



MONTHLY MEETINGS

The North Staffs Accordion Band provided the entertainment at the pre-Christmas monthly gathering on 30th November. The band consisted of fourteen players, with one member also leading the entertainment. Song sheets were distributed to encourage everyone to join in and have a good sing-song. Both the music and the singalong proved to be very popular, and were enjoyed by all. Branch Catering Officer, Diane, excelled once again by providing Christmas themed cakes for the refreshments.

The one disappointment for the committee was the very poor attendance of just over twenty. This number was the lowest at monthly meetings during the 2023 calendar year. After accounting for room hire; entertainment; and catering costs, relative to attendance fees, a large deficit was the inevitable result.

The committee consider that although caution regarding Covid may still linger a little, it no longer appears to be a prime issue. Consequently, if the lack of attendances relates to our choice of entertainment, Branch Entertainments' Co-ordinator, Beverley would like to be informed and she will react accordingly. Since financial losses are regularly encountered at each monthly meeting, it is important that attendances increase in order to balance the books.

Dates for your Diary

25th Jan '24 Paul Lucas will entertain the branch with a presentation titled "The perils of an educational transport officer."

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

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

MEMBERSHIP

At the branch committee meeting held on 11th January, the Membership Officer reported that the latest count of members was 405. This was an increase of 1 relative to the previous month. At this time in 2023 we had 416 members, there has therefore been a very small decline. The committee continue to work hard with publicity, and hope that there will soon be an upward trend.

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

Governance

The vision of the Trust is to have a smaller elected Board to handle governance alongside an elected Council, with delegated powers, which will represent all the branches.

It is hoped that the new arrangements will provide a necessary forum where branch ideas, concerns and experiences can be used to shape decision making. Currently, this model is being tested via a "Pilot Council."

Eligibility for membership - Age

The Chair of the Third Age Trust has written to all branches explaining that legal advice has been sought regarding age limits for membership. Although the u3a's focus will remain on older people who have retired from full time work, it is advised that age is not a restriction. Therefore, as long as branch activities are generally educational, national and local "objects" do not limit who can participate.

Member access to the Trust Website

In response to member feedback, the Trust are redesigning the content that members access on their website. This will be launching soon.

Regional Trustee - Information

(a) In 2024, our current website "Sitebuilder" will be replaced by "Siteworks" which uses the open-source web content management system, "Wordpress." A Cumbrian branch site went live recently and may be viewed at <https://skiddaw.u3asite.uk/>

The chairman informed the branch committee on 11th January that he has registered the branch to be placed in the queue for implementation of the new site.

(b) A Recruitment Workshop has been booked by the Trustee for 7th March at Longton Central Hall. An invitation is extended to all, but a booking must be made in advance via Eventbrite. A number of committee members have agreed to represent the branch and the venue on the agreed date.

FOCUS ON GROUPS

Arts Lovers Group

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

Lynette Bell is the longstanding group leader, and would be delighted to welcome new members.

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 31st January 2024.

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

Computer Group

Group leader, Joe Neilson still has an intention to resume this class, but only if a satisfactory number of members register an interest. Should anyone wish to make a fresh start, please contact Joe, whose details are: via telephone 01782 852042; or by email; joeneilson6@gmail.com

Discussion Group

The next group meeting is confirmed for Tuesday 13th February 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: **Does class still exist?**

Group leader Bob Jones can be contacted on 01785 817743.

Family History

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

Flower Arranging

The group meets on alternate Mondays at St. Paul's Church, Longton Hall Road. The next meeting will take place on Monday 29th January 2024. The Group's Leader is Margaret Mack, whose contact telephone number is 01782 642117.

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 9th February 2024. The agreed venue is Rode Hall Gardens (ST7 3QP). Rode's Snowdrop Walks have a strong and well respected reputation throughout the UK. The entrance fee is £7.50, and refreshments are available in the Courtyard Kitchen.

Members will meet outside "NEXT" 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.

Indoor Kurling

The group meets on alternate Wednesdays. The next meeting, on the top floor at Longton Central Hall, will be from 10am to 12 noon on Wednesday 7th February 2024.

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

Mexican Train Dominoes

We again encourage members to join this very small group. The enjoyment of the attendees very much relies on there being a good number of participants. Games are good fun with simple rules. but you can learn and implement a variety of strategies.

The group meets on alternate Wednesday mornings at Longton Central Hall, and is led by Pauline Murray (Tel: 01782 392817). The next meeting date is 31st January 2024.

Walking Group

No walks took place during January, but the two walks below are planned for February:

Please note that Sharon Molloy has taken over from Ali Townsend as group leader. We thank Ali sincerely for her past leadership.

Monday 12th February 2024: Aston Marina (ST15 8QU) along the towpath to Stone.
The walk is mainly on the flat. Meet for 10.30am start.

Monday 26th February 2024: Hem Heath (ST4 8FR) and Wedgwood.
The walk is mainly on the flat. Meet for 10.30am start.

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

Ukulele Group

The ukulele group showcased their skills by performing a Pre-Christmas Concert at St Mary's and St Chad's Church, Anchor Road, Longton. A lovely letter of thanks was subsequently received. We therefore thank the group for representing the branch so ably, and for their community spirit.

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

National u3a Newsletter

You can still sign up on the national website at <https://u3asites.org.uk> to receive the National Monthly Newsletter by email. It's worth taking a look to see what is going on in other u3a's and you might even be inspired to try something new yourself.

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.

There are still a number of vacancies available for this training, therefore if you wish to attend please contact Andrew Devin, whose details are recorded at the end of this Newsletter.

Damp in your home?

Have you seen wet patches, tide marks or black spots on the walls in your council-owned home?

! This is a sign of damp and mould!

✓ Report it to the council online at www.stoke.gov.uk/dmc

☎ Or, get in touch with the council on 01782 234100



Cost of Living

If you are struggling with the cost of living, Stoke-on-Trent Council is presently running a 'Help Is At Hand' campaign which is aimed at addressing the pressing issue of rising living costs. If you are facing the challenge of striving to make ends meet, the council has dedicated support available. You can find out more at www.stoke.gov.uk/helpisathand

Christmas Quiz

I expect that most members have now forgotten about Christmas, but there may still be some desperate to check a few answers to the quiz, so here they are:

Answers

1. Germany 2. Egg Nog 3. Four: the spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future, and Jacob Marley 4. White 5. Johann Hinrich Wichern 6. Feliz Navidad 7. Sandringham 8. Christmas Eve 9. King William I of England in 1066 10. 364 gifts 11. Norway 12. Latvia 1510 13. Balsam Fir 14. Winter Solstice 15. Silver coins 16. Gobbler 17. 1957 18. Indiana 19. Minced beef 20. T. S. Elliott 21. Indian 22. 1843 23. Oliver Cromwell 24. Natasha Kaplinsky with Brendan Cole 25. Holiday Inn 26. Bohemian Rhapsody by Queen 27. Los Angeles 28. George V in 1932. 29. Moby Dick 30. J. R. R. Tolkein.

u3a Radio

The u3a Radio Podcast is broadcast on 17th of each month, but you can view them all via u3a's YouTube channel. If you have a story to share, you can email it to: communications@u3a.org.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, 19th February 2024. Tel: 01782 942352 or email: a.devin2@gmail.com