



## MONTHLY MEETINGS

### 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025 – Monthly Meeting Review



On 29<sup>th</sup> January 2026, our guest speaker Dean Dixon took us on a Nostalgic Journey back to the 1950's. Housing remained quite poor, with families living largely in terraced properties or prefabs. Most homes didn't have a bathroom so people would either wash in a tin bath by the fireside, or take a weekly trip to the local municipal baths. Toilets were usually outside.

Although black and white television sets became available, most families didn't have one until the very late-Fifties. This didn't really matter because children could play in the streets without the fear of traffic. Buses and bicycles were the most popular modes of transport. There were few cars in Britain, but the iconic Morris Minor was very popular.

Children were taught discipline at home and at school, and corporal punishment was freely administered for bad behaviour. It was the decade of the beginning of rock' n'roll with Elvis Presley and Cliff Richard. When the Queen was crowned in 1953, food rationing was still in force, supermarkets were unheard of, and fish and chips was the national dish. The milkman came daily and delivered milk onto your doorstep, and he would take away the empty bottles to be washed and re-used. Children were also provided with milk at school.



We thank Dean for an interesting presentation which was enjoyed by all.

### Dates For Your Diary

**26<sup>th</sup> February 2026** – Former professional footballer and Stoke City Manager, Lou Macari, will talk about his work in providing shelter for the homeless. He will explain how he came to set up the Macari Foundation and the triumphs and challenges of running a charity for the homeless. He will also share a few stories from his footballing career both on and off the pitch.

Lou is willing to accept donations to the Macari Foundation.

**26<sup>th</sup> March 2026** – The meeting offers **Spring Time Bingo** and will be led by committee members. There will be three traditional games of bingo (Lines and Full House), with a spring time quiz after the first two games. Edible prizes will be given to the winners. Come along and try your luck. The meeting will conclude with refreshments and an Easter cake.

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

### **Refreshment Helpers at Monthly Meetings**

In last month's Newsletter, the committee appealed for volunteers to join the catering team at monthly meetings to help serve drinks and clear up afterwards. Help is appreciated now and again, not every monthly meeting. Unfortunately, due to illness, Catering Officer, Diane, was unable to attend the January meeting, therefore could interested volunteers please converse with Diane at the February meeting.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

At the branch committee meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026, the Membership Officer reported that the latest count of members was 430, (of which 63 were new members).

As at the same time in 2025, the branch had 441 members, thus showing a current reduction of 11 members. The committee, although disappointed, continue to work hard with publicity, and hope for a reversal of this trend.

Many thanks to those who have persuaded family and friends to join us, and please encourage new membership 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/>

### **u3a TRUST MATTERS**

Applications for the position of Regional Council representatives closed on 3<sup>rd</sup> February. The Trust's CEO will work through the nominations in the coming weeks.

The current Regional Council Representative, Jean Jackson, confirmed that no members from the West Midlands Region had applied for the two available posts of Council representative. Jean has also confirmed that she will stand down from Regional duties in April 2026.

## **COMMITTEE MATTERS**

### **Membership Renewal and AGM Planning**

As we draw close to the end of February, the Committee's attention moves towards annual membership renewal, and planning for the AGM.

**(a)** Membership Officer, Alan Stevenson, will circulate Membership Renewal Forms to all members shortly, reminding them that a new membership year commences on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.

**(b)** Also included within the above circulation will be two further documents relating to the AGM. The first document is an Invitation Letter, advising members that the AGM will take place on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2026. The Invitation also contains the agenda for the meeting. The second document is a Committee Application Form, which also contains a brief description of the vacant positions.

### **Entertainments Co-ordinator**

In last month's Newsletter, the committee informed the membership that the position of branch Entertainments Co-ordinator would become vacant after the AGM in May. The committee consequently appealed for an early replacement so ensuring the continuity and format of the popular monthly general meeting. Early acceptance of the role would provide a volunteer with some useful time to shadow the incumbent, together with an immediate co-opted place onto the committee. Since there was no response to last month's appeal, it is therefore being repeated.

Should any members find this vacancy of interest, please contact Andrew Devin as follows:  
mob: 07486 376483 or a.devin2@gmail.com

## **FOCUS ON GROUPS**

### **Discussion Group**

The next group meeting is confirmed for **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026**, 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 is titled: **Slavery in the 21st Century**

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

**New members are welcome to join the group.**

### **Family History**

A reminder that the activity is currently suspended, and will remain so until a new group leader is appointed. Should anyone wish to take on the leadership role, please contact the Chairman whose contact details are shown on the bottom line of this newsletter.

## **Gardening and Nature Lovers**



The group's next meeting will take place at Fletchers Garden Centre on **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2026**. The address is Bridge Farm, Stone Road, Eccleshall. ST21 6JY.

Fletchers is a family run garden centre established in 1976. It has gone from strength to strength evolving from a market garden to a large garden centre today.

The garden centre offers a full-day experience combining a visit to Gentleshaw Wildlife Centre.

Members will meet outside "NEXT" 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.

## **Local History**

The next two group meetings will take place on **24<sup>th</sup> February** and **10<sup>th</sup> March**. Should anyone have any queries, please speak to the group's new contact, Andrew Devin, mob. 07486 376483.

## **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 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026**. 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.

## **Potential New Board Games Group**

The committee has had minimal response to last month's appeal for members to join this proposed new group. u3a member, Derek Wardle will lead the new group and has exceptional enthusiasm for the project. Derek's thoughts are re-presented below.

*"Many different board game clubs are becoming popular these days alongside well-established chess clubs. There is, however, room for a club which is dedicated to games which are designed for members to further develop their ability to think clearly in a friendly gathering.*

*Initially, four games will be introduced, CHESS, GO, DRAUGHTS and BLOCK. None of them contain the element of chance, so when you play you are on a learning curve of your own making. The ideal outcome of playing these games is not winning per se, but the development of new thinking skills. Chess, Go, and Draughts are extremely old games, with Block being developed and first played in the 1990s, this game is seen solely as a battle of wits."*

**Could expressions of interest be conveyed to the Chairman whose contact details are shown on the bottom line of this newsletter.**

### **Potential New Ukulele Beginners Group**

As a result of a Waiting List being maintained in respect of the ukulele group, former group leader, Barbara Cooke is willing to start up a second group for beginners. Once again, there has been a minimal response to last month's appeal for expressions of interest. The committee remains supportive and will review the response at the next committee meeting.

**Again, could expressions of interest be conveyed to the Chairman whose contact details are shown on the bottom line of this newsletter.**

### **A Second Badminton Group**

The present Badminton activity offered by the branch is very popular and a waiting list for newcomers is now being maintained. Current members of the activity have received authority from the committee to commence a second group under the branch umbrella.

This group will meet weekly (3.30pm to 4.30pm) on Mondays at Michelin Athletic Club Sports and Leisure, Rosetree Avenue, Trent Vale. ST4 6NL.

**Should you have any queries, please contact Group Leader Linda Burgess whose telephone number is 07392 401265.**

### **Waiting List – Indoor Bowls**

Since the Indoor Bowls group has been at maximum capacity for some time, the group leader has taken the decision to commence a waiting list.

**Should members have any queries, please contact Group Leader Dave Darby on 01782 317408.**

## **OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST**

### **Tesco Parking**

A reminder to members who attend any u3a activity held at Longton Central Hall, and who park on the Tesco Car Park. They do need to take account that the maximum stay during the day is three hours. Contravention of this regulation will result in a penalty charge of £70. Advice to members is to be always mindful of the time!

### **Day Trips**

The Stoke South Walking Group's next trip is to **Hebden Bridge and Halifax** on **Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026**.

You may contact Carole Arrowsmith on 07871 231767 or [ladyarrow@live.co.uk](mailto:ladyarrow@live.co.uk) for further details.

## **Longton Exchange Initiative**

The management team of Longton Exchange are embarking on an initiative titled “**The Longton Big Spring Clean.**”

Centre Manager, Chris Ward has written to all retailers and other interested parties based in Longton, reminding them that March marks the national Great British Spring Clean. This is the UK's largest mass-action environmental campaign led by Keep Britain Tidy. Each year, it brings together individuals, community groups, schools, businesses and local authorities to tackle litter, improve local places and show pride in where they live.

Following Longton's recent bid to become “**Town of Culture**”, and the national attention it has brought, this feels an opportune time for everyone to collectively showcase what Longton is capable of.

All retailers have been invited to get involved in “**The Big Longton Spring Clean**”, taking place from Friday 13th to Sunday 29th March 2026. Everyone is encouraged to ensure that:

- Shop frontages are clean, tidy and well maintained.
- Weeds and debris are removed from the outside of premises.
- Windows and signage look clean and tidy.

The Longton Exchange management and security team will be actively participating throughout the campaign, but would of course welcome retailers, and anyone from the wider community to join organised daily clean-up sessions. Sessions will be from 9:45am to 1:00pm and commence at the Centre Management Office.

Litter pickers; bin rings and bags; other tools; and protective equipment will be provided.

Following each collection session, tea, coffee and biscuits will be available in the management suite. The contact phone number is 01782 593278.

## **Mitchell Arts Centre**

Ray Johnson is offering a free presentation at the Mitchell Arts Centre, Hanley, titled “**Rock’n’Roll to Northern Soul.**” At the end of the 1950s the Music Scene was changing and the Potteries nightspots became the hub of the North West in the 1960s. Hear the memories and see some great archive footage - a real rockin' film show!

The screening will take place on **Tuesday 3rd March 2026** at 11am. Just turn up on the day, there is no requirement to pre-book. All of the films are taken from Ray Johnson's Staffordshire Film Archive.

**If you have any items you wish to have publicised in any future Newsletter, please contact Andrew Devin, Tel: 07486 376483 or email: a.devin2@gmail.com**