

North East Melodeon Playgroup II

Friday and Saturday on 18 – 19 May 2018

(with an extension on Sunday 20 May)



**Whittonstall Residential Centre & Campsite,
Pasture House,
Whittonstall,
Northumbria,
DH8 9JS**

About

This is our second annual PlayGroup.

The Saturday Programme will last from 0930 hrs until as late as you want – the residential venue is dedicated to us for the whole weekend.

The PlayGroup is intended for players who:-

- Have never played a melodeon before (absolute beginners).
- Understand the rudiments but want to develop their skills and gain confidence in playing along with others (beginners).
- Are slightly more experienced than beginner level and want to further improve their skills and confidence and develop their session repertoire (improvers).

It will be informal – no advanced booking and you could just drop in.

It will be a supportive and friendly environment – playing will be done at an appropriate speed and it will be acceptable to make mistakes without any criticism.

It will be non-profit making and cheap at no more than £15 - 20 per person – the low cost of hiring the facilities and tutors' travel expenses will be simply divided between those attending.

The aim is to stimulate your interest in playing the melodeon, encourage you to improve your skills and enhance your confidence so that you feel able to attend more advanced melodeon events (eg Melodeons at Witney, Melodeons in Wensleydale) and to participate in multi-instrument workshops at folk festivals and local folk music sessions.

Our highly skilled volunteer tutors will lead the workshop sessions for each ability level. A limited number of loan melodeons will be available for absolute beginners.

In addition, there will be an opportunity to play with others in open sessions on Friday and Saturday evenings and at other times. In particular, there is one open

session where beginners are encouraged to play their party piece without fear of making mistakes – they will probably never experience a more friendly and understanding audience because everyone is or has been in the same boat, including the tutors.

The event is designed for players of the D/G melodeon, so the tunes will be in the keys of D, G and Em. Players of other melodeons are welcome but they will need to adapt.

There will also be a practical session demonstrating how a melodeon works.

The event is held at our dedicated retreat with accommodation, camp site, caravan/mobile home parking and facilities, including self – catering and take-aways from the local pub. We have the place from Friday until Sunday evening with a possible extension to Monday.

There are a number of other Melodeon Playgroups in England. All of these Melodeon Playgroups are independent, unconnected and run by different people. We are adopting the same ethos as the other Groups.

Planning

After reading these notes, the following information would be very helpful if you're thinking of coming:-

1. Your likely ability level; absolute beginner, beginner or advance.
2. If Absolute Beginner, would you like to borrow a melodeon?
3. Are you travelling by car?
4. Do you want a pick-up and drop off in Ebchester?
5. Do you or any others (gender required for house bedrooms) want to stay in the house or campsite on Friday and/or Saturday nights? Also, would you like to stay over on Sunday night?
6. Would you like to park your caravan/mobile home on site for the 2 or 3 nights?
7. Would you like to attend Mel's additional workshop on the Sunday?

Please email or phone Nigel Brace (nigelbrace@aol.com or tel 01207581552/mob 07767215532). It would be extremely helpful for confirmation of items 2 - 6 in advance. You can always change your mind before and during the event – informality is important.

Tutors

Three experienced tutors will run the workshops for each ability level and lead the sessions. There will also be a practical session on how the melodeon works. Our tutor (Mark Insley) will take one apart, give tips on sensible DIY work and re-assemble it.

Details of our tutors and their workshops and sessions can be found below:

Mark Insley – Absolute Beginners

Mark is a vibrant and energetic young melodeon player living in Newcastle, originally from Lincolnshire. He has a solid background in playing for Morris Dancing and for Ceilidhs. Mark has studied melodeon at Degree level both in Newcastle and Telemark, Norway.

Richard Featherstone – Beginners and Sessions Leader

Richard started playing in 1978. He is the musician for "Jet Set" and "Locos in Motion" border morris teams. He plays English and French tunes on DG and GC melodeons.

Mel Biggs – Improvers

Mel has been a supporter of the Melodeon Playgroup series since the original Evesham event in 2012. Renowned the world over for her perceptive, patient and mindful manner in teaching groups and individuals, Mel is a leading light in the world of melodeon teaching; both on and off-line. Having been teaching since 2009, Mel has an ever expanding toolkit of techniques at her disposal which she adapts to every new teaching scenario. You can expect a bespoke blend of learning-by-ear, call and response playing, analogies, visualisations and pattern recognition, tune deconstruction and notation in moderation. Her workshops are fun and inclusive. You'll leave with a smile on your face and new knowledge in your fingers!

Support by Acorn Instruments

The **Acorn Instrument** stall will be open throughout – see information on page 6.

Programme

The Programme is built around the residential facilities and camp site dedicated for our use. It will be our retreat!

Schedule – Friday 18 May

From evening to late: Informal Sessions. You choose; personal practice, similar ability groups (small and large), play any type of instruments or just socialise and eat/drink. There is plentiful space and the venue opens at noon!

Schedule - Saturday 19 May

9.30 – 10.00: Welcome, introduction, administration, refreshments, order lunch.

10.00 – 12.00: Workshops Session 1
Mark with Absolute Beginners
Richard with Beginners
Mel with Improvers

12.00 – 14.00:	Lunch/social time
	Melodeon Autopsy with Mark (or social time)
14.00 – 16.15:	Workshops Session 2 – same format as Workshops Session 1
16.30 – 17.30:	Open Session - Party pieces led by Richard.
17.30 – until late	Evening Meal, open sessions, goodbyes, thanks and good nights!

This final session provides an opportunity for informal gatherings and social activity just like Friday night.

Programme - Sunday 20 May

This is the big addition to our PlayGroup in 2017 and is based upon the highly successful workshop at the Derbyshire PlayGroup. Mel will lead her “Thinking Outside the Box” workshop which is aimed at all ability levels from Beginners upwards. This is entirely different in scope, objectives and costs to Mel’s Improver session during the Playgroup.

This edition of “Thinking Outside The Box” will focus on dynamics using Mel’s infamous ‘1 tune’ approach. The tune will be sent out to participants before the event so participants can prepare. Full payment of £40 will be essential upon booking to secure your place. Numbers will be capped at 25. More details available on Mel’s website: www.melbiggsmusic.co.uk If you would like to attend, please email workshops@melbiggsmusic.co.uk

Absolute Beginners are still welcome to stay over and form informal gatherings on the Sunday. We will look after you and provide space.

Booking for the Playgroup

It is very informal. You do not need to book. You could just drop in.

You will not pay in advance. The organisers and tutors are volunteers. We will pay travel expenses to tutors – this is only fair as they are kindly giving their time. The low cost of hiring the facilities and these travel expenses will be divided between those attending and we will collect this money on the day. It will be no more than £15 - 20 per person and could much less.

Despite the emphasis on informality, it would be helpful to know whether you might come – see page 2. You could still change your mind, even at the last minute.

You could inform us by a number of methods; posting a reply in melodeon.net (the topic is “North East Melodeon Playgroup” in the News and Events section), on our facebook page ([North East Melodeon Playgroup](https://www.facebook.com/North-East-Melodeon-Playgroup)), sending an email to nigelbrace@aol.com or phoning Nigel on 01207581552 or 07767215532.

Please note that there are separate arrangements for Mel’s workshop on the Sunday (see above)

Our programme is offered in good faith, but the organisers reserve the right to make changes in the case of unforeseen circumstances.

Venue, Travel and Accommodation

Venue

The venue is Whittonstall Residential Centre & Campsite, Pasture House, Whittonstall, Northumbria, DH8 9JS. Details are given on <https://www.girlguidingnorthumberland.org.uk/whittonstall-residential-centre> . It is a pleasant site surrounded by farm land with lovely views across the Northumberland fells. We'll be playing for ourselves and sheep!

There are limited parking spaces at the venue but, if needed, we will have alternative arrangements.

We will provide free refreshments (tea/coffee/biscuits). Lunch (light food) and Evening meals will be organised at cost, made for ourselves or delivered from the local pub - we will provide details nearer the time. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks will be available at cost.

Travel

Travelling along the A694 (from Newcastle, Durham or Consett), in Ebchester village take the B6309, in Whittonstall village take the minor road signposted "Slaley, Derwent Reservoir, Kiln Pitt" and the car park (for our house) is 0.8 miles on the left hand side.

Alternatively, coming on the A68 from the South, at Kiln Pitt Hill take the right hand road signposted "Whittonstall, Ebchester" and the car park is 1.7 miles on the right (just after our house).

There is a limited and infrequent bus service to the venue.

There is a good bus service to Ebchester – the nearest village. We will arrange pick-ups and drops for those travelling by bus to Ebchester.

There is a good bus service (Red Kite 45 or 46) from central Newcastle (including a stop at the main train station) which stops at Ebchester Church. The bus journey takes 40 mins, runs at 15 min intervals in the morning and the latest return bus departs from Ebchester at 22.23 hrs.

Whilst frequent, the bus services from Durham are not direct and involve a change at Consett.

Accommodation

Our Place!

The venue is ours for the weekend – Friday lunchtime to Sunday teatime. An extension to Monday could be arranged.

The house has a fully equipped kitchen/diner, lounge and beds for 28 people (bunks, beds and en-suite disabled), toilets and showers. The bunks are housed in separate (gender) rooms and 12 people could sleep without double-decking! The cost will vary from £10 to £18 per person per night, depending on take-up.

There is a large camp site with excellent showers/toilet/washing facilities. We will be able to accommodate a few caravans/mobile homes – please contact Nigel Brace. The cost will vary from £5 to £15 per person per night, depending on take-up.

There is also a large cabin which could be used for indoor camping for a few people who dislike dormitory sleeping or real camping.

We will provide food for self-catering or delivery from the local pub – charged at cost.

There are open and sheltered outside areas. Bonfire hearths are available although singing of scout/guide songs is not obligatory!

Hotels

We don't have many hotels in the area. We would like everyone to join in the communal life at the venue. Please contact Nigel Brace for details if you really want to stay in a hotel.

Caravan/Camperhome Sites

There are 2 local sites if you don't want to stay with us.

The nearest is Allensford Caravan Park (<http://www.allensfordcaravanpark.com>) .

The other site is Byreside Caravan Site, Hamsterley, NE17 7RT (<http://www.byresidecaravansite.co.uk>)

Glamping is possible at the Derwent Water Reservoir (DERWENTVIEWGLAMPING@BTINTERNET.COM)

Resource Materials

We will update this flyer to include information about tunes from Richard and Mel a few weeks beforehand, so that you are able to prepare for their workshops.

It is not appropriate to prepare for Mark's workshop. Otherwise, you are not an absolute beginner.

Acorn Instruments



As in the case of the other Playgroups, Pete from Acorn Instruments will be supporting this Playgroup and will be exhibiting. They carry the largest stock and selection of Castagnari melodeons in the UK and are also the English agents for Manfrini Accordions.

You can find out more about Acorn on their [website](#) or [Facebook page](#).