



MONTHLY MEETINGS

Monthly Meeting 24th April 2025 - Gladstone Pottery Museum - 50th anniversary.

As part of the City's Centenary celebrations, Professor Ray Johnson is presenting a series of films from his Staffordshire Film Archive at a number of locations within the City. We were fortunate to have invited Ray to be our guest speaker on 24th April, which coincided with the day of Gladstone Pottery Museum's 50th anniversary. Accordingly, Ray decided to deliver a presentation/film, which was most relevant to the day, titled "The Gladstone Story - 50th Anniversary."



The former Victorian pottery factory in Longton was officially opened on 24 April 1975 by Prince Richard, the Duke of Gloucester. A pottery factory first opened on the site in 1787, but the bottle kilns were fired for the last time in 1960 and the site put up for sale. The former factory was eventually opened as a museum, with the city council taking ownership in 1989.

Gladstone's golden anniversary was marked by an event on site on Thursday, 24 April. The Lord Mayor of Stoke-on-Trent, Councillor Lyn Sharpe, stated that she was incredibly proud to be celebrating 50 years of the heritage of Gladstone.

We thank Ray sincerely for his excellent film and presentation and for making it so topical. Since the City's Centenary events are a funded project, Ray has requested feedback from those members in attendance, which he will forward to the SOT100 Project Manager.

Could members who attended and wish to be supportive of both Ray and the branch, please respond to either Andrew Devin (Chairman) or Beverley Maher (Entertainments Co-ordinator). A good response will no doubt encourage Ray to again be our guest at future monthly meetings.

Dates for your Diary

22nd May 2025 - Rebecca Done has been booked to provide the musical entertainment at the Annual General Meeting. She is a Country & Western singer and entertainer based in Leek. She has performed with various groups and as a solo artist for 20 years, and is also known for her time as being the youngest Mayor of Leek.

26th June 2025 - A lady named Denise Hopewell (but likes to be called Denny) will present a talk on 26th June, sharing her experience about looking after hedgehogs. Denny has operated a hedgehog rescue service for 17 years, accepting injured animals from vets, schools, and the public. After nursing them back to health, she either releases them back into the wild, or keeps those that cannot be released, within designated secure gardens.

She has requested that members bring along some kitten biscuits and cat meat, but this is not obligatory. Something you should bear in mind is that hedgehogs can't eat fish-based cat food, only meat flavoured.

Please encourage other members to attend, what is always a good afternoon out.

MEMBERSHIP

Generally, in the months of April and May each year, the membership count is at its lowest. This arises because many members do not renew until after the new subscription year has commenced. Presently, the branch membership officer reports that the total number of members stands at 362. This comprises 338 renewals, and 24 new members who have joined since the start of the 2025 calendar year.

The total membership count at a similar time in 2024 was noted to be 357. Although this indicates a level of consistency year on year, the committee remains a little concerned because as at the end of the previous subscription year (31/03/2025), the total membership was 447 thus indicating that some 80 members have not yet chosen to renew.

Many thanks to those who have persuaded family and friends to join us, and please encourage new memberships whenever the opportunity arises. Likewise, if you have a Facebook Page, please publicise whenever you are able.

Should you know anyone who would like to join us, application forms can be obtained from our website, or from membership officer, Alan Stevenson, Tel. 01782 395760: or by emailing: a.stevenson09@btinternet.com

You can also find us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/StokeSouthu3a/>

May we respectfully remind members who have not yet renewed, that the new membership year commenced on 1st April 2025.

COMMITTEE MATTERS

Annual General Meeting

The 12th Branch AGM will take place at Methodist Central Hall, Longton, on Thursday 22nd May 2025. Although the membership has been advised of the arrangements in a prior circulation, the committee wishes to remind everyone that refreshments will be served at 1.30pm, and the AGM will commence promptly at 2pm. The meeting will include progress reports from the chairman and the treasurer, together with the election of one honorary officer and seven general committee members. It is vital that we have sufficient committee members to fill all essential roles, therefore if you wish to apply for any of the vacant positions, please submit the appropriate document without delay.

The committee is mindful that the branch constitution requires a quorum of at least 5% of the membership to be in attendance for the meeting to be legal. Should a quorum not be achieved, the committee must adjourn the meeting to another day, which would result in much extra unwanted expense. The committee respectfully encourages as many members as possible to attend.

Additionally, the membership is requested to support a proposal to amend Clause 7(iii) of the branch constitution. The aim of which is to protect the future of the branch.

As mentioned above, musical entertainment will follow, which will be provided by Rebecca Done.

FOCUS ON GROUPS

Gardening and Nature Lovers

The group's next meeting is a visit to Wollerton Old Hall Gardens on 13th June.

Set around a 16th Century Hall (which is not open to the public), Wollerton Old Hall is a formal, modern garden on an old site covering 4 acres. Its garden rooms are richly planted with perennials and bursting with design ideas. The garden is renowned for its salvias, clematis and roses, growing in controlled exuberance, and the clever use of colour, form and scale.

The address of the Gardens is: Wollerton, Market Drayton, Shropshire. TF9 3NA, and note there is an admission fee of £10.00 per person.

Members are requested to meet outside "NEXT" in Longton between 10.15-10.30am, and travel will be arranged for those without transport. Please contact Josie Peirson if you have any concerns. Josie's telephone details are: Mob: 07775 974876 or Landline: 01782 399711.

Discussion Group

The next group meeting is confirmed for **Tuesday 10th June 2025**, 10.00am to 11.15am. It will take place in Stoke Library, which is located in the Council Hub close to the Market. Presently, there are vacancies within the group.

The subject under discussion will be: What do you want from Life?

The group leader is Bob Jones whose contact number is 01785 817743.

Family History

Group meetings aim to help members from starting research to building and extending family trees.

The next meeting will take place on **23rd May 2025** commencing 1.30 pm in **Longton Library**.

Group leader Les Waller may be contacted on 01782 394431

Lunch Group

The group's regular meeting place is the "Man in Space" in Trentham (New Inn Lane). The next planned meeting (2nd Tuesday in the month,) will take place at 12.30pm on **10th June 2025**. Further details may be obtained from Christine Whitfield, Mob: 07939 621499. Christine requests that new attendees contact her prior to the meeting, so that table numbers can be booked in advance.

Outdoor Bowls

Group meetings are held weekly at Fenton Private Bowling Club, Claude Street, Fenton, ST4 4LL. Since the group is presently over-subscribed, group leader, Dave Darby is maintaining a waiting list. Therefore, if you wish to attend, please contact Dave on 01782 317408, to determine if there are any vacancies.

Gentle Exercise class at Central Hall

Group leader, Eileen, is currently taking a lengthy holiday break abroad. Consequently, there will be no gentle exercise classes from Wednesday 7th May to Wednesday 4th June (i.e. five sessions). The group will resume on 11th June 2025.

The Calendar and groups section on the website have been amended accordingly,

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Day Trips

(a) The “Closer to Home” Walking Group’s next trip is to Chorley Market and Southport on **Tuesday 10th June**. You may contact Carole Arrowsmith on 07871231767 for further details.

(b) “Doreen’s Friendship Group” operates from Longton Central Hall. Friendships are encouraged by arranging day trips and holidays, with vacant seats being offered to the u3a. The next planned Day trip is to **Llandudno** on **Wednesday 16th July**.

Should anyone be interested, you may contact Doreen for further information. Her contact details are: Landline 01782 373369 or Mob. 07818 811153.

Longton Market Award

Longton Market, which dates back over 150 years, has been named the best in Staffordshire. The Market clinched the title of ‘Staffordshire Market of the Year’ at the **Our Staffordshire News’ Business, Charity, Community and Food Awards 2025**.

The awards, which took place in early April also awarded Tunstall Market third in the same category.

Councillor Finlay Gordon-McCusker said “all of our traders and our dedicated markets team work tirelessly to make sure our markets remain at the heart of our town centres, so I would like to pass on my huge congratulations to them.”



If you haven’t visited Longton Market for a while, why not call in and see what’s on offer?

The Centenary Big Clean in the Community

Although very few residents drop litter and illegally dump waste, the issue still remains. It is, however evident, that it is community spirit that helps to get places looking great and litter-free.

As we embark on our Centenary year, the Council is hosting a city-wide clean-up event for the entirety of 2025. The aim is to make the city sparkle!

There will be activities happening throughout Stoke-on-Trent, so you can easily find a way to get involved.

Trentham Brass Band

On Saturday 14th June 2025, a Fundraising Concert featuring Trentham Brass Band will take place at Longton Central Hall. Proceeds will be in aid of Central Hall.



Under the direction of musical director, Shaun Farrington, the band balances its commitments between concerts in and around Stoke-on-Trent as well as contesting further afield.

The Concert will commence at 7.00pm. Tickets are £5 and can be obtained from various members of Longton Central Hall; from the Church Office; or you can pay at the door upon arrival.

Great Pottery Throw-down pieces

During an episode of the “Great Pottery Throwdown,” the potters were challenged to design and create pieces that would mark the city’s 100th anniversary. The bird baths crafted by the potters during episode 7 will be on display at Gladstone Museum until 24 October 2025.



This Newsletter is also accessible on our website (via the News Button). Please try to share information with fellow members who do not have access to the internet.

Items for publication in the next Newsletter will need to reach Andrew Devin by Monday, 16th June 2025. Tel: 01782 942352 or email: a.devin2@gmail.com