

# STAPLERS

## NEWSLETTER

[www.staplers.org.uk](http://www.staplers.org.uk)

March 2013

### Notes from the Chairman

Once again – “Has winter finished? Is spring coming? At the time of writing this, with balmy spring weather one day and bitter cold winds the next, I don't know”

This is what I wrote this time last year and we seem to be the same this year.

However, as always, Staplers are preparing for 'Spring & Summer' regardless. Several of us are going to **Eastbourne Folk Festival** over the early May Bank Holiday weekend. Ask about it if you are interested but not booked yet.

In July we have another **Maypole Evening** in Pirton and are going to the Red Lion Preston again for dancing followed by barbecued sausages.

Before all this, the last Monday before Easter, 25<sup>th</sup> March, you are invited to come along in your Easter 'bonnet' or otherwise seasonally adorned to enjoy dancing to Joan Rutt's choices with music during part of the evening from Derek, Chris and one of our

newer members, Sally. Prizes for all who take up the challenge!

The weather caused disruption to our Monday evenings in January but despite this we have had some very enjoyable times this winter and look forward to more after Easter.

**Ann Gibson**

### FUTURE EVENTS

#### Maypole Evening

**Chris Turner with Cloudburst**

1<sup>st</sup> July 2013 • 7.30 start  
Pirton Village Green

#### BBQ Evening

**Nick Plum with Derek & Friends**

22<sup>nd</sup> July 2013 • 7.30 start  
Red Lion, Preston

### Committee

*Chairman:* Ann Gibson  
*Secretary:* Ces Mills  
*Treasurer:* David Millman  
*Editor:* Cedric Morgan

### *Committee Members:*

Kim Brosan;  
Leslie Elliott;  
Denise Devonald;  
Hazel Glass;  
Lorraine Morgan

# EVENTS

## Plough Monday celebration • 7<sup>th</sup> January 2013

Call 'Staplers' a Dance Club? The 39 folk who came to celebrate 'Plough Monday' were treated to so much more!

Firstly, Ann welcomed us with a reading about Plough Monday history and customs – Ces had also placed a book on the display table, so we have no excuse for ignorance of various English customs, some dating from the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century.

Traditionally, St. Distaff's Day was when women resumed their spinning and ploughboys went back to the fields. However, in the Eastern side of England the newly blessed ploughs were also taken round the villages into the Manor Houses and the boys danced – Molly in Norfolk or Cambridge, Rapper Sword in the North-East and the East Midlands.

Yes, we danced some very apposite dances including *In Fields of Frost and Snow*, *January Girl*, *Midwinter Maggot*, *The Ploughboy*, *Speed the Plough*, *Picking Up Sticks*, and *Winter Memories* – thanks Ann.

We did not eat Norfolk 'Plough Pudding' (a meat & onion suet pudding), but we were treated to Stollen, biscuits and Ann's very welcome hot spiced apple juice.

Jenny had arranged a couple of

songs, very sweetly and harmoniously sung by her, Lorraine, Kim and Ces: '*The Ploughboy*' (traditional) and '*The Ploughshare*' (Copper family song) which ended with the toast 'Here's success to the bright ploughshare and may it never rust' – and our response 'May the ploughshare never rust'.



Ian sung us a song about beer, which made me laugh as Alan and I live across the river from the Charlie Wells brewery, and occasionally we are treated to the waft of hops.

We had no young ploughboys to dance for us but six young-at-heart dancers from both Offley and Letchworth Morris, both sides having evolved from Staplers in the '50s, danced a hanky dance '*The Valentine*'

# EVENTS

## Plough Monday celebration • 7<sup>th</sup> January 2013

and a stick dance 'Young Collins', ably accompanied by a beaming Martin on the accordion.

Light and shade – we smiled and enjoyed the curtseys and (Brownie?) salutes of the *Radetsky Quadrille* and then our final dance which was *Gathering Peascods* which we danced for Daphne, appropriately using the music from Orange and Blue Band.

Throughout our first meeting of 2013 I had observed the animated faces



round the room; it was a lovely start to the year. Once again, all credit to our hard-working committee who spend

much time and thought on making sure we are more than a Dance Club.

**Anne Dickens**



*Mixed Morris side made up from Offley and Letchworth Morris Men dancing 'The Valentine' from Fieldtown*

# EVENTS - DANCES

## Spring Dance • 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2013

We arrived at the Spring Dance about 7:20pm thinking we would be one of the first. To our surprise the car park was virtually full and parking a bit of a problem. We dropped off various cakes and sandwiches and went into the hall to find that there were between 50 and 60 people clapping encouragement to Folkus Pocus who were set up and running through some warm up numbers. Robert Moir was also on stage checking notes and microphones.

By half-time there were nearly 100 dancers – a bit worrying for the committee and the allocation of food.



The dancing began promptly and after *Auretti's Dutch Skipper* and one other dance the more mentally challenging modern compositions began, most of which I thoroughly enjoyed.



There were some dancers who were new to the country dance scene and found the whole experience a little too taxing. I did not see them at the end of the evening.

After much needed sandwiches, cakes and coffee at the interval the second half seemed to pass quite quickly and I particularly enjoyed the nobility of *Well Hall* and energy of *Red House* played beautifully by Folkus Pocus. I would have liked to hear them play a few contras so I could have a swing with my partner!

An articulate experienced caller; a dynamic accomplished duo and an extremely successful dance; much as last year but without the snow — consequently better attended.

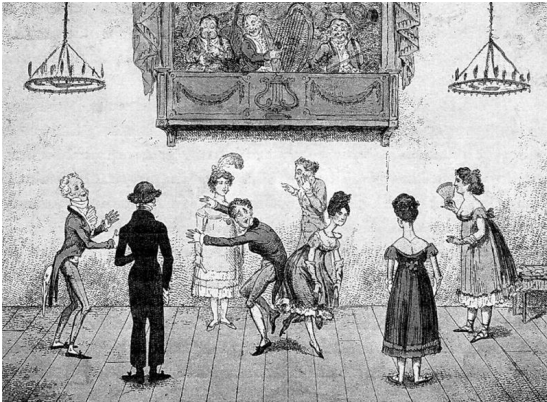
**Joan and Chris Rutt**

# EVENTS - WORKSHOP

## Irish Set Dance Workshop • 24<sup>th</sup> February 2013

It was on a cold wintry Sunday afternoon that a hardy collection of Staplers dancers made their way to St Ippolyts to attend the Irish Set Dance Workshop run by Geoff Holland.

Irish set dances are based on Quadrilles which were danced at the French court in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were transformed by the Irish into a unique folk dance of the Irish rural communities.



*Accidents in Quadrille Dancing*

Four couples are arranged in a square. Both the eight dancers in the group and the dance itself are called a set – just to confuse. The couple to the right of the head couple always dance the figure last so this is the ideal position in the square for beginners.

Our hearts sank when the first thing Geoff needed to do was teach us the

required steps. This turned out to be no easy task as the room suddenly seemed filled with a collection of left feet.

The first step seemed straight forward enough and my twinkle toes coped quite well but to my horror the next step to learn looked the same as the first one. Was it just me – apparently not, as at least one brave soul asked for clarification.

As the afternoon wore on (Ed – ‘wore on’ - I thought this was a pleasure)

Staplers took up the challenge and before long the hall was full of dancers doing ‘House around’ ‘Advance and retire’, ‘dance at home’ and ‘slide at home’.

I overheard our caller describe Irish set dancing as aerobic. I knew this to be the case as my chest was heaving my face was red and I was considering calling for an oxygen cylinder.

The high point of the afternoon came when it was time for a ceilidh dance, we were by this time able to show off all our new skills with confidence and lots of beaming faces.

Thanks to Geoff for a very enjoyable afternoon and an interesting insight into Irish Set dancing.

**Ron McDowell**

# EVENTS

## A 'different' Club Evening • 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013

A packed hall of keen dancers braved the freezing weather for Martin Butler's debut as a Staplers caller. Accompanied by his accordion, and eschewing the help of a microphone, Martin took us through a wonderfully varied set of dances. To keep us warm on a cold night, Martin refused to let us walk every dance and insisted on a rant, skip-step or step-hop as appropriate. Tricky moves were explained carefully for the beginners, but when he judged that we had "got it", Martin stopped calling so we had to – oh no! – think – and could enjoy the lovely music.

Martin started with a circle dance from Alsace which was great for scooping up late arrivals into the group – he and Jill standing in the middle of the circle with accordion and bodhran. He then called his favourite dances, which included several well-loved by the club such as *Devil's Dream*, *Nonesuch* and *Black Nag* and also introduced us to some new, dif-



ferent dances. He often gave us snippets of information about the origins of the



music or the dances – one of which dated back to the early 1600s. It never ceases to amaze me when I hear that we are doing dances which have survived "intact" since the time of Elizabeth I!

Unlike many callers, Martin allowed the club flexibility in how we wanted to interpret some of the better known dances – a clap added here, an additional cast there, and even a very un-genteel, skipped "up a double and back".

Our favourite local band, Cloudburst – entertained us throughout with some lovely tunes and really showed their prowess as a good dance band by letting the music tell us where we were in the dance and help us to remember what came next.

All in all it was an atmospheric and cosily friendly evening – well done Martin and many thanks to you and to Cloudburst.

**Kim Brosan**

# IN MEMORIAM

## **Rita Belcher**

Sadly we report that Rita Belcher, an active member of Staplers in the seventies and eighties, died on 16th January after a prolonged period of illness. In a letter to the club her son said, "She had been moved to the Cromwell House Care Home in Huntingdon shortly before her death. Her pain was under control by then and she was described as being "comfortable". It was, in some ways, a relief as she was bed ridden and knew that there was no hope of getting better. Her mind (and hearing) remained as sharp as ever!"

Rita served on the committee and with her husband, Wally, was often seen at Saturday dances and folk festivals. Hazel and Ces attended the funeral in Cambridge on behalf of Staplers.

## **Norman Manning**

It was with shock we heard the news one Monday in February that Norman Manning had died very unexpectedly in hospital following an operation. Norman had not been a member very many years but clearly enjoyed his Monday evenings –still coming along alone when June was visiting her daughter in Scotland. In addition he came to Saturday dances, Sunday lunches and joined us at the pub after club nights so participated fully in all Staplers had to offer.

We offer our sincere condolences to June in her loss.

## **Stan Taplin**

We also heard recently that Stan Taplin died on 8th March. He came along in the 90s with his wife, April who was already a member of Staplers. His first passion was amateur dramatics and as a keen member of Lytton Players and Hitchin Thespians took part in many shows, singing solo and in Barbershop quartets.

Both Stan and April were in the group who went to Sidmouth when Staplers 'officially busked' there. Later, he compered the afternoon session of the Gathering for many years.

We send our condolences to April and her family.

# MONDAY NIGHT CALLERS

8 April	Lorraine Morgan	10 June	Bob Lilley
15 April	Barry Goodman	17 June	Lorraine Morgan
22 April	Rachel Bending	24 June	Bernard Higgs
29 April	Jill Bransby with <i>Cloudburst</i>	1 July	<b>Maypole Evening</b> Chris Turner with <i>Cloudburst</i>
6 May	Bank holiday – no club	Pirton Village Green	• <b>7.30pm start</b>
13 May	Ann Gibson	8 July	Terry Elvins
20 May	Wendy Harrup with <i>Derek Boothby</i>	15 July	Joan Rutt
27 May	<i>Bank holiday – no club</i>	22 July	<b>BBQ Evening</b> Nick Plum with <i>Derek Boothby</i> and friends
3 June	Bridget McRury	Red Lion, Preston	• <b>7.30pm start</b>

## EDITORIAL

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 it is time to give them hearty thanks for their efforts. It makes my life as Ed much easier to have well-written, accurate and witty content to play with. All I have to do is make it fit on the

page with a few photos to remind readers what it looked like at the time.

In order to be a little greener and as the vast majority of Staplers members are emailable these days, we will only publish this Newsletter in 'e' format in the future. You will receive it as an emailed PDF. There will be one copy printed and pinned to the notice-board in case of power-cuts and we are also considering putting a link on the website so that anybody can download it.

**Ced the Ed**