



## MONTHLY MEETINGS

**The title of the presentation on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026 was “Pets AS Therapy.”**



Pets as Therapy is a national charity based in Oxfordshire, but has a nationwide network of dedicated volunteers. The charity has a community of over 6,000 pet owners with their temperament assessed dogs and cats. They connect with care homes, hospitals, and organisations like the u3a, to boost moods, build confidence, reduce anxiety and brighten days.

Volunteer Lauren Simmonds attended the monthly meeting with her dog “Boston.” She explained that the work of the Charity is all about creating everyday moments of magic to those who need it most. The pets bring comfort, companionship and joy like nothing else, unconditionally and without judgment.

All of the PAT dogs are assessed for suitability because they need to love meeting new people and relish being touched and stroked. Before becoming a PAT Visiting Volunteer, the charity does need to find out a bit more about the person and the pet. The volunteer must be confident and comfortable when engaging with new people from a variety of backgrounds. The main requirements of the pet are that it must be at least one year-old, and lived with the volunteer for at least 9 months. Additionally, up-to-date vaccination certificates must be available.

It was obvious from member reaction that they thoroughly enjoyed the presentation and the interaction with Boston.

### **Dates for your Diary**

**21<sup>st</sup> May 2026** - Popular local professional singer Holly Reynolds has been booked for the **AGM** on 21<sup>st</sup> May. Holly was very well received when invited a few years ago. Since the AGM will be conducted in front of the stage, Holly’s musical entertainment will be provided from the stage.

**25<sup>th</sup> June 2026** – We welcome Phil Colclough whose presentation is titled “Beautiful Britain.” Phil will show numerous photographs of beautiful landscapes which will be accompanied with music.

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

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Generally, in the months of April and May each year, the membership count is at its lowest. This arises because many members do not renew until after the new subscription year has commenced. Presently, the branch membership officer reports that the total number of members stands at 357. This comprises 327 renewals, and 30 new members who have joined since the start of the 2026 calendar year. Based on last year’s membership, the calculated number of potential renewals for 2026/27 (excluding 2026 new members) is 404.

The total membership count at a similar time in 2025 was noted to be 362 (+5). Although this indicates a level of consistency year on year, the committee remains a little concerned because only 327 members have renewed in the current year (from a potential of 404). Some 77 members have not yet chosen to renew (80 at this time last year). This does show that the branch requires some 80 new members each year to maintain its 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 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.**

## **COMMITTEE MATTERS**

### **1. Annual General Meeting**

The 13<sup>th</sup> Branch AGM will take place at Methodist Central Hall, Longton, on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2026. Although the membership has been advised of the arrangements in a prior circulation, the committee wishes to remind everyone that refreshments will be served at 1.30pm, and the AGM will commence promptly at 2pm. The meeting will include progress reports from the chairman and the treasurer, together with the election of four honorary officers and four general committee members.

It is imperative that the branch operates according to its Constitution, and therefore complies with the necessary number of committee members. It is worth emphasising that the branch must accord with the Constitution in order to remain a registered charity (which is a requirement of being affiliated to the u3a Trust). At the date of writing, only one application has been received. Vacant positions will again be offered during the AGM.

The committee is mindful that the branch Constitution requires a quorum of at least 5% of the membership to be in attendance for the meeting to be legal. Should a quorum not be achieved, the committee must adjourn the meeting to another day, which would result in much extra unwanted expense. The committee respectfully encourages as many members as possible to attend.

As mentioned above, musical entertainment will follow, which will be provided by Holly Reynolds.

## **U3A TRUST MATTERS**

### **1. Trust AGM 2026**

The 43rd Annual General Meeting of the Third Age Trust will be held on Wednesday 14 October 2026. The AGM is a great way to find out more about the work of the Trust and its future plans and strategy. Details on the location for the in-person event and how to access the meeting online, will be shared with u3as in due course.

### **2. Volunteers' Week – 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

Volunteers' Week is an annual celebration of volunteering and it's a great opportunity to recognise that the u3a, as a movement, is dependent on individual members sharing their time and skills. The Trust would like to feature superstar volunteers from branches on their blog and social channels throughout volunteers' week. If group leaders wish to nominate anyone, they should send an email to [communications@u3a.org.uk](mailto:communications@u3a.org.uk) and the Trust will feature as many as possible.

### **3. A note from the u3a Trust Chairman**

Trust Chairman, Allan Walmsley, explains that the new financial year will start a raft of Trust activities, new initiatives and new ideas. The Board has approved a budget that focuses directly on the Trust's strategic aims of supporting, promoting and strengthening the u3a movement, all directed towards the vision of creating the opportunity for a positive and fulfilling later life through lifelong learning.

## **FOCUS ON GROUPS**

### **Discussion Group**

The next group meeting is confirmed for **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 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 under discussion will be: "End of Life Care"**

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

### **Indoor Kurling**

We would like to encourage more members to join this small group. 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, so why not give it a try?

The group now meets on alternate Fridays. The next meeting, in the main hall at Longton Central Hall, takes place from 10am to 12 noon on **Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2026**.

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 **9<sup>th</sup> June 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 on **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June 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**



Sadly, the long-standing 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 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 short reminder that this longstanding activity has remained suspended for a number of months due to the sad passing of group leader, Les. The activity location remains 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**

### **Visit one of the local parks**

The City Council is encouraging everyone to spend some time in our local parks. It considers that Spring has truly arrived across local parks, and they're looking better than ever.

From fresh blooms and blossoming trees to vibrant greenery and lighter evenings, Longton, Burslem, and Fenton Parks are bursting into life. Whether you're heading out for a peaceful walk, planning a picnic, enjoying family time or just grabbing some fresh air, there's no better time to slow down and enjoy your local green spaces.

Make the most of the brighter days and visit one (or all!) of our local parks this Spring. We residents of Stoke-on-Trent South may be a little biased, but Longton Park is surely the jewel in the crown! They are however, all a credit to our City.

### **Day Trip**

The Stoke South Walking Group's next trip is to Chorley Market on **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2026**. Pick-up is in Longton at 9.15am, and return is 5pm.

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

## **Branch Ukulele Group Concert**

On Friday 24th April 2026, ten players from the branch ukulele group performed at the Eldon House Care Home in Ricardo Street, Dresden. The concert delighted some thirty residents, together with branch members John and Janet Wilding (Janet's mother is a resident).

The musical entertainment included a number of well-known songs, including a number of Irish ballads, which were very well received. Renditions on the harmonica certainly added to the enjoyment. The residents were provided with "Singalong" sheets at the outset, and Janet opined that it was good to hear the audience singing loudly and harmoniously throughout. The owner of the Care Home was so pleased, she even made reference to "the next visit being in a larger room!"

The Branch Committee thanks Entertainments Co-ordinator Beverley, who is also a member of the group, for making the appropriate arrangements. We also thank sincerely, all of the ukulele members for giving up their time and boosting so well the reputation of the branch.



**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, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2026. Tel: 07486 376483 or email: [a.devin2@gmail.com](mailto:a.devin2@gmail.com)**