

North Staffs Accordion Club

November-December 2024

No 515



Hi EVERYONE.

JUST THINK..... FATHER CHRISTMAS, TO DELIVER ALL GIFTS TO PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD ON CHRISTMAS EVE, WOULD HAVE TO VISIT 822 HOMES A SECOND, TRAVELLING AT 650 MILES A SECOND - NOT TO MENTION EATING A MINCE PIE AT EVERY STOP. SO WITH THAT THOUGHT - PLEASE LET ME WISH YOU A



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

CHRISTMAS PARTY

We will be starting the Christmas party with carol playing, as we do every year, for which all club players are invited to take part. There will be a few *special* members' spots and, of course, our fabulous party guests, not forgetting our Christmas buffet.



This year we'll be having a party with a difference with two duos as guests, **The Philanian Magic Duo**, who will be performing both stage and table magic, and Barry Smith's **The Master Butcher Duo** (left).



It takes place at our usual club night venue, Bradwell Workingmen's Club, commencing at the earlier time of 7.00 pm on the 17th December, 2022, Christmassy attire to be admired once more. A night to look forward to.

JANUARY POST CHRISTMAS JAZZ NIGHT BASIN STREET JAZZ AND BLUES

In the past our January club night was one where we regularly had Harry Hussey and Lily's Weepers' Jazz entertainment. Unfortunately, age has caught up with this line-up. In its place we will revive the jazz genre with the **Basin Street Jazz and Blues** ensemble.

Don't worry, the usual post Christmas indulgence, namely the consumption of mince pies, Christmas cake and sherry, will take place during the interval.

The ensemble members have been making music together for a decade and are constantly developing their repertoire. They perform throughout the North West, at functions and festivals in



addition to more formal concerts and jazz club sets.

The members are:

Jules M Scott vocals

Jules began her singing career down south in Brighton a little over 20 years ago – singing in a friend's bluegrass band. Since moving to Derbyshire she soon formed Basin Street Jazz & Blues and performs as lead vocalist. She also sings with two fantastic swing bands – Fish Lip Soup Big Band and High Peak Big Band. When she's not singing, Jules works as an artist and creative mentor. But, even then, she's usually still singing!

Mike Dale saxophone & flute

Multi-instrumentalist, Mike plays piano, guitar, clarinet, saxophone, and flute although saxophone has always been his main instrument. He forged a career in piano tuning and when not composing, he is involved in many different types of music, ranging from baroque to jazz, and many other styles, both written and improvised, that come his way.

Brian Lightowler piano & accordion

Brian took up the clarinet and saxophone at school and has always held a fascination for the versatility of the accordion. In the 1980's he was one of the founder members of the revived Stockport Accordion Club, then known as the Clifford Wood Accordion Orchestra. The venture started in Cliff's local pub; largely a forum for the maestro's pupils and the small group participated in the NAO festival circuit. We fondly remember outings to the national competitions at such hot spots as Burton, Scarborough and Blackpool. Initially as a gesture aimed at addressing lugubrious unfitness, Brian joined the local Scottish Dance class but soon found a niche in playing the music, making an annual pilgrimage to the Mecca of the genre in St. Andrews. Until its disbandment he was the accordionist for Manchester Royal Scottish Dance Society (RSCDS) demonstration team, and also ran a successful ceilidh band for a few years. Brian moved towards the piano in midlife and juggled his hobby with a busy career in the medical profession. More recently he has become embroiled in the local Big Band scene and is also at home on the 'king of instruments', the pipe organ.

Adrian Sherwood double bass

Adrian Sherwood was taught double bass at school on an old cracked and split instrument that sounded awful. After leaving, he played bass guitar with ensembles, eventually buying a 4 string Fender and later 5 string Steinberg fretless bass guitars. In the mid 90's, when invited to join Basin Street Jazz & Blues, to get a more 'authentic' sound a Luther in Cornwall made a 5 string electric double b made principally of pale maple wood and is known as 'The Blonde'. Adrian currently plays jazz with 'Basin Street', contemporary rock and pop with a Buxton based band called 'Moving Target' and rhythm and blues with 'Responsibly Sauced' with members from around the Peak District.

AUDLEY THEATRE

By Steve Hughes

For a visit by our guest player, John Morgan of Falkirk, we booked the local Audley Theatre for a joint performance by John and our club band in aid of the Macari Foundation. John was scheduled to be our guest on his way back to Scotland from very successful appearances at the West Midlands Accordion Festival in Dudley. We had outstanding reports from some of those who attended.



After welcoming all, compere for the evening, Pete Cowie, opened the concert by giving an account of the work done by ex Manchester United footballer, and Stoke City FC Manager (also featured in the film 'Marvellous') Lou Macari, by providing shelter for the homeless of Stoke on Trent through his foundation.

With MD Steve Houghton at the baton, the North Staffs Accordion Club band started its performance with the lively A La James Last and was met by lovely acoustics from the theatre.

We're not used to such venue comfort with curtains and lighting engineers. The only thing it lacked was a few more to fill some empty chairs.

After the first of two spots by the band John Morgan took to the stage with his lovely Piermaria accordion and a load of electronic equipment. Known as an acoustic lover, I was a bit apprehensive until he started playing and the sounds, different for each piece he played, were amazing, from guitar and banjo to full orchestra and everything in between. How he controlled the changes mid-song was very impressive and involved using his elbow as well as his foot pedals and couplers. I have never heard an electronic accordion played like this before. At one point he played through a tartan blanket, having covered the keyboard of the accordion!

John told me that there were no backing tracks although there were two tunes that he used auto-accompaniment on namely the Lord of the Dance medley and Duelling Banjos. The auto-accompaniment facility is triggered from the left hand of the accordion and can create a basic accompaniment based on which bass note and chord is being played on the left hand meaning that if a wrong button was pressed, the accompaniment would go awry.

John uses 3 different sound modules namely a Roland Integra, a Yamaha Motif, and a Ketron SD90. All three excel at different things. He can control the three modules at the same time from either the iPad, or the iPod built into the grill of the accordion.

He is a beta tester for Midi Designer, the app he uses on the iPad, and many of the items such as pedals and midi hardware in his setup he has designed himself from scratch. He is often called upon by other musicians to solve midi problems or to design something to do a job that can't be done by any off-the-shelf unit.

It was a lovely concert which also raised £300 for the charity.

OCTOBER CLUB NIGHT – AGM



Derek Wilton

As members gathered together for the October club night we were met with some nice background music provided by Mike Richards. The evening then started with our AGM, presided over for the first time by incumbent president, Pete Cowie. Chairman Steve Hughes presented his report stating that the club membership was stable as was the membership of the beginners group. The uptake of the '3 month-free-accordion-loan' scheme was down on the previous year, he said, but was

still healthy. This was followed by Tony Britton's treasurer's report, reporting the club to be well placed financially for the year to come.

Following a harmonica performance by Derek Wilton, the band, under the direction of MD, Steve Houghton, gave a performance, playing out the evening with a programme which included newer additions to its repertoire.



NOVEMBER CLUB NIGHT



Miriam Umpleby

Our November club night took place on a horrible windy and snowy night and although, at twenty four, our attendance was lower than normal, we were delighted that that many had turned out.

The theme for the night was to play something in Latin rhythm and from the response, in terms of the number of pieces played and braving the weather by the player, it must have been popular.



Peter & Viv Cowie

The following is what was played:

Geoff Capewell	Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White, La Comparsita, Brasilia
Steve Hughes	April in Portugal, Tico Tico
John Plumb	La Donna e mobile, Vesti la Giubba
Derek Wilton	Wheels, Jambalaya, Brazil
Tony Britton	Jealousy, Arrivaderci Roma
Jacqui Flather	Kevana, Blue Tango
Mike and Paul	La Paloma / Spanish Eyes / Arrivaderci Roma - medley, The Fields of Athenry
Betty Nixon	Green Eyes, La Paloma
Miriam Umpleby	La Bamba, Suku Suku
Viv and Pete Cowie	It's Now or Never (duet), Perfidia
A-Team	O Sole Mio, Summertime, Maria, Habanara

For The Fields of Athenry, that rhythm, Mike said, would get them thrown out of an Irish pub, the audience, however, enjoyed it.

Miriam Umpleby used recorded rhythmic backing for her renditions of La Bamba and *Suku Suku*, and (compere) Pete sang It's Now or Never to accordion accompaniment by other half, Viv Cowie, followed by a solo by Viv of Perfidia.



The 'A-Team'

The night ended with a group performance by the 'A-team' quartet (Tony, Rosie, Mike, Jacqui). It turned out to be a great night, enjoyed by all, and leaving us to brave the slightly better weather on our way home.

CASTELFIDARDO

By Steve Hughes

Geoff Capewell and I had a great time in October on a trip to the Mecca of the accordionists, Castelfidardo, a town near the heel of Italy, famous for the manufacture of accordions. We were members of a group visit organised, and advertised as his last of the big groups, by Peter Le Geyt of the Guildford Accordion Club. Peter has been doing the trips for years, also having holidays in that area of Italy, and has extensive knowledge of the area and numerous accordion factories, and has the contacts, enabling him to make it a highly organised event, as this one played out.

Most of the British contingent of the group flew out from Heathrow, but our flight was from Stansted where we were dropped off at 3 am (!) by Geoff's son, Robert, for a 6.30 am flight to Bologna. The rendezvous at the Italy end was the coach park at the airport, and there we met our coach driver for the stay, Franco, and the other members of the group, 13 from the UK, 9 USA. 6 Canadians, 3 Irish (who had been on our plane) and one from Israel, who, we found out, had had great difficulty getting a flight out of the country because of the ongoing conflict there; 32 in all. We were to find out that for one Scottish couple, Tony and Sue, it was their 6th visit and for two others it was their 2nd (Alex, Scottish) and 3rd (Peter, Irish).

The coach journey from the airport took about two and a half hours,



Galassi bellows factory

stopping for lunch, and then on to Castelfidardo where some of us ascended a hill to see a monument commemorating a battle for the unification of Italy in 1860, and others went to the shop of the Musictech digital accordion manufacturers. We then travelled to our hotel via collection points for the loan of three accordions for use by our group.

Our accommodation was the lovely Hotel Giardino, which sported a large swimming pool (though end-of-season cold) and a (warm) spa, in the sea resort of Numana, 6 miles from Castelfidardo. Throughout our stay we had breakfast here and other meals on our travels. We had a section of the hotel separate from the other guests and could entertain ourselves with the accordions up to 11.30 pm. There were some very good players in our midst (Tony and Alex included) and we had a really good time during these sessions. The three from Ireland and I were button players and unfortunately (in my case fortunately for them!) we didn't have button accordions. Geoff was brave enough to try out the swimming pool with one or two shivering others, and we both took some time off the factory visits to enjoy the spa.

Over the stay the group visited factories and showrooms every day; Siwa & Figli, Beltuna, Scandalli, Bugari/Zero Sette (they also make the Petosa and Giullietti elsewhere), RCR (reed blocks), Polverini, ABB, FBB, Maxims (who have the Sonola and Settimio Soprani brands), Binci Reeds, Galassi (bellows), Voci Armoniche Reeds, Carini Accessory Shop. We skipped a few.



Geoff with the world's biggest accordion

In addition to our short visit to its outskirts, we had time at Castelfidardo town centre where we visited an accordion museum and in nearby building, the largest working accordion in the world, and a smaller, but large, chromatic. There was a visit to the underground caves in Osimo from which Geoff and I opted out, instead going to Numana town where we had pizza near the beach, but from the feedback the cave proved to be very interesting, extensive and man-hewn over centuries with carved 'graffiti'. We missed out on that one! On our penultimate day we went to the scenic town of Loreto with its magnificent Basilica where we had lunch.

Each night we dined in different country restaurants with self-created accordion entertainment in some of them. On our first night this entertainment was supplemented by the Castelfidardo adopted accordionist, Antonino, taught by Frank Morocco, who gave an impressive jazzy performance.

On the final Saturday, after another of their bountiful breakfasts and a group photograph, we loaded the coach for our return journey. The 'holiday' wasn't quite over, however, and en route to the airport we had a visit to the (F1) land-and Italy-locked country of San Marino dominated by its hilltop fortress city. Tourism is a major part of San Marino's economy and it served us well with the shops, restaurants and splendid views. Away then to the airport and, for Geoff and me, a hotel stay overnight for our Sunday flight, landing home this time at a decent hour of 6 pm.



Steve & Geoff at San Marino

It was a great experience. We learned a lot about the manufacturing process of producing accordions, and it was good to visualise the factories of the accordion brands that we talk about so often. It was also a good social gathering and we made new friends from this and the other countries and nice to meet Peter, who I have spoken to and emailed so often, and on top of that we had a jolly good time.

p.s. Peter may be arranging an additional smaller group in March or April to be advised

MY LIFE IN MUSIC by Ian Harris.

Ian Harris joined the beginners section of our club in October 2024 and does a four hour journey each way to get to Bradwell from Lowestoft, Sussex, staying overnight in a local hotel and sometimes going on to another club before returning home.



Music was in my life from an early age and started at primary school with my class teacher who was a pianist and played her piano for school assembly and in her classroom, which was also the music room. She sure could make those ivories sound out. During my time at primary school my dad took me to watch a sea cadet band march through the town on a church parade on a Sunday morning to the local parish church and sing a few hymns in church. We would then follow them round and back to their unit to witness their ceremony of evening colours where the band played whilst the flag was lowered. I quite

liked the idea of that, and when I was ten I joined the Sea Cadet Corps and very quickly joined the band as a cymbal basher then onto the bass drum. I marched with them for a further 10 years on carnivals, church parades, inspections starting with the Royal Tournament at Earls Court London (where we were the preliminary item on the programme), and eventually our own Naval Tournament at the local pool which was could be converted into a stage and hall.

I remained in the corps for many years and eventually took up a euphonium at the age of 23, playing countermelodies. I expanded my experience by playing at a local concert band and got the chance to play onboard HMS Illustrious with the Royal Marine Band on way back from Gibraltar to Portsmouth, my claim to fame.

The corps changed significantly and I was stores officer with little music to be played so I moved away from the corps and started playing in concert bands mainly brass but occasionally military and played in Barnes in London, Eastbourne in Sussex, Loddon in Norfolk and sometimes the odd fill in, mainly as 2nd euph player and not principle.

About three years ago after Remembrance Day in London I hung up my euphonium and took up accordion taking local lessons. I found that I was not improving sufficiently, however, I got to know LSAB Accordion Club in Letterkenny in the Republic of Ireland and Sean O'Neil from Gortin in Northern Ireland who introduced me to Anne-Marie Devine who became my new accordion teacher and I have been taking lessons from her on Zoom ever since, or when in Ireland in person with her. I have also tried to support her by being at venues when she has been playing in Northern Ireland or here in Birmingham or at North Staffs. I made stand fronts for the Northern Lassies Accordion Quartet.

I'm now looking to improve on my accordion playing; having taken Level 1 piano accordion and gained a pass I am now working on Level 2.

Looking forward to many more years of music.

CLUB COMPOSERS' COMPETITION

Here is a reminder of the **Composers' Competition**, open to members, which will take place on the February club night. The rules have been relaxed and the main objective is to play it, or have it played, on the night. Take it as seriously or jocularly as you wish and we will work with you after the event as to how we take it forward if that is your wish.

MUSESCORE WORKSHOP



By **Elizabeth Brixton**

Hats off to Tony Britton and Steve Hughes for the huge amount of work and thought that they put into the MuseScore workshop on 28th November. The two-hour session was well presented to around fourteen club members who were keen to get to grips with various aspects of the free music writing program, MuseScore.

We were a mixed bunch, ranging from the more experienced to the almost beginners like me.

We covered the use of the VIEW menu for using PLAYBACK to practise the band and other pieces, with volume and tempo control, the separation of the different accordion parts and bringing in a metronome and a 'count in'.

Adopting and adapting scores and creating music will also be very useful, particularly the shortcuts for inserting rests and notes of different values, without the difficulty of trying to get



the arrow in exactly the right place. There was much to take in but I think that it covered enough ground to help people to benefit from its usefulness.

There was more that we would have liked to do but time got the better of us. Thanks again.

The North Staffs Accordion Club
 plays
CHRISTMAS CAROLS
 featuring
CLUB PLAYERS

at
Royal Stoke University Hospital
FRIDAY DECEMBER 20TH 2024, 3.00PM
 IN MAIN BUILDING
 OVERLOOKING MAIN ENTRANCE
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Diary

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

December	Christmas Party – Music and Magic
January	Post Christmas Jazz
February	Composers Competition and ‘Love’ Theme
March	Gennaro & Colette

Beginners/Improvers at Bradwell WMC

December	9th	
January	13th	27th

Band rehearsals at Bradwell WMC

Tuesdays except 3rd

Playing for Pleasure at the Boat Club, Endon

5th December thereafter the second

Thursdays at 2 pm.

Knutsford Accordion Day

Saturday 10th May 2025

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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