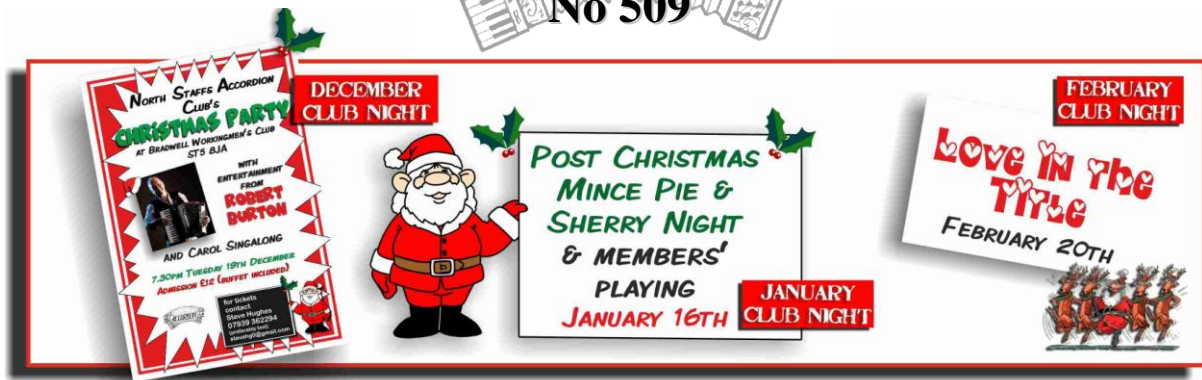


North Staffs Accordion Club

November/December 2023

No 509



HI EVERYONE.

JUST THINK - CHRISTMAS IS THE ONLY TIME OF THE YEAR WHEN EATING CHOCOLATE OUT OF SOCKS IS COOL! - SO FEEL FREE TO INDULGE - AND LET ME WISH YOU ALL A

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year Lily



CHRISTMAS PARTY

We look forward to another annual 'let-your-hair-down' party with super buffet, our customary Christmas carol mass-member playalong/singalong, Christmas quiz and entertainment provided by accordionist Robert Burton of Stafford. For Robert it will be his first performance at our club and he promises to be an excellent 'party' choice with his playing styles 'for every occasion'.

The party takes place at Bradwell Workingmen's Club at 7.30 pm on Tuesday the 19th December. Admission is by ticket with family and friends welcome. Tickets at £12 are proving as popular as last year.

(Pictured - last Christmas merriment by Stuart, John and Peter).



OCTOBER CLUB NIGHT

A mixture of business and pleasure. Following the playing of background music by Paul Hobbs welcoming members in, the October club activities started with the AGM chaired by the club president, Steve Houghton. Chairman Steve Hughes, and Tony Britton, treasurer, gave their reports. The chairman made comparisons of performance in the year with the data for the previous year most of which was positive. Notably, five new members had joined during the year, each having taken the 'three-months-free-accordion-loan' offer. He thanked all who had contributed to another successful year. The secretary reported that the club had ended the year in a strong financial position. The president thanked the committee for its work throughout the year.



President Steve Houghton stood down having served three two-year terms in the role. Peter Cowie accepted the position for the coming term and was duly elected. Jacqui Flather and Ron Rhodes were elected onto the committee, taking the places of Paul Hobbs, who had left after six years of service, and Miriam Umpleby.

Another financial year, number 38, bites the dust!

Following the AGM formalities an award was presented to the member who had played the most themed pieces throughout the year. The winner, Jacqui Flather (left), was presented with a

trophy by the outgoing president.

After the AGM and a break Derek Wilton gave us some medleys on his harmonica followed by Paul Hobbs. Closing the event we had the club band which left the MD, Steve Houghton, very happy with its performance.

NOVEMBER CLUB NIGHT

by Jacqui Flather

On Tuesday 14th November we had a guest performer at our club night. I always look forward to these visitors, as I wonder what kind of music they are going to play, and what I might be able to learn from them.



It had been the Midland Accordion Festival over the previous weekend. Steve Hughes and Geoff Capewell had been there and Steve had sent a couple of short emails referring to our next guest, **Leonard Brown** (left), saying that we were 'in for a real treat', so I was looking forward to it even more!

The club night started with some background music, played by me. I must say that I was a tad nervous, and I did my best to play 'in the background'! Then we played a few group numbers as we always do at these club nights, to kick things off.

Then Leonard was up on stage. A Geordie – well he is from Sunderland rather than Newcastle (the other one!) so he is actually a 'Mackem' not a Geordie, he told us.

He played a real mix of music types and styles, ranging from classical, Scottish music, to Glen Miller, the Typewriter song to Abba – who would have thought it was even possible to do all of that in just one performance?

Leonard had a real presence on the stage too! He put some great comedy and banter into his performance. We all laughed at his hilarious story about how he went to buy his shoes – which, I noticed, were a lovely blue patent leather.

We had so many visitors to the club; there were a few people from Birmingham, who were having a great time!

I particularly enjoyed the music mix that included 'Amarillo', which got people up dancing. But the highlight for me was the Abba mix, which was excellent.

I must take a moment to mention the duets that Mike Richards and Paul Hobbs played at 'half time', which were superbly perfect, as always!

All in all, it was a very enjoyable evening, and Leonard Brown was a great performer and character both on and off the stage. I bought a couple of his CD's and got the sheet music book. I will have to have a go to try and learn a few of these – but they look a tad difficult to be honest!

Although in the far past having played the piano, Jacqui only took up the accordion 18 months ago and is a member of our beginners/improvers section. She has already made it to our band and is always ready to take part in playing on our club nights. On this occasion she excelled with a 15-minute background performance. Well done, Jacqui.

INSIDE THE BOX WORKSHOP

By Ann Millward

It's nearly 15 years since I joined the band and they seated me next to a beautiful and kind man, Graham Butler, who not only encouraged and challenged me to play more difficult pieces but was also there should anything go wrong with my accordion. He always had a spare 'something' in his magic box or knew what the problem was and was willing to fix it, mine and anyone else's. Sadly, we lost Graham a few years ago but in the last years of his life he was kind enough to pass on that knowledge and his box of tricks to his apprentice Steve Hughes. They would meet up in a 'shed' somewhere to perform post mortems on old accordions. How fortunate for us that they did because those skills have now been cascaded to our 'repair team' Tony Britton, John Corden and Pete Cowie who have with extra research,



practice and sourcing added to that body of knowledge and it was Monday the 30th October when 14 of us took up the invitation to look 'inside the box'.

In a very professional presentation, they each covered various sections of the accordion. Well prepared teaching aids allowed us all to experience some issues and how they could be resolved. Simple advice was given for solving basic problems from tightening up the

hand straps or straightening misaligned keys. There was advice on what to look for or test before we even opened the box. Was a duff note being played on air input or output? Was it being heard in a particular coupler? We then looked inside the different sections, treble and bass, and handled the component parts. The mantra on disassembling the workings was 'make sure that you number every piece so you know where it goes' on assembly.

Very sound advice otherwise you might never get it back together. Although parts may look alike, they may have slight differences which will affect the sound or the way it fits together. The distances between reeds and the plates they are fixed to is critical to the thickness of a sheet of paper. We were then allowed to tune some of the reeds using a tuning app on our phones and using the devices that had been set up by the team. Scratching the metal on the reeds either at the top or bottom, depending whether the reed was flat or sharp, tunes it. For somebody who feels nervous just removing the different sections from each other, it gave me confidence to at least go in and have a look.

The one thing that amazes me is the complexity of the inside of an accordion; held together primarily by beeswax, pins and glue and very precise metal positioning of reeds. Why don't they go wrong more often? It also instils into me that I must treat my accordion with more respect by handling and storing it carefully. The job of restoring, repairing or tuning an accordion takes a lot of patience and expertise. Sadly I am lacking in both, so my respect goes out to our repair team and all those out there who are capable. It was a very enjoyable and informative workshop. Thanks team.

MIDLAND ACCORDION FESTIVAL

by Steve Hughes

On Friday 10th of November Geoff Capewell and I drove down to the Mercure Birmingham West Hotel, West Bromwich, for a weekend at the Midland Accordion Festival organised by Barry Smith and members of the Black Country Accordion Club. We both thoroughly enjoyed the event, meeting up with friends and acquaintances from other clubs, and making new ones. Elizabeth Brixton, Glenda Reid and John Jones from our band were also present.

Most of the artistes have been guests at our club in the past, including (in order of appearance), Jovan Rynjak, Helen Rich, Harry Hussey, Stefan Andrusychyn & Denise Leigh (local), David Vernon, Julie Best & Jean Corrighan, Rosemary Wright, Barry Smith's 'The Master Butcher's Duo' (our guests as a trio last Christmas) and Igor Sayenko (of the Kyiv Duo).

Other guests were Sue Bennett who gave us a hilarious duo with Harry Hussey where she accompanied Harry's accordion playing with cow-bells which had to be put in a different order between each piece played. She also sang some risqué songs that



Gathering of Performers

I would not repeat here even if I could remember them! Also present was the super-accordionist from South Shields, Leonard Brown, who we had the pleasure of having as our guest at our club after the festival (see article), The Northern Lasses (Julie Best, Jean Corrighan, Ann-Marie Devine (Ireland), and Helen Rich). They blended so well together and Helen Rich playing the violin added a lot to the sound. Ann-Marie, of course, entertained us on one of our Zoom charity concerts during lockdown. Anne & Stewart Towe from the Black Country Club gave an enjoyable performance and festival regulars, Nigel Pasby and Helen Newton, gave their usual superb performance. What a gathering of talent at a three-day event! There were four bands of which, having brought with us two vintage accordions from the club stock, we joined the vintage band, and, assuming that we would not have much time to practise, we joined the elementary one. Both bands were ably led by Jean Hanger. The other bands were the Scottish; in the absence of Angie Lukins who was not well, Helen Rich stepped in to lead this, and the intermediate band conducted with flamboyance by Nigel Pasby.

There were trade stands, a vintage accordion display, and bookable lessons with Sue Bennet and Harry Hussey of which I took advantage and which evolved into a busking session with others joining in. I managed to get Elizabeth Brixton (*left*) and myself committed to perform in a 'party piece' by saying that if she would, I would. She performed a lovely Icelandic piece without fault. I'm afraid that my renditions of 'La Bal de la Marine' and 'In the Summertime' were not so faultless.



Everyone was rolling with laughter when, during an auction of an accordion, Barry Smith asked if anyone could demonstrate it being played. Rosemary Wright accepted the challenge but Barry could not get her to stop. It was like a rehearsed double act; every time he started to

ask for a bid, she started a new phrase and this went on for what seemed like ages! She later said, "If I test an accordion, I have to test every note".

Geoff's highlight was when we spent Saturday night listening, in the company of David Vernon and members of the Northern Lasses and others, to Carlo of Cardiff with his electronic button accordion and Gennaro Fiondella. They played well into Sunday morning and we ended up going to bed at 2 am. Gennaro told me the next day that he did not make it till 4!



Entertainment stopped for 2 minutes silence at 11 am on Sunday, Remembrance Day. The reading was given by Stan Shakespeare with Carlo playing the Last Post on his accordion, followed by David Vernon, in full piper's regalia playing the bagpipes (*pictured right*)

The festival ended on Sunday night with a performance by all of the orchestras and a gathering of all the performers on the stage with group playing led by Barry. At the very end the group played 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow' for the well-deserving Barry Smith.

For once the M5 and M6 gave us a clear run home as we recapped on a brilliant weekend.

DAVID VERNON

During one of his performances at the Midland Accordion Festival David gave us an insight into his practising method. He stated that he:

- spent a minimum of an hour each day practising
- scheduled each month so that each piece in his repertoire got practised
- practised difficult sections in his repertoire daily
- made sure that for the fast runs, he practised them at a slower speed with a space between each note. When speeded up this space would become automatic giving distinct notes rather than a mushy run.



HELLO GLASGOW, GIVE ME DR. JAZZ (PHD)

By Steve Hughes

Not only did Harry Hussey travel all the way down from Glasgow to do his normal 'name me a piece to play' gigs at our club, we also teamed him up with our bass player's trad jazz band, **Lily's Weepers**, for our 'January Jazz' sessions (*pictured left with trombonist Terry Brunt*) over several years with great success. I had the pleasure of having a long and interesting chat with him over breakfast at this year's Midland Accordion Festival.



Retired building estimator and surveyor, Harry is now Dr Harry Hussey, having gained his PhD at the age of 94, a remarkable achievement.

This is more so in that over the 6 years he worked on his thesis, he had the bereavement of his lovely wife, Pat, and was himself hospitalised with colon cancer.

The title of his thesis is the lengthy 'Establishing Criteria for Descriptions of Building Work which Include Practicality and Intricacy'. It contains over 700 pages and 94,000 words and even when he was hospitalised the nurses would look in and leave in despair seeing him working on it at all hours on his laptop. Harry claims that the processes for estimating the project costs within the building trade are substantially the same as those used in the 1600s and he comes up with proposals to change this such that the HS2ish cost increases that plague the industry are a thing of the past. Part of his work involved visiting building sites and taking photographs to prove his case. Having finished the thesis and got his doctorate he says that there remains a long way to go in getting the work implemented, and to that end he has already given lectures to trade institutes.

'Congratulations' seems to be a tame word to acknowledge his painstaking achievement.

Steve Hughes

p.s. Harry Hussey will also be reappearing on Channel 4 in a Christmas special addendum to the 'Piano' programme in which he was one of the televised finalists earlier in the year. Don't miss it.

2023 BROKEN CROSS CONCERT

On Sunday afternoon December 10th, 2pm, the Stockport Accordion Club 'Road Show' will be once again at the Broken Cross Club, Broken Cross, Macclesfield, SK11 8TU, for the Stockport Accordion Club annual charity concert. All the proceeds from the concert will go to the East Cheshire Hospice. The club has been presenting this annual concert since 1999.

The Stockport Accordion Band, Accordion Spice, Helen Rich, and Walter Perrie will all be performing, so you can be assured of an afternoon of super accordion entertainment. John Jones MBE is the organiser, and the tickets cost £8 each; contact John for tickets/info on 01625 618 691 (landline) or 07871 767708 (mobile). All are welcome.

Rob Howard (SAC)

COMMUNITY PLAYING – BERRYHILL VILLAGE

By Tony Britton

The great thing about Community Playing is not only the music but also the camaraderie amongst the players, and the socialising over refreshments. Here we are during the break, on Saturday 25th November, at Berryhill Village community near Bucknall, Stoke-on-Trent. Missing from the picture are Rosie and Miriam who may be in the queue for our gratis hot-dogs and drink. The event was their Christmas Fair with many stalls loaded with Xmas gifts and artistic items from jewellery to cuddly toys. It was very well attended and a joy to play for.

One word of warning. Always remember to impress on organisers that we accordionists need chairs without arms. After a moment of panic, we espied enough armless chairs to swop for those allocated. We're getting good at this type of gig with ample music to cover the whole 3-hour event.

The organiser must have been happy, giving us a little extra than expected for our funds. Next up, is our visit to the u3a at Longton on Thursday, 30th of November.



Knutsford Accordion Day

MD Andrew Purkiss

at

The Hall at Marthall

Bring your accordion for a fun-tastic event



Accordion workshop for accordionists of all abilities

Music for all playing levels provided in advance

Andrew Purkiss is an experienced MD at accordion events and comes with excellent credentials

The Hall at Marthall
Sandlebridge Lane
Marthall
Knutsford
WA16 7SB

Saturday
18th May, 2024

10 am - 5 pm

Players' admission £20

light refreshments available

Any surplus funds, donations and raffle income go to Cancer Research UK



Further information available from
info@northstaffsaccordionclub.com
www.northstaffsaccordionclub.com

Steve Hughes 07939 362294

Diary

Club Nights at Bradwell WMC ST5 8JA (third Tuesday of the month)

December	Christmas Party
January	Club Players + Sherry and Mince Pies
February	Theme Night 'Love in the Title'
March	Theme 'Welsh or Irish' (St David's, St Patrick's)
April	Guest Night – Tracey Middleton
May	Player's Night
June	Theme 'Mode of Transport'
July	Guest – Accordion Spice quartet

Beginners/Improvers at Bradwell WMC	Mondays Nov 27 th Dec 11 th
Band rehearsals at Bradwell WMC	Tuesdays except 3 rd of month
Community Playing at Longton u3a,	Thursday Nov 30 th
Playing for Pleasure at the Boat Club, Endon	Thursday 14 th December 2 pm.
Band Concert, Community Hall Endon	Saturday 19 th April, 2024
Knutsford Accordion Day	Saturday 18 th May, 2024

External Events

Stockport AC's charity concert,	Broken Cross Club, Macclesfield. Dec 3rd, 2pm
Eastbourne Accordion Festival	2 nd - 5 th February, 2024
Cambridge Accordion Day	Sunday 3 rd March, 2024

Club Contacts

President Peter Cowie

Trustees:

Chair	Steve Hughes	07939 362294
Acting Secretary	Steve Hughes	07939 362294
Treasurer	Tony Britton	07923 580760
John Corden, Jacqui Flather, Rosie Galley, Betty Nixon, Ron Rhodes		

Web address: www.northstaffsaccordionclub.com

Club Email: info@northstaffsaccordionclub.com

REGISTERED CHARITY No 1180528