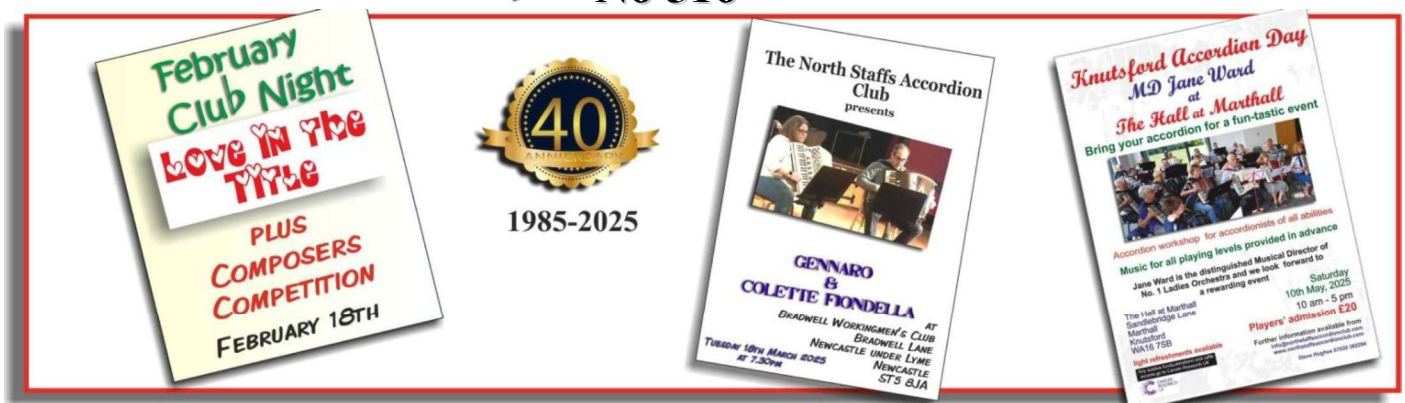


North Staffs Accordion Club

January-February 2025

No 516



*HI EVERYONE AND A HAPPY (BELATED) NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL.
CHEERS LILY*

HAPPY NEW (ANNIVERSARY) YEAR

by **Steve Hughes** (Chair)

This is our first newsletter of 2025, so a Happy New Year to all of our members and friends of the club.

The North Staffs Accordion Club was formed in January 1985 which makes 2025 our 40th Anniversary year. We will be celebrating this in our May club night. Chairman-retired Mike Richards is the only founder member who remains a current one (I joined when I found out about it a year later, so become the second longest).



The 'January Jazz' club night was a superb night featuring **The Basin Street Jazz & Blues Band** (more later) and for the rest of the year we have guests **Gennaro & Colette Fiondella**, **Steve Roxton & Jean Dauvin**, **The Northern Lasses**, and **Leonard Brown** lined up. Also organised is the **Knutsford Accordion Day** for Saturday 10th May.

Our band continues to rehearse, and numbers are growing in the beginners' section, supported by the 3-month free loan of an accordion and subsidised lessons.

All in all, we look forward for a good year ahead.

NEXT CLUB NIGHT

The theme, once again, for our February club night is Valentine related; to play a 'love' related piece. The additional challenge, as always, is to play something that no one else plays. All of these are optional but gain brownie points!

Also, on that evening, we will be having performances of members' compositions (not theme related). Six pieces are scheduled to be played.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Lily Lynch

Our annual Christmas party took place on Tuesday 20th December with Bradwell Workingmen's Club concert room decked out in Christmas decorations and 50 members and friends were present donning their Christmas jumpers and hats.



The night promised plenty of entertainment. There were the usual Christmas carols and a plentiful buffet. We were to be entertained by Barry Smith's **Master Butchers' Duo**, Phil Eardley's magic act called **The Philanian Duo** and a festive sketch written by Miriam Umpleby called **The Real Santa**.

First on the programme we had our club players with carols and Christmas songs to accompany carol singing by the audience with MD, Steve Houghton 'on the baton'.

Next was the Master Butchers' Duo who played and sang. Their programme was packed with rousing songs from the past and plenty of dance music to delight our usual dedicated dancers.

After this followed magic, courtesy of club ex-member and also member of the Magic Circle, **Phil Eardley**. He invited members of the audience to come up on stage to help him with a variety of magic tricks. One trick that always makes me laugh is the one involving thought transference featuring the use of an egg whisk to draw out and transfer thoughts from one brain to that of another of his 'helpers'. The audience was truly mystified and very appreciative of Phil's skills. The other half of the Philanian Duo, **Alan Peake**, was to deliver 'table magic', in the form of 'sleight of hand', to the members while they were eating.



After the buffet we were treated to some home grown entertainment in the form of a short dramatisation involving the identity of 'the real Santa'. Written and narrated by Miriam Umpleby, it featured three Santas, all professing to be 'the real Santa'. Various fighting broke out between two dodgy looking contenders, one professing to be from Asda 'in the High Street', and the other from Marks and Spencer saying it was 'a bit more up market', when suddenly the third (rather dishevelled) Santa appeared from behind the curtains saying that he was 'from frozen Lapland', late, as he was forced to come on the bus because his sleigh was in for service and that HE was in fact the real Santa.



After much argy-bargy and fighting our president suddenly called a halt to the proceeding as they had run out of time. Miriam wound everything up by telling us that it would have to be resolved (and the real Santa revealed) at the next Christmas party.

Finally to round off the evening the Master Butchers returned to the stage and provided further merriment and dance music.

Editor: On my way home, turning everything over in my mind, I decided that I had solved the mystery of the Santas. NONE of the three could in fact have been the real Santa as NONE of them uttered the words, "Yo ho ho"!.....elementary.



JANUARY JAZZ NIGHT

Tony Britton

Traditionally our January club night is a Jazz night and for many years we've been honoured to have Harry Hussey all the way from Glasgow joining our local Jazz group 'Lily's Weepers' with our own Lily on string bass. This year it was the turn of '**Basin Street Jazz and Blues**'.

On a dark and wet January evening it's great not only to have uplifting music but to also keep the seasonal spirit going with a little sherry, Christmas cake and mince pies, another January club night tradition.

The Basin Street Jazz and Blues, a local group of talented musicians and delightful singer, with their line-up of keyboard/accordion, sax/clarinet/flute, string bass and voice make a great sound. So nice to have a blues singer 'Jules M Scott' with her silky-smooth voice. Check out a video of them from the event captured on our YouTube channel 'accordion tv - north staffs'.

I was fascinated by their instruments, especially that of Brian Lightowler, a 5-voice top of the range Scandalli accordion, with 45 treble keys, and an unusual converter bass, which converts the standard Stradella buttons into 6 rows of free bass made up of 3 double rows each replicating the solo buttons of Stradella, while being set to include rows an octave above and rows an octave below the standard rows. Interesting!





John Jones

Not to be outdone Adrian Sherwood plays a 5-string electric double bass made principally of pale maple wood and is known as 'The Blonde'

Respect to Mike Dale who plays tenor sax (Bb), alto sax (Eb), clarinet (Bb), and flute. No wonder he paused for a moment when Jules asked what key a piece was in. Mind you, he didn't match James Gallway's (world class flautist) party trick of playing two tunes at the same time on two penny whistles.

Following the refreshment break, including raffle prizes and attendance award to one lucky member, our club members John Jones and Miriam Umpleby entertained us ahead of Basin Street Jazz and Blues returning to the stage.

The evening was a roaring success due in no small part to the hard work of all helpers and audience participation.

HOSPITAL PERFORMANCE

There was a colourful display on the 20th December when 21 players, plus supporting members, turned up sporting Christmas jumpers and hats for the carol performance at Royal Stoke University Hospital. Situated on a



'balcony' overlooking the main entrance we played Christmas music for 90 minutes under the direction of MD, Steve Houghton, whilst the hospital charity staff had their collection boxes in the foyer below.

Ann Millward brought a boxful of home baked muffins which went down very well during our short break.

A RATHER SPECIAL ACCORDION

by Joan Walley



It was a chance conversation with Charlie from Caverswall, a new recruit to the beginner's group of the North Staffordshire Accordion Club that prompted me to venture out one Monday night to Bradwell Working Men's Club to try my hand at something I'd always wanted to do: play my dad's piano accordion.

I'd grown up with this heavyweight of an instrument. I'd always had a sense that it was not just any old accordion. (Even though, back in the 50s, they were more plentiful). It was certainly special to me. Most of the time it sat in its dark navy blue moulded case, leather handle on top and extra locks on both sides, gathering dust in our cold box room. It belonged to another era; to a life before I was born; to a time

which looked back to the popular music hall tradition and the big bands of the twenties and thirties. But very occasionally, and usually at Christmas or when we had the occasional visitor or a coal fire blazing in the front room, my dad, Arthur Simeon Walley, would haul it down the stairs and carefully open it up. I couldn't wait for him to unfold the protective deep royal blue velvet cover to reveal the stunning butterfly emblazoned instrument lying underneath.

It didn't take long for him to slide through its shoulder and wrist straps, sit down on the piano stool and place the accordion onto his lap, releasing the bellows as he did so, ready to reel out the medley of [Note 6 wrist couplers](#) songs that he could instantly capture from thin air. Christmases were always about the family gatherings around the accordion. Later when he was out of work and money was tight he would head off to local pubs



like the Staffordshire Knot, the Horseshoe or the Coach and Horses for an extra few bob in his pocket. It was usually the piano that he'd play, but very occasionally the piano accordion would go with him too for the singsongs behind drawn curtains that lasted well after closing time.

The tunes he played were very much the songs of the day that people sang along to. He was gifted in that he could play anything by ear, but that didn't stop him filling the piano stool with the exotic sheet music of Gracie Fields, rag time and popular music. Never having asked why they gave me Lorraine as a second name, I can't help thinking it had something to do with the song Sweet Lorraine.



I loved it when he got the accordion out. He wasn't one to boast but he was always very proud to tell the story that it had been specially made for a concert in 1953 in the Potteries to celebrate the Queen's coronation. Looking back, it pains me that I can't remember the detail of the story he told me when I was a little girl about the origin of his red, white and blue – union jack colours - of his purpose made and special piano accordion. Suffice to say that I've treasured it down the years and only wish that I could have extracted its history like he could its tunes.

Turning up at Bradwell Working Men's Club on that cold October night, accordion in hand but too heavy for me to easily lug up the stairs, brought back all these happy memories.

Enquiries with the manufacturers of the accordion, Scandalli, prompted the following reply:

Concerning your request, we can confirm that this is a very particular model, and probably made on specific request.

But unfortunately, since the instrument is too old for our archives, we are not able to provide you with further information.

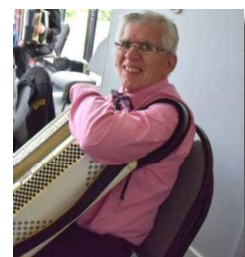
We are very sorry and wish you good luck with your research.

Apparently their archives start in 1990.

Research is continuing into the Bill Bentley Band, of which Arthur Walley was a member and is believed to have played this instrument.

RIP Barry Graham

We start 2025 with the sad news of the death on Monday 6th January of Dr. Barry Graham at the age of 75. Barry, from Wrexham, was a playing member of our club and a pivotal member and treasurer of the Chester Accordion Club. He had been battling cancer for some months and final days were spent in a hospice. Barry was a brilliant musician and put so much feeling into his playing.



Walter Perrie played 'Dark Isle' on the accordion and Barry's daughter, Heather, sang to her friend's guitar accompaniment. Family video recordings shown at the wake featured Barry playing his beloved accordions, of which he had 10. Several references were made to his enthusiasm for the instrument. He will be sorely missed.

RIP Rob Beacroft

Rob, owner of the Birmingham Accordion Centre, and who ran the Birmingham Accordion Club, will have been known to many of our members and was a great personal friend. He last visited our club for the Leonard Brown club night in November, 2023.

Rob lost his battle with cancer on Sunday 5th January after a short stay in hospital. It will be a great loss to the accordion fraternity.



Steve Hughes

Knutsford Accordion Day

MD Jane Ward

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

Jane Ward is the distinguished Musical Director of
No. 1 Ladies Orchestra and we look forward to
a rewarding event

The Hall at Marthall
Sandlebridge Lane
Marthall
Knutsford
WA16 7SB

Saturday
10th May, 2025
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@northstafssaccorionclub.com
www.northstafssaccorionclub.com

Steve Hughes 07939 362294

Diary

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

February 18th	Composers Competition + Theme – Love songs
March 18th	Gennaro & Colette Fiondella
May 20th	40s Anniversary Party
June 17th	Steve Roxton/Jean Dauvin
September 16th	The Northern Lasses
October 32st	AGM & Band
Nov 11th (2nd Tue)	Leonard Brown
December 16th	Xmas Party

Beginners/Improvers at Bradwell WMC

February	10th	24th	March	10th	24th
April	7th	28th	May	12th	26th

Band rehearsals at Bradwell WMC

Tuesdays except 3rd

Playing for Pleasure at the Boat Club, Endon

Second Thursdays 2 pm.

Knutsford Accordion Day

Saturday 10th May 2025

External Events

St Audries Accordion

July 4th - 11th

Midland Accordion Festival

November 7th, 8th and 9th

Club Contacts

President

Peter Cowie

Trustees: Chair

Steve Hughes

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Acting Secretary

Steve Hughes

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Treasurer

Tony Britton

07923 580760

John Corden, Jacqui Flather, Rosie Galley, Betty Nixon, Ron Rhodes

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