

RAL Music Club 2017/2018

Club Matters

Chairman: Dr Tristan Youngs (x1250)

Secretary: Mr Ronnie Brumfitt (x5048)

Treasurer: Mr Dan Beckett (x6634)

AGM / EGM

The Music Club scheduled an AGM on the 7th August 2017, but which was declared void owing to failure to establish a quorum. An EGM was subsequently scheduled for the 5th of December 2017, and which was well attended. Matters arising:

Nomination of Club Officers

Tristan Youngs was nominated for Chairman, and Dan Beckett for Treasurer, both nominations being approved at the meeting. Ronnie Brumfitt to continue as Secretary.

Block Booking of Calendars

It was noted that recurring calendar bookings have been in-place in the calendar for extended periods of time (many months) and which potentially monopolises certain timeslots. At the same time, members (particularly those in bands) find it difficult to establish regular times at which they can play, and so wish to be able to block-book certain times. A limit of 6 weeks on recurring appointments was suggested.

Room Tidiness

With the high use of the music room by different people, and the short sessions they have, it is often the case that equipment is left not packed away, or in particularly awkward places for the next users. Inevitably this forces the new users coming in to tidy up the room first, losing their own time in the process.

Membership

We revised our membership list in October to show active members, who regularly use the Music Room, and non-active members, who tend to play or perform outside of RAL. We currently have 50 active members (30 full, 14 affiliate & 6 associate) and 37 non-active members (30 full, 4 affiliate & 3 associate). During the last year 17 new members have joined the Club and 5 have informed us that they have left RAL/Harwell Campus and can no longer be members.

Piano Lessons

In April 2017 we acquired a second-hand piano and in October we introduced piano lesson with local teacher Rebecca Watts. Lessons were initially offered to Music Club and then to RecSoc members. 36 people expressed an interest, 10 had free introductory lessons and 9 are now having regular lessons in the Music room on Tuesdays. The piano has also been tuned twice during the year for which we thank the RecSoc for their financial support.

Events Calendar

Wednesday 5th July – Open Mic Night

The Music Club held its Open Mic Night on Wednesday the 5th of July in the RecSoc, with a modest crowd of around 25 turning up to see the acts on offer! Our first, piano / violin soloist Freya Ryan, unfortunately couldn't attend the event, but a last-minute replacement was found in the shape of 15-year old Vivian Zhang who played two solo piano pieces – Chopin's Fantaisie Impromptu in C-Sharp, and another piece the name of which escapes me! Regardless, neither can be considered easy to play, and she performed each of them with considerable technical skill and feeling, warranting warm applause by an appreciative crowd.

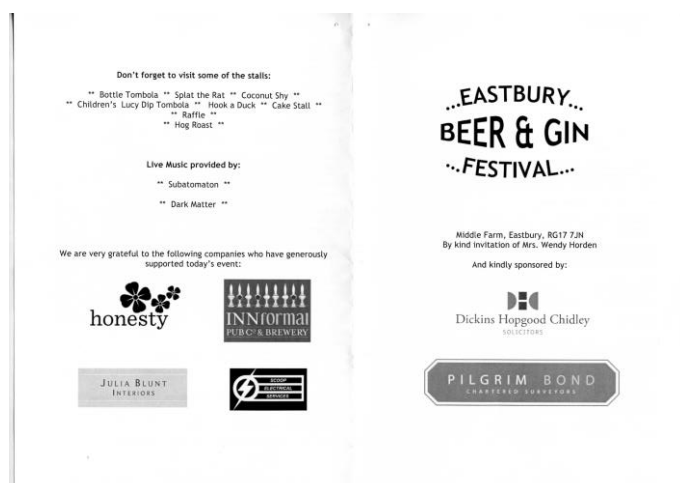
Subatomaton then stepped up and crushed any hopes the crowd may have had for an evening of sophisticated musical performances, instead subjecting them to a setlist of their own material based firmly in crunch rather than in classical. The band kept it tight, much fun was had by all, and the room appreciated that! Finally, Dark Matter took to the stage and readdressed the balance with some outstanding blues covers, swinging and swaying through their set with great musicianship all-round. Overall we had a few hours of top quality music for which I think the acts concerned should be pretty proud of.

Somewhere in the middle of Dark Matter's set the pizzas arrived (hurrah!) but the providers of pseudo-Italian food, Flominos (name changed to protect their identity), let themselves down with a fair old delay on the final delivery time. Everyone concerned trooped on with rumbling tummies, but I can only apologise for the late arrival of the food on behalf of Flominos, and say that we will do our best not to let that happen again!

We should also say thanks to Peter Phillips who took on the majority of bar cover during the event, and to Tom Nicolaides (Graduate Intern at Element Six) who took on front-of-house engineer duties for the acts, in preparation for...

Saturday 8th July – Eastbury Beer & Gin Festival

On the 1st of June 2017 I was approached by a colleague who is a member of the social council for Eastbury village church, asking if there were any acts at the RAL Music Club who would play at their beer festival in exchange for a hog roast bap. The call was received with interest by several acts associated with the club, but eventually boiled down to "modestly firm rock-band" Subatomaton and blues cover-band Dark Matter taking up the offer. The latter even accepted the invite despite being two members down owing to prior commitments! The provision of two acts able to cover a few hours of music was warmly appreciated by the organising committee, since other acts had expressed interest and pulled out, leaving the RAL Music Club as the sole source of live acts on the bill.



So, on the morning of Saturday the 8th July, rental van being driven by Ronnie Brumfitt, and now-proven sound engineer Tom Nicolaides in tow, the music room was systematically emptied (to a point!) and driven down to Eastbury village. Once frankly dismal parking signage was deciphered, Subatomaton and Dark Matter arrived at an empty gazebo, one just begging for musical equipment to be installed in. There followed two hours of unpacking, cabling, recabling, missing cables, power distribution issues, speaker problems, and baking hot

sunshine, but by the time 2:30 pm rolled around (thirty minutes before Dark Matter were due to go on) Ronnie and I agreed that a working setup was now in place, and a celebratory (somewhat in relief!) hog bap was taken to sustain energy levels for the next few hours.

Dark Matter took to their grassy stage bang on time at 3 pm, a drummer and one guitarist down, but smooth blues covers filled the ears of the attended revellers for the next thirty minutes. Each number was greeted by warm smatterings of applause from around the garden ground in which we were playing, the audience somewhat spread between the bar, the hook-a-duck,



the hog-roast and the coconut shy. A short break followed to give the crowd a chance to take in some run-of-the-mill pop songs from an iPod supplied by one of the organisers, and which was extended somewhat by the fresh cable problems to emerge with Subatomaton's foolish lead-singer / rhythm guitarist's needlessly complicated pedalboard setup. That boy will never learn. Effects pedals suitably disconnected, Subatomaton were ready to pick up where Dark Matter left off, and played through their two-part set which, in total, somehow managed to span 90 minutes. Odd technical issue aside (more cable problems!) we made it to the other side, again to the seeming approval of the crowd.



The feedback I had back from the bar (where people talk, obviously) was extremely positive, despite the odd rumbling (referring to Subatomaton) along the lines of "I wouldn't necessarily have pictured them playing here...". Dark Matter were the better fit to the event for sure, but we were both received well in the end!

The van rolled up back at RAL around 7 pm, where all the gear was unpacked and the music room restored to its former glory. The band members subsequently dispersed, all of us feeling rather pleased with the way things had gone. We wait to see if we get a call-up next year!

Special thanks to Jonny Ranner for allowing us to borrow his PA for the event.

Saturday 23rd September – RAL Music and Dance Festival (RAL MaDFest)

The first RAL Music & Dance Festival was held on Saturday the 23rd of September, and encompassed music acts courtesy of the RAL Music Club, dance troupes, local food vendors, local artisans, kid's entertainment, and science exhibits from the departments on and around Harwell Campus.

Let us first say a big “thank you” once again for the sponsorship from ISIS, CLF, PPD, Technology, and RAL Space departments. Additional support from the CSSC, Effective Event Solutions, Mrs B Designs, Hobs Repro, and the Wallingford 11:55 charity was also gratefully received, since without all this additional funding / contribution we would certainly not have been able to put on an event with the scale and scope that we had envisaged from the very start.



The event had an allowable capacity of 500, and I'm pleased to say that we sold out! From the outset the vision was to have a family-centric festival with music at its heart, with science displays and kid's entertainment as secondary flagships, and the feedback we have received seems to confirm that we achieved that.

Families with children praised it highly, and around 25% of the total attendees were in the under 11 category. All seemed to enjoy the mix of bouncy castles and interactive science displays (the perfect combination!), and that goes for the adults as well!



Feedback from the science tent itself confirms the popularity of the exhibits – for instance, the ISIS stand saw over 100 people through the course of the day.

At the recent STEAM event their stand interacted with around three times that but, to put it into perspective, the STEAM event saw around ten times the number of attendees overall. So, it looks like we are heading down a good track with respect to public engagement!

Some technical difficulties were encountered with the stage that we hired for the event but, once this was setup and in place, we were made extremely proud by the contributions of the acts associated to the RecSoc's Music Club. All performed admirably on the day, and many positive reviews were heard. A similar response was received on behalf of the dance troupes we had perform for us. Overall, the event was a success, and we hope to run it again next year, only bigger and better!

For more information on the content of the event, take a look at <https://www.ralmadfest.com> or find us on Facebook at <https://en-gb.facebook.com/RALMaDFest/>.

Thursday 23rd November – Live Music @ RecSoc

Owing to the number of bands now associated with the Music Club, there is more than enough talent to draw on and construct a full evening's entertainment. So, what used to be the "Open Mic Night" has become "Live Music@RecSoc". In a further departure from previous events, hot food was also trialled at the event, being available from doors opening. This operated on an "honesty system" and, while no specific prices were placed on any of the fare on offer, punters were asked to contribute what they felt it was worth. Three different soups along with bread and sandwich fillings were on offer (all homemade) and proved quite successful on the night. Contributions to the honesty box covered the cost of all ingredients.

Musically, things kicked off with solo spots from Freya Ryan on violin (accompanied by muso supremo Ronnie Brumfitt) and our new piano teacher Becky Watts. Both played really well and were warmly applauded by the crowd.

Skyba Doovers then kicked off the "higher volume" section, covering a range of classic numbers in their own inimitable style, to much appreciation by the crowd. Dark Matter (a man down, but that's never stopped them before!) followed suit with some excellent blues rock covers as well as their own work (good stuff guys, keep it up!).

Sadly Dan Beckett couldn't make it on the night, but firmly within the Open Mic spirit we had a last-minute addition to the program. Three new members of the music club, ably assisted by one-fifth of the Skyba Doovers, took to the stage and performed two rollicking numbers, one of which was Californication, a song performed earlier in the evening by the Skyba Doovers themselves!

Following on we had Subatomaton who heavied things up a touch with their own brand of rock, bludgeoning their way through a set of their own material, and giving the crowd one final warmup before headliners Tyro took to the stage. The power trio opened, to not insignificant applause, with the third rendition of Californication to grace the lounge in one evening! More quality covers followed (Sunshine of Your Love a highlight for me), each played with great musicianship and feel, and the crowd loved it! Top marks for Tyro.

The soup and sandwich food options seemed to go down well – many thanks for your donations! Better option than the pizza order? I understand the bar also did quite well over the course of the evening.

So, let me say a big thank you to all the bands and solo acts who played, to Jonny Ranner who was sound tech for the evening and did a sterling job, to Dave Hunt for manning the bar like a trooper, to my ever supportive wife Sarah for cooking loads of soup with me, and to everyone who carried a piece of kit before, during, or at the end of the evening.

And Finally

On behalf of the Music Club members I'd like to thank the RecSoc for their continued support and financial assistance for MaDFest and the purchase of new wireless microphones for live performances in R58, van hire for the Eastbury festival, and piano tuning.

During the forthcoming year we hope to:

- 1) *Continue our Open Mic / Live Music@RecSoc events* – sadly we have not held one yet in 2018 owing to the ongoing bar and lounge refurbishment, but we are aiming to organise two over the remainder of 2018, and one early 2019.
- 2) *Provide Live Music at the R58 Reopening* – an open event is planned to celebrate the newly-refurbished bar and lounge and promote the facilities to new users, and the Music Club will have a presence in the evening. Any interested bands, please get in touch!
- 3) *Hold MaDFest 2018* – building on the success of the inaugural MaDFest last year, we have bigger (and better!) plans for this year if the event is given the go-ahead. Plenty of volunteers will be required!
- 4) *Improve our Facilities* – the Music Room is old and rather tired, and we hope to at least get the room redecorated this year. The addition of sound-proofing to the walls, new lighting, and additional power sockets to the room would further improve the usability of the room.
- 5) *Purchase Recording Equipment* – the addition of some recording equipment (e.g. a PC, monitors, and audio interface) would allow budding musicians to record themselves at play, in order to provide the necessary material for that oh-so-important critical evaluation. We would ask the RecSoc for a grant in this case. Any suggestions welcome!

Tris