



Staffordshire Centre

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March

News Bulletin – March 2025

Hello Centre Members.

A very full news bulletin this month with details of our first walk of 2025 – around Pirehill and Aston – by – Stone – fixed for April 17th and two visits for April as well!

Our first visit of the year – to Shugborough for a guided tour of the Forest Garden - is scheduled for April 10th and our skittles afternoon is also going ahead in April at The Royal Oak, Gnosall.

There is also still a room (single or double) available on the Stafford Arts Society Holiday in May. If you want to take advantage of it, contact Regent Travel.

All that remains is move on to our next talk – Trot on Regardless by Stefan Wild. Hoping to see you there.

Best wishes
Margaret Winfield

TALKS

All talks start at 2:30 pm at Walton Village Hall. To book for a talk, go to the Talks page on our website, ntstafford.org.uk or [click here](#).



Trot on Regardless – 11th March 2025

A Talk by Stefan Wild



2023 marked the hundredth anniversary of the Mounted Section being created in Birmingham. What happened to the police horses? Where did they come from? What did they do? Perhaps more importantly,

where have they gone? To find out more, come to this talk and join the ride with Stefan Wild through the brief history of police horses patrolling West Midland streets.

From Victorian ceremonial duties, to shocking scenes of 1980's football violence, Stef tells the story of how a department evolved from a regimented, military style, male bastion, to a modern-day operational, inclusive unit. Brought to life through pictures, colourful characters, both equine and human, join us for a light hearted talk, using handed down tales, and personal anecdotes.

Stef served with West Midlands Police between 1972 and 2005, working proudly, as a mounted officer from 1979 until 1991. During retirement he has written several short stories for police and historical publications, before publishing 'Longest Way Up Shortest Way Down', a five-star rated book about his time with the horses which will be on sale after the talk.

Diary Dates :

8th April – AGM 2025

13th May – Women in Aviation by Jess Boyden-Jukes

10th June – Unpicking The Thread by Shaun Farrelly

WALKS

The first of our walks for 2025 is now open for booking. Please remember that you join our walks at your own risk and are responsible for your own safety. Leaders will indicate the difficulty of the walk so walkers can make an informed choice on whether or not to join in. Appropriate clothing and footwear should be worn.



Pirehill and Aston-by-Stone – 5.5m – Thursday 17th April



Our starting point (and lunch afterwards) is at the Star Inn, where there is plenty of parking. The pub doesn't open until midday, but public toilets are available just around the corner, in Crown Street Car Park.

We begin our walk by passing under Stafford Street, to Westbridge Park, before crossing the River Trent via the Old Walton Bridge to Cherryfields. Having viewed the local floodplain, we cross the A34 via the footbridge to Walton, then up on to Pirehill Lane.

After passing North Pirehill Farm, we take a footpath on the left, across the fields, with good views towards Aston-by-Stone. There are some stiles at this point on the route, but most also have gates that can be opened.

After passing Pirehill House (former fire HQ, now a training centre), we head down towards Aston-by-Stone, and St Saviours Churchyard, before joining the Trent and Mersey Canal towpath and returning to the Star for lunch.

Meet: in the Star Inn car park at 9:30, ready to depart by 9:45

Sat Nav: ST15 8QW – **W3W:** ///somewhere.absorb.images

Lunch: 13:00 (approx.) Please let me have your menu choices by Tuesday 15th April

Organiser: Nigel Holmes

Note: If you feel like a short walk (less than two miles), prior to the meal, then please meet us (around 12:00) at St Saviours Churchyard (ST15 0BJ – W3W: ///bluff.frail.hinders).

I can provide a lift back there (for 2 or 3 people) after the meal.

Diary Dates: -

Thursday 29th May, Thursday 12th June, Thursday July 17th

To book, go to the Walks page on our website, ntstafford.org.uk or [click here](#)

VISITS

Shugborough Forest Garden

A Car Visit on Thursday 10th April



Our friends at Shugborough have offered to give our group a talk and a tour around the Forest Garden – our guides will be Caroline Beacall and Lizzie Pellowe.

We'll have a walk around exploring the work that the Shugborough team are doing in creating the garden. We will be walking on newly laid hard paths with good access – not muddy.

The world is changing, and our planet desperately needs us to take climate action, yet so many of us don't know what to do for the best, which decisions should we make and how can we individually make a difference.

The Forest Garden at Shugborough will offer insight, inspiration, and simplicity on how our gardens can be environmental champions, absorbing carbon, supporting plant and wildlife diversity and celebrate nature's beauty.

A forest garden is densely planted into layers with a wide range of plants which create a natural defence to pests, diseases, and extreme weather conditions such as drought. A forest garden has the capacity to capture significant amount of carbon, feed and protect a wealth of wildlife or organisms as well as ourselves.

After the talk and tour you will be able to take lunch at the Mansion Tearooms or the Park Farm Café. To book on this visit go to the Visits page on our website ntstafford.org.uk or [click here](#)

Price : This visit is **free** to members of the Centre and their guests, although you will have to pay the standard admission to Shugborough if you do not have a valid NT card or volunteer card.

Meet: Visitor Reception at Shugborough in good time for a 10.00am start

Sat Nav: ST17 0UP

Booking Deadline: April 2nd

Organiser: John Willis

Skittles at The Royal Oak, Gnosall

A Car Visit and lunch on Tuesday 29th April



Our inaugural skittles event last year had to be cancelled, due to problems with the venue. Now under new management, The Royal Oak is ready for you to come and join us for some fun at our skittles day, to be held upstairs at The Royal Oak.

We have booked the skittle alley at the Royal Oak, Newport Road, Gnosall for a session at 12 noon. A buffet lunch will be served and drinks will be available from the bar.

As we can only accommodate 20 people, early booking is essential. There is a large carpark at the rear.

Hope you will join us for a fun afternoon.

The price includes the buffet lunch – what more could you ask for?

Price: £14 pp

Booking deadline : 15th April – Please Note: this suggestion proved popular when first advertised last year and the maximum number of participants we can book is 20 – so please act now if you want to join us!

Organiser: Margaret Winfield

Meet: Royal Oak, Gnosall at 11.45 for a 12.00 start **Sat Nav:** ST20 0BL

AGM 2025 – a special reminder

Our 51st AGM takes place on April 8th and there is an additional communication being sent out with this bulletin to announce this with a form to enable you to vote for the re-election of the committee for 2025. Although all of the current committee are willing to stand for re-election, there are now only eight of us compared to a full establishment of twelve.

This means that we have fewer and fewer resources to organise and manage events for you to enjoy and take part in. It also means that we have fewer people contributing fresh ideas for activities.

If you know anyone who you think would be suited to help us in this, please try and persuade them to join the committee and fill in the nomination form in the additional document.

If you want to join and help out yourself and need someone to nominate and/or second you simply contact the sender of this bulletin – you will find many willing nominators and seconders! Even if you don't want to join the committee, please get in touch if you can help by running an event or have new ideas for things that we could try.



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