MONTHLY MEETINGS

27th August 2026 – Monthly Meeting Review



Following prior year successes, **"Crafternoon Tea"** was repeated at Longton Central Hall. The session was again provided in-house.

The craft skills showcased were: Flower Arranging; Glass Decorating; Card Making; and Art (which was an addition to those offered previously). The session was directed by Diane and a number of group leaders. Many thanks to Diane for her input in arranging the event, and for providing the catering. The committee expresses its sincere thanks to the group leaders and activity members who provided their time and utensils to make the event so enjoyable for everyone.

Although the committee accepts that heavy rain on the day most likely deterred a number of members, it was nonetheless very disappointed that only twenty members attended, (thirty-nine members attended in 2025).



After all of their hard work, attendees chatted over tea/coffee and cakes. It was obvious that they had not only enjoyed the learning exercises, but also the social interaction with members they don't usually meet.



As noted in last month's Newsletter, the Chair of the u3a Council had informed the branch that a new Regional Support Trust Volunteer, named Barry Appleby, has been appointed to visit and offer support to branches.

Barry is a member of Burton-on-Trent u3a and decided that one of his first visits would be to travel the short distance to our branch.

Barry entered into the spirit of Crafternoon Tea and spent time with the Art group and the Glass painters. We enjoyed Barry's company, and thank him for his attendance. He is pictured with the Glass painters.

Dates for your Diary

24th September 2026 – Chris Stratman will provide live musical entertainment. He will present an informative history of "The Shadows." He brings humour and extensive knowledge of the group, together with his excellent guitar playing. The title of his performance is **"The history of Britain's first supergroup."**

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.

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

MEMBERSHIP

As at 3rd September, the Membership Secretary reported that the count of members was 399, which comprised 355 renewals and 44 new members. The total membership count at a similar time in 2025 was 400 (which included 43 new members.) The committee is obviously delighted that there has been no downturn year on year, but we encourage everyone not to be complacent.

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

1. The Chief Executive has thanked candidates who had put themselves forward for election to the Trust Board. Three candidates have been correctly nominated, and have provided details of education, skills and achievements in support of their applications. The branch committee discussed the supporting papers of each candidate at the meeting held on 3rd September, and unanimously selected one of the candidates.

The chairman has subsequently cast the branch vote, which is classed as two votes, based on our number of members.

2. The Trust has organised a free workshop on 7th October titled "**Contingency and succession planning."** The two-hour online session explores what steps can be taken, and the need to share ideas with other u3a members.

COMMITTEE MATTERS

Committee Vacancies

The committee is delighted to inform members that Glenys Browne has offered to take on the key branch role of Entertainments Co-ordinator. Glenys attended the committee meeting held on 3rd September, and in accordance with the Constitution, was formally co-opted onto the committee. Glenys will also attract full voting rights.

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 13th October, 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 **13th October 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 25th September 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 9th October 2026**. The agreed venue is Bluebell Wood, Wedgwood, Barlaston. It is part of Hem Heath Wood, which is one of the largest woodland areas on the edges of Stoke-on-Trent. As you walk along the pathways, you will observe the many singing birds, butterflies, and wild flowers, together with ash, beech, cherry, oak and sycamore trees. The area is close to the Wedgwood Visitor Centre



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.

Flower Arranging Group

Following their usual summer break, the group resumed their fortnightly meetings on **14th September 2026**. The next meeting will take place on 28th September 2026.

Outdoor Bowls

Group leader, Dave Darby, has confirmed that the last meeting of the group for the 2026 summer season will take place on Wednesday 30th September. Meetings will resume in April 2027.

Local History Group

The group is worth a mention because it has grown rapidly over the last 12 months. The room is now generally full for most meetings. This subject does appear to be growing in popularity nationally as people become more aware of the loss of their former industries. It is apparent that there is a strong desire nowadays to celebrate heritage.

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Heritage Open Days

Heritage Open Days for 2026 concluded on Sunday 20th September. The ten days of events again proved to be very popular with excellent attendances. Many of the events were fully subscribed some time before the opening day. Many u3a members were in attendance, and we are sure that they will join the branch in thanking local Heritage groups for their many hard months of preparation and implementation. Branch member, Phil Rowley, presented a talk at the Spode site on Wednesday 16th September.

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 Senior Citizen Coach Holiday to "The Suncliff Hotel" Bournemouth - Half Board with Excursions – **Monday 5th to 9th October 2026**. Also, there will be a mystery trip on **5th November**.

If anyone finds these trips of interest, please telephone Doreen on: **01782373369 or 07818811153.**

Potteries Men Sing

Potteries Men Sing is launched in September 2026, and is supporting "Dementia Stoke." Forty men are being recruited 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 Shauney Connor on **07562 670430; Or visit www.potteriesmensing.co.uk**

Staffordshire Film Archive

Ray Johnson is offering a free presentation at the Mitchell Arts Centre, Hanley, titled **"Rockets to the Moon and Beyond."** The screening will take place on **Tuesday 13th October 2026** at 11am.

The first big-budget science fiction films paved the way for the great Space epics which have since always been a mainstay of the commercial Cinema. Apart from feature films, space travel was adopted in the ever-popular Serials, which were part of pre-WWII cinema screenings. The serials had episodes always finishing in impossible-to-escape-from cliff-hangers, ensuring that punters came back week after week whatever the main feature films were. They were the 'soaps' of the day.

Staffordshire Film Archive celebrates the pioneering creativity in action and adventure crafted in the early serials, including the original "Flash Gordon".

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

