

North Staffs Accordion Club Newsletter

May/June 2022

No 500



Hi EVERYONE. I HOPE YOU HAVE BEEN ENJOYING ALL THE WONDERFUL JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS AND THE WARMER WEATHER.



APRIL CLUB NIGHT

Although numbers were down against pre-pandemic attendances, we had a reasonable turnout for the April club night and it was a good gathering of players for the monthly playalong to start off the evening's entertainment. It was good to see some new faces. We have seen her and heard her play on Zoom, but it was the first time for us to meet Amanda Hilmarsson-Dunn in person.



Another 'first' was the appearance of Elizabeth Brixton at a club night, though she is a seasoned member of the band rehearsals. Both of them live in the Lichfield area and manage an occasional practice together and, with Amanda having lived in Iceland, they gave a duet performance of some beautiful Scandinavian music.

The theme for the evening was for 'nautically related' music and the players did not disappoint. There was another 'first' when opening player, Barry Graham, finished his spot singing the lyrics. We didn't realise that he had this skill! The evening finished with everyone joining in a singalong to a performance by Miriam Umpleby, and everyone went home happy, especially the chairman, Steve Hughes, who pocketed the attendant member award of £10.



Following is a list of the players and what they played:

Barry Graham (above left) - *Theme from the Navy Lark, The Man at the Nor* (the latter with vocals)

Amanda Hilmarsson-Dunn and **Elizabeth Brixton** (top right – Elizabeth left, Amanda right) - Landmanna Langum, Vettabergs Skagga, Úndir bláhimni *

John Corden - *Songs of the Sea, Hearts of Oak, Sloop John B*

Paul Hobbs (above right) - *Stranger on the Shore, La Mer*

Viv (acc) and **Peter Cowie** (vocals) – *Shoals of Herring, The Sinking of Reuben James*



Norman Brown (*above*) - *Do you want your Old Lobby Washed down? Galway Bay, Mountains of Mourne, Golden Light of Old Aberdeen*

Derek Wilton - *Red Sails in the Sunset, Anchors Away, Rule Britannia*

Betty Nixon – *Over the Waves, The Mariners' Hymn*

Miriam Upleby (*below right*) – (Medley with vocals with the audience joining in) – *Now is the Hour, Tipperary, Pack up your Troubles, White Cliffs of Dover, We'll Meet Again*

* Amanda provided the following interpretation of, and information about, the duet music played

'**I** (*in*) **Landmannalaugum**', a geothermal nature reserve in the volcanic mountains of southern Iceland. There is a hot stream running through the area, so campers are able to take a dip in the warm water. It was written by Vigfús Sigurðsson in 1944.

'**Í Vettabergets skugga**', 'In the Shadow of the Vettaberg' a 781 metres high mountain in Sweden south west of Östersund. It was composed by Sven Amren and there is a YouTube performance of the piece.

'**Úndir bláhimni**', 'Under the Blue Sky', was arranged by Amanda's late Icelandic accordion teacher, Karl Jónatansson, but is actually Norwegian. In Norwegian it is called 'når lysene tændes derhjemme', which translates as 'when the lights are turned on at home' again it is on YouTube.



MAY CLUB NIGHT

The attendance was lower this month with quite a few apologies. Getting back to pre-pandemic attendances looks like being a difficult task. Once again we started with our playalong, Tony Britton



taking the lead. No attendant members award this month because the chairman had forgotten to bring the 'bingo balls'(!) so double award was promised for next month.

Following is a list of the performances:

Geoff Capewell - *Golden Coach, Ich Liebe Dich, White Cliffs of Dover*. During Geoff's performance of *Golden Coach*, chorister John Corden could be heard singing the

lyrics so Geoff was invited to do a repeat, accompanied by John in full voice, which went down well with the audience.

John Plumb - *Georgia on my Mind, Midnight in Moscow, Am Spinette*, a Swiss piece from the country of his birth.

Paul Hobbs - *More, Happy Birthday Sweet 16, The Last Waltz*



Betty Nixon (*left*) - *La Paloma, Cucaracha, Scottish Medley*

Derek Wilson (*right*) - 11-minute medley of 11 old-time songs on harmonica. Derek was complimented not only for his playing but also for his memory in stringing the songs together.

Steve Hughes (*top left*) - Spoken words and music '*Bosun Bill*' from the Sea of Thieves online game.

Mike Richards - *Morenita Do Brazil, La Cumparsita, Leaving of Liverpool* (the latter with accordion, backing track and sung).

Miriam Upleby – Following her popular closing spot in April, Miriam was invited to take on the last one again. She played *Happy Birthday* (for John Plumb), *Red Red Robin* and *Mockingbird Hill* singalongs, finishing with *Chicken Dance* (with actions)! This was another good closing spot with full audience participation.



CHARITY CONCERT FOR UKRAINE

Kidsgrove Town Hall

On Friday 22nd of April our club organised a charity concert to raise money for the people of Ukraine suffering in the terrible war waged by Russia. The Kidsgrove mayor kindly gave us one of her charity nights which meant that we had the Victoria Hall in Kidsgrove free of charge as a venue, all proceeds to be channelled through the Disaster Emergency Committee, Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal (DEC).



Our club band had two spots during the evening (before and after the interval) as did **Stefan Andrusyschyn** and **Denise Leigh** and the **City of Stoke on Trent Male Voice Choir**. **Philip Eardley** was compere and there was a raffle during the break when a good selection of homemade cakes with tea and coffee were offered.



The hall was soon full and everything kicked off with our band first on with a varied programme from our playlist.



Stefan and Denise followed and then the choir. As usual, Stef and Denise were superb with Denise's beautiful voice filling the hall. I was thrilled when she remembered to include my favourite song – Vilja from The Merry Widow which had me in tears as usual. The

choir were wonderful even though some of their number were absent for various reasons. I was particularly moved by Bring Him Home from Les Miserables.

The evening raised £1100 for the charity. **Lily**

THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE PARTY

From the feedback we have received since, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Party held at Bradwell Workingmen's Club on Tuesday 31st May was a huge success. Under the excellent guidance of Tony Britton as compere, the event started with a singalong/playalong of the National Anthem followed by medleys of the music of the UK countries, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and



England ending in a rousing, flag-waving rendition of



Land of Hope and Glory. Sixteen club players (*above*) gave the accompaniment under the direction of Steve Houghton and Peter Cowie led the audience in singing.

Our guests for the evening, **The Fettleers** (*above*), followed with **Michael Joyce** on accordion and **Bryn Ford** on guitar, Michael mainly, but Bryn also contributing to the vocals. They are excellent musicians and had a programme ideal for creating a party atmosphere and drawing much of the audience onto the dance-floor, the ice



broken by the Houghton family, Steve, Cathryn and daughters Lydia and Bethany who were first up and last to leave! Steve was totally committed and managed to raise 'dad dancing' to a whole new level!



One of the songs played, and sung by Michael (for the first time in public), was '**The Knocker Upper Man**' by the late Bury entertainer, Mike Canavan. He told us that the knocker

upper was a man, usually employed by a factory owner in the days before the availability of alarm clocks, who used a long pole to knock on the upstairs window of the factory workers to get them out of bed (*see Wikipedia*). Apparently the last one did not go out of business until 1973 in Bolton!

As well as his musicianship, Michael Joyce demonstrated that he is an accomplished artist and kindly gave us a framed drawing of the knocker upper man for our raffle. It is one that he had drawn (*see photo above*). Fittingly this picture was won by the Houghton family.

STOCKPORT ACCORDION BAND CONCERT

Broken Cross Club, Macclesfield

by Glenda Reid

On Sunday April 3rd 2022, I went to the Broken Cross Club in Macclesfield, where Stockport Accordion Band (SAB) was giving a concert in aid of the Intensive Care Unit at Macclesfield Hospital.

There was already a good crowd waiting for the concert to begin when I arrived. Looking around the room, I spotted numerous people that I knew including members of the North Staffs Accordion Band and also Pearl Fawcett-Adriano who is renowned for being a world class player.

Rob Howard introduced the Stockport Accordion Band (SAB) as they were to open the concert. As I understand it, the band no longer has an M.D. and so some of the members take on the role and conduct a few pieces each. First to lead the band was Adrienne Sharp. She gave a little information about the pieces, before they played *Waltzes from the North, All in the April Evening, Gold and Silver Waltzes* and *Liechtensteiner Polka*.



The band had a break and John Jones stepped forward and gave us a solo performance of some well known melodies. Then they returned for a second spot with Brennan Wilson leading them. He is a very well spoken gent who gave some interesting facts about the music to be played, these being, *Cuckoo Waltz, So deep is the Night, Londonderry Air, and Proudlock's Hornpipe/Boys of Bluehill*.



Walter Perry was the next soloist to perform. I have seen Walter perform before and recall that he has very speedy fingers. Walter had brought his dog along and left it in the care of his wife whilst he was playing. The dog reacted as Walter stepped forward to play and barked intermittently throughout the performance, even attempting to join his master as he played. It only settled down when Walter returned to his side. 'Different!'

For me, the highlight of the afternoon came when the ladies who make up the quartet, **Accordion Spice** (*above*) came on stage. They work well together led by the very talented Helen Rich (*above right*). She has a beautiful new Serenellini and the sound was exquisite.

The main interval came and I took the opportunity to chat to the players and examine newly acquired accordions, Helen's and Brennan's in particular. Brennan demonstrated his new instrument and explained that it was not covered in cellulose and therefore was 1 kilo lighter. The raffle took place and to my surprise, I won a prize. I'm not usually successful in raffles.

Straight after the interval, the SAB played their 3rd spot, this time with Marj Howard as their conductor. They played *Autumn Leaves, These Foolish Things, Topsy* and *Love is a many Splendid Thing*. I was watching Pearl Fawcett-Adriano during the playing of Topsy. (I may have got the wrong tune, but it was one that she either wrote or arranged.) Pearl played the piece with her fingers on the table, fingering the melody exactly as she knew how.

The concert finished with a performance by Water Perrie and Helen Rich playing together. Helen is a superb player but was concerned that she could not keep up with the speed of Walter's fingers. How we all wish we could say that. John Jones closed the afternoon by thanking everyone and informing us that almost £500 had been raised. A worthwhile and enjoyable afternoon and we were also able to drive home in daylight.

COMMUNITY PLAYING

Groups of our players have recently played in two venues, the first, playing for villagers at the Goldenhill Community Hall. It must have gone down well, because they immediately booked us for Christmas. Mind you, we have a secret weapon in the form of front man Pete who has the audience in the palm of his hand, currently out of shot while taking a picture or two.

The second was at Headway House, Cobridge, helping them to enjoy their Jubilee Party. Headway is the leading UK charity dedicated to the care and support of people who have sustained a brain injury. We also have two more up-coming events over the Jubilee weekend, at Bradwell Hall, and Beaumaris Court, Newcastle.



FIRST POST-PANDEMIC BAND PERFORMANCE

Bethesda Methodist Chapel, Hanley.



On a sunny afternoon of Saturday, the 14th May, the band gave a performance in the iconic and historic Bethesda Methodist Chapel, Hanley, in support of an open day organised by the chapel trust for its upkeep funds. Originating from the late 18th c the Grade II listed building has seating for a congregation of 2500 and is one of the largest Nonconformist chapels outside London. One of its attractive features is its wonderful acoustics which makes it a venue loved by musicians.

We had a transient and sparse (blamed on the weather) audience, but nevertheless an enjoyable time as our first post-pandemic band outing. It's always good to hear the words "Will you come again" when parting.

Diary

Weekly Tuesdays 7.30 pm	Band Rehearsals, Bradwell WMC
Thursday, 9 th June 2.00 pm	Playing for Pleasure
Tuesday, 21 st June 7.30 pm (replaces rehearsal)	Club Night (Theme - Name of Person) Bradwell WMC.
Monday 27 th June 7.30 pm	Beginners/Improvers, Bradwell WMC
Saturday 2 nd July 2 pm	Band – Tittensor School Fete
Thursday 14 th July 2.00 pm	Playing for Pleasure
Tuesday 19 th July 7.30 pm (replaces rehearsal)	Club night - Players' Night. Bradwell WMC
Monday 11 th July 7.30 pm	Beginners/Improvers, Bradwell WMC
Monday 25 th July 7.30 pm	Beginners/Improvers, Bradwell WMC

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