## MONTHLY MEETINGS

### 24th September 2026 – Monthly Meeting Review



Our guest entertainer at the monthly meeting on 24th September was Chris Stratman. The title of his performance was **"The history of Britain's first supergroup."**

It proved to be a very enjoyable afternoon with Chris providing us with his intimate knowledge of the history of "The Shadows." In addition to his narratives, which were both informative and humorous, he performed many of their best-known hits on his Fender guitar.

Key statistics quoted about "The Shadows" were five number one singles, and 69 chart entries over five decades. This data surely demonstrates the longevity of their appeal.

The Shadows were formed in 1958 and were originally known as the Drifters until 1959, when they were faced with legal action by the American vocal group also called "The Drifters." "The Shadows" name was thought up by bass guitarist Jet Harris, and was formally adopted by the group in July 1959.

Initially, The Shadows was a backing band for Cliff Richard, but began producing hits in their own right when their single "Apache" reached No. 1 in the UK Charts in 1960. The number-one hits of The Shadows include: "Apache"; "Kon-Tiki"; "Wonderful Land"; "Foot Tapper"; and "Dance On."



We thank Chris for an excellent presentation which was clearly enjoyed by the audience.

## Dates for your Diary

**29th October 2026 –** Jules Hill will present a talk titled "Beat the Cold." The independent charity of the same name, works to reduce the incidence of cold related illnesses and fuel poverty.

**26th November 2026 –** Popular local singer Holly Reynolds will provide the entertainment at our pre-Christmas gathering. Holly was very well received on her last visit a few years ago, and the theme of her presentation will of course be Christmas.

Since the branch AGM in May, attendances at monthly meetings have been very disappointing, rarely exceeding thirty members. Monthly meetings entail much work from committee members in their planning and on the day duties. In addition, payments in respect of room hire, catering, and fees for guest speakers/entertainers are in total resulting in losses that cannot be acceptable long term.

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

## MEMBERSHIP

As at 15th October, the Membership Secretary reported that the total persons in membership was 406 (of which 50 were new members). The committee was pleased to note that the branch had received 356 renewals to date.

The total membership count at a similar time in 2025 was 408, which comprised 357 renewals and 51 new members. The committee is obviously very pleased that numbers have remained static year on year, but we encourage everyone not to be complacent. Therefore, 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 branch 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/

## u3a TRUST MATTERS

The 2026 Trust AGM took place on Wednesday 14th October at the Midland Hotel in Manchester. Again, it was a hybrid event, i.e. attendances both in person and on-line. The chairman attended on-line on behalf of the branch.

A summary of agenda matters that were discussed/agreed, together with noteworthy statistics are presented below:

**1.** There are just over 1,000 u3a branches affiliated to the Trust, yet only some 350 branches attended either in person or online (i.e. about 1/3 of member branches).

**2.** Only 25 members turned up in person to the event.

**3.** The two statutory resolutions passed easily, the votes related to: (a) approving the minutes of the previous meeting, and (b) appointing the auditors for next year.

**4.** Sam Dukes was appointed in January 2026 to the position of "Head of Marketing." His brief is to deliver the marketing strategies already defined. Sam gave a lengthy presentation on how he will execute his plans. A key aim is to achieve the 2023 resolution, which was passed as a priority, to have in excess of 500,000 members by the end of 2028. During 2025/2026 membership stood at 438,000, so there is still much hard work to do.

**5.** The Treasurer reported on the Consolidated Account for 2025/26 which included the activities of the Trust and "Third Age Trading." Key financial statistics were as follows:

(a) Income for 2025/26 = £3.735m
(b) Expenditure for 2025/26 = £3.948m

**6.** Finally, a resolution from Haxby and Wiggington u3a requested the Trust to consult member u3as before moving into further campaigning and social policy activity outside the shared purpose of the Trust and u3a movement. The Board proposed an amendment to the resolution which gave them the final authority. The amendment passed easily, which rendered the original proposal largely irrelevant.

## COMMITTEE MATTERS

### Committee Vacancies

There still remains one vacant co-opted position on the committee, should anyone be interested, please contact the chairman, whose details are recorded at the bottom of this Newsletter,

## FOCUS ON GROUPS

### Discussion Group

The next group meeting is confirmed for **Tuesday 10th November 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: What constitutes a Good Life?**

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

### 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 **10th November 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.

### Indoor Kurling

The next meeting, in the main hall at Longton Central Hall, takes place from 10am to 12 noon on **Friday 6th November 2026 - why not give it a try?**

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

### Gardening and Nature Lovers

The group's next meeting will take place on **Friday 13th November 2026**. The agreed venue is Trentham Garden Centre, located just inside the Trentham Estate. It is managed by "Blue Diamond", the largest garden centre group in the UK.




The Centre is influenced in style by the adjacent Italian Gardens. It displays a huge range of indoor and outdoor living products, as well as everything needed for home and garden.

Customers may also enjoy two places in which to relax and dine, Caffé Bello and the Six Arches Restaurant.

Please contact Josie Peirson if you require further information. Josie's telephone details are: Mob: 07775 974876 or Landline: 01782 399711.

## OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

### Day Trip – Walking Group

The Stoke South Walking Group's next trip is to **Bury Market** on **Wednesday 18th November 2026.** Pick-up is in Longton at 9.15am, and return is 5pm.

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

### Doreen's Friendship Group

The Friendship group is based at Longton Central Hall. Doreen is offering a mystery day trip on **Wednesday 9th December.**

If anyone is interested, please telephone Doreen on: **01782373369 or 07818811153.**

## Staffordshire Film Archive

Ray Johnson is offering a free presentation at the Mitchell Arts Centre, Hanley, titled "**Social Housing - A century of future visions."**

The screening will take place on **Tuesday 1st December 2026** at 11am.

The show features three important films dealing with the issues and achievements associated with Social Housing over the past hundred years. The third film was produced for the Stoke-on-Trent 100 celebrations. It explores how social housing began, why it was created, and how it continues to transform lives across Stoke-on-Trent today.

Footage is from the Staffordshire Film Archive

**Community day films are drop in free events. Just turn up on the day, there is no requirement to pre-book.**

**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, 14th September 2026. Tel: 07359 388836 or email: a.devin2@gmail.com**