

# STAPLERS

## NEWSLETTER

www.staplers.org.uk

February 2016

### Notes from the Chairman

After a well attended, friendly, very enjoyable 'Spring Dance' our winter season of Saturday evening dances has finished and already we have started to think about our Spring and Summer activities.

Our traditional Club Sunday Lunch is coming up on 13<sup>th</sup> March – have you put your order in yet?

The display dancers have just started working on this year's repertoire and once again several of us are going to folk festivals – Eastbourne over the early May Bank Holiday weekend and Chippenham over the late May Bank Holiday weekend.

If this is something you are interested in trying or perhaps taking up again like me but would like to know more do speak with one of the committee. I am delighted we have had such a good turn-out on Monday evenings since

January and trust that this will continue, even if a touch of spring in the air makes you think of gardening!

It has been encouraging too to see the number of members turning up early for the additional workshop sessions. Is there something you would like to see covered on these evenings, if so please speak to a member of the committee.

We have several guest callers visiting us over the next few months and another Staplers *Monday Night Special* on 29<sup>th</sup> February. That evening, Lorraine will highlight the significance of the date with a programme of dances all composed or with tunes composed by ladies.

I hope we have plenty to tempt you to continue coming dancing on Monday evenings and I look forward to seeing you.

**Ann Gibson**

## MONDAY NIGHT

15 February	Joan Rutt	28 March	Easter Monday – No Club
22 February	John Green	4 April	Denise Devonald
29 February	'Ladies Night' – with Lorraine Morgan	11 April	Chris Turner
7 March	Jacqueline & Stuart Beattie	18 April	Jeanie Byron-Williams
14 March	Wendy Harrup with <i>Staplers Musicians</i>	25 April	Bernard Higgs
21 March	Kevin Prigmore		

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### Committee

*Chairman:* Ann Gibson

*Secretary:* Ces Mills

*Treasurer:* Kim Brosan

*Editor:* Cedric Morgan

### Committee Members:

Denise Devonald

Ron McDowell

Lorraine Morgan

### ANNIVERSARY DANCE

1<sup>st</sup> October 2016 • 7.30 – 11.00

**Ray Goodswen** • with **Kelly's Eye**

### CHRISTMAS DANCE

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2016 • 7.30 – 11.00

**Mark Elvins** • with **Deo Volente**

*All Events at: St Ippolyts Parish Hall, Hitchin SG4 7RA*

# EVENTS

Anniversary Dance • 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2015



As the first Staplers Club night was held in 1958, the Club is now 57 years old. However, with the professional calling of Ron Coxall and delightful music by Stradivarius, there was no evidence of the Club showing its age!

Ron gave us an evening of dances which seemed very complicated when walking them through but once into the music and his reminders, were eminently danceable (is that a proper word – should be!). I particularly enjoyed Barbara Walton's Delight from 1981 – a lovely dance to a really good tune and hope I get the chance to dance it again some time.

The last dance was a circle mixer which turned into Circassian Circle with your original partner, which then melted into everyone dancing towards the Band to 'honour' them – a very effective end to the evening.

There were lovely raffle prizes of a fruit hamper, a mysterious pink parcel, chocolates, wine and cider – all English which were won by delighted recipients: Corrina, Ron, Joan, Kim and Jean.

**Margaret Rollason**

*Do we get discount if the band and caller dance too. Looks like Dorset 4-hand reel*



# EVENTS

## Workshop: *Dances from the Napoleonic Era* • 25<sup>th</sup> October 2015

We met at St Ippolyts hall on a lovely sunny autumnal afternoon for a workshop with Frances Richardson to learn about Napoleonic dances. Frances led us with her gentle calling through a whole variety of dances which included circles, waltzes, hornpipes, squares and more, accompanied by excellent music from Kelly's Eye.

The workshop encompassed the period 1792 up to 1817 when the French revolutionary wars started. Frances explained that as a result of the wars there was a big change in fashion in both costume and dance.

Britain looked to France for its fashions but was completely cut off from France during the wars. In 1814 Napoleon was defeated and banished to Elba, so the British started to cross the channel once more and the dancing masters returned with the latest fashions.

In France nobody wanted to be accused of being aristocratic, which could mean risking one's neck. As a result, gone were the elaborate baroque fashions with panniers, layers of fabric, high hairdos and intricate dance steps. These were replaced by more rustic styles of dress and bouncy country dances became all the rage.

The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society standardised their steps on those described in some Regency dance manuals so the nearest equivalent modern dance step to that used in Napoleonic times is the Scottish Pas-de-Basque.



The waltz step started to come into fashion during the early part of the century. It was frowned upon by polite society as being potentially injurious to the reputation of young ladies. A waltz country dance is mentioned in Jane Austen's *Emma*, published that year. Figures will have been adapted, notably the pousette, which became a turning pousette, and gradually turned into a ballroom hold waltz-around.

Frances explained that a dance like 'The Lancers' could have taken half an hour to dance all five parts – fortunately we only learned the last part!

Our thanks go to Frances for a most enjoyable afternoon and also for sending me information on the workshop afterwards (you don't think I managed to remember all this do you?)

**Lorraine Morgan**



*Another caller and a band member having a go at dancing (?). This time to demonstrate a hold which led to great hilarity*

# EVENTS

## Christmas Dance • 5<sup>th</sup> December 2015

### Who in their right minds would seriously consider:

- going out at night while Storm Desmond was at its peak and breaking branches off nearby trees
- travelling to a little-known Parish Hall (which was down a narrow turning, off a narrow road that was itself off a road that was a “B”-road)
- to attend an event (also variously described as a “dance/shindig/ceilidh”)
- at which the most likely experience would be to spend some hours being repeatedly told over a microphone what to do, and precisely when to do it
- while two musicians played the same tune over and over and over again?

When you put it like that, as might an anthropologist studying the rituals of a primitive tribe, it's a wonder that 80 or so people did engage in just such behaviour.



*Kathryn & David Wright calling,  
music from Folkus Pocus,  
– and a baby*



*Elaine showing  
how it's done*



Clearly, there must have been some fringe benefits that our anthropologist has failed to capture. Let me suggest that, in no particular order they may well have been:

- Two callers: with an interesting mix of dances, old and new, adding significantly to the variety of the evening
- Outstanding calling: the calls were always clear, calm and completed exactly to the moment that the next phrase of music commenced
- Driving dance music: a band that was playing the music and watching the dancers far more than just trolling out the notes on the page
- Fantastic musicianship: virtuoso fiddle playing and inventive keyboard riffs
- The company of many other like-minded individuals and familiar faces
- The homely addition of noises-off from two youngsters in the back room
- A mid-way feast of prodigious proportions
- The juxtaposition of familiar dances to the unusual musical accompaniment of Christmas carols

... need I go on?

Clearly our postulated anthropologist failed to capture the essence of the event while we who attended enjoyed another in a long line of excellent Staplers' Christmas dances.

There is a phrase I remember in the Christian Christmas liturgy: “The Word made flesh”. How fitting then that during the evening David shared with us a similar but rather more prosaic, quotation from Imogen Holst: “Dancing is music made visible”. How true.

### Stuart and Jacqueline Beattie



*Usual excellent Staplers spread  
– low fat we hope?*

# EVENTS

## Winter Solstice Party Evening • 21<sup>st</sup> December 2015



Elf & Sophie MC'ing

*Stir up Elf and Sophie, we beseeched thee  
The talents of Staplers, as that's what we've got.  
For the great Solstice Party that would do us all good,  
We danced and we sang and we laughed such a lot.*

We skipped to the stable with *Shepherd's Delight* and extended our delight with *Three Christmas Jigs*.

We rang the changes with our feet rather than bells to announce the dawn of *Christmas Day*.

Our Choir Boys (well girls actually) impressed us greatly with their command of Latin until they let us into their secret that they didn't understand a word of it either and descended into panic over Christmas preparations. \*

*Cor, haec  
sunt aspera  
ruffs*



Derek and Chris played to us beautifully on the *Boxing Day Hunt* through *Roses on the Heath* to a Slip Jig.



Drawing back the Blue Curtains put us in pantomime mood as we sang as Elf and Sophie embarked on a somewhat slapdash creation of a Great Christmas Pud. – although the feast provided by all was much more appetising.

Graham slipped into character as 'a lady of a certain age' with memory to match, but was soon into flow as her husband 'who knows it all'. A challenging quiz tested all our memories of winter-themed songs. We are still a little foggy about the exact date of the Solstice Special but now know that the meaning of 'Yule' is 'Wheel'.

In true Viennese style we welcomed New Years Day as we danced to the *Radetzky March*.

With Winter Festivities behind us we looked with anticipation to spring and summer Holiday visits to *Rock the Line* at such places as *Whitby Town*, or was it a *Devil's Dream*?

And importantly it was with our heartfelt thanks that Ann presented David with **Life Membership of Staplers** in recognition of distinguished service on the committee as Treasurer and Secretary over a long period of time.

A big thank you to Elf and Sophie and all who made the evening such an enjoyable start to the Season.

**Angela Gould**



Graham in full flow – even the snowman is impressed, — probably



No cheating we hope!

\* We thank Ruth White of 'Singing Aloud' for the Gaudete translation

# EVENTS

Spring Dance • 6<sup>th</sup> February 2016



I really did enjoy our Spring Dance. Carol Hewson's clear calling, interspersed with little stories and quips ensured a room full of smiling faces as she led us through a wonderful evening of interesting and fun dances. The choice of music and playing from The Ivel Valley Band was superb.

We were unsure how well-attended our dance would be on a very windy evening which clashed with at least two other events. People kept arriving and while we were walking through the dance 'Bring a Chair' (aka 'Bring and Share' – another of Carol's stories!) our chairman Ann was to be seen carrying in and setting out more seats! In the event we had nearly 80 dancers – friends from far and near.

It was a good thing we had plenty of refreshments for half-time. The food was as delicious as always – we really do have some excellent cooks in our club!

Carol's enthusiasm bubbled over into the raffle, where the winners were greeted with enthusiastic cheers.

Last but not least, thanks to Bridget for brightening the hall with some very attractive floral displays.

**Lorraine Morgan**



# IN MEMORIUM

Sadly we have to report the passing of several former members of Staplers.

## **Norma Jackson**

Norma Jackson was a regular 'Monday nighter' in the seventies and eighties, one of a group of dancers who were also keen walkers and who introduced me to North Herts Ramblers and the pleasures of HF holidays! Norma died on 7 September 2015 at home.

## **Ann Gibson**

## **April Taplin**

It was with great sadness and shock to hear that April Crawford-Taplin died suddenly after a short critical illness in hospital on 30 November 2015.

April (Crawford) joined Staplers in 1989 followed by Stan Taplin a year later, whom she married in September 1992.

April and Stan always involved themselves fully in Staplers' activities and frequently joined a group of Staplers at the Highlander pub after a club evening. They both attended Staplers' Golden Anniversary celebratory lunch in 2008 at Offley Place.

April was a very active, kind and loyal member of the club. She soon immersed herself in helping with the organisation of the club serving on the committee from September 1989 until 1996, as well as serving time on the Gathering committee.

Initially, April took on the role of Treasurer's Assistant, helped with decorations and catering before taking on full

responsibility for catering for dances and the mammoth task, with help, of organising refreshments for Staplers' big event of the year, the Hitchin Gathering.

April was a qualified and skilled florist, putting her expertise into use in providing floral decorations for Staplers' events.

April was devoted to her family and whatever she did, even in the face of adversity, was always cheerful and whenever or wherever you met her she had a wonderful smile.

We send our condolences to all her family.

## **Alan Hughes**

Alan's main connections were with the Bedford dance groups but he has been a regular at Staplers' Saturday dances for many years and for a short time in the eighties he was a member of Staplers and danced in several Gathering displays for us.

With his wife Rosemary he formed Merrie Mix, a trio who played regularly for our Monday evenings and for some of our workshops.

Alan will be sorely missed in the local dancing community and we offer our condolences to Rosemary and to his daughter Lynne Render who is a popular caller at our Saturday evening dances.

# ...AND FINALLY

To end on a lighter note, we've had two compliments for our Saturday Spring Dance.

The first from Robin Meekins, who emailed the Staplers website to say:

Top class dance on Saturday. Great programme, great caller, and excellent music. Of course the food was very good too. Thank you Staplers.

...and the second from Linda Moon who was talking to Ann Gibson at the end of the dance:

Linda said, "We didn't know the band or the caller but we thought, it's Staplers, it'll be good and it was"