

DEREHAM BLUES FESTIVAL

New Open-Air Blues Busk Added to the Dereham Blues Festival

After a two-year covid related absence, this year's Dereham Blues Festival is returning on 6th July through to Sunday 10th July and will be bigger and better than ever. In addition to more venues and over 60 top blues acts the Festival will have a brand-new open air event sponsored by Norfolk Blues Society (NBS) . The NBS 'Blues Busk' will feature a non-stop afternoon of seasoned buskers and up and coming, young, local, blues talent.

Eight solo, duos and bands will be busking in the Ellenor Fenn Garden in the centre of Dereham on Saturday afternoon 9th July. The Blues Busk will start at 1:00 pm kicking off with Dereham's very own Rockavox choir, who are past favourites of the festival, and have appeared at the Memorial Hall before many of the Festival's opening concerts including this year's for which tickets have and are being sold at a record rate.

Following Rockavox the busking acts will each play a 20 - 30-minute unplugged set, Although Norfolk Blues Society is sponsoring the event, in true busking style, the acts will be rewarded by the town centre audience throwing money into a bucket. 10% of raised funds will be donated for the upkeep of the Ellenor Fenn Garden, a community pocket park which opened in September 21 as a result of collaboration by About Dereham, with Breckland Council and Dencora. The Blues Busk will allow Dereham shoppers, passersby and those who are not able or accustomed to attending licensed bars to also experience the inclusive and entertaining atmosphere of the 2022 Dereham Blues Festival.

Norfolk Blues Society are keen that young people should be included in the Blues Busk as the Society has a charitable remit to encourage young musicians to engage with blues music. NBS Secretary Doreen Aitken said 'Blues is at the core of most modern music and provides a bedrock for understanding the basics of modern music. The Blues Busk will be a fabulous chance to get to hear these new young acts who will ensure that this region and Dereham in particular will continue to be at the heart of live blues music both traditional and new innovative styles.'

Terry Bunting music tutor at Reepham College who mentors one of the young bands said " This is such an important opportunity for these young musicians as young bands so rarely get such a professionally run chance to perform in public."

The Blues Busk is facilitated by Percy Paradise who has organised the busking events at the famous Swanage Blues Festival. Norfolk Blues Society Chairman Dan Earp said " It is a real boon to have Percy and all his know-how for this "first ever" Blues Busk of the Dereham Blues Festival. DBF organisers have long wanted an event like this but until now it has always been beyond our resources and we lacked a suitable location but now with the new Ellenor Fenn Garden everything has fallen into place and we are grateful to Dencora Properties, About Dereham and Breckland Council for helping to make this possible."

It is planned that the buskers will also be free to roam the festival venues in order to perform during the changeovers from one band to the next.

DBF Chairman Harry Collins said " Be sure to make a note in your diary of Saturday 9th July in the Ellenor Fenn Garden for a chance to hear and see a whole lot more than twelve bars of blues. See you there!"

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.... April 2022



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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.derehambluesfestival.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@derehambluesfestival.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.

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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.

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 and Orchard Caravans. Please see our website for more details: www.derehamb blues festival.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 blues festival.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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