

Staplers' Committee Report 2017 – 2018

2018 is Staplers' 60th year and it's wonderful to be able to report that the club is still going strong!

Looking back over the year which started last October, we have had three very successful public dances.

At the first, the Anniversary Dance, back in October 2017, we had a wonderful evening of dancing with the caller Madeleine Smith. Very appropriately in the centenary year of his birth, she called a selection of mainly Pat Shaw dances, some of them quite challenging. But due to her excellent teaching, with great warmth and personality, and the wonderful music from Double Dichotomy we all seemed to cope very well.

Our Christmas dance this year was led by Kathryn and David Wright with music from 'most of' Momentum. In fact, the evening started with even less of Momentum as one of the band members was delayed on the way to us but the rest of the band and the callers coped admirably and gave us a lovely evening of mainly modern dances, all with appropriate names for the season.

In February we had an excellent Spring Dance with the calling of Lynne Render to the music of the English Contra Dance Band – renamed by Ann as the English Country Dance Band as they played a mixture of American and English/Playford tunes for us.

In April we had an extra dance event in the calendar. To celebrate the 60th Anniversary we held a tea dance at St Ippolyts with Kevin Prigmore and Kellys Eye. Over 70 people came along to dance some old and new favourites and enjoy a cream tea. They were also able to browse the Staplers scrapbook and watch recordings of Hitchin Gatherings from the 1990s. Many people have told us how much they enjoyed this event.

Our Monday evenings continue to be well attended and members seem to enjoy the mixture of club and guest callers who all bring a different range of dances from the familiar old favourites to newly written modern dances.

Particular highlights this year have been: a Regency evening in October 2017 led by Colin Hume to mark the 200th anniversary of the death of Jane Austen; the premiere of our new club dance The Hitchin Diamond on our first club night of 2018; a celebration evening in February for Ann's big birthday; the Christmas party which this year included the award of life membership to Cecilia Mills; and another pub and pizza evening at the Cricketers in Weston - this time the weather was kinder to us and we were able to dance, and eat, outside. On a sadder note, we also held a memorial evening for Ced Morgan when we danced some of his favourite dances in his memory.

In the summer the weather was good for all our garden evenings and our thanks go to Lorraine, Val and Bernard, and Derek and Jean for the use of their gardens; and also to Joan and Chris for an evening at the Methodist Church Hall in Langford.

Our thanks also go to all the callers without whom these events would not be possible. Guest callers this year: Pat George, Adrian Besant, Jeannie Byron-Williams, Frances Oates, Kevin Prigmore, John Green, Paul Garner, Bob Barrett, Marlene Harrison-Jones and Ken Judd; and Club callers: Ann, Barbara, Barry, Bernard, Colin, Denise, Jacqueline & Stuart, Jill, Joan, Lorraine and Nick Plum.

Thank you too to the musicians who have given us the pleasure of dancing to live music. These include Derek and Chris, often joined by Michelle to create our own club band – which now has a name, Triple Minor – and also The Carousel Band, Spring Greens and Adrian & Martin. A special thank you to Derek, who has played for most of our dance displays and practices and also to Jon Newton who stepped in when Derek was unavailable for the Baldock Day of Dance.

Other successful activities by the club have included various displays at care homes and lunch clubs, attendance at a Playford day at the Benslow Music centre and a Sunday lunch in October 2017 at the Sun Hotel in Hitchin.

One less successful event was a taster evening which was organised in January. We want to encourage more people to come and enjoy dancing with us but this did not attract as many people as we had hoped for. Do let us know what you think about events like this and how we can ensure the club continues to thrive and attract new members.

Just before I finish I have two more important thank yous. Firstly on my own behalf to Ces who held this role before me. She did a wonderful job for many years and has passed on everything impeccably organised and has been so helpful with advice and guidance. Thank you so much Ces.

Finally on behalf of the committee I must thank Ann who has yet again put in another great year of leading this club. She puts in so much effort to keep Staplers alive and thriving and this year in particular has been a lot of work with extra events for the 60th anniversary on top of the regular jobs - plus she has had to deal with a new secretary and treasurer! But most importantly, she sets the tone for the friendly and welcoming nature of the club ensuring that everyone is looked after from the most expert guest callers to the newest, most inexperienced dancer. I'm sure that this atmosphere set by Ann is a big part of the reason why Staplers is still thriving in its 60th year.

It's certainly been a great 60th year so far with other successful celebrations including the recent Anniversary Dance and Sunday Lunch. More details of those will be in next year's report. For now, let's look forward to our 61st year, and hopefully many more years, of dancing, music and friendship.