Notes from the Chairman

Staplers have been busy as ever this summer with the usual as well as some new activities. The evenings were fine and warm this year for our annual dance around Pirton Maypole and our Pub/BBQ night – this time at the Fox, Pirton.

For the first time for many years a group from the club went to the dance festival at Eastbourne over the first May Bank Holiday, where we enjoyed sun and sea as well as good dancing and company.

Our lavender and straw costumes have had an airing at the Baldock, Letchworth and Hitchin festivals in May, June and July respectively.

Baldock Midnight Morris invited Staplers to join with them in their Day of Dance on the last Saturday of the Baldock Festival. Staplers danced, along with morris sides from a wide area, at various locations around the town and enjoyed the varied other events organised for the day which stayed warm and dry. Unfortunately we were not so lucky, weather-wise for the Letchworth Festival Day of Dance. This consisted of a series of timed slots when local dance groups of any sort could showcase what they did. Staplers were ready, led by Joan Rutt, to show a few dances then encourage others to have a go but not long into our slot the heavens opened and all had to retreat to shelter. With limited time allotted the group resumed in the arcade but in the cold, wet conditions sadly it was not the occasion we had hoped for.

Fortunately the dire weather forecast for the Hitchin Festival Buskers Day proved inaccurate and I leave you to read Ron’s account of that morning. Events like these help to publicise the club in the local area and the practices required in advance help to raise the standard of dancing within the club.

Don’t forget we return to St John’s on 2nd September with our caller, Bernard Higgs.

Ann Gibson

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Monday Night Callers

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Caller</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Sept</td>
<td>Bernard Higgs</td>
<td>4 Nov</td>
<td>Paul Garner</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Sept</td>
<td>Nick Plum</td>
<td>11 Nov</td>
<td>Barry Goodman</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 Sept</td>
<td>Joan Rutt</td>
<td>18 Nov</td>
<td>Colin Hume with Spring Greens</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 Sept</td>
<td>Ced &amp; Lorraine Morgan</td>
<td>25 Nov</td>
<td>Denise Devonald &amp; Barbara Gilder</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 Sept</td>
<td>Wendy Harrup with Staplers musicians</td>
<td>2 Dec</td>
<td>Terry Elvins</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Oct</td>
<td>AGM @ 8.30pm. Dancing from 8.00pm and after AGM with Bridget McRury</td>
<td>9 Dec</td>
<td>Ann Gibson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Oct</td>
<td>Adrian Besant</td>
<td>16 Dec</td>
<td>Christmas Party – Anything could happen! – and probably will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Oct</td>
<td>Jill Bransby</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bring a plate of food or drink to share</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 Oct</td>
<td>Bridget’s Birthday Special music from Roger Nicholls</td>
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"It may be possible to do without dancing entirely. Instances have been known of young people passing many, many months successively, without being at a ball of any description, and no material injury accrue, either to body or mind; but when a beginning is made - when the felicities of rapid motion have once been, though slightly felt — it must be a very heavy set that does not ask for more”

Jane Austen in Emma
It is quite difficult for a novice dancer like myself to provide a coherent commentary on the proceedings, having spent much of the evening, so to speak, on the wrong foot. Apparently I had a Brief Encounter with Emma Watts in the Grand Square underneath the Dunham Oaks at Nampwich Fair. Following a brief Zig Zag, Sicilian–style, I ended up in a ‘one man-two ladies’ dance with two other men! We will not go down the road of gender identities if you don’t mind; but I will note that Martin-in-the-Middle swung with a vigour approaching exit velocity.

Hilary and I eschewed the Easter bonnet contest – unsure about standards and protocol here. However all entrants appeared to win, though I had a preference for the tribute to Hugh Hefner’s contribution to the Easter Bunny concept – it somehow had a little bit extra to it. At the interval there was an a-bun-dance of calorie-replacement cakes from well-wishers. Joan led the evening with great diligence and remarkable patience, and the in-house band of Derek, Chris and Sally provided rhythm for the feet and music to the ear.

Hilary and I would like to thank you all for being so friendly and helpful both on and off the dance floor. After four weeks I’m still struggling not only with the steps but also the language. I now know that there are occasions where it is perfectly acceptable to be improper. I also have an additional definition of ‘set’ – to add to the seventeen meanings of the verb and fourteen uses of the noun according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary.

It is in this spirit of new experience that I have set pen to paper to set down in doubtless set phrases how we have set out to attempt new dances set to music in either a longways or square set requiring us to set to partner or neighbour, so that we may become less set in our ways and no longer set our faces against the challenges set by music and dance that can set the spirit free.

David Stott

Such a wordsmith - I think we have a new Ed brewing. -

Ced the Ed

Staplers go to Eastbourne • 3rd - 6th May 2013

The Staplers party included Ann, Leslie, Denise, Phil, Graham, Cecilia, Ron, Chris, Joan, Alan, Ann, Kim and Sue (myself). We were distributed amongst various B&Bs in the eastern part of Eastbourne. The venue, Bishop Bell School, is not central so you do need to go by car or bus. The days are divided into five separate sessions. There are two 1¼ hour long workshops each morning and afternoon. At lunchtime very good food is available at the school canteen. At 5.15pm you go back to the B&B to prepare for dinner (taken at a restaurant) and the Evening Dance. For each of these sessions you have a choice of up to five different venues and callers, each with their own theme. As you can imagine, this is overwhelming for someone not used to the scenario. Once you get to know the different callers it becomes much easier to make your selection. They are all extremely good and you really feel that you have learnt something from them.

The most dedicated and fit dancers attend all the sessions. However, I think most of our group took some time off to rest and to see Eastbourne. Apart from Saturday, the weather was lovely. Picnics were taken on the beach and walking all along the promenade and the pier was very popular.

I hope this gives the uninitiated some idea of what to expect. We were very sociable, most of us having dinner together every evening, sharing lifts and enjoying the whole experience. It was certainly a weekend to remember and I am very pleased that I went. Many thanks are due, especially to Ann and all the others who made plans and helped to organise the event.

Sue Else
Baldock Day of Dance • 18th May 2013
Events

Pirton Maypole Evening • 1st July 2013

Hooray! At last a Staplers’ outside event that was neither wet nor freezing cold. A goodly number of Staplers members congregated on the green at Pirton for an evening of Maypole dancing with live music from Cloudburst.

Chris Turner was the caller — MC, cajoler, joke teller and folklore expert – and in between the dances shared some very interesting information with us.

I was somewhat disappointed to learn that maypole dancing was invented by C of E school teachers only 150 or so years ago – it seems such a quintessentially English village tradition!

The other thing that one might not expect was that there was actually not much dancing involved! It’s never easy to skip on a roughly mown lawn, and many of the moves had to be done carefully in order not to get tangled up. A sort of springy walking step seemed to be the order of the day – with a strange tilt of the head to watch the pattern progressing around the pole as we dipped, dived, wove and “rippled”.

Chris was brilliant at explaining what he wanted us to do, and there were more than enough participants to take up the 24 brightly coloured ribbons. Many local people – young and old – were watching and joining in and Cloudburst were in fine form. (They were also very patient about being interrupted mid-refrain so that Chris could untangle us!) With 4 fiddles, accordion and banjo, they filled the green with lovely lively music and to the delight of many, played on past the end of the dancing.

Our thanks to all those who helped organise and set up, and to Pirton for letting us continue this Staplers event.

Kim Brosan

Bar-B-Que Evening • 27th July 2013

In spite of a last minute hitch when the pub chosen for the Staplers’ Summer BBQ announced that they would not be open on that night, the occasion lived up to its reputation for being a really fun affair!

We all met at the Fox in Pirton, who welcomed us with a relaxed and warm hospitality perfectly suited to the occasion.

Led by Derek, the band played tirelessly the whole evening in temperatures of around 30°C. Their music was much appreciated, not only by the dancers but also by the several dozen locals who were drawn in as audience.

Very wisely and to everyone’s delight many of the dances were Playford-style giving us all a chance to be graceful and measured – a very good idea considering the heat and the uneven ground. More lively dances were attempted by the brave, while many members who had not been to the club recently caught up with friends and admired the stamina of the others. It was a farewell visit from Sarah whose move to Somerset is imminent. It was lovely to be dancing with Erica, her daughter whose birth we had all celebrated not so many years ago.

The BBQ was delicious, with meat provided from the local butcher and really did represent a labour of love – cooking over charcoal on that stiflingly hot night could not have been much fun!

Many thanks to the Committee who rescheduled the event and saved it from the brink of disaster – all their hard work transformed it into another night to remember.

Jenny Ellis
The Staplers display team turned out once again on Saturday 27th July for the Hitchin Buskers Day during the Hitchin Festival. [Note: we were billed as Morris Dancers – no bad thing! – Ced the Ed]

The morning start was filled with a sense of doom, the weather forecast promised storms and heavy rain due before our dancing slots would be completed! There was trepidation amongst the dancers as the final practice had been plagued by errors made by some of our most competent and experienced dancers, it had got so bad that tattoos of dance instructions could be observed on the hands of the affected individuals.

Our internationally famous dance master had put together a gruelling program of thirteen dances which was testing our memory to the limit and at 10:30am our ‘busking’ got off to crackling start with a faultless rendition of our signature dance – Lavenders Blue. There followed Newcastle, Picking Up Sticks, Fivepenny Bit, Terpsicouranti, Devon Bonny Breast Knot and finally the impressive Jubilee Roundabout.

The dancers took a well earned rest, safe in the knowledge that their competence had shone through, they were all a bit more relaxed now but aware that problem dances were still to come.

The dancing buskers relocated to the Cloisters, near St Mary’s Church for their 11:30am slot which started with Shepherd’s Delight. Luckily one of our less able dancers had heeded our dance master’s instruction to get a move on. Yorkshire Square Eight and Shrewsbury Lasses were completed without problems, then as Winter Solstice got under way there were audible gasps from the ever growing audience as the mesmerising figures were played out before their eyes. The program moved on with Clopton Bridge, Black Nag and a further rendition of Jubilee Roundabout. As the slot came to an end the audience erupted with applause and a very enjoyable bit of busking had been completed. We even cheated the forecast.

Ron McDowell

First Steps Nursery! – What?
Derek & Jean Boothby’s Garden Evening • 29th July 2013

The previous few days unexpectedly accurate Met-Office forecast of “heavy showers” in the area did nothing to deter attendance at Staplers first 2013 garden evening.

Fortunately for those not having visited Derek & Jean Boothby’s house in Wymondley Road before, the detached property has two unique features. It displays a prominent number 107 on the door plus an unmissable 1 meter wide sundial half way up the front wall of the house!

As recommended, members arrived carrying personal folded or rolled up chairs (and bottles of insect repellent) and found a place in the garden until both sides sported a wide variety of seating. That said, in my experience seating at these events is generally a redundant feature.

Although I arrived in good time, I found Ann already in place having set up the ‘Coomber’ and arranged her notation cards & CDs in preparation for her role as our caller for the evening.

Ann opened her carefully prepared Tri-Part programme promptly at 7 O’clock with a “celebration of summer”, featuring Zephyrs & Flora, Honeysuckle Cottage and Upon a Summers Day. In recognition of the recent birth of prince George, the second set of dances included, Prince George’s Birthday, Kate’s Hornpipe (For Mum) and The Prince of Wales Favourite (for proud Grand-dad). Ann concluded the evening with dances from her ‘because I like them’ category and selected Fandango, Jamaica, Dashing White Circle & Byron’s Boutarde.

Finally overcome by lack of light dancers gratefully accepted tea/coffee and cake generously provided by Jean (and Derek of course!) at which point lively conversation replaced lively dancing.

Although rain remained an ever present possibility the evening turned out to be a totally dry one and everyone appeared to enjoy themselves. Let’s hope this sets the trend for the remaining Garden Evenings.

Many thanks to Derek & Jean for their hospitality and to Ann for her enthusiastic calling.

Graham Styles

Auntie Sylvia, who came all the way from Canada joined in with gusto – Ced the Ed

Our final garden evening of the summer was held in Val and Bernard’s garden. Lorraine and Ced gave us a lovely evening of dances, cleverly planned so that all Lorraine’s dances started with ‘L’ and all Ced’s started with ‘S’ (Yes, it took me a while to work it out too). A very relaxed evening with much chatter and banter, all finished off with a cup of tea and a slice of Val’s delicious Victoria sponge. What could be better?

Denise Devonald

Dear, dear, escapees from Kim’s garden, these two wanted to join in the fun but frankly their performance was a bit stiff.
**Events - Garden Evenings**

Joan & Chris Rutt’s ‘Garden Evening’ • 5th August 2013

‘Come All Ye’ through the rain, under the rainbow, to Langford Methodist Church Hall at 7 o’clock.
‘Come All Ye’ Staplers and invited guests – Bedford Fine Companions, plus welcome newcomers.
‘Come All Ye’ to fill the Hall (ignoring the piled playgroup paraphernalia), to Petronella, Pousette and Promenade.
‘Come All Ye’ to listen, learn and enjoy such a medley of dances, smile at and applaud our cheerful callers.
‘Come All Ye’ to feast on welcome cups of tea and such a variety of scones and cakes part-way through the evening.
‘Come All Ye’ to dance on to 10.00pm, then journey home with the music still in our heads. So lucky!

We danced:

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<td>Ced Morgan</td>
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Kim Brosan’s Garden Evening • 12th August 2013

**Rising Stars**

Did anyone see any shooting stars on Monday 12th August as we passed through the meteor shower?

There were rising stars present at Kim’s garden evening when Bridget and our new caller Denise presented an enjoyable evening with lots of our favourite dances. We also witnessed Kim’s calling debut as she guided us expertly through Shrewsbury Lasses.

The other star of the evening had to be young Erica who, in her very pretty party-frock, skipped her way confidently through the dances.

The evening was rounded off with some delicious refreshments, a chat to friends and the odd foray outside to see if there were any more stars around – guided by Stuart with his special phone app.

**Lorraine Morgan**
Sadly this issue records the passing of several people once very involved with the club.

Brian Limbrick 1931 - 2013

In May we heard with sadness of the death of Brian Limbrick. It was Brian, along with other dancers from local evening institute classes, who started Staplers in 1958, a few years after he had founded Offley Morris with his friend Ted Wright.

In addition to calling for Monday nights, our Saturday dances - especially the Anniversary dance and acting as the club MC for dancing on outings, folk days etc Brian compered the afternoon ‘Gathering’ for most of its life. He also ran very popular, successful barn dances locally from which many people joined Staplers.

Brian had an extensive knowledge of the history of dance which led to his involvement in festivals, weekends at Halsway Manor and Playford Balls. Along with Yvonne, his wife and Gordon and Dalphine Stacey, Brian started running barn dances to raise money for local charities and these evolved into the famous Town Hall Christmas Parties. In 1999 Brian received the Bill Ranscombe award for services to country dancing in Hertfordshire.

As his physical health declined Brian transferred his energies to saving the historic British Schools in Hitchin for which he was awarded the MBE in 2003 for services to the history of education. How much we owe to him. Whatever Brian did he did with great passion, energy and drive. Reminiscences of Brian’s, and of others, of events with which Brian was linked with Staplers may be found in the Golden Anniversary Book of Memories.

Alan Robertson

Also in May we heard of the death of another stalwart from Staplers earlier years, Alan Robertson. Although never a member of Staplers Alan, as leader of the Chiltern Ramblers, played for Staplers Saturday dances, the summer outings and the Gathering ‘Playford Dance’ in the days when we had so many dancers on Gathering evening we had to run a second dance, in the gymnasium at the town hall. Alan shared many memories, mostly humorous, of the earlier days of Staplers in the Book of Memories.

Alan Philpott

Again in the spring, news came that Alan Philpott, who was the first Chairman of Staplers, had died. Alan had moved away from the area but contact was made with him and his wife when we were tracking down former members in the Golden Anniversary year and they both came to the Anniversary Lunch at Offley Place in 2008.

The following paragraph was in the previous issue of Staplers, the newsletter. It is still very apt so I will repeat it

You have probably noticed over the past half a dozen issues of this Newsletter how the content has improved and got more interesting. This is largely due to the army of contributors/reporters we have access to. They don’t always need bribing but it does mean that not only do they write the story but obviously have to pay attention during the actual event too. So I say a heart-felt thank you to those concerned – you know who you are!

The main difference you may have noticed with this issue is the fact that I have increased the size to A4. The previous A5 versions were done largely to allow it to be printed easily. As it is now PDFd and emailed, it seemed a good idea to make it A4. This will mean it’s easier for anyone who prints some or all of it on their home printers (mad fools that you are).

Ced the Ed

Jane Austin’s five best flirting tips:
1. Maintain eye contact with your partner
2. Smile at new partners
3. Be guided by the music and your neighbours movements
4. Remember you are at a dance, not the gym and complete each sequence with elegance
5. Don’t talk until your partner does (unless he’s Darcy!)