



MONTHLY MEETINGS

On 25th January, Cheadle u3a member, Paul Lucas entertained the branch with a presentation titled "The perils of an educational transport officer." Paul recounted his many humorous encounters with schoolchildren, bus company staff and Headteachers. The presentation was well received by the audience.

Dates for your Diary

29th Feb '24 Jo Austin will be the guest speaker, and her talk is titled "Aneurin Bevan and the troubled road to the NHS."

The next presentation is split into two halves, and is titled "All the fun of the Fair." Our guest speaker, Steve Smith, will present each of the two sections on 28th March and 25th April respectively. Steve has much experience in providing talks to a variety of organisations.

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

MEMBERSHIP

At the branch committee meeting held on 8th February, the Membership Officer reported that the latest count of members was 409. This was an increase of 4 relative to the previous month. At this time in 2023 the number in membership was 426; we have therefore experienced a small reduction. The committee constantly work hard with publicity, and hope that the trend will soon change.

Many thanks to those who have persuaded family and friends to join us, and please encourage new membership 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/>

u3a TRUST MATTERS

Structure and Governance

The proposed new structure consists of: (i) a smaller board, focused on governance and finance, and (ii) a new Council, where elected representatives highlight and resolve issues that branches want to be addressed. Two Council representatives would be drawn from each region/nation, and three members will represent u3a networks. A new u3a board would focus on ensuring that the Third Age Trust meets all the requirements of the Charities Commission and corporate law.

A consultation will now follow, and if it indicates broad support from the u3a membership for change, the Board will submit a resolution to the AGM in October 2024. The resolution would require 75% of the votes cast.

Chief Executive

Chief Executive, Sam Mauger, has announced her intention to leave the Third Age Trust. She has worked for the Trust for eight years, and has decided to take a break from full-time working. She will leave in October 2024.

Regional Trustee - Information

(a) A reminder that a Recruitment Workshop has been booked by the Trustee for 7th March at Longton Central Hall. Everyone is invited, but a booking must be made in advance via Eventbrite. A number of committee members will be in attendance to represent the branch and the venue.

(b) The Trustee is holding a Zoom meeting on 27th February for all members who would like to join the Regional Support Team. Should anyone be interested, please contact the Regional Trustee.

COMMITTEE MATTERS

As we draw towards the end of February, the committee's attention moves to annual membership renewal, and planning for the AGM.

(a) Membership Renewal Forms

Membership Officer, Alan Stevenson, will circulate Membership Renewal Forms to all members shortly, reminding them that a new membership year commences on 1st April 2024.

(b) AGM Documents

Also included within the above circulation will be documents relating to the AGM, that will take place on 23rd May 2024. These include the invitation; a committee application form; and two proposals to amend the branch constitution.

Review of Branch Policy Documents

It was agreed at the committee meeting held on 11th January that a review of the branch “Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy”, together with the “Member Code of Conduct” should be carried out. Accordingly, the task was completed by the chairman, and minor changes were authorised by the committee at its sitting on 8th February. Both updated policies have been uploaded to the branch website.

U3a Insurance Policy – 2024

Copies of the 2024 Insurance Policy have been printed for insertion into each group leader’s pack. They are in the process of distribution.

FOCUS ON GROUPS

New Activity – Yoga Class

The committee is delighted to offer a weekly Yoga Class at Longton Central Hall on Tuesday mornings, 10-11am, commencing 5th March.

If you want to feel good, positively improve your wellbeing, and meet new friends, then consider joining this u3a class suitable for reasonably fit and active members. If you are unsure of the suitability of the class, please contact the group leader whose details are recorded below.

A session typically includes:

Fun based moderate whole body warm up to music; basic yoga principles; traditional yoga postures; and floor mat work. Floor work will, however, require a mat.

Group Leader is Mary Pyatt, who is a dru registered teacher. Her contact number is: 01782 342290.

Card Craft Group – Change of Title to “Craft Club”

Groups Co-ordinator and longstanding Card Craft group member, Pauline Williams writes as follows: “Since the group began, the main activity has been card making, hence the title. Members now consider it is time for the group to move in a slightly different direction. In addition to just making cards, the desire is to move into the bigger world of craft. Class members have been requested to bring along their own personal projects, whether it be knitting, crochet, colouring, and of course cards.

The plan is for more demonstrations to enable sharing of knowledge. The group therefore has decided to change its title to Craft Club.”

The group will continue to meet at Longton Central Hall at 10am on alternate Fridays. Group leader, Joy Till, may be contacted on 01782 314703, and the next planned meeting date is 8th March 2024.

Art Lovers Group

We are still encouraging members who would like to improve their artistic skills in painting and drawing techniques to join this friendly group.

The group's venue is Oakwood Road Community Centre, Oakwood Road, Blurton, (off Blurton Road), ST3 3AR, and meets on alternate Wednesday mornings from 10am until noon. The next planned meeting is 13th March 2024.

If you are interested, please contact Group Leader Lynette Bell on 01782 238712.

Computer Group

Group leader, Joe Neilson, has received little interest from members wishing for a resumption of the class. In addition, Joe considers that his personal circumstances have changed, and a resumption would have proved difficult. The group has therefore been suspended indefinitely, but we thank Joe sincerely for his efforts.

Discussion Group

The next group meeting is confirmed for Tuesday 12th March 2024, 10.00am to 11.15am. It will take place in Stoke Library, which is located in the Council Hub close to the Market. Unfortunately, due to the constraints of the room size, the group is again fully subscribed.

The subject under discussion will be: **Transgender?**

Group leader Bob Jones can be contacted on 01785 817743.

Lunch Group

The lunch group is currently suspended due to the non-availability of the group leader. Should anyone wish to take on this role temporarily to ensure continuity of the group, please contact Groups Co-ordinator, Pauline Williams: mob. 07928 628583.

Gardening and Nature Lovers

The group's next meeting will take place on Friday 8th March 2024. The agreed venue is Jacksons Nurseries, Thorney Edge Road, Bagnall (ST9 9LE). The Garden Centre, Tea Room, and Farm Shop are located on the edge of the beautiful Staffordshire Moorlands countryside.

Members 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.

Family History

The next alternate Friday meeting will be held at the Tollgate Hotel, Blurton at 2pm on Friday 1st March 2024. The meeting usually takes place in the restaurant. Group Leader, Les Waller, may be contacted on 01782 394431.

Walking Group

Details of the walks planned for March are as follows:

Monday 11th March 2024: Rudyard Lake. The walk should take about 2 hours. There are no major inclines. Meet at the Steam Railway car park, ST13 8PF for 10.30am.

Monday 25th March 2024: Ford Green Nature Reserve. The walk should take about 1hr 40 mins. There are one or two steepish slopes. Meet at the car park by Ford Green Hall, ST6 1NG for 10.30am.

If you have ideas for future walks, or if you require further information, please contact Sharon Molloy on 07710 693851 or via email: molloysharon@icloud.com

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

North Staffs Accordion Club

The North Staffs Accordion Club provided the entertainment at the pre-Christmas monthly gathering on 30th November. Both the music and the singalong proved to be very popular, and were enjoyed by all. The club is a registered charity, and has asked us to publicise their wish to recruit new members. It is a vibrant club made up of players and enthusiasts of the accordion.

The club operates a beginners/improvers night every second Monday night, 7 pm at Bradwell Workingmen's Club, ST5 8JA. This is an ideal route to learn to play the accordion. Players of all abilities are catered for, including absolute beginners. The club operates an arrangement whereby an accordion may be borrowed free for a period of three months.

If any member is interested in learning to play the accordion, please speak to one of the contacts below:

Chairman: Steve Hughes: Mob. 07939362294, or Ron Rhodes: Mob. 07484804466.

Day Trips

Similarly to 2023, the "Closer to Home" walking group will be arranging a monthly day trip by coach to a variety of interesting locations during 2024. Since the group has a number of members who are also members of the u3a, they have kindly offered vacant seats to u3a members, and there is no obligation to join the walking group. Any bookings made by u3a members will of course not be related to u3a membership.

The group's first trip of 2024 is to Birmingham on 28th March. You may contact Carole Arrowsmith on 07871231767 for further details.

Independent Monitoring Boards

The chairman received a request from a Ministry of Justice (MOJ) representative, asking the branch to advertise a volunteering opportunity. The role is for applicants to join Independent Monitoring Boards, who monitor prisons for fair and humane treatment. The committee was in agreement that the request should be advertised in the branch Newsletter.

The MOJ are currently recruiting at HMP Werrington, HMP Stafford, and HMP Dovegate. Volunteers are required to commit to an average of 3-4 visits a month. Training and support will be provided during the 12-month induction period. For further information please email imbrecruitment@justice.gov.uk or sophie.anscombe@justice.gov.uk

CPR / Defibrillator Training Session

Entertainments Co-ordinator, Beverley, has booked the CPR and Defibrillator Training Session for Friday 15th March at Longton Central Hall, 10am to midday. Time permitting, the session may also include a short instruction on "First Aid for choking and bleeding." The Training Instructor will be Julie Lawton from AED Donate.

Should anyone wish to attend this training, please contact Andrew Devin, whose details are recorded at the end of this Newsletter.

The Big Plastic Count

An organisation called "Everyday Plastic" run campaigns to raise awareness about the issue of single-use plastic, and hope to persuade people to reduce their own consumption.

During March they are running an exercise called "The Big Plastic Count", and it is really simple. Just count your plastic waste for one week from 11th to 17th March, and submit your results via the link below. This will reveal how much plastic we are throwing away as a nation, and what really happens to it afterwards. The results will be used to encourage UK ministers to lead the way in global talks.

The organisation has asked the branch to share the following registration link. They make the point that the more people that take part, the more powerful the collective voice will become:

thebigplasticcount.com/U3A

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, 18th March 2024. Tel: 01782 942352 or email: a.devin2@gmail.com