

North Staffs Accordion Club

Newsletter

Jan/Feb 2022
No 498



HI EVERYONE. MAY I WISH YOU ALL A HAPPY NEW YEAR AND ALSO EXTEND A WARM WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER ELIZABETH BRIXTON.

DUNCAN AND I CAUGHT THE DREADED OMICRON RECENTLY. HAPPILY I HAVE NOW BEEN RELEASED BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY AND DUNCAN WILL FOLLOW TOMORROW (MONDAY).

CHEERS LILY

NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The timing of our newsletter publications makes it belated but I wish all members and friends of the club a much-improved year over the last two. Band meetings have been live for most of the second half of 2021 without anyone contracting the Covid virus as a result, for which we are grateful.

With a relaxation in mitigations, things look promising for 2022 but we started cautiously with an online club night in January. The February session will also be online but with a four-female line-up of guests, **Julie Best, Anne-Marie Devine, Tracey Middleton and Helen Rich** plus other club players. With the rest of the members, those who do not have access to the internet can look forward to a live event in March featuring **Gennaro Fiondella** from Woking in Surrey, quite a drive!

Our main challenge will be to get the beginners' section up and running again. This section has suffered the most from the pandemic with no activity taking place over the two years.

Thank you, all, for sticking with us over the dark days and I look forward to seeing you all again soon.
Steve Hughes

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

A week before the event we were forced to change our plans for the Christmas party due to the coronavirus situation. This meant cancelling our guests, the Fettleers, our venue and buffet. Instead, we switched to a Zoom event and got our player members, at the short notice, to come up with a carol

programme based on their Zoom performance at the 2020 Zoom Christmas party, including a joke before each performance.

Although lacking the atmosphere of a live event, it turned out to be the best alternative with members and spouses enjoying themselves. Twenty six club players/singers took part, without repetition of the carols played, and a list of those taking part is included on the members' website together with what was played.



JANUARY CLUB NIGHT

Mainly because of the Omicron virus and also because of the seasonal weather, this club night was organised as a virtual event on Zoom. Mike Richards (*right*) joined in with a Zoom connection from his holiday villa in Tenerife. He said that both he and Barbara had been infected with Omicron presumed to have been caught on the plane out, and were now self-isolating. Fortunately, they are in Tenerife till March so hope to be able to enjoy the greater part of their holiday. In the meantime, they are making full use of a good sized balcony.



We started off with our normal playalong with Greta Moseley leading the playing of half a dozen pieces, and all other players muted. Greta also drew the short straw for playing first and, after Mike, came new member Amanda. She has not yet managed to visit the club in person, living quite a distance away in Lichfield but looks forward to doing so before too long. Mike Beese (*left*) plucked up courage to give his first performance for our club



with an excellent rendition of English Country Garden.

The following lists all players and what was played:

Greta Moseley	Love is a Many Splendored Thing, Love Me with All of your Heart
Mike Richards	Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head, Fly Me to the Moon
Amanda Hilmarsson	Harry Lyme Theme (The 3 rd Man), Up a Lazy River
John Cordon	Old Man River, Four in the Morning
Tony Britton	Fiesta Espana, Searchlight Tattoo
Geoff Capewell	Maggie, Que Sera, Sera
Miriam Umpleby	Trumpet Voluntary, Yours (with vocals)
Norman Brown	The Old Spinning Wheel, Do You Want Your Old Lobby Washed Down
John Jones	Engelbert Humperdink Medley
Barry Graham	Caprice (Yvette Hohner), Tico Tico
Mike Beese	English Country Garden
Steve Hughes	El Condor Pasa, Take 5

There were one or two Zoom quality issues, but in the main the connection behaved and it turned out to be a very enjoyable evening.

FEBRUARY VIRTUAL GUEST CONCERT

This is a February club night with a difference. It is another Zoom event with performances by guests **Julie Best, Anne-Marie Devine, Tracey Middleton** and **Helen Rich** supported by club players. We look forward to a great evening's entertainment.

COMMUNITY PLAYING:

Berry Hill Retirement Village, Bentilee by Ann Millward

This was the band's second gig after lockdown and wow it was so good to get out and play again. Only a reduced band of 9 was requested because we were told the venue was small. Unfortunately our MD, Steve Houghton, couldn't be there so our programme was chosen carefully and included a selection of band pieces, Christmas carols and singalongs led by our resident compere and chorister, Peter Cowie. In the main we presented a good show with just a few timing issues. For those who question the validity of a conductor, it's at times like these you recognising their worth. Don't give up on us Steve!

The communal hall was quite large with an open plan restaurant and bar attached and we were placed in an alcove away from the main thoroughfare. The rest of the hall was filled with craft and food stalls which were very impressive. The event was very well attended and our transient audience seemed to appreciate the variety of music they were getting, singing and jigging along to us as they passed.

Attending gigs like this has a three-fold purpose It gets us out, it provides entertainment to others and it gives us an opportunity to rate the variety of care accommodation available if our time comes. Personally I think music will keep us all perpetually young so keep squeezing.



Photo (left to right) Susan Edge, Mike Richards, Viv Cowie, Tony Britton, Rosie Galley, Ann Millward, Steve Hughes, Miriam Umpleby, resident (!) Santa – unseen photographer Pete Cowie.

MAILBOX

Email received from John, son of member Jim Clarke, who played the bagpipes at our Wolstanton Golf Club January club night 2020.

As you know he (*dad*) hung up/retired from playing the bagpipes after many years of enjoying revisiting an instrument from his youth - his hands could no longer cover the holes on the chanter and hit the right notes. Accordion wise he really enjoyed the club nights and concerts - long time ago now - 2 years!!

He was looking to change his accordion for a lighter model and was trying his best to practise and pick up where he left off many years ago - ironically I googled our old teacher Jack Tamburro who had a shop in the '70s on the outskirts of Birmingham city centre (I think it was Digbeth or near Aston University before he relocated to Alum Rock) and to my surprise the July/Aug 2018 newsletter of the club came up. It contained an article written by Paul Hobbs - I see he is on the set list next week - he mentioned knowing Jack at the beginning of the 1990s - I can relate to his fear of the instrument becoming obsolete - for me and my 2 brothers, who had lessons from Jack in the mid '70s to early 1980 - we could only see that an opportunity for an accordion player would be in Dexys Midnight Runners - who you would only see on top of the pops just playing the piano keyboard without bass accompaniment - maybe had his thumb on the bellows button - who knows.

Anyone who met Jack never forgot him - the guy he had bought his accordion from in Birmingham just over 2 years ago was completely floored when we mentioned Jack's name to him. Jack was an Italian, who suffered all his life with a hunch back and wasn't very tall either - but his fingers on an accordion were electric - I don't think I have ever seen or met anyone who could play as well as him.

Paul also recalled joining Club Accord - funny story. In the '70s we entered a Club Accord competition - we were the outsiders - all the other contestants were Club Accord members - and the piece that had to be played in front of the adjudicators had a change of register halfway through the composition - however there was no bar or beat rest to enable this - and we rehearsed the hand positioning and finger position to enable the register to be played on the note - we practised this for months and had the piece to perfection in the manner that the score had been written. Come the day of the competition my 2 brothers, especially my older brother, and I, nailed it to perfection - and as we stood by and watched the other musicians stop for anything from 3 beats to completely out of time, we were feeling pretty confident we had done enough - to our horror one of the poorer performances won!! - I can still remember my dad taking the judging panel to task and pointing out to them the error of their ways - we left dejected - "we woz robbed" as they said in the day - and we never darkened the door at any Club Accord event ever again.



THE ACCORDION IN MY LIFE



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and worked out what the bass notes were from the piano where I discovered they were not just random but a very well planned laid out pattern. Next was to stand in front of a full length mirror, find middle C and start playing.

The accordion proved to be a very important part in my life, often playing at open-air events with a Christian organisation and thus was also instrumental

(excuse the pun) in meeting and marrying my husband (Eric). As you will all understand, accordions are pretty heavy things to carry around and Eric offered to give me lifts home and carry this heavy load. Over 50 years later he is still carrying the accordion!!!!

In the year 2000 we took a trip to the North Yorks Railway at Pickering only to find it was a 1940s War Week-end event. This began a 1940s re-enactment accordion journey. From that one event

we have found ourselves at many more events even playing over in Holland. As an accordion player it became a useful opportunity to play 1940s songs at events on steam trains, trams, in marquees and out in the open-air.



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I also have opportunities to play the accordion to children (usually years 5 or 6) as they are on educational visits dressed as evacuees. It is great fun playing for children and showing them how accordions work and it is amazing, in today's generation that children find it hard to grasp that acoustic accordions are not digital and do not need to be 'plugged in' or 'switched on' to make them work.

As Eric is an accredited local preacher we began to be asked to take times of Remembrance at events around the country, again using the accordion to play the music. This is something we felt most at home taking part in as it serves as a reminder of the sacrifice made by so many for our freedom today and also to present the Christian side of the Remembrance ceremony. I do have various 1940s outfits, some civilian, and some military, depending what the event requires, but perhaps the one I wear most of all is the ENSA uniform (Entertainment National Service Association). This seems appropriate when singing and playing the accordion.

As with so many events the pandemic stopped, none was more poignant than the cessation of the 75th Anniversary of VE Day in 2020. However we decided to hold celebrations in our gardens (socially distancing of course) so we made out some '40s song sheets and invited the entire street to sit out in their gardens and join with us in a sing-a-long and short time of remembrance (*pictured left*).

It was heart-warming to see so many bring out their small tables and chairs to their front gardens and join in and remember. The weather was beautiful and a great help in having an unusual but beneficial time in a very difficult one.

This brings me to how I am now part of the North Staffs Accordion Club as I had never been part of an organised club



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before.

In May 2019 we moved across the country from our native Yorkshire to Cheshire and joined a church there. It was while I had been asked to play the keyboard at a funeral that I was approached by a relative of the deceased with these words "Do you play the accordion?" This resulted in my first visit to a practice in January 2020 and so becoming a member of a very well organised, very happy and friendly group. I am very grateful to have joined the club, even though much of our practice time since joining has been on 'Zoom' but we are now back meeting in person once again. This gives me a chance to say thank you to the club for their welcome and friendship.

As this write-up relates, the accordion has been an instrument of great importance for so many years, for which I am thankful and I hope will be for years to come.

Pictures above :

1 in Scotland, Petty officer's uniform. 2. in ENSA uniform on steam train.

3 in ENSA uniform singing Amazing Grace. 4 in Bolton Abbey as a nurse.

Diary

February	15 th	Zoom Concert with guests Anne-Marie Devine Julie Best Tracey Middleton, and Helen Rich
March	15 th	Guest Night - Gennaro Fiondella
April	19 th	Theme Night (nautical related)
May	17 th	Players' Night
June	21 st	Guest Night (tba)

Charity Concert
by
Stockport Accordion Club
at
Broken Cross Club, Macclesfield
2 pm Sunday, 3rd April 2022
Tickets and info. John Jones MBE 07871 767708

Accordion Tuition

John Romero John Romero jr@carillonstudios.com 01606 240148

Tony Watterson tony.watterson@virginmedia.com 07732 263938

Richard Adey (jazz) richard@richardadeymusic.com

Ingrid Gould 0121 458 2781



For Sale

120 bass Hohner Carmen II accordion for sale in nice condition
with soft case £250.

Contact **Jean Austin** 01782 866091

President	Steve Houghton	01270 768178
Chairman	Steve Hughes	07939 362294
Secretary	Steve Hughes	07939 362294
Treasurer	Tony Britton	07923 580760

John Corden, Susan Edge, Ken Hall, Paul Hobbs, Barry Tunnicliffe

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