

DEREHAM BLUES FESTIVAL

It's Here - The Dereham Blues Festival 2022

The Dereham Blues Festival is back and raring to go. After two years of Covid restrictions the Dereham Blues Festival starts on July 6th and runs each day until Sunday evening 10th July, all ready to put Dereham firmly at the centre of Norfolk's cultural mix and a must-visit place in the region in the summer.

First off on Wednesday evening 6th July, the big and now sold-out opening concert at The Dereham Memorial Hall gets the festival off to a top-drawer start. Doors open at 18:30 and the local community choir Rockavox will be performing in the bar area before the main gig commences. Then, not one, but two of the fastest rising and fabulous UK blues and soul acts will take to the stage. Kyla Brox will perform with her band, pouring her heart and soul into her set, truly showing why she is one of the hottest soul acts in the UK today. Then topping the show, the fabulous When Rivers Meet (Grace and Aaron Bond), together with their band, will take to the stage and show why they are taking the UK-wide blues scene by storm. Hailing from East Anglia, When Rivers Meet are carving out rave reviews for their shows across the UK. Both acts have won recent awards for their stunning performances. If you have a ticket for the show, you are in for a real treat.

Then for the next four days until Sunday 10th July, Dereham town will again come alive to the sounds of all sorts of blues and soul music. It is amazing, but even after two years of silent guitars and drums collecting some dust and voices not being stretched to their full blues capacity, this festival is truly back, and bigger and better than any previous year since 2013 when the festival started. The blues as a music genre is a true and resilient survivor.

There are a record number of some 70 bands this year and also more than ever, there are 17 unique venues spread throughout the town, from pubs, bars, restaurants, sports and social clubs, hosting and sponsoring the bands. All this adds up to a bigger Festival than we have ever seen before. The Festival is once again supported by the generosity of a new group of highly enthusiastic sponsors. The Festival can only take place with their support, and that of all the bands, venues and other supporters and volunteers.

Although the volunteer organising committee continued working quietly in the background over the past two years, knowing we would be back, it says so much for the enthusiasm and resilience of the all concerned, that there was no difficulty in reviving the festival after the enforced break due to Covid restrictions. Venues, bands, sponsors and festival goers alike, have enthusiastically all rushed forward to make this festival happen again. The Festival Chairman Harry Collins says; "We cannot thank them all enough".

Additionally, there is an extra special event this year. On Saturday afternoon 9th July. There will be a "pop-up" open air blues busk in the Ellenor Fenn Garden, starting at 13:00 providing a non-stop afternoon of local, both young and seasoned up and coming buskers performing their own special brand of blues music. This event is sponsored by the active and thriving Norfolk Blues Society. So come along and be amazed at the quality of local talent.

With so much going on over the five days of the Festival, if you wonder who is playing, where and at what times, please head to The Dereham Blues Festival website for full details at <https://www.derehamb bluesfestival.org.uk> . Under the section "Program 2022" there is a full list of bands, venues and times to help you plan your days at the festival to get the most out of your stay. It is arranged in such a way on the website you can makw your own itinerary and timetable to suit you.

With the surge of interest and demand from the public so far received, the Festival brochure had to be extended to 42 pages and now 12,000 copies are currently being distributed to the public countywide via the venues, at other public places and at pop-up promotional events throughout the region, eg the Dereham Day event last month.



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And the final good news ? It is all free for audiences in all the venues. So get along to your favourite venues, hear your favourite bands, buy some refreshments and enjoy it all.

It is so good to be back.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The 2022 Dereham Blues Festival will run from Wednesday July 6th to Sunday July 10th.

You can download high res. images from the last Festival, which was held in 2019, from the website here: <http://www.derehamb bluesfestival.org.uk/about/media-centre>

The Dereham Blues Festival started in 2013 and in its first year attracted 500 people to the market town.

The festival in 2019 attracted over 2000 music fans from across the county and beyond and has become one of the go-to events on the Blues calendar.

Email: info@derehamb bluesfestival.org.uk

There was no festival in 2020 and 2021. The COVID pandemic meant that the difficult decision was made not to hold the Dereham Blues Festival in those years.

Dereham Blues Festival is a not-for-profit company under its chairman Harry Collins, who leads the devoted team of Blues volunteers, many of whom are themselves active gigging musicians. The founding members are Doreen and Stewart Aitken who have run the festival since its 2013 inauguration.

Some 50+ acts perform in the festival, drawn from 'local-grown' talent in Norfolk and the greater East Anglia region, and from all over the rest of the UK.

The festival kicks off each year with a well-known national or international blues act. Previous years have seen Dr. Feelgood in 2016, Andy Fairweather Low and the Low Riders in 2017, Georgie Fame in 2018, and the 2019 headline show saw the fantastic Hamilton Loomis perform a storming set, culminating in a spontaneous standing ovation.

The opening night is held at Dereham Memorial Hall – for more information about this venue, other events held there, and the work of the Friends of Dereham Memorial Hall, please see their website – <http://derehammemorialhall.co.uk> .

The market town of Dereham in Norfolk has seen significant growth over the past few years and the town's Blues Festival reflects and supports this continued social and economic development.

The estimated 2000 or so festival visitors provide a real economic boost to the town as well as bringing the place alive throughout the festival week in July.



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The Dereham Blues Festival continues to be a real success story in the region thanks to its two lead organisers: Norfolk Blues Society founders Doreen and Stewart Aitken. As founding members, they remain fully involved and are determined that the festival has a long future.

The festival is entirely run by a volunteer group of some 12 local Norfolk blues enthusiasts and is supported by the Norfolk Blues Society, who can be found at <http://www.norfolkbluessociety.org.uk>

We are proud to be associated with the following sponsors of the festival and we thank them for their support: Minors and Brady who are the Headline Sponsors; Dereham Taxis, who are the Main Sponsors; and business sponsors Stephenson Smart, Quote 4 and Orchard Caravans. Please see our website for more details: www.derehamb bluesfestival.org.uk/about/sponsors

Any band who wishes to play at the annual Dereham Blues Festival in July must apply via the website – <https://www.derehamb bluesfestival.org.uk/wanna-play> Applications open each September and close the following February.

Information about Ellenor Fenn Garden can be found here: <https://aboutdereham.org/ellenor-fenn-garden/>

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