



MONTHLY MEETINGS

Annual General Meeting 22nd May 2025

Rebecca Done provided the entertainment after the conclusion of the AGM. Rebecca is based in Leek and sang a range of songs that related to music through the decades. 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.



Feedback from members who attended the AGM was generally positive, but some would have liked to listen to Rebecca singing a few more songs, rather than engage in the question/answer sessions. We thank Rebecca for following our recent pattern of providing something different.

Dates for your Diary

26th June 2025 - A lady named Denise Hopewell (but likes to be called Denny) will share her experience about looking after hedgehogs. Denny has operated a hedgehog rescue service for 17 years. After nursing them back to health, she either releases them back into the wild, or securely keeps those that cannot be released.

She has requested that members bring along some kitten biscuits and cat meat, but this is not obligatory. Please note that hedgehogs can't eat fish-based cat food, only meat flavoured.

31st July 2025 - Phillip Evans, a clinical hypnotist, has been booked for a presentation titled "**The power of the unconscious mind.**" Phillip's aim is to provide a better understanding of how hypnosis works, and the ways it can bring about positive lasting change to transform lives. Members should not be hesitant about attending, you won't be tricked into doing cartwheels on the stage!!

28th August 2025 – Following last year's success, we give early notice, that “**Crafternoon Tea**” is going to be repeated. The session will again be directed by a number of committee members, but aided by relevant group members. More details next month.

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

MEMBERSHIP

At the branch committee meeting held on 12th June 2025, the Membership Secretary reported that the count of members was 374. The total membership count at a similar time in 2024 was 370, which indicates a level of consistency year on year, however the committee would of course prefer an upward trend. It is pleasing to note that 352 members have renewed their subscriptions for year 2025/26.

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 took place at Methodist Central Hall, Longton, on Thursday 22nd May 2025. The meeting included progress reports from the chairman and the treasurer, together with the election of committee members whose tenures had expired. Applications to join the committee were received from the incumbent officers only, and all were re-elected. The outcome is that two vacant committee positions remain.

The requirement in the branch Constitution for a quorum of at least 5% of the membership to be in attendance was achieved, and the formal business was able to proceed. Thirty-seven members were in attendance, so exceeding the nineteen required for the quorum.

The committee proposal to amend clause 7(iii) of the Constitution was authorised unanimously by the membership, thus exceeding the two thirds majority required. The draft minutes of the AGM may now be viewed on the website via the Committee tab.

Branch committee appointments

The first meeting of the new committee year was held on 12th June. It is at this meeting that committee roles and responsibilities are allocated for the forthcoming year. All committee members were content to remain in their previously held positions, consequently no changes were necessary. Since there is no position within the Constitution titled "Business Secretary", Phil Rowley has reverted to the constituted title of "Secretary."

The committee will operate over the next year with ten members, i.e. a shortfall of two. Should any member have a change of heart, the committee can co-opt up to two members during the year, and they will still attract full voting rights.

u3a TRUST MATTERS

Election of Vice Chair

Nominations are now open for the role of Vice Chair of the Trust. A candidate pack can now be requested via the Trust website. Applications will close on Thursday 10 July 2025.

Trust AGM 2025

The 42nd Annual General Meeting of the Third Age Trust will be held on 15 October 2025 as a hybrid meeting, allowing delegates to attend in person or online. It will take place at Sketchley Grange Hotel in Hinckley.

West Midlands Regional Matters

Two regional events took place on 21st and 22nd May in Kings Norton and Lichfield respectively. They were attended by a total of 122 u3a members. Roughly half of the u3as in the Region were represented. Members took the opportunity to find out more about what's happening in u3a movement and its new set up. The Trust's CEO, Iain Cassidy, was in attendance and stated that he aims to "professionalise" the u3a's central organisation.

FOCUS ON GROUPS

Art Lovers Group

We haven't advertised the Art Lovers group for a while, and although there have been a few newcomers, we would still like to see a few more. Therefore, we are appealing to members who may be interested in improving their artistic skills in painting and drawing techniques, to join this friendly group. The venue is Oakwood Road Community Centre, Oakwood Road, Blurton, (off Blurton Road), ST3 3AR, and meets on alternate Wednesday mornings from 10am until noon. The next planned meeting date is **9th July 2025**.

Group Leader Lynette Bell may be contacted on 01782 238712, and she will be pleased to provide further details.

Discussion Group

The next group meeting is confirmed for **Tuesday 8th July 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: **"The effect of electronics"**

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

Gardening and Nature Lovers

The group's next meeting is a visit to Goldstone Hall Gardens, Market Drayton, Shropshire, TF9 2NA, on **Thursday 10th July 2025**. Please note that this is a change to the usual Friday visiting day. There is also an entry fee of £8.50.



Goldstone Hall Gardens are mature and intriguingly designed, including formal and informal planting, encapsulating the essence of a quintessential English Garden. Set in five acres of ground overlooking the tree-strewn rolling countryside, enjoy one of the U.K.'s most productive hotel kitchen gardens, a walled garden, rose terrace, double tiered herbaceous borders, unique herbal walkways and more. The attached photo will hopefully whet your appetite.

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.

Family History

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

The next meeting will take place on **Friday 4th July 2025** commencing 1.30pm in **Longton Library**.

Group leader Les Waller may be contacted on 01782 394431

Gentle Exercise class at Central Hall

Following a short break, the weekly Wednesday classes have now recommenced under the direction of group leader, Eileen.

The group meets 10.am to 11.am at Longton Central Hall.

Group Leader Eileen Owen may be contacted on 07514 360830.

Lunch Group

The group's regular meeting place is the "Man in Space" in Trentham (New Inn Lane). The next planned meeting will take place at 12.30pm on Tuesday **15th July 2025**. Please note that this is the third Tuesday of the month (not the usual second Tuesday). 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.

Mexican Train Dominoes Group

Unfortunately, the attendance at this group has dwindled to only three members. We therefore appeal to members to consider joining this very small group. More attendees will not only make the group more viable, but also the enjoyment of the group very much relies on there being a good number of participants. The game is played with multi-coloured dominoes and players form 'Trains' from consecutive numbers/colours. It's good fun, with simple rules, but you can learn and implement various strategies as you go along.

The group meets on alternate Wednesday mornings at Longton Central Hall, led by Pauline Murray (Tel: 01782 392817). The next meeting date is **2nd July 2025**.

Potential New Groups

Committee member, Diane Ellis has expressed a particular interest in both Backgammon and Seated Yoga. Accordingly, she has requested that these potential activities be mentioned in this Newsletter to determine the level of interest from the membership. Therefore, if any members are interested in attending either or both activities, could you please register your interest with Andrew Devin, whose contact details are on the bottom line of this Newsletter.

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Day Trips

(a) "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.

(b) The "Closer to Home" Walking Group's next trip is also to **Llandudno** on **Thursday 7th August**. You may contact Carole Arrowsmith on 07871231767 for further details.

Staffordshire Archives

Ray Johnson is offering a free presentation at the Mitchell Arts Centre, Hanley, titled "Arthur Berry – In his own words." The screening will take place on **Tuesday 22nd July 2025** at 11am. Just turn up on the day, there is no requirement to pre-book.

The archive films contain sequences of Arthur himself talking about the Potteries; Local Industry; his own history as a Painter, Art School Teacher; and then reading some of his poems. He also talks about his plays presented at the Victoria Theatre and his wonderful character creations.

The Films are from the Ray Johnson Archive.



Feedback to Professor Ray Johnson

Ray Johnson attended our Monthly Meeting on 24th April and provided a presentation about the "Gladstone Story" as part of the City's Centenary celebrations. Since the City's Centenary events are a funded project, Ray requested that we provide feedback from members, which he would then forward to the SOT100 Project Manager.

We therefore confirm that seven members provided narratives of feedback to the committee and we thank them. The comments have been typed and forwarded to Ray, all of which were very supportive. Hopefully, this should encourage Ray to be our guest again at a future monthly meeting.

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, 21st July 2025. Tel: 01782 942352 or email: a.devin2@gmail.com