will be taking place from Monday 2 to Friday 6 October. <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/igo-online-fair>
The IGO Fair is an opportunity to try out u3a's online learning community for free!

Click here to find out more about what there is on offer nationally [National u3a](#)

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:

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.