

# North Staffs Accordion Club

## Newsletter

### May-June 2023

### No 506



**HI EVERYONE. BACK DOWN TO EARTH NOW AFTER A LOVELY DAY FOR THOSE WHO ATTENDED THE KNUTSFORD ACCORDION DAY – BACK TO THE GARDENING, OR EVEN SUNBATHING!**

## KNUTSFORD ACCORDION DAY



**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

It was a warm, sunny morning, on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May, when accordion enthusiasts from far and wide, gathered at Marthall Hall, Nr. Knutsford, to take part in a music workshop and concert, organised by the committee of North Staffs Accordion Club (NSAC).

Hot drinks and biscuits were available on arrival and a lively buzz filled the room as old friends met up, raffle tickets were sold, and a selection of pre-loved music was on offer for a small donation to the charity of the day, Alzheimer's Research UK. A seating plan on the wall ensured everyone found their place quickly.

At 10.00am. Peter Cowie opened the event by welcoming everyone and introducing our leader for the day, Anita Bašić (*left*), (pronounced BASH ITCH).

Anita introduced herself as an advocate for the accordion and regaled us with stories of her musical journey. Her philosophy was, "Playing music with others is the most important thing you can do".

Earlier, she had handed out numbered cards bearing an accordion related question, and, throughout the day, she regularly selected a number and the bearer of that card introduced themselves and tried to answer the question as it related to them.



At 10.30am. the first musical session began with an in depth look at the score of BELLA ROMANTICA. Anita's approach was to tackle tricky bits first and take note of key signatures, timing, articulation,

dynamics, bellows control and difficult bits in each of the parts. After examining the score in this way, we attempted to play the piece, hopefully with a lot of confidence.

At 11.30am we took a break and the catering team supplied hot drinks and biscuits.

At 11.50am we began a SIGHT READING session led by Anna Leskelä (*right and below*). During the break she had supplied written notes and samples of music. Many people deemed this area of music to be difficult but after 10 minutes spent looking at and discussing the format of the music, they seemed eager to attempt to play. Anna allowed a few minutes for everybody to play the piece (all at the same time). There was a cacophony of sound, but all were concentrating on the task in hand and appeared to ignore others around them.



The next session began at 12pm. With Anita exploring the structure and parts of a Ukrainian piece called, 'Oj Ty, Divčyno Zaručenaja' (OH YOU, ENGAGED GIRL). Anita brought this sombre piece of music to life by gradually bringing in the various parts and adding layers of sound and rhythm, using percussion instruments, ably played by non-accordionists.

A welcome lunch break came at 1.15pm and many people chose to picnic outside and enjoy the fine weather. The catering team again supplied hot/cold drinks and presented a calorie laden display of homemade cakes, supplied by members of NSAC.

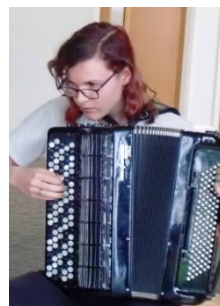


After lunch, there was a group photo taken, outside, by Lydia Houghton. Lydia had spent the morning popping up around the room, taking snapshots of the proceedings. The raffle took place next and was followed by Anita's next session. This was a light hearted, hilarious activity, working in pairs and seemingly testing our ability to count to three. Each couple counted to 3 alternately, but then substituted a clap for 2 and then a stamp for 3. It proved to be ridiculously hard to do and reduced us all into fits of laughter and rendered us incapable of counting to three.

Once seated again, we tackled a well-known song, STAND BY ME. Anita cleverly introduced the beat with finger clicking and bass accordion. Again, layers were slowly added, including some necessary singing, until we presented a lively rendition of the music.

A tea break came at 3.15pm with more cakes to consume. This was followed by a non-stop performance of the three pieces we had worked on.

Throughout the day, Anita made everyone feel comfortable, valued, and confident enough to contribute at whatever level they could manage.





At 4pm. It was our time to relax and listen to performances given by six guest players, namely, Johnny-Lee Leslie (*above left*), Julie Best (*pictured next and also with Helen Rich above*), Ben Cobb (*pictured next*), Stefan Andrusyschyn (*above right*), Helen Rich, and Anna Leskelä. Each guest played three pieces, all of which were contrasting and extremely well executed. Something for the rest of us to aspire to.

The end of the day came at 5.30pm. and Anita thanked the NSAC committee for their hard work in organising the day and Peter Cowie closed the event with thanks to Anita, guest players, cake makers, kitchen management and raffle organisation.

The event raised a commendable £515 for the charity.

It was the end of a very enjoyable day and left many asking, "When is the next one?"

**Glenda Reid**

*More photographs shown on our website – [www.northstaffsaccordionclub.com](http://www.northstaffsaccordionclub.com) / Latest News and Events / Photos.*



## JUNE AND JULY CLUB NIGHTS

The June club night will be a players' night with no theme and in July we look forward to having Julie Best and Jean Corrighan as our guests. Julie has played for us several times but this will be the first time for us to hear the duet.

Julie and Jean met at the Ronmar School of Music in Carlisle when Julie joined The Orchestra conducted by Ron Hodgson. They became great friends and formed a successful accordion duet partnership winning the All Britain Premier Duet Championship 3 times. Both girls competed and performed as soloists and studied for their accordion exams. Julie gained 3rd place in the British senior solo on two occasions and was awarded her LBCA and ABCA accordion diplomas from the NAO. Jean spent time living and working in the North East of England and when she returned to Carlisle she dusted off her accordion and their duet partnership was re kindled.



They now have a wide repertoire of music, and enjoy performing at many varied events, parties, weddings, festivals and accordion clubs etc.

## APRIL CLUB NIGHT (AKA CORONATION PARTY)

Tuesday evening, 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2023, another of our monthly club nights; no guest and no theme, so we organised



an impromptu party with cakes brought in by members. The excuse, the impending Coronation of King Charles III, so out came the Union flag, bunting and hats, all set to give a festive atmosphere for those gathered.

Another big change – after our regular playalong (preceded by a communal rendition of Happy Birthday for Steve Hughes' wife, Beryl's big birthday) we had a playing semi-circle pretending to be a playing circle, something we have not had for many years.

Advantages: Quicker - no lengthy change of player, more numbers played in the time available, beginners/first timers more at ease.



Disadvantages (or what some may regard as an advantage): not sitting with wife/husband/partner during playing time.

**Paul Hobbs**, who had previously led us in for the six playalong numbers, started off the 'circle' with an intricate playing of his own arrangement of *My Way*. This was followed by

**Elizabeth Brixton** (left) who played *The Rabbi's Hornpipe* on a beautiful-sounding English (chromatic) concertina.

**Steve Hughes** followed with *She Wears My Ring*,



**John Jones** – a different interpretation of *My*

*Way*,

**Tony Britton** (right) *Cockles and Mussels*.

**Betty Nixon** was next and in a position where two of the pieces she had prepared had already been played so capably switched to *Trumpet Tune* which

**Rosie Galley** followed with a lovely rendition of *Morning Has Broken* (although she has played duets it was the first time for her to play solo on a club night).

**Jacqui Flather** played *Edelweiss* and



**Miriam Umpleby** brought the first round to a close involving the audience and other players with a handout of lyrics for *I Vow To Thee My Country*. Before the 'party' break

**Derek Wilton** came forward to play *You are the Wind Beneath my Wings* and *Top of the World* on his harmonica.

Our regular door guardian, and usual cake provider, Barbara Cole, missed out on the attendant member award of £10 in that she was sunning herself in Tenerife. Others stepped in and there was an abundance of cake (nothing else!) for

consumption in the break and taking home!

After the break visitor **David Clews** gave us a rendition of *Summertime* before the (semi) circle set off again. There were two rounds as follows:

**Paul Hobbs** – *Secret Love* and *Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head*;

**Elizabeth Brixton** - *After an Old Fairy Tale* and *Jeannie With The Light Brown Hair*;

**Steve Hughes** - *This Old House*, *Danny Boy*;

**John Jones** - *I Can't Stop Loving You* and *Tulips from Amsterdam*;

**Tony Britton** (on a seafaring theme) *My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean* and *Skye Boat Song*;

**Betty Nixon** - *Your Cheating Heart*, *Bye Bye Love*;



**Rosie Galley** – A lengthy piece that used to be played by the band, *Africa Sings*, played with faultless rhythm;

**Jacqui Flather** - *When I'm 64, Sloop John B*; ending with

**Miriam Umpleby** (right), again with lyric handouts, *Land of Hope and Glory, Here's a Health to His Majesty*.

This last song is worth a mention because of what we would regard as strange lyrics today. *Here's a Health unto His Majesty* is an English patriotic song which is used as the regimental march of the Royal Army Medical Corps.

It dates from the reign of King Charles II and was composed by Jeremy Savile, in 1667 for the viol and arranged for three voices; treble, tenor and bass. Note the song was never *Here's a Health unto Her Majesty*!

### **Here's a health unto His Majesty**

With a fal la la la la la la

**Confusion to his enemies**

With a fal la la la la la la

**And he who would not drink his health**

**We wish him neither wit nor wealth**

**Nor yet a rope to hang himself**

With a fal la la la la la la la la la (repeated)

The song became popular again during the near fatal illness of King George V in 1928 sometimes being sung before God Save the King.

## **MAY CLUB NIGHT**

(Theme 'piece accompanied by singing')

This was another brilliant night with plenty of players to fill the programme. With Peter Cowie as compere (and his wife, Viv, present, but still not playing because of her broken arm), we started off with our usual playalong cum warm-up of half a dozen preselected pieces from our music book. After a short break to resettle the

players **John Plumb** took the opening spot with *Midnight in Moscow* and *Georgia on my Mind*. The following players then took the stage taking us up to the break:

**Geoff Capewell** - *White Cliffs of Dover, Dark Island, Roses of the South*.

**Jacqui Flather** (right) - *Oom-Pah-Pah, Do You Hear the People Sing, Tarantella, Napoletana, Beer Barrel Polka*.

**Norman Brown** - *Northern Lights of Old Aberdeen, Highland Cathedral, I Love You Because, Welcome to My World, When Two*

*Worlds Collide*.

**Betty Nixon** - *One Day at a Time, The Accordion Man Waltz*.

For the first of these pieces Betty was accompanied by Miriam Umpleby who sang the lyrics. They were the first on the night to get theme brownie points.

**Derek Wilton** (harmonica) - Medley - *Swanee River, Camptown Races, Oh Suzannah, When the Saints go Marching In*.

After a break in which the raffle and attendant members prize were drawn (no 'attendant member' for the latter so it goes up to £30 next month), we continued the entertainments with our second 'singer' duet of the evening:





**Rosie Galley** (accordion) and **John Cordon** (vocals) (*above left*) - *Those Were the Days, Now is the Hour*, (I and, as was the case for Betty and Miriam, had some assistance from the audience. They were followed by a delightful duet from **Elizabeth Brixton** and **Amanda Hilmarsson-Dunn** (*above*) – who played *Lily* (an Icelandic folk song), *Petit Fleur* and *La Vie en Rose*.

On a repeat visit, **David Clews** then gave us a rendition of *Summertime* on harmonica.

**Miriam Umpleby** – then sang *What a Wonderful World* with a backing track on which she had recorded her playing of the accompaniment and also her singing of alto harmony.

**Mike Richards** - *Don't Blame Me, Bluebell Polka, Fly Me to the Moon, La Cumparsita* with clever self-made backing tracks and improvisation and to end the evening with gusto: **Barry Graham** (*above left*) - *O Sole Mio, Slow Train Shuffle, Charlie the Boxer, Sorento*.



An excellent evening all round and we look forward to the next!

## BAND PLAY AT ST LUKE'S



This is a photo of the band playing at a concert at St Luke's Church, Clayton, Newcastle under Lyme, arranged to raise money for maintenance of the building.

A number of the band members were absent

for various reasons but we enjoyed it (and the generous refreshments during the break).

## FUNDRAISER OF THE YEAR

Band member John Jones MBE has been in the news again, this time for winning the 'Fundraiser of the Year' award in the Daily Mirror/TSB sponsored Pride of Manchester Awards.

John has raised a total of £340,000 for charity over the years, £108,000 of which was for East Cheshire Hospice and £110,000 for Macclesfield hospital.

Presentation of the award was made by Coronation Street actors Ellie Leach, Colson Smith and Sair Khan and John entertained the star-studded audience with an impromptu rendition of Sweet Caroline, much to the delight of those there.



## AUCTION EXPERIENCE

You will have heard the joke about the man parking his car leaving an accordion on the back seat. When he returned, someone had broken in, had not stolen it but had left another one! To alleviate our storage problems and to test the water, member John Cordon volunteered to take one of the club's 'negative equity' instruments to a live auction in Leek. It took him by surprise to find that ours was one of four for sale that day! It makes one wonder just how many unused accordions there are in an area!

p.s. It did not sell and was left to try again.



# Jeff Burndrett

We have sadly lost one of our fond members, Jeff Burndrett, who died in the Belong home in Newcastle under Lyme on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2023. Jeff, born in 1940, had been an electrician, inventor and French polisher and, though he didn't read it, had a fantastic ear for music. He loved playing the piano and his accordion and played for singalongs in many venues. Before becoming too ill to do so, he really enjoyed attending our club and his family think that it helped slow down his dementia.



Over two years to the age of 28 he invented the Liquid Level Indicator for blind people to enable them to pour a cup of tea or coffee without scalding themselves. The invention was primarily to help his father, who was blind, but it received an award from the Institution of Electrical Engineers, demonstrated at an exhibition, and helped blind people in many countries.

Our thoughts and condolences go to his wife, ex-peripatetic music teacher, Mary, and son, David. David is a freelance professional doublebass player, composer and arranger of music.

RIP Jeff.

**Steve Hughes**

## HOW TO ADJUST YOUR ACCORDION STRAPS CORRECTLY

*This article was first published in the March 2011 newsletter*

This is a fairly difficult 'nut to crack' because people come in different shapes and sizes and so do accordions. But if you don't adjust your accordion straps correctly, your accordion will be uncomfortable and more difficult to play.

### 1. Seating position

Professionals tend to use the same seat every time they play but club players tend to use the first seat that becomes available - I wonder why? Most people use a seat that's too low and their knees are pointing upwards away from the floor. This is a very uncomfortable position for your legs and it tends to force the accordion upwards towards your chin.

Choose a seat that's high enough. With the correct seat your feet should be slightly apart and flat on the floor; furthermore, your thighs should be almost parallel to the floor (not pointing upwards) and you should be sitting forward on the seat with your back in an upright position.



### 2. Choosing the right accordion

I'll state the obvious - if you're a short person it's pointless choosing an accordion that won't fit between your thighs and your chin. Your accordion has got to become part of you, so it's got to fit your body.

### 3. Adjusting the straps

To position the accordion correctly you will need to tighten the left strap (as much as possible in most cases) and slacken the right strap. Persevere - most straps have sufficient adjustment but in some cases it may be necessary to modify the straps (I've done this with my 5 voice accordion).

### 4. Positioning the accordion correctly

When you are seated correctly, adjust the straps until the centre of the black keys is vertically in line with your chin. If you move the keyboard too far to the left, you may find it difficult to fully open your bellows. However, if you move the keyboard too far to the right, you'll not be able to play with a straight forearm and 'flat' wrist and this is essential for good playing.

When you've positioned the accordion correctly, the treble half of the accordion body should be resting on your left thigh (partially supported by the straps) and ideally the right-hand edge of the treble keyboard should be level with the inside of your right thigh for additional support.

### 5. The Back Strap

Some people like to wear a back strap and some don't, but I feel comfortable with a one because the accordion is more stable, i.e., the treble keyboard tends to stay in the same place and this makes it easier to find the right notes - rocket science?

**I hope this helps!**

**Mike Richards**

### Club Nights

<b>Third Tuesday of month 7.30 pm</b>	<b>Bradwell WMC ST5 8JA</b>
June 20th	Players' Night
July 18th	Julie Best and Jean Corrighan
August 15th	Theme Night
September 19th	Guest tba

### Other Events

Weekly Tuesdays 7.30 pm except for 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tues	Band Rehearsals, Bradwell WMC
Monthly 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday 2pm	Playing for Pleasure (on hold)
Monday 5 <sup>th</sup> Jun 7.15 pm	Beginners/Improvers, Bradwell WMC
Monday 26 <sup>th</sup> Jun 7.15 pm	Beginners/Improvers, Bradwell WMC
Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> Jul 7.15 pm	Beginners/Improvers, Bradwell WMC
<b>(Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> Jun) - CANCELLED-</b>	<b>Band Concert at St Dominic's Church, Stone (Stone Festival)</b>

### For Sale

<p>P A System £400  ALTO Professional LIVE 802 Mixer, 2 x ALTO Professional TS215  1100 W, 15",  2-way powered speakers with height adjustable stands.  All necessary cabling.  Contact: Haydon on <a href="mailto:hdncrdw@gmail.com">hdncrdw@gmail.com</a></p>
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### Club Management

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Secretary	Paul Hobbs	07707 732756
Treasurer	Tony Britton	07923 580760

Committee Members: John Corden, Rosie Galley, Betty Nixon,  
Miriam Umpleby

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