



MONTHLY MEETINGS

30th October 2025 - Monthly Meeting review

On 30th October, our guest speaker was Peter Hardy, a longstanding volunteer at the National Memorial Arboretum. The Arboretum is a site of national remembrance located in Alrewas, Staffordshire. Its objective is to honour the fallen, and to recognise service and sacrifice.

After undergoing a large-scale regeneration project, the Arboretum's Remembrance Centre was officially opened by the Duke of Cambridge in 2017. It features three exhibition galleries, and a courtyard with a garden.



The idea for the arboretum was conceived by Commander David Childs, CBE, in 1988, who wished to establish a national focus to those who had died giving service to their country. An appeal was launched in 1994 by Prime Minister, John Major. The project began with no money, no land, no staff and no trees. The National Lottery granted some forty per cent of the funds needed, which were matched by donations. Planting began in 1997, and the Arboretum was officially opened on 16 May 2001 as a Registered Charity.

The arboretum contains more than 25,000 trees and more than 400 memorials. The largest section is the Armed Forces Memorial, at the heart of the Arboretum. It represents a tribute to over 16,000 service personnel who have lost their lives in conflict or terrorism since the end of the Second World War.

Many thanks to Peter Hardy for an excellent presentation, which was enjoyed by all.

Dates for your Diary

27th November 2025 – The pre-Christmas entertainment will again be provided by the branch ukulele group, and will include a “Singalong.” Songs will be a variety of well-known ballads and Christmas favourites. Festive refreshments will be served after the presentation.

29th January 2026 – The first presentation of the New Year will be provided by Dean Dixon. The talk will involve a stroll down memory lane, and is titled “1950’s – A Nostalgic Journey.”

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

MEMBERSHIP

At the branch committee meeting held on 13th November 2025, the Membership Secretary reported that the count of members was 416 which comprised 357 renewals and 59 new members. The total membership count at a similar time in 2024 was 432, which indicates a reduction of 16 and is of course a disappointment to the committee.

Many thanks to those who have persuaded family and friends to join us. However, since any reduction in membership is of concern, it is considered vital that current members encourage new memberships whenever the opportunity arises. Similarly, 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/>

u3a TRUST MATTERS

Following the 2025 Trust AGM which took place in October, and no major issues on the horizon, there is only one matter to report. The Board are considering a new Vision and Mission for the u3a movement.

COMMITTEE MATTERS

Potential new group – Seated Yoga update

The Groups’ Co-ordinator has conversed with the group leader of the presently operating Yoga class to determine her thoughts of combining two classes. The leader again wished to have more time to consider ponder over suggestions.

Since some of the members interested in seated yoga do attend the current yoga class, the committee consider it unlikely they will attend both classes. The committee considered the overall situation, including a lack of a group leader for Seated Yoga, and has decided that a new group should not proceed.

Refreshment Helpers at Monthly Meetings

The branch has always endeavoured to provide refreshments to attendees at monthly meetings. Catering Officer, Diane, has requested that members consider the following appeal:

“Volunteers are wanted for the catering team to help serve the drinks and clear up afterwards. Help is appreciated now and again, not every monthly meeting. Please contact Diane or any member of the committee to express an interest.”

FOCUS ON GROUPS

Resignation of Groups' Co-ordinator

The committee was disappointed to receive a note from Groups' Co-ordinator, Pauline Williams, on 2nd November in which she tendered her resignation from the committee with immediate effect. The chairman has responded to Pauline, thanking her for her input both during her current tenure and prior tenures. The committee will consider a replacement at its January 2026 sitting. Should any group leaders have any issues during the interim, please contact the chairman whose details are shown on the bottom line of this Newsletter.

Festive Period - Attendances

As we enter the month of December, many groups will be arranging Christmas meals, and members will no doubt be engaged on other obligations of a festive nature. As a consequence, many groups will be taking a short break from activities. In order for members not to have wasted journeys and be disappointed, it is important that if in doubt, they should contact group leaders before turning up for December meetings.

As a guide to members, Longton Central Hall will be closed after Friday 19th December 2025 and will re-open on Monday 5th January 2026.

Also, it is very important that group leaders liaise with their venues, and cancel bookings as appropriate.

Discussion Group

The next group meeting is confirmed for **Tuesday 9th December 2025**, 10.00am to 11.15am. It will take place in Stoke Library, which is located in the Council Hub close to the Market.

The subject under discussion will be: **"The Power of the Press"**

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

New members are welcome to join the group.

Family History

A short reminder that the activity remains suspended for the foreseeable future due to the group leader being unwell. Group members can, however, continue to use the computers and software at Longton Library. Members will need to contact Library staff for opening times over the festive period. Should anyone wish to take on the leadership role on a short-term basis, please contact the Chairman.

Gardening and Nature Lovers

No visit to an outside location will take place during the month of December. The group will follow its annual arrangement of meeting for Christmas lunch at an agreed venue.

Should any regular attendees have any issues regarding travel to the venue, please contact Josie Peirson, whose telephone details are: Mob: 07775 974876 or Landline: 01782 399711.

Local History

Group leader, Phil Rowley presently remains unavailable due to illness. Group meetings will however continue as normal, the next two meetings being on 2nd and 16th December. Should any newcomers wish to join the class, please contact Andrew Devin (01782 942352).

Mexican Train Dominoes

Due to the group leader not being available for a number of weeks, the activity is suspended until the New Year, after which the issue will be reviewed by the committee.

Potential new Board Games group

As a result of declining numbers attending the Dominoes group, the committee is keen to explore whether Board Games would be of interest to members. No specific games are mentioned because suggestions are best made by members who are interested. If we receive a good response, we will of course require a group leader. Members may contact the chairman with expressions of interest / ideas, and the details will be conveyed to the committee.

High attendances – Ukulele group

A Waiting List is now being maintained for this highly attended class, we advise potential new attendees to contact the group leader before initial attendance.

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Day Trips

(a) “Doreen’s Friendship Group” - The next planned Day Trip is a “**Christmas Mystery**” on **Wednesday 3rd December 2025** (From Longton Central Hall). 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 to **Bury Market** on **Wednesday 10th December**. You may contact Carole Arrowsmith on 07871231767 for further details.

Tesco Parking - Update

Members who attend any u3a activity held at Longton Central Hall, and who park on the Tesco Car Park need to be aware of new restrictions that have taken effect from 6th November. The key change that will affect members is that there is a Maximum stay of three hours between 6:00 am to 10:00 pm. Contravention of this regulation will result in a penalty charge of £70. Members who normally stay in Longton to visit the shops after attending an activity will therefore need to very mindful of the time!

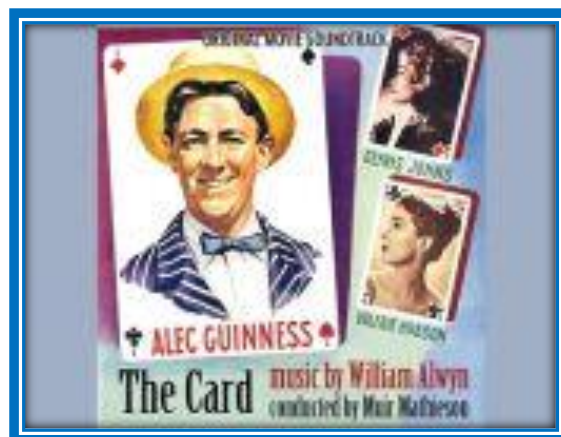
Mitchell Arts Centre

On Tuesday **2nd December 2025** at 11am, The Mitchell Arts Centre presents:

“The Card - Captioned”

The Card is a 1922 British comedy film directed by A. V. Bramble and starring Laddie Cliff, Hilda Cowley and Joan Barry. It is an adaptation of the 1911 novel The Card by Arnold Bennett.

The showing is a community day - drop in free event.



Christmas quiz questions - 2025

1. Which popular Christmas beverage is also called “milk punch?”
2. What did the other reindeer not let Rudolph do because of his shiny red nose?
3. How many ghosts show up in “A Christmas Carol”?
4. Elvis isn’t going to have a white Christmas - he’s going to have a....
5. What do people traditionally put on top of a Christmas tree?
6. In which modern-day country was St. Nicholas born?
7. What words follow “Silent Night” in the song?
8. Which Hollywood actor played six different roles in *The Polar Express*?
9. In Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, what was the first name of Scrooge?
10. Which real-life person is Santa Claus based on?
11. The first artificial Christmas tree was made from what?
12. What do children get from Santa if they’re on the “Naughty List”?
13. What is the name of Rudolph’s girlfriend?
14. Which Christmas song contains the lyric “Everyone dancing merrily in the new old-fashioned way?”
15. Which country started the tradition of putting up a Christmas tree?
16. According to the song, what did my true love give to me on the eighth day of Christmas?
17. What was the highest-grossing Christmas movie of all time?
18. How do you say “Merry Christmas” in French?
19. What Christmas decoration was originally made from silver?
20. Which Christmas ballet premiered in 1892?
21. Which animated film involves a train that carries kids to the North Pole at Christmas?
22. In the classic song, “We Wish You a Merry Christmas,” what type of pudding is mentioned?
23. This hot-spiced cider is a popular Yuletide tradition. What is it?
24. What is the name of the last ghost that visits Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*?
25. What gift did the Little Drummer Boy give to the newborn Christ?
26. What is the best-selling Christmas song ever?
27. What was the first company that used Santa Claus in advertising?
28. In “The Christmas Song,” who does the narrator see kissing Santa Claus under the mistletoe?
29. Which popular phrase was made popular by Ebenezer Scrooge in “A Christmas Carol”?
30. In North America, what’s another name for wild reindeer?

Please note that we do not have a monthly meeting in December!

The committee wishes everyone, and all your loved ones, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

If you have any items you wish to have publicised in any future Newsletter, please contact Andrew Devin, Tel: 01782 942352 or email: a.devin2@gmail.com