

**North East Melodeon Weekend IV**  
**Friday to Sunday on 19-21 June 2020**  
**(with an extension to Monday 22 June)**



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

### **General Information**

This leaflet explains both the non-profit making **Playgroup** and Mel's more developed **Thinking Outside the Box**. You could attend one or both of these events depending on your ability.

### **Breaking News**

Up until now, we've only offered DG melodeon workshops in previous Playgroups. Depending on demand, we aim to run parallel workshops for GC melodeons on either or both days, i.e. we're considering extending the scope of the weekend. Please indicate an interest when answering questions on page 2. We'll be in touch.

### **Playgroup**

This is our fourth annual Playgroup in the North East.

The Saturday Programme will last from 0930 hrs until the evening

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, change ability group before or during the day or simple drop out at any time.

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

It will be non-profit making and cheap at no more than £20 per person – the cost of hiring the facilities, lunch and tutors' costs 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 ultimately feel able to attend more advanced melodeon events (eg, Thinking Outside the Box, Melodeons at Witney, Melodeons in Wensleydale, BorderBox etc) 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.

### **Other Essential Background Information**

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. Some players have asked whether we could also run workshops for GC melodeons on either or both days, i.e. this would not replace the workshops for DG melodeons. The ability level would be pitched at Beginner/Improver depending on demand. Please answer the question below if interested.

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

The event is held at our dedicated retreat with accommodation, caravan/camp site and facilities, including self – catering and take-away from the local pub. We have the place from Friday until Sunday evening with a possible extension to Monday to enable you to play more or just socialise.

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 via email would be very helpful if you're thinking of coming:-

1. You intend to attend the Playgroup.
2. You intend to book a place on Thinking Outside the Box VI.
3. You are interested in attending workshops for GC melodeon instead of DG melodeon, or possibly a mixture of both DG and GC workshops.
4. Your likely ability level; absolute beginner, beginner, improver or more advanced.
5. If Absolute Beginner, would you like to borrow a melodeon?
6. Are you travelling by car?
7. Do you want a pick-up and drop off in Ebchester or Stocksfield?
8. Do you or any others (gender required) want to stay in the house on Friday and/or Saturday nights? Also, would you like to stay over on Sunday night?

9. Do you or any others want to pitch on the camp site or caravan/mobile home site on Friday and/or Saturday nights? Also, would you like to stay over on Sunday night?

## **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.

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

### **Vicky Cooper – Absolute Beginners for Playgroup**

Vicky is band leader for Silkstone Greens North West Morris and a relative newcomer to all things folk. She has previously taught at North East Playgroup, Derbyshire Playgroup and Melodeons at Wensleydale. She has a passion for encouraging others to take up the melodeon in the hope they love it as much as she does! She plays D/G and G/C melodeons, with a particular soft spot for French tunes.

### **Richard Featherstone – Improvers and Sessions Leader for Playgroup**

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 – Beginners for Playgroup and facilitator for Thinking Outside the Box VI**

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**

Pete Ward supports all of the Playgroups. He will run the **Acorn Instrument** stall which will be open throughout – see information on page 6. Pete will also run the melodeon autopsy session, i.e. take one apart, give tips on sensible DIY work and re-assemble it.

## **Programme**

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

### **Schedule – Friday 14 June**

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!

### **Playgroup Programme - Saturday 15 June**

9.30 – 10.00:	Welcome, introduction, administration, refreshments, order lunch.
10.00 – 12.00:	Workshops Session 1 Vicky with Absolute Beginners Mel with Beginners Richard with Improvers
12.00 – 13.30:	Lunch/social time
13.30 – 16.00	Workshops Session 2 – same format as Workshops Session 1
16.15 – 18.00:	Open Session - Party pieces led by Richard. Melodeon Autopsy with Pete (or social time)
18.00 – 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.

### **Thinking Outside the Box VI Programme - Sunday 21 June**

Following the success of last year's TOTB event in Whittonstall, this is an additional workshop on Sunday from 0930 to 1630 hrs which is facilitated by Mel Biggs. This is entirely different in scope, objectives and costs to Mel's session during the Playgroup.

In this edition of TOTB, explore melodies that involve changes in time signature. Learn how to truly engage your rhythmical core and play the same tune in different time signatures. Improve your understanding of rhythm, and how to control it on your instrument.

In contrast to Playgroup, some preparation in advance is essential for this event to run successfully. There will be a small repertoire (3 tunes maximum) of common tunes sent out one month before the event so participants can prepare.

### **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 costs to tutors – this is only fair as they are kindly giving their time. The low cost of hiring the facilities, lunch and tutors' costs will be divided between those attending and we will collect this money on the day. From previous experience, it is usually no more than £20 per person.

Despite the emphasis on informality, it would be helpful to know whether you might come – see info on 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](#)), sending an email to Mel Biggs

(workshops@melbiggsmusic.co.uk) or phoning Mel on 07969060394 (leave a message and she'll get back to you).

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

### **Booking for the Thinking Outside the Box VI**

Full payment of £40 will be essential upon booking to secure your place. Numbers will be capped at 20.

If you would like to attend, please email: workshops@melbiggsmusic.co.uk and let Mel know which ability level you fall into: good beginner, improver, intermediate, more advanced.

Please send payment **referenced with your name** to:

<b>Nationwide 070806 01973077</b>
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Please note that refunds will not be available within 4 weeks of the event. Bookings are transferable if you can fill your place with a friend.

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

### **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 the 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) on both days and lunch (light food) for the Playgroup. All evening meals and lunch on the Sunday 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 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 22.20 hrs.

Whilst frequent, the bus services from Durham only go to Consett. We would need to pick you up in Consett.

Similarly, we will arrange pick-ups and drops for those travelling by train to Stocksfield Train station on the Newcastle – Carlisle line. The train journey takes 30 mins, runs at 30 min intervals in the morning and the latest return train departs from Stocksfield at 23.30 hrs.

For those using public transport, Stocksfield train station is most convenient as it is the closest pick up point for our venue.

## **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. The cost will vary from £5 to £15 per person per night, depending on take-up.

Other than the free refreshments and Saturday lunch, 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 us 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](mailto:DERWENTVIEWGLAMPING@BTINTERNET.COM))

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## **Resource Materials**

We will communicate (by email, melodeon. net, facebook) information about tunes from Richard and Mel a few weeks beforehand, so that you are able to prepare for their workshops.

You will not be provided with materials for the Absolute Beginners workshop.

## **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. Visit the website for more information on current stock:

[www.acorninstruments.co.uk](http://www.acorninstruments.co.uk)