

Staplers' Committee Report 2018 – 2019

2018 was Staplers' 60th year and last October, at the start of our club year, we had a big weekend of celebration with two very successful events – the 60th anniversary dance on the Saturday night and then the 60th anniversary lunch on the Sunday. Having both on the same weekend meant that many people were able to attend both.

For the Saturday night dance our caller was Ron Coxall, a Staplers' favourite for many years, and the music was from 3D, who also have long-standing links with Staplers. Unfortunately I wasn't able to be there but I hear that the trumpet playing was a particular highlight of the evening. For this event we decorated the hall with memorabilia from previous events and, reviving a feature from earlier years' Anniversary dances, we had an entertainment spot, with a display from Gog Magog which was very well received.

On the Sunday 16 former and 30 current club members together with some partners and family enjoyed lunch at The Priory in Hitchin in another celebration of our diamond anniversary. Again, I wasn't able to be there but I'm told that the Priory provided an excellent lunch with very good service. The sun shone and following the meal, after chatting outside and browsing the scrap books, there was chance to dance several well known club favourites - rounding off a very enjoyable weekend.

Finally, to finish off our anniversary year, our Christmas dance was led by Colin Hume, a member of Staplers, with music from the Ivel Valley band, also with close connections to the club. There was a really good attendance of 99 dancers which created a great festive atmosphere.

Moving into 2019, in February we had a very enjoyable Spring Dance with the expert calling of Rhodri Davies to the music of the Kelly's Eye. Again we had a really good attendance – 88 people this time, and a really good atmosphere.

It's encouraging to see that our Monday evenings continue to be well attended with the average attendance staying at about 28: we continue to use a mixture of club and guest callers who all bring a different range of dances which enables us to practise the old favourites and also learn newer dances.

An event that is now a regular in the Monday night calendar is the Pub and pizza evening in June. This year it proved very popular with 39 people attending and able to dance outside in the pub garden before enjoying their pizzas.

Later in the summer the weather was also good for all our garden evenings and our thanks go to Lorraine, Val and Bernard, and Barry and Gill 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. Our guest callers this year were: Marlene Harrison-Jones, Wendy Harrup, Adrian Besant, Kevin Prigmore, John Green, Jeannie Byron-Williams, Paul Garner, Bob Barrett, Ken Judd and Pat George; and our Club callers were: Ann, Barbara, Barry, Colin, Denise, Jacqueline & Stuart, Jill, Joan, Lorraine and Nick. We have also seen the debuts of new club callers Maggie and Andrew.

Thank you too to the musicians who have given us the pleasure of dancing to live music. These include our very own club band, Derek, Chris, and Michelle now known as Triple Minor, and also The Carousel Band, Spring Greens and Adrian & Martin. A special thank you to Derek in particular as he has played for most of our dance displays and practices.

And there have been quite a few displays this year. We started by showcasing our diamond anniversary dance The Hitchin Diamond at the Fine Companions Christmas party in December last year. In the spring we danced in Hitchin at the Rotary Club event on the May Day Bank holiday and then had a busy weekend later in May, dancing at the Baldock Festival on Saturday the 18th and the Walsworth Festival on Sunday 19th. We then danced at the Bethany club and the Christchurch lunch club in June.

Finally in July we took part in a new event, the Hitchin Day of Dance, organised by Barry Goodman. Together with other country dance groups, Morris dancers and Lindy hop dancers, we danced at various points around the town and had a very enjoyable day.

So that's been our club year and I have to say most of it has been down to this lady sat in front of you. Ann puts in so much effort to keep Staplers alive and thriving and I'm sure you would like me to thank her for her efforts on your behalf.

I'd like to close by also thanking you, the members of this club, for continuing to come along on a Monday night, for enjoying your dancing, being such good company and generally making Monday nights such a pleasure. Please continue to do so so that our club continues to thrive!