



MONTHLY MEETINGS

28th November 2025 – Pre-Christmas Meeting



The musical entertainment for the pre-Christmas gathering was provided for a second year by the branch Ukulele Group. It is again worth mentioning that the group operates by consensus, i.e. without a designated leader. Group member, Phil McGuinness, does however operate as the Musical Director, and Beverley Maher as the group administrator. Beverley acted as spokesperson during the concert. Again, the group provided a faultless performance in both playing their instruments and singing along.

The first half of the concert was devoted to a number of well-known songs, including Irish Ballads which were very well received. Additional renditions on the harmonica and guitar added to the enjoyment. The second half was devoted to well-known Christmas songs and carols. Having been provided with “Singalong” sheets at the outset, it was good to hear the audience singing loudly and harmoniously throughout.



Ham/Cheese rolls with quiche and salad were table served post-concert, together with festive cakes and beverages. It was obvious from member reaction that a good time was had by all.

Dates for your Diary

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.”

26th February 2026 – Lou Macari will talk about his work in providing shelter for the homeless.

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

Refreshment Helpers at Monthly Meetings

The branch has always endeavoured to provide refreshments to attendees at monthly meetings. The committee, therefore, wishes to repeat the following request made by Catering Officer, Diane, in the November 2025 Newsletter.

“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.”

A New Year message from Doreen Roberts

Doreen is a longstanding attendee at our monthly meetings, and the Local History group. She is passionate about the u3a and has penned her thoughts as follows:

Doreen offers a big thank-you to everyone who keeps the branch running. She considers that during 2025, members have been richly entertained at monthly meetings with an excellent variety of subjects. She congratulates the catering team, the ukulele group, and the “members’ singalong” for making the pre-Christmas gathering so enjoyable.

Doreen expressed her hopes for Local History group leader, Phil Rowley, to “get well soon.” He has spent the latter three months of 2025 receiving hospital care. She concluded by hoping that 2026 is a good year for everyone.

MEMBERSHIP

At the branch committee meeting held on 8th January 2026, the Membership Secretary reported that the count of members was 420 which comprised 357 renewals and 63 new members. The total membership count at a similar time in 2025 was 435, which indicates a reduction of 15 and therefore is a disappointment.

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

There have been no reportable communications from the Trust over the festive period.

Regional Council Representative, Jean Jackson, held two meetings via Zoom in early January to determine what can be done to encourage members to stand as Council Representatives at the February 2026 elections.

COMMITTEE MATTERS

Entertainments Co-ordinator

At the committee meeting held on 8th January, branch Entertainments Co-ordinator Beverley, gave notice that she would end her tenure on the committee at the forthcoming AGM in May. Since this post is crucial to the branch being able to provide a varied programme of entertainment at monthly meetings, it is essential that we have a replacement.

Normal branch procedure is to appoint committee members to specific roles at the first committee meeting following the AGM in June of each year. Due to the importance of filling this position early, and giving the post-holder some time to shadow the incumbent, the committee is willing to deviate from procedure and immediately co-opt any interested member onto the committee.

The committee is therefore appealing for a volunteer who will ensure the continuity and format of the popular monthly general meeting.

Could anyone who finds this vacancy of interest, please contact Andrew Devin on: mob: 07486 376483 or a.devin2@gmail.com

Tribute to Les Waller

We are saddened to inform the membership of the passing of Family History group leader, Les Waller. Les was unable to lead the group during the latter months of 2025 due to his illness, from which he succumbed in hospital on 21st December.

We will long remember Les for his great passion for Family History and his love of the u3a. His wife Hilary made the lovely, poignant and relevant reflection, that “Les has gone to meet his ancestors.”

Hilary invites u3a colleagues from the Photography and the Family History groups to his funeral service, which will take place at 1pm on Friday 30th January at Old Chapel, Etruria. ST1 5PE. Les had expressed a wish for attendees not to wear black, (red was his favourite colour). All of his friends are invited to a later gathering at the Village Hall, Meir Heath, from 2pm.

Les will be sorely missed, may he rest in peace.

FOCUS ON GROUPS

Discussion Group

The next group meeting is confirmed for **Tuesday 10th February 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 will be continued from the January meeting which was titled: **What do we want to teach our children?**

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 is currently suspended, and will remain so until a new group leader is appointed. Group members, however, are still able to use the computers and software at Longton Library. Along with the committee, Les was keen for this longstanding group to continue. Hilary Waller is willing to pass on his books to any member showing an interest.

Therefore, 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 on Friday 6th February 2026. The agreed venue is Rode Hall Gardens (ST7 3QP). Rode's Snowdrop Walks have an excellent reputation throughout the UK. The entrance fee is £8.00, and Lunch will be taken at the Bleeding Wolf Pub.

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

In the enforced absence of group leader, Phil Rowley, meetings are continuing as usual, the next two meetings being on 27th January and 10th February. Should anyone have any queries, please contact Andrew Devin: mob. 07486 376483.

Mexican Train Dominoes

There has been some recent doubt about the future of the group, but the activity is now continuing as normal with Pauline Murray leading the group. The next two meetings will take place on 28th January and 11th February.

Potential new Board Games group

As a result of the committee wishing to explore whether Board Games would be of interest to members, u3a member, Derek Wardle, has offered to lead a new group and he presents his thoughts via the narrative 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 Andrew Devin, **mob. 07486 376483** or **email: a.devin2@gmail.com** who will pass on the data to Derek and the committee.

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. The committee is supportive but is keen to explore the level of interest from members before agreeing to progress the matter. Could expressions of interest be conveyed to Andrew Devin, **mob. 07486 376483** or **email: a.devin2@gmail.com**

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Christmas Quiz - 2025

It is expected that most members have now forgotten about Christmas, but there may still be some who are keen to check a few answers to the quiz, so here they are:

1. Eggnog
2. Join in any reindeer games
3. Four
4. Blue Christmas
5. An angel
6. Turkey
7. Holy night
8. Tom Hanks
9. Ebenezer
10. The Christian bishop St. Nicholas
11. Goose feathers
12. A lump of coal
13. Clarice
14. “Rocking Around The Christmas Tree”
15. Germany
16. Eight maids a-milking
17. Home Alone
18. Joyeux Noël
19. Tinsel
20. “The Nutcracker”
21. The Polar Express
22. Figgy pudding
23. Wassail
24. The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come
25. He played a song for him on his drums
26. “White Christmas” by Bing Crosby
27. Coca-Cola
28. Mommy
29. Bah humbug!
30. Caribou

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!

Mitchell Arts Centre



On Tuesday 10th February 2026 at 11am, Ray Johnson presents the following Double-Bill from his Film Archive:

Gertie Gitana - "The Star who Never Failed to Shine" plus "The Potteries' Own" Theatre Royal remembered:

Born in Stoke-on-Trent, Gertie was one of our greatest Variety stars. She became "The Tommies" favourite songbird" during WWI, (the equivalent of WWII's Vera Lynn) . Some of her songs were so popular the soldiers at the Front adopted them and added their own lyrics. She sings several of her songs, including her greatest hit "NELLIE DEAN".

Next to Gitana Street is the Theatre Royal - the Potteries' greatest variety theatre. Designed by the great theatre architect Frank Matcham, the Theatre Royal brought entertainment and star names to Hanley.

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

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