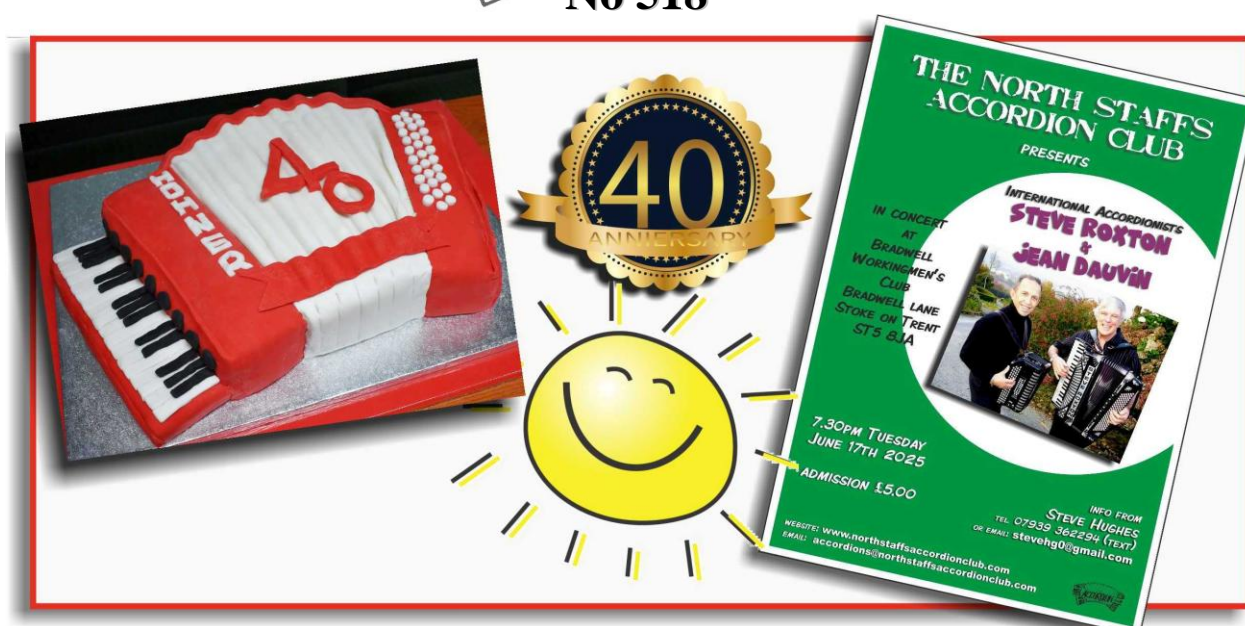


North Staffs Accordion Club

North Accordion Staffs
May-June 2025
No 518



HI EVERYONE. WHAT AN EVENTFUL MONTH FOR THE CLUB WITH THE KNUTSFORD ACCORDION DAY AND OUR 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS NOW BEHIND US. WE NOW LOOK FORWARD TO SOME SUPER GUESTS IN THE COMING MONTHS.

LILY

40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

by Lily Lynch

On Tuesday 20th May we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the forming of our club and we planned an evening of band music with guests, plus a pie and pea supper, and of course the obligatory cake. Just short of 70 people were present and we were honoured to welcome Newcastle's Mayor and Mayoress, Councillor Robert and Mrs Judy Bettley-Smith. Other guests were, founder member of our club, Joy Rendell, who travelled up by train from Paignton, Devon, her friend Yvonne Porter, Rob and Marj Howard from the Stockport, and Barry and Christine Smith from the Black Country accordion clubs.



To open the evening the club band, under the direction of Steve Houghton (who was then to comper the rest of the evening), performed a selection of their repertoire including a great version of *Casey Jones*, featuring some wonderful train like bellows shakes, and finally The Anniversary Waltz.

Afterwards we went swiftly on to the delicious homemade pie, pea and gravy supper which was rapidly



served and enjoyed by all.

Speech time - Mike Richards, the only current club member who was also a founding member, was first to speak, and reminisced about the beginnings of the club and the first year, when the ground rules were laid

down and the newsletter was first introduced; a time when membership was £1 per annum! He told us how he and the late George Karklins were instrumental in getting it going, together with Brian Shufflebotham and Aubrey Lowndes (both also deceased) after visits to Club Accord in Birmingham. Joy Rendell (then Kibble) joined the newly formed committee. It was a time when the late Malcom Gee had great influence on the accordion scene and many of the clubs formed in that period followed his template.



The Mayor then said a few words, thanking us for the invitation which he had gladly accepted as the accordion is a favourite instrument of his. He spoke about the encouragement given by the council to organisations offering music to the youth of the borough.

He was followed by Joy who talked about her experiences while a member, and her musical life including having been instrumental in the formation of Club Accord of Birmingham, and Sheffield Accordion Club (as was).



Mayor and Mayoress with Steve Hughes, Tony Britton and Steve Houghton



Joy Rendell & Mike Richards

Chairman Steve Hughes followed with a report on the current activities taking place in the club.

Then our present president, Peter Cowey, rounded off the speeches saying how he and his wife, Viv, had been welcomed into the club when musician Viv expressed an interest in playing the instrument back in 2016.

It was then time for the cutting of the cake. This had been created by Barbara Cole and yours truly. Barbara baked two delicious cakes (well-fed with whisky) and I cut and pasted them together and iced them to (hopefully) fashion them into an accordion. Joy and Mike did the cake-cutting honours and it was briskly delivered to the tables.

The evening was rounded off with music. Mike Richards and Paul Hobbs played duets - *Island Waltz* (*Weltering Home*; *Skye*; *Roths Bay*), *Cotton Eyed Joe*, *Genevieve Waltz* & *Marino Waltz* – (Medley)



John Baranek

Next was Joy, who played *La Vie en Rose*, *C'est Tout/Amor/Perfidia* - medley, and *Reginella Campagnola* (the woodpecker song).

After this was John Baranek who played a most wonderful sounding button accordion giving us *Siboney* by E. Lecuona, *Valse de Paris* by J.P.Cernay and *The Third Man Theme* (The Harry Lime Theme) which we joined in song with gusto.



The last player, Joe Hill rounded off the evening with a medley of WW1 singalongs.

This had been a wonderful party - all food was devoured including every piece of cake - and we all left having had a wonderful time.

A Non-musical Role for an Accordion (?)

by Steve Hughes

Founder member George Karklins once told me that during the war he was travelling with the intention of getting to the UK from his Baltic state homeland when he was stopped at a German checkpoint. The German officers examined his luggage including his accordion case. George was petrified (his actual words are unprintable) and then relieved that they did not ask him to play the instrument; it was stuffed full of cigarettes!



NEXT CLUB NIGHTS

On Tuesday 17th June we have Steve Roxton (Middlesbrough) and Jean Dauvin (Normandy) as our guests. They were last here on their second visit as a duo six years ago, in April 2019, prior to which Steve came as a solo performer. We are in for an entertaining evening.

No guest on Tuesday 15th July, instead we create our own entertainment with the (optional) theme, **Season of the Year**.

APRIL CLUB NIGHT

by Tony Britton

I tend to enthuse when it comes to write-ups, leaving few superlatives left to praise extra special events. However, as Simon Cowell would say, "I didn't LIKE this event, I LOVED it!" The playing standards and performances at our players nights are improving massively. We take for granted the playing of the likes of Paul, Mike and John Jones (great to have Paul and Chris with us this month), and we're now privileged to have super players like Joe Hill and John Baranek as members.

But what about the rest of us?

Well, I think we are excelling at what we do. The standout performance for me this month was Elizabeth Brixton playing *Ashokan Farewell*. It was an impeccable performance, including posture, phrasing, and bellows control.

We not only record and publicise many of our activities to the general public through our website, Facebook page and YouTube channel but we also have a MEMBERS ONLY section to the website and YouTube videos, to encourage our members to have pictures and their performances recorded without them feeling the added pressure of performing to the public.



Elizabeth Brixton



Pete and Viv Cowie

Another special performance this month was that of Steve Hughes playing his own composition *Molly's Tears*, named after a granddaughter. YOU can see all our resources including the player night videos, by becoming a MEMBER.

We don't praise our helpers enough who, every month, make it all happen. This month let's give a special mention to Viv Cowie who does a great job videoing the performances and capturing the titles of the pieces, and hubby Pete, sorry President

Pete, who comperes so effectively.

I'll mention all the players, but if you want to see their play list check out the website's latest news. <https://www.northstaffsaccordianclub.com/latestnews>

Players this month were Paul Hobbs, Steve Hughes, Jacqui Flather, R&J Duo (Rosie Galley and John Cordon), Viv and Pete Cowie, The A-Team (Tony Britton, Rosie Galley, Jacqui Flather), Elizabeth Brixton, John Baranek, Joe Hill, and Mike Richards & Paul Hobbs. The trick is to get yourself playing partners thus giving you the opportunity to play more than once!!

Finally, Mike won the £10 attendance award, when his MEMBERSHIP numbered ball was selected on the eighth draw. This meant that 7 other members missed out on the winning by not being there on the night. Mike's not complaining!



Steve Hughes

KNUTSFORD ACCORDION DAY 2025

by Glenda Reid

Saturday 10th May heralded the 4th Annual Accordion Workshop Day, hosted by the North Staffs Accordion Club. The venue was the pleasantly situated Marthall Village Hall near Knutsford. The early morning sunshine was glorious as club members began to arrive to prepare for a 10am start.

Chairs were set out, (with a seating plan), pre-owned music displayed for sale, raffle prizes arranged and tea, coffee and biscuits prepared for the arrival of those participating in the day. There was an excited buzz in the room as people gathered and were re-acquainted with one another.

The workshop was led by our MD for the day, Jane Ward, who is MD of the No.1 Ladies Accordion Orchestra.

The 1st session began promptly at 10am with Jane introducing herself and giving us a summary of her impressive musical background. The three pieces we were going to work on had been arranged by Jane and supplied to us prior to the event. We began with a piece called *Beguine for Bert*. It was pointed out to us that this music and the other two that we would tackle during the day, did not contain any directions – i.e., dynamics, phrasing, emphasis etc. and it would be our job to decide what and where these should be. Jane's plan was to help us develop musicality and encourage us with advice and instruction.

As we worked through the piece she added tips on bellows technique, control exercises and adding body movements to enhance our playing. Some of these we probably had known before, but they had receded into the dark recesses of our minds or they were completely new to us. An hour and a quarter later and feeling the effects of total immersion and concentration, we had developed a bland musical piece into an exciting, dynamic performance.



Jane Ward

We took a 20 minute break and were treated to hot beverages and a magnificent array of calorie laden cakes supplied by the lady members of the club.

The 2nd session began with a very different arrangement of *Scarborough Fair*. This was tackled in the same manner as before and as lunchtime approached and tummies began to rumble, we performed our final version. By now our photographer Lydia had arrived and began popping in and around us snapping facial expressions and general mug shots.

During the lunch break there were raffle tickets to buy, music to purchase and more cakes to consume. Picnic lunches were taken outside, making the most of the glorious sunny weather. The obligatory group photo was taken by Lydia and then we drifted indoors for the start of the 3rd session.

The last piece to be tackled was *Gypsy Train* and proved to be the most demanding. Interestingly, Jane revealed that although she had arranged it, she had never heard it performed. Our efforts could have been sheer joy or utter disappointment for her – best we don't know. Given the relatively short time that we had to work on this testing piece, we did finally achieve a credible performance.

We took a break at 4.15pm and during refreshments, the raffle took place. Proceeds from the day were being donated to *Cancer Research UK*. At 4.45pm



the workshop orchestra was seated and ready to give a grand performance of the 3 pieces we had worked so hard on. The audience was small but very appreciative.

This was followed by Simon Kensdale from the Chester and Weaver Valley clubs. He entertained us with an amusing poem about playing the accordion, called *Ebulliance*.

A rare treat came next as Ken Farran (MD of the now lapsed Weaver Valley Band) and his wife Wendy played a duet called *Ferientag* by Hokzshuh. Ken recently celebrated his 90th birthday and proved to us all that when words fail, music speaks. Wendy then played a duet with herself using her digital Bugari. It was a calming, peaceful rendition of *Last of the Summer Wine* and had the effect of inducing a dreamy effect after a busy day.

Julie Best took centre stage next with 3 pieces played in her usual lively style. They were *Der Draufganger* (The Acrobat), a Latin American piece called *Rumbata* and a Sicilian Tarantella – *Bel Fiore*.

Finally, our MD Jane, played 3 pieces, all without the aid of little black dots. First was *Billy's Breton*, then *Brazil* (Faro). Next were 2 jigs played using a drone effect, called *Just for Fun* and *High part of the Road*.

There was huge appreciation for every one's efforts and Steve Hughes brought the event to a close at 6 pm with thanks to all concerned with making the day another success. We gathered our belongings, distributed left over cake, said our goodbyes and headed for home.

Well done North Staffs – another one in the bag.

PLAYING FOR PLEASURE

By Vivienne Cowey A Toast to all those who secured our freedom.

Our P4P group (aka The Trifle Club) took things to a new level on the 80th Anniversary of V E Day, Thursday 8 May 2025. What a wonderful opportunity for a 'Street Party'! We had all the essential ingredients – our very own Veteran, plenty of singers and players, words and music and lots of trifle, cake and drinks. We even had three imminent 80th birthdays and glorious sunshine. What's not to like!

The afternoon started with a quick transformation of the boat club's lounge with flags and bunting and a rehearsal of war songs, ready for the arrival of John Plumb, Veteran, resplendent in his family medals. Following the enthusiastic singing and playing we were enthralled by John's account of his recollections of the Second World War, his family's exit from the French Jura Mountains, and his father's heroic achievements.

Cake, trifle, tea and wine flowed whilst we reminisced about ration books and childhood memories of the 40's and 50's and most importantly, we toasted all those who secured our freedom.

Derek entertained us with medleys on his harmonica and we downed our accordions to enjoy listening to expertly played requests and original music from Paul to end a perfect afternoon.

A fitting tribute to all those who Served. Thank you.



Betty & Geoff at P4P

THIRD PLACE AT THE NORTHERN IRELAND ACCORDION CHAMPIONSHIPS

by Ian Harris

From September 2024 to March 2025, I prepared for the Northern Ireland Accordion Championships with the dedicated support of my tutor, Anne-Marie Devine from Northern Ireland. Encouraged by her simple advice to 'have a go', I entered the Senior Player (over 60) category, selecting five tunes: *The Dark Island* by Iain McLachlan, *The Harvest Home*, *The Rakes of Mallow*, *Out on the Ocean*, and *Grandfather's Clock* (for the solo).



Jean Corrigan presenting Ian's awards

Some pieces were more challenging than others—*The Harvest Home* required a slow and steady approach, while *Out on the Ocean* presented rhythmic difficulties due to its 6/8 time signature. Nevertheless, I practised daily, often in the evenings while my wife and son watched *Emmerdale* and *Coronation Street*, in the bedroom.

Our journey began on Thursday, 6th March, with an overnight stay in Ayr, followed by the 11:30 ferry from Cairnryan on Friday. We arrived in Belfast by mid-afternoon, just in time to change and attend the Friday evening event at the Hilton—a brilliant start to the championships, showcasing both standard and electric accordions.

My first competition performance on Saturday morning didn't go as planned—it was my very first time playing solo in competition—but my second session at 3:10pm went much better. I was praised for the performance, with just one suggestion: give the bellows a bigger squeeze to produce more sound.

We returned in the evening for the awards ceremony. I had no expectations, given it was my first competition and at such a prestigious level. To my delight, I earned two third-place trophies in the afternoon sessions—now proudly displayed in our sitting room.

The weekend was a fantastic experience, brilliantly organised by Clyde Johnstone. I'm grateful to Tony Britton from the North Staffs Accordion Club for his invaluable advice and to fellow members at the Beginners and Improvers evenings in Bradwell for their encouragement.

Ian tries to get to the Beginners/Improvers session of our club once a month. Not a mean feat in that it involves a 233 mile drive, 5 hours each way, and an overnight stay, all the way from Lowestoft, Suffolk. What a hero.

Diary

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

June 17 th	Steve Roxton/Jean Dauvin
July 15 th	Theme – Season of the Year
September 16 th	The Northern Lasses
October 32 st	AGM & Band
Nov 11 th (2nd Tue)	Leonard Brown
December 16 th	Xmas Party Roman Voloshchuk

Beginners/Improvers at Bradwell WMC

June	2nd	23rd
July	7th	28th
August	11th	
September	1st	22nd

Band rehearsals at Bradwell WMC

Tuesdays except 3rd

Playing for Pleasure at the Boat Club, Endon

Second Thursdays 2 pm.

External Events

St Audries Accordion	July 4 th - 11 th
Midland Accordion Festival	November 7 th , 8 th and 9 th

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		

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