



**Stéphane Grappelli**

Supported by Martin Taylor, Diz Disley, Jack Sewing,  
**Live in Leek ! Friday April 10<sup>th</sup> 1981**

You can't buy memories like this.

Like that old saying if you can remember it, you probably weren't there! – I needed help to even remember the date! \*

As Chris Ellis said in an article he wrote for the Sentinel a number of years ago, he, John Bailey, Mike Gledhill and I had a great time organising a series of events that we called 'Folk Fiascos' in the late 70's and early 80's.

The aim was always to promote self-financing top line concerts with artists across a wide range of musical genre– not just traditional folk.

Jake Thackray, Mick Elliot, The McAlmans, Vin Garbutt, Sean Cannon, Neil Lewis, Bernard Wrigley, Shep Wooley, Hunter, Grace, Johnny Waterhouse Blues Band and many more graced our stages at various venues around Leek and the Moorlands - including The Winking Man, The Three Horseshoes, South Bank Hotel, and just once at Westwood High School.

Eventually we got our own home at The Wilkes Head when Pat, John and I bought it from Allied Breweries in April 1982.

Jim McPhee of Acorn Entertainment rang me one Saturday in early March 1981. We talked about various acts and he mentioned that if we could put something together in 4 weeks Stéphane Grappelli's gig at Kingston upon Hull had just been cancelled. The line up included Diz Disley, Jack Sewing, and Martin Taylor - £1000, cash (£4,500 at today's prices)! We had one hour to think about it!

I phoned Chris, John, Mike, (and Pat). We did not have a venue big enough and we certainly didn't have a grand in the kitty, but Stéphane and Django had been heroes of mine from my early teen years, so I really wanted this to happen.

After deliberation Mike Gledhill came up with the notion that the worst that could happen was that we would have a private concert for £1000 for just us and our wives at a ticket price of £125 each. Based on that sound logic we did the deal.

Mike was head of 6<sup>th</sup> form at Westwood High at the time so he also came up with the venue – the main hall at the school.

Our good friend David Cliffe was the editor of the Leek Post at the time so a quick phone call and (once he realised that we were not having an alcohol induced dream), he made editorial space on the front page available the following week.

Dave Rhead printed posters and tickets went on sale at Fine Sounds Music Shop, St Edward Street where Chris worked that Thursday.

We sold out in hours.

When the great day arrived Chris and I stood waiting outside Lloyds Bank clutching a brown envelope with £1000 in cash.

Along rolled up the black limo with the whole group plus manager on board.

The great man, Stéphane sat slumped in the back seat wrapped in a blanket and motionless.

My heart sank.

For a moment I thought '-now I know why we got him cheap he might not last the day out'!

As we headed for the school Diz rode with us and he explained that Stéphane needed very careful management and medication.

So, we delivered them all into the Westwood Hall changing rooms with the old French man sitting in a semi-catatonic state under his blanket. Chris and I retreated to the main Hall and waited in trepidation.

After a short while a dapper sprightly French gentleman (minus the blanket ) strode on to the stage, tripped down the steps and greeted us. He scanned the piano and he and Chris took it in turns to bring it alive. Stéphane took an instant shine to Chris!

By now the crew had rigged their PA and Chris, the School cleaner, Richard the caretaker, our car park slaves \* and I were treated to a private warm up session, first with Stéphane then the whole group.

And yes, I did ask for 'Little Brown Jug', which Stéphane agreed to play, but he did say that whilst so many of us relate to the era of him with Django Reinhardt and the Quintette du Hot Club de France, his style, like music, had moved on with the times especially from the 1970's when Diz brought him back on to the world touring circuit.

To prove this point, he made his acoustic and electric violins sing and swing to every edge of its many 'voices'

After half an hour chatting. His manager administered the off pill and the old man re-appeared and slumped back behind his blanket. We then got on with getting ready for the evening.

Special arrangements had to be made for Steph's accommodation that night at the Southbank Hotel.

And, so to the concert itself – wow! All of us needed to suck on lemons to wipe the silly grins off our faces. It was truly a life changing moment for all who were there.

Many of the old standards were in there and loads of the latest stuff.

No, we didn't record it, nor do I know of any photographs.

However, I have found a rare film recording of the same line up and play list from the same period – so if you weren't there in Leek that night this is what you missed – clic on this .

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzxZx62mTTw>

Recorded July 4th at the Paul Masson Winery in Saratoga, CA 1982

Violin - Stéphane Grappelli 1st Guitar - Martin Taylor 2nd Guitar - Diz Disley  
Bass - Jack Sewing

The piano part of the story in Leek was that Stéphane asked for a piano to be available on stage and Westwood had a very fine grand piano which lived on the floor in the main hall. The Education Authority wanted us to pay £80 for it to be moved onto the stage and same again for it to be moved back and to pay for its tuning for each move. We couldn't afford it so on the floor it stayed.

At a key point in the concert Stéphane said 'the piano is too important to come to the stage for me to play – so I must go to it!'

He then trotted down the steps and to hear what it sounded like- clic here-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHlg781uZNE>

In staging the gig, we were helped by so many good friends, most of whom are still with us. It could not have happened so quickly and so well in any other place – Leek and the Moorlands people just know how to do things together especially if musical.

Unforgettable, unbelievable, but all true. Happy days.

Photos and memories would be welcome.

Footnotes -

1. Beth and Paul Harvey were not jazz fans but were great supporters of our Musical Fiascos so they volunteered to run our 'bootleg bar'. An absence of time to get a

licence meant that we sold cheese at special prices and 'gave away' glasses of wine to our 400 guests.

2. When Diz heard about the after show 'liquid catering arrangements' he elected to stay with us up at the 'Herbage' (our farmhouse home on the moors) – already a scene of many all-night parties and that night was to be no exception. (No one can recall what time or even if we went to bed that night or for that matter the date and year when it all happened! \*).
3. \* Mike Gledhill also arranged for slave labourers ( stewards) Ivan Sherratt, Tim Hall, Mick Hale and Graham Crawford who not only took on car park management but, crucial to this memoire, they were not at the afterparty so had enough functioning brain cells left to be able to provide key facts like dates which all other witnesses were too debilitated to remember!

The 'Car Park Slaves' also remembered other hilarious behind the scenes facts from Friday April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1981!

**From Ivan Sherratt**

My initial reaction is that everyone's recollections rather underplay our heroic role in directing traffic to the car park and keeps banging on about some French fiddle player.

**From Graham Crawford:**

Ha! Yes, I remember doing this with you! We had some walkie talkie's to co-ordinate the traffic but the batteries died with the arrival of the first cars. Still, we got them all parked, using the manicured lawns littered with the "keep off the grass" signs when the tarmac ran out. No one cared and we were all done and dusted before the stage lit up... Great night.

**From Tim Hall :**

I can remember doing car park duty and being astounded by the concert and then, the whiskey drinking back stage.

**From Mick Hale ( The man with the memory )**

This is what he 'remembers' of that night (only slightly wrong) :

1) My feeling that the concert was on a Friday is supported by the following two memories:

2) Malcolm, I remember you telling us that you had reluctantly booked Stéphane Grappelli a room at the Southbank Hotel, despite telling his manager that the Southbank was the venue for a loud and often violent disco at weekends. Apparently, either Grappelli himself or his manager insisted that he stay in accommodation bearing the word "hotel" in its name, and had therefore turned down the other (probably far nicer) accommodation you would have preferred to put him up in. OK, so that makes it a Friday or Saturday night, but...

3) I remember at one point standing in front of the stage with you, Ivan, Tim and Chris Ellis. Stéphane Grappelli had just arrived and you introduced us all to him.

He nodded very courteously and said hello, then sat down in the front row of chairs, which had already been put out by the Westwood High School caretaker, Richard Fowler (who later that summer would put me and Tim together with a diminutive lady country singer we called "One-Lunged Pat", on account of her being called Pat and only having one lung - I'm not joking).

No sooner had Monsieur Grappelli sat down, when one of the Westwood cleaning ladies abandoned her mop and bucket, plonked herself down on the chair next to him, linked arms with him and loudly declared, "I remember seeing you play at the Tower Ballroom in Blackpool when you were a lad."

The fact that Grappelli must have been in his early 70s and she was about 40 didn't seem to shake her in this

conviction.

I remember us all falling about laughing, and you and Chris had to more or less prise the utterly perplexed violinist from the clutches of his well-meaning assailant.

Anyway, the point of all this is that if the Westwood cleaning staff were there, that would make it a Friday night, as they didn't come in at weekends.

4) Diz Disley: You also took us stewards into the backstage changing rooms, where we were greeted by the sight of Diz Disley lying flat-out on his back on the tiled floor, clutching a bottle of whisky or brandy in his right hand and yelling "Bastard f\*\*\*\*ng cramp!"

He was wearing a white shirt which was half in, half out of his trousers and only about half the buttons were done up - the way shirts often look after the wearer has been in a fight.

He was also wearing dark flared trousers and zip-up boots, the zips of which were open due to the "bastard f\*\*\*\*ng cramp" he was complaining about.

I remember he eventually got up and sat down on one of the benches and was utterly charming and very funny. It pretty soon became clear that Diz was a functioning alcoholic, but you wouldn't have noticed that once he got up on stage, where he performed immaculately.

5) The music: obviously, Stéphane Grappelli was the star of the show, and I was amazed by the skill and passion with which he still played - despite having looked before the show as if a sneeze or a light breeze would've knocked him over.

However, because I played guitar myself, I spent most of the concert watching Diz Disley and Martin Taylor and thinking to myself "How the f\*\*k do you learn to play like that?" The musical highlight of the evening for me was when Stéphane Grappelli and the bassist took a break and Disley and Taylor did a wonderful jazz version of "Here, There and Everywhere" by The Beatles. Funnily enough, I've got no real memory of the bassist, even though I know he was there. (Jack Sewing)

6) The audience: I remember someone saying, "The local burglars will have a clear run at Birchall tonight, because the bastards are all here."

Meaning: a lot of posh or would-be posh people were there, simply because the concert represented Culture with a capital C.

I'm quite sure there were a lot of genuine music/jazz lovers there that night, but some of audience were definitely keeping-up-with-the-Jones, culture vulture types. Whatever: it was a terrific night, and because we'd paid in kind by doing our bit on the car park, me, Graham, Ivan and Tim got to see it for free.

Anyway, that's what I remember of that evening almost 39 (bloody hell!) years ago. I hope these memories fill in a few gaps for you, Malcolm. If anything else comes back to me, I'll drop you another email.

Second email from Mick

1) The date of the concert: I was talking to my mum about this last night and she says the family friend who had the heart attacks died on the May Day Bank Holiday Monday (4 May) and not the Spring Bank Holiday Monday, as I remembered it. She says he'd had his first heart attack just over a fortnight before this, about two days before the Stéphane Grappelli concert. This would make the date of the concert Friday 10<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> April. Anyway, regardless of which one of us is right, we can definitely say that the concert took place mid-April to mid-May 1981, which narrows it down considerably.

2) Diz Disley: He wasn't shouting "Bastard f\*\*\*\*ng cramp!", it was "Bastard f\*\*\*\*ng gout!" That was why he couldn't zip his boots up - and it's more in keeping with his evident alcoholism. This suddenly came back to me just as I was about to fall asleep last night, as did a memory of him sitting on one of the benches in the changing room and talking about his gout and showing us his swollen ankles and calves.

STALL  
IN THE MARKET

# Leek Post &

CIRCULATING IN THE COUNTIES OF STAFFORDSHIRE

No. 5038

Thursday, March 19, 1981

## Jazz star for Leek

Stephane Grappelly — the greatest jazz violinist in the world — is coming to Leek next month!

Grappelly, supported by the Dik Dinsley Trio, will appear at Wistwood High School on Friday April 10, presented by the organisers of Fiasco Entertainments. Many will have witnessed the amazing 'Folk Fiasco' evenings where top folk artistes appear each month and, as chief organiser Malcolm Hawksworth told the 'Post and Times', "The Grappelly concert marks the start of the next stage in the Fiasco plan — Superstars!"

"In pulling off this amazing feat Fiasco is at last fully achieving its primary aim — bringing top class live entertainment to Leek" he added.

Malcolm insists that the concert is not just a one off — he and his colleagues are already involved in negotiations to bring other international stars to the Moorlands. But one thing is for sure, he commented "They don't come much bigger than Stephane Grappelly".

Demand for tickets for the concert is so great and, of course, numbers are very limited, that the organisers feel that the only fair way to offer them is on a first come first served basis. Priced at £4.75 the tickets will be on sale from 10 a.m. on Saturday at Fine Sounds Music Shop in St. Edward street.

## Leek M.P. v

Leek M.P. Mr David Knox was one of eight Conservative "rebels" who voted against the Government in Monday night's debate on the Budget.

The issue which forced Mr Knox to split from his party line was the swingeing twenty pence increase in petrol. With eight "rebel" votes and twenty

abstentions, the Government won the petrol tax vote by a majority of only 14, the narrowest of the whole debate.

Mr Knox said afterwards that

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**freetime...  
Stately  
homes  
concerts**



Twenty five of England's finest and most famous historic stately homes will be the venues for a number of concerts over the coming year.

Amongst the list is Hagley Hall in Shropshire, Audley End Hall in Essex, Knole in Kent, and Thoresby Hall, Nottingham. In each case, the promoters, the English Tourist Board and the ICHM, have tried to match the music to the style of the house. For example a Tudor or Elizabethan mansion has the music of the 'Golden Age', including William Byrd, Thomas Tallis and even Henry VIII. Contemporary instruments or exact replicas are used for most of these performances.

During the evening, guests will be served with a special light buffet supper and wine. This follows a tour of the State Apartments or principal rooms. Tickets priced at £7.50 each are available from the BMW Box Office, 21-23 Chilworth Street, London W2 3HA telephone 01 402 7128, or your nearest BMW dealer.



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September.

A recommendation to last Friday's meeting of the County Council's Education Committee suggested that the charge for a term of 11 weeks, two hours a week, should be increased from £6.50 to £8. Pensioners not working will be charged half, as will students under 18 not in full time education. Students under 18 who are in full time education will be charged a nominal £1.

The recommendation was made by the Youth, Community and Careers Sub-committee and was the subject of a report made as part of the re-organisation of adult education being considered by the council at present. Various alter-

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**Cheers  
Charles!**

Those who are looking forward to celebrating Prince Charles' marriage with a drink will be able to do so at almost any time of the day in most of Leek's pubs.

At last week's Licensing Session 86 members of the local Licenced Victuallers' Association were granted extensions for July 29. The hours granted will mean that pubs can stay open from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. until midnight.

The same group of licencees were also granted permission to open till midnight on Easter Bank Holiday and the same time on Spring Bank Holiday.

**Violin maestro  
once a dancer**

Those who saw Sunday night's BBC 2 film 'Isadora' will be fascinated to know that sixty years ago, Stephen Grapelli was one of her dancing pupils.

Grapelli (above) who has been the world's top jazz violinist since before the last war, visits Leek Westwood Hall on Friday night, backed by a trio including Diz Dizley (below).

By the beginning of this week there were only about 40 tickets left for the concert, which promises to be the Moorlands jazz event of the year.



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Some of the play acting scenes

# A tale of three concerts

Short of Barry Manilow doing a summer season at Rudyard, Friday night's concert by Stephane Grappelli must surely go down as THE musical event of the year for Leek — perhaps the decade.

The main hall of Westwood High School was packed with 400-plus adoring fans, delighted from the first note by the miraculous playing of the world's greatest jazz violinist. Two hours of superb music later and they were on their feet giving a standing ovation for a concert that all felt privileged to have witnessed.

For me it was the start of a musical weekend which featured harp music from Wales and finished up with the massed voices that are the pride of Bid-dulph.

Back to Grappelli's five-star performance. Not only did the white-haired maestro produce some of his old favourites on the violin, but he proved he was a mean pianist too. And that wasn't all — the "backing" trio of Diz Dizley (guitar), Martin Taylor (guitar) and Jack Sewing (bass) were out of the top drawer too.

Taylor, fifty years younger than Grappelli, did a memorable solo of one of his compositions and seemed to have a great rapport with the older man while Sewing well deserved the spontaneous applause that punctuated every piece during the evening.

As organiser Malcolm Hawksworth put it afterwards: "How do we follow that?"

I personally followed it on Saturday night with a trip out to Keele at the invitation of of the Stoke on Trent and Dist

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David Cliffe - Leek Post 18th April 1981

(whose Barry Manilow? was he the guy who did the tight rope walking ?)