



MONTHLY MEETINGS

Annual General Meeting - 21st May 2026

The branch ukulele group provided the entertainment following the formal business of the AGM. Local singer, Holly Reynolds, had been booked but unfortunately had to cancel on the morning of the meeting because she felt too ill to attend. Entertainments Co-ordinator, Beverley, made numerous frantic phone calls to recruit ten members of the ukulele group to provide us with a concert. The performance from the group was once again faultless. We thank Beverley and group members sincerely for hastily sidelining their plans for the day, and turning out in the best interests of the branch.



The concert comprised a variety of well-known songs, which included a number of Irish Ballads. Stuart's haunting melodies on the harmonica amazed and delighted everyone. "Singalong" sheets were provided at the outset, and members were invited to join in, which they duly did, loudly and harmoniously.

It was obvious from member reaction that they thoroughly enjoyed the concert.

Dates for your Diary

25th June 2026 – We welcome Phil Colclough, whose presentation is titled "Beautiful Britain." Phil will show numerous photographs of beautiful landscapes, accompanied with music.

30th July 2026 – Jon Heal has been booked to present a talk titled “Fresh Air for the Potteries -The photographs of William Blake of Longton.” Blake ran a shop in Longton for nearly 50 years, as a stationer and bookseller, but his real passion was taking photographs.

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

MEMBERSHIP

Generally, in the early months of the year the membership count is at its lowest. This arises because many members do not renew until after the new subscription year has commenced. As at 11th June, total persons in membership was 370, which compared closely to 374 at June 2025. It was pleasing to note that the branch had received 340 renewals to date.

As reported at the AGM, during each of the previous two subscription years, the branch accepted just over 80 new memberships, but total membership at the end of the year remained static. This indicates that the branch requires some 80 new members each year to maintain its current level of membership.

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 the secretary, 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 2026.

COMMITTEE MATTERS

1. Annual General Meeting

The 13th Branch AGM took place at Methodist Central Hall, Longton, on Thursday 21st May 2026. 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 current committee members only, all applicants were duly elected/re-elected. The outcome is that the committee now has six members only, out of a desirable number of twelve. This has resulted in most committee members taking on more than one role.

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. Twenty-nine members were in attendance, so exceeding the nineteen required for the quorum. 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 11th June. It is at this meeting that committee roles and responsibilities are allocated for the forthcoming year. Two general committee members were elected to officer roles at the AGM. Kevin Ford is now the branch Vice-Chairman, and Alan Stevenson is the new branch Secretary. There were no changes to the appointments of Chairman or Treasurer. The final change is that Diane Ellis will take on the responsibility of Groups Co-ordinator.

Should any member have a change of heart, please contact the chairman whose details are recorded at the bottom of this Newsletter. The committee may co-opt up to two members during the year, and they will still attract full voting rights.

U3A TRUST MATTERS

- 1.** The 43rd Annual General Meeting of the Third Age Trust will be held on Wednesday 14 October 2026. It will be held at the Midland Hotel in Manchester, but will also be a hybrid meeting (in person and on-line). The AGM is a great way to find out more about the work of the Trust and its future plans and strategy.
- 2.** The Trust has recently opened up applications for Non-Executive Director roles on the Trust's Trading Board. The Trust would like to hear from anyone who is interested in a volunteer role on a national level.
- 3.** The Trust also needs volunteers with digital skills and experience to join their Digital Services Advisory Group.
- 4.** This year's u3a essay competition is now open. Writers must take the reader on a remarkable real-life journey, of discovery, adventure or transformation in fewer than 1000 words. Entry is free and open to all u3a members. The Deadline is 31st July 2026. The prizes of book bundles have been donated by *HX Expeditions*.
- 5.** The Chair of the National u3a Council, is holding a West Midlands Workshop-day on Tuesday 16th June in Sutton Coldfield from 10.00am – 3.45pm. The main theme of the Workshop will be "Motivating Members to Volunteer." Take up for the gathering is apparently very poor. Most branches appear to be having similar difficulties to ourselves regarding committee/leadership recruitment.

FOCUS ON GROUPS

Discussion Group

The next group meeting is confirmed for **Tuesday 14th July 2026**, 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 will be a continuation of the discussion that took place in May, i.e.:

“The consequences of the Iran War”

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

Indoor Kurling

We are still encouraging more members to join this small group. Although the group recently changed its meeting room and meeting day, i.e. to alternate Fridays in the main hall, there has been little impact on attendance. The enjoyment of the group very much relies on there being a good number of participants. We are sure that you will enjoy the friendly competition.

The next meeting, in the main hall at Longton Central Hall, takes place from 10am to 12 noon on **Friday 3rd July 2026 - why not give it a try?**

If you are interested in joining this group, please contact Trish Rowley on 07939 209054.

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 **14th July 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.

Gardening and Nature Lovers

The group's next meeting is a visit to the John Hall Wellness Garden. The meeting to this venue was cancelled in June, and will now take place on **Friday 10th July 2026**.

Nestled in the heart of Leek, John Hall Wellness Garden is a serene community haven dedicated to enhancing mental well-being. The garden offers a variety of therapeutic activities, including gardening sessions, creative arts, wellbeing workshops and support groups. Produce grown on site is also sold to the public.

The address of the garden is: John Hall Wellness Garden, Ball Haye Cottage, ST13 6BH.

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.

Mexican Train Dominoes

A final reminder that the Mexican Train Dominoes activity has not taken place for a couple of months, largely due to low attendance and group leader, Pauline, is no longer able to attend. We therefore encourage members to consider joining and re-starting this activity. Games are good fun with simple rules, but you can learn and implement a variety of strategies. The group has regularly met on alternate Wednesday mornings at Longton Central Hall. If anyone is interested, please converse with the Chairman whose details are at the bottom of this document.

Family History

A final reminder that this longstanding activity has remained suspended for a number of months due to the sad passing of group leader, Les Waller. Hilary Waller has now donated to the branch all of the reference books that Les used, therefore any potential group leader will not be starting from scratch.

The activity location will remain at Longton Library, where use of the computers and software is still permitted. Should anyone be interested in attending / re-starting this group as its leader, please converse with the Chairman whose details are at the bottom of this document.

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Day Trip

The Stoke South Walking Group's next trip is to Gloucester Quays on **Thursday 9th July 2026**. Pick-up is in Longton at 9.15am, and return is 5pm.

You may contact Brian King on 07929 939519 for further details.

North Staffs Pensioners Convention – Day Trip

Regular attendees to monthly meetings will recall an excellent presentation given in October 2025 by 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.

The Pensioners Convention have spare seats for a planned excursion on Wednesday 16th September. The price for non-members of the group is £25. Please call the Office on 01782 201724 or Satnam on 07849 015675.

MBE for Lou Macari

Members may also recall Lou's excellent presentation at the end of February 2026. Lou explained the work of the Macari Foundation in helping the homeless in Stoke-on-Trent. It was clear from his presentation that he is a compassionate man with a strong social conscience.

Branch members held the strong view that official recognition was long overdue. Thankfully, it was announced in the recent King's Birthday Honours list that Lou would be the recipient of an MBE. The branch is absolutely delighted for Lou and his Family, the award is richly deserved.

Potteries Men Sing



Potteries Men Sing is launching in September 2026, and is supporting "Dementia Stoke." Forty men are wanted to perform on stage in six major venues within Stoke-on-Trent. The 10-week project will give volunteers a chance to learn to sing and have experience of singing in a male voice choir. Support and professional direction will be provided. Practice sessions will be held at Methodist Central Hall in Longton.

For more information, please contact Shauneey Connor on 07562 670430;

Or visit www.potteriesmensing.co.uk

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, 20th July 2026. Tel: 07486 376483 or email: a.devin2@gmail.com