



MONTHLY MEETINGS

On 29th February, Jo Austin, gave an excellent presentation titled “Aneurin Bevan and the troubled road to the NHS.” It was very well received by the audience.

The talk gave all of us a chance to reflect on how fortunate we are to have access to free NHS services based on clinical need, not on an individual's ability to pay.

Dates for your Diary

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.

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

MEMBERSHIP

At the branch committee meeting held on 14th March 2024, the Membership Officer reported that the latest count of members was 425. This was an increase of 16 relative to the previous month. As at the similar period in 2023, the number in membership was 431. Although only a small reduction is in evidence, the committee remain ever hopeful that the trend will soon be upward.

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 Committee Role

The Trust Board are seeking to recruit a new member to their Governance Committee. This committee works to; ensure the correct governance of the Trust and support the governance of branches; monitor the Trust for compliance with its legal requirements; and ensure effective risk management of the Trust's affairs.

Any member of the u3a may apply for the post if they consider they could make a contribution. A full role description may be viewed on the u3a Trust Website.

Recruitment and Retention Workshop

The Regional Trustee hosted the above workshop, at Longton Central Hall on 7th March. The nationally prepared "Recruitment and Retention Toolkit" contains ideas and guidance on different topics such as: recruiting new members; building a committee; and getting started on social media. The event was open to all branches within the West Midlands Region. Four members of the branch committee attended the event.

COMMITTEE MATTERS

The Committee's current focus remains on annual membership renewal, and planning for the AGM.

1. Circulation of Membership Renewal Forms and AGM Documents

Many thanks are offered to both Lynne and Alan Stevenson for completing the huge task of circulating the above documents to members. Arranging the printing of documents; placing into envelopes; and then hand delivering/posting, involves much time and effort. As in previous years, the exercise has been successfully completed.

(a) Membership Renewals

May we respectfully remind everyone that the new membership year commences on 1st April 2024.

(b) AGM Documents

(1) The Invitation Letter advises members that the AGM will take place on 23rd May 2024. The document also contains the agenda for the meeting, (a small number of agendas will also be available on the day of the meeting).

(2) The second document is a Committee Application Form which contains a brief description of the vacant positions. As recorded in the Invitation Letter, the branch has five committee vacancies which relate to: chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer; and two general committee members.

(3) The third document contains proposals to amend two clauses of the branch constitution. Both proposals will provide the committee with more flexibility regarding decision making.

2. Take-up of Third Age Matters Magazine (TAM)

May we again respectfully ask members who take TAM, but have little interest in reading the magazine, **not** to tick the relevant box on the Renewal Form. The cost of production and postal charges have to date, been funded by the Branch, the cost of which is £3.60 per member in receipt. Many u3a branches nationally now charge members for this service, therefore, as finances permit, the committee may at some future date need to revisit its funding of TAM.

FOCUS ON GROUPS

Art Lovers Group

Attendances at this longstanding group remain quite low, so 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 two planned meeting dates are 27th March and 10th April 2024.

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

Discussion Group

The next group meeting is confirmed for Tuesday 9th April 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: **AI and its implications?**

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 29th March 2024. The meeting usually takes place in the restaurant. Group Leader, Les Waller, may be contacted on 01782 394431.

Gardening and Nature Lovers

The group's next meeting will take place on Friday 12th April 2024. The agreed venue is Wolseley Bridge Garden Centre which has been operating since the early 90s and it sits on the edge of the picturesque Cannock Chase. It has a large plant area filled with an incredible variety of plants, crops and tools.

The Centre also operates the delightful Gardener's Retreat Restaurant, where a variety of delicious main meals, snacks, and tasty treats are served.

The location of the Centre is off the A51 roundabout (just past the Wolseley Arms / A513 turn to Stafford). The Post Code is ST17 0YA.

Members are asked 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.

Lunch Group

The Committee are grateful to Christine Whitfield for taking on group leader duties for the Lunch Group, which has been suspended for a number of months. The group will again meet on the second Tuesday of each month at The Hem Heath (on the corner of Stanley Mathews Way).

The next meeting will take place at 12.30pm on 9th April 2024. Further details may be obtained from Christine Whitfield, whose telephone number is: Mob: 07939 621499.

Outdoor Bowls

As Spring approaches, the outdoor bowls season will shortly recommence. The first weekly group meeting will take place on Wednesday 3rd April 2024, at Fenton Private Bowling Club, Claud Street, Fenton. ST4 4LL, 1.30 to 3.30pm. Group Leader, Dave Darby, may be contacted on 01782 317408.

Walking Group

Details of the walks planned for April are as follows:

Monday 15th April 2024: **Etruria Canal Side - Hanley Park.** The walk should take approx. 1 hour 55 minutes, and is on level ground. Meet on "Next Car Park", Festival Park 10.30am.

Monday 29th April 2024: **Barlaston Downs.** The walk should take about 1hr 30 mins. There are some inclines and it can be muddy underfoot. Walking poles would be handy. Meet at the car park at the bottom of the drive to The Upper House, ST12 9AE 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

Yoga Group

The new weekly Yoga Class commenced at Longton Central Hall on Tuesday 5th March. The committee were encouraged with an initial attendance of fourteen, a number of whom will be new members. There remains plenty of room for more members to attend. The session time is every Tuesday morning 10-11am.

If you want to improve your wellbeing, and meet new friends, then consider joining this u3a class suitable for the reasonably fit and active. If you are unsure of the suitability of the class, please contact the group leader Mary Pyatt, whose telephone number is: 01782 342290.

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Day Trips

The “Closer to Home” walking group are continuing to arrange a monthly day trip by coach to a variety of interesting locations during 2024. The group, with its many u3a members have kindly offered vacant seats to the u3a, 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 next trip is to Nottingham on 18th April 2024. You may contact Carole Arrowsmith on 07871231767 for further details.

CPR / Defibrillator Training Session

Seventeen members attended the CPR and Defibrillator Training Session at Longton Central Hall on Friday 15th March. It was an excellent session enjoyed by all, and also included a short instruction on “First Aid for choking and bleeding.”

Many thanks to Training Instructor, Julie Lawton from AED Donate, and to branch Entertainments Co-ordinator, Beverley who arranged the event. Should anyone wish to make a financial donation to AED, appropriate details are recorded on their website. One final point, a white scarf was left in the hall after the event, and it can be collected at the next monthly meeting on 28th March.

Brown Bin – Garden Waste Service

Stoke-on-Trent City Council will no longer collect garden waste from residents from 1 April 2024 unless a fee of £40 has been paid. Payment will entitle residents to have their organic waste collected from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The service is fortnightly, providing 25 collections, with a two-week closure period for Christmas.

You will need to pay an annual payment of £40 by credit or debit card. After payment you will receive a welcome pack and bin sticker.

You may wish to consider home composting, if you do not wish to use the subscription service. You can also take your garden waste to your local Household Waste Recycling Centre (the tip).

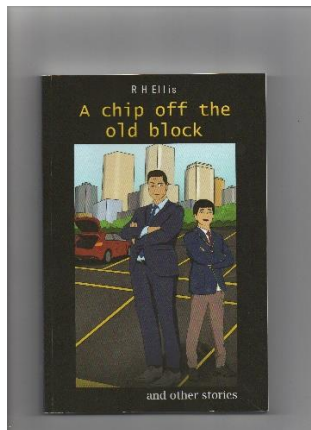


u3a Radio

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

u3a Member's Book of Short Stories

One of our members, Richard Ellis, has recently had a book of short stories published, entitled "**A Chip off the Old Block.**" Richard has several copies available to give out to interested members free of charge, so please contact him on 07903 645802 or 01782 849400 where he can also give details of where further copies of the book can be purchased. The retail price of the book is £9.99.



Richard considers that a good story is always one that entertains, and each story in this collection does just that.

Erection of Scaffold at Longton Central Hall

We have been asked by Central Hall staff to warn members that, during the first few days of April, scaffold is planned to be erected inside the Weekday entrance. Therefore, members who are due to attend group meetings on these days should access their usual rooms via the Church entrance only.

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, 15th April 2024. Tel: 01782 942352 or email: a.devin2@gmail.com