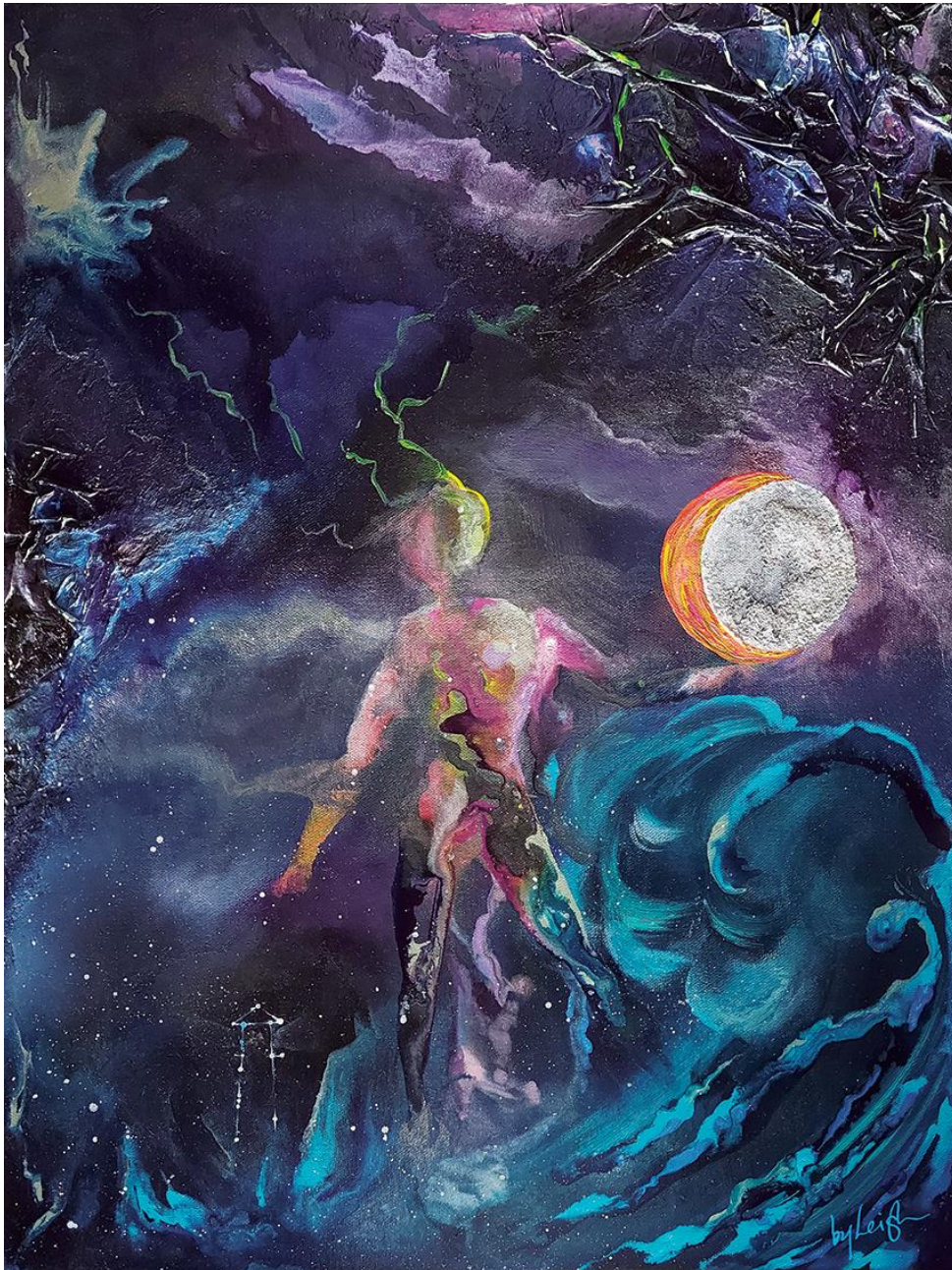


ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Festival programme cover image: 'Force of Nature' by Stacey Leigh-Ross and Zolana Ross.

Festival Premier Partner: **Johnson Matthey**

Annual Report 2023

ROYSTON ARTS FESTIVAL & EVENTS

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Mary Antony: Town Council Representative

Kate Berry

Cath Boughton: Marketing

Eleanor Cashman

Liz Cox: Community

Carl Filby: Chair & Websites Administrator

Fran Foster: Treasurer

Ivana Kisegi: Volunteer Coordinator

Phil Oddy: Vice-Chair

Nicky Paton

James Watt

Laura Whitford

The Office of Secretary remained vacant during 2023 and duties were covered by the Chair.

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Web: www.createroyston.org & www.roystonmusicfest.uk

Facebook: [/roystonartsfestival](https://www.facebook.com/roystonartsfestival)

Twitter: [@royartsfest](https://twitter.com/royartsfest)

Instagram: [@creativeroyston](https://www.instagram.com/creativeroyston)

Chairperson's statement

After a difficult three years, brought on initially by the Covid pandemic and resulting in fewer volunteers for the Creative Royston Management Committee (CRMC), it was wonderful to have the luxury of a full committee of 12 members in 2023, the maximum allowed by our Constitution. I would therefore like to thank all the CRMC members, listed above, for all their efforts which has made being Chairperson so much easier and enjoyable this year.

Our festival theme in 2023 was 'Force of Nature' so it was very pleasing that Royston Environmental Group joined with us in our Community Event in Priory Gardens rechristened as 'Gala in the Gardens'. It was also lovely to have our Finale Concert back in the Parish Church which is looking great after its refurbishment following the 2018 fire. In 2023 our Finale Concert featured not only children from King James Academy in Royston but also a significant contribution from Freman College in Buntingford, which is the first time that the concert has featured children who attend a school outside of Royston itself.

In total, we had 49 events scheduled for the arts festival, counting the second or third days of exhibitions as separate events. That would have risen to 79 by adding in each MusicFest mini-concert as a separate event though in the end 2 events had to be cancelled owing to the illness of a speaker and the late withdrawal of a venue. That still meant that the number of events staged during the 2023 festival rivalled any such figures from previous festivals in the decade prior to Covid.

The overall attendance for the 2023 festival was estimated at 5,000 visits if including 120 views of the online film On The Heath/On The Edge and is clearly on an upward trend. The 2022 festival attendance was estimated at 4,552 visits which was itself a big improvement on the previous year 2021, which was something of a 'hybrid' with several online events. We also collected 238 feedback forms in 2023 which was a sixfold increase on the less successful online version which we tried in 2022.

I am very grateful to all those who have contributed to making the festival a success in 2023 including our sponsors, local businesses (more than ever in 2023), event organisers and all our volunteers. Hopefully, all those groups and/or individuals have been acknowledged at some point in this report but if not I apologise for my unintended omission.

Once again, for the fifth year running we have made this report available in electronic form only as we continue to pursue environmentally-friendly policies and practices wherever possible.

Carl Filby

Chairperson, January 2024

Volunteers and Contributors

Creative Royston events could not happen without the hard work of our volunteers and we are always keen to hear from people who would like to help out at events. Just a couple of hours during the festival spent on a ticket desk or stewarding visitors can be a great help. If you're interested or would just like to know more, please email us on volunteers@creativeroyston.org.

Many thanks to all our volunteers in 2023: Ian Barral, David Beardwell, Ruth Brown, Emma Daintry, Graeme Dargie, Helen Filby, Robbie Filby, Tina Filby, Ray Finlay, Lucy Forrest, Elizabeth Freeman, Kate Gardiner, Vicky Key, Chris Lee, Emily Mackay, Dave Ramsay, Selene Rebane. A special thanks is due to photographer Caroline Baker whose photographs have been used to illustrate the programme section in this report.

The individuals, groups and local businesses which actively participated in the 2023 festival (not including paid artists or performers): Amandeep Dhillon; Armadillo Ink; Balanced-Be; Linda Bance; BEEE Creative; Bloom; Bow Books; Cambridge Wine; Curwens; Corvus Amateur Dramatic Society (CADS); Glazed Creations; staff and pupils of Freman College, Buntingford; The Friends of Therfield Heath Plein-Air group; Johnson Matthey; Kelly's Kitchen; Ladds; staff and pupils of King James Academy Royston; Limitless Academy of Performing Arts; Hannah Long; p-arts; Caitlin Pearman; Revolution Records; Royston Arts Society; Royston Cave; Royston Craft Fair; Royston Environmental Group; Royston First; Royston Library; Royston Live; Royston Museum; Royston Photographic Society; Royston Picture Palace; Royston Radio; Royston Town Band and Development Band; Stagecoach Performing Arts; Thursday's Band; Trinity Life Church; Nic Wilson and WomenSing.

Organisations which contributed financially or in-kind in 2023: Details of the financial contributions by our sponsors can be found in the supporting statement to our 'Income and Expenditure Account' on page 20, but we would like to take this opportunity to thank them again along with others who assisted in some form with the 2023 festival. Our Premier Partner, **Johnson Matthey**, were very generous in their support and sponsorship in once again providing a 'no-strings attached' sum to Creative Royston as the first year's payment in another 3-year support programme and we hope that they will continue to support our efforts as our Premier Partner. We also thank the **Brian Lesley Racher Trust** which has regularly given us great assistance, often supporting MusicFest which it did again this year whilst also funding the printing of our festival programme. **Royston First Bid** kindly paid for the distribution of the festival programme the first time we have had one since 2019. **Royston Town Council** has made their rooms available for festival planning meetings and we also thank the **Town Council office staff** for their assistance during the year. **Tesco** contributed wine for the 'Wild Writing' talk by Nic Wilson and also allowed us to mount a window display of posters leading up to the festival, as did **Royston Library**. We are also grateful to **Royston Rotary Club** for allowing us once again to distribute festival flyers with the Kite Festival programmes.

Finally, thank you also to everyone who contributed to our publicity efforts by putting up posters in their windows, banners on their premises or helping to distribute flyers and share posts on social media etc ...

Creative Royston Competitions

The Rotary Club of Royston has supported our Creative Writing Competitions for the last few years but quite understandably decided that owing to the number of other calls on their support they could not do so in 2023. Creative Royston wish to thank the Rotary Club for all their generous support in the past.

We took a different approach in 2023 to previous years, to both our poetry and creative writing competitions, by offering to allocate prize money to individual schools and allowing them to run and judge their own competitions. This was done in the hope that we might encourage more children to participate as we have not had as large a response as we would have wished in previous years either from children or adults when we had have the latter age category. For the 2023 competitions we asked schools to follow a 500-word format and award prizes to first, second and third places in each age range. We specified that we would award prize money to each school in two age ranges: Years 5 and 6 and another for those up to and including Year 4, whilst leaving it to schools regarding which lower age limit to apply.

Unfortunately, whilst a few schools expressed an interest only St Mary's Catholic School responded with some actual prize-winners and we thank them accordingly. It was noticeable however that some of the prize-winners were the same as last year, which is fine, but also seems to demonstrate the limited interest in the competitions. We also understand how hard-pressed schools are post-Covid with limited resources and great demands placed on teaching staff and we will therefore review whether it is desirable to run these competitions in 2024 taking these factors into account.

Once again local artist Stacey Leigh-Ross (ByLeigh) was kind enough to spend some of her valuable time creating an original piece of art to reflect Royston schoolchildren's interpretation of the festival theme, on this occasion with the assistance of her daughter Zolana Ross.

Schools were asked if they wished to participate in the competition by encouraging their pupils to produce a drawing based on the festival theme 'Force of Nature'. Unfortunately, there was a limited response from the schools probably for similar reasons as described above with our other competitions, but we are grateful to St Mary's Catholic School and Tannery Drift for encouraging their pupils to enter the competition.

You can see the result on the front cover of this report which contains a copy of the original artwork produced by Stacey and Zolana. The artwork was also used for the front cover of our festival programme and sections of it appeared on the front cover of the September edition of The Listing thanks to proprietor Cath Boughton. We also thank Royston Library (and Royston Arts Society for the use of their display boards) in allowing the children's artwork (around 50 drawings) to be displayed during September.

Below you can find a guide produced by Stacey describing how the original artwork was put together and how the children's drawings were used to inspire the composition.

Winners' Guide Sheet

RAF 2023 – Force of Nature



As always, winners of the Creative Royston Schools' Cover Art Competition are chosen based on two things:

- 1) How unique is your interpretation of the theme? and
- 2) How well is your idea executed?

This year's Cover Art Competition Winners' work was used to influence the design and style of the finished painting. Unlike previous years, specific pieces of each winners' artwork were not replicated on the final piece. Instead, a new design was created by Zolana Ross (age 10, KJAR). It was heavily influenced by the winners' techniques, styles, and interpretations of the theme. That design was then executed on canvas as a mixed media painting by Stacey Leigh Ross of by Leigh Art. Listed below are the winners and how their artwork influenced the Royston Arts Festival 2023 programme cover art painting – Force of Nature.

From **St Mary's Catholic Primary School**

Alice Perkins – The black sky with splattered stars, the hot sun and cold moon, the scraped effect in the moon.

Jonah Lock – The black sky, sea waters, lightning, spots on the moon, colour scheme of pinks, purples, yellows and blues.

Harry Edgeley – The deep blue, the faded lightning, the water colour effect tree. This influenced the techniques used on the person at the centre of the painting, who is a force of nature while being impacted by nature.

From **Tannery Drift First School**

Ollie – The hidden eye in the black swirling clouds became a person in the final painting. The lightning, the rough textured crayon rub became a dry brush effect on some gas clouds and rough textures.

Kyro – The lightning, the dark to light shading, the rough textured crayon rub became a dry brush effect on some gas clouds and rough textures.

Sammy – The black and blue colour scheme, the lightning, the smudged tree/volcano(?) disappearing into the storm, the scale of tiny trees to massive cyclone.

Dimitar – The lighthouse, the lightning, the scale of the large light house being dwarfed by the huge tsunami waves.

Jessie – The lightning, the zig zag explosive look was turned into zig zag textures. The volcano colour scheme was used in the central being and the sun.

Marketing and Promotion

In 2023 we were greatly assisted by having the professional expertise of The Listing's Cath Boughton available to fill the marketing role. The main benefit was that we developed a proper marketing strategy guided by a marketing plan with a focus on social media.

Early on in the planning process we also decided that we would like to produce a printed festival programme given the expertise we had on CRMC including the graphics skills of Nicky Paton who kindly agreed to design the programme. We received a lot of favourable comment on the printed programme which set out events in a chronological order running from Friday 22nd September through to the Finale Concert on Sunday 1st October.

Inevitably some events missed the deadline to be included in the printed programme, including our own MusicFest owing to the allowance of too much leeway for one venue in particular to agree whether or not to participate. In the end they did agree but too late for the performance schedule showing individual artists to be included in the printed programme. There was some verbal feedback on the day suggesting that it would have been good to have had the full MusicFest schedule in the printed programme which also serves to illustrate the value of the latter as well as providing us with a valuable marketing lesson. Clearly, it would be preferable to ensure that as many of the festival events as possible are included in the printed programme.

As has been the practice in the past, The Listing Magazine was commissioned to distribute the festival programme to 17,000 households, reaching 7,550 households in Royston itself and 9,450 households in the South Cambridgeshire and North Hertfordshire villages surrounding Royston. This has always seemed to be the most effective way of reaching the greatest number of people in the immediate catchment area.

Otherwise, the website was very useful to reflect late additions to the festival programme and also allowed the events to be presented in accordance with the type of activity involved, as well as chronologically. In 2023 the categories were similar to 2022 but a surge of marketing activity in the lead-up to the festival saw a record number of local businesses come on board. In many cases this involved running a workshop which therefore became a sixth category. The festival programme can still be seen on the website using this link: <https://www.creativeroyston.org/2023-festival-programme-launch/>

Banners, posters and flyers:

Vinyl banners, mostly 3m x 1m, advertising the festival and MusicFest were displayed at Tesco roundabout, Royston Rail Station, The Jolly Postie, Royston Town Hall, Banyers House and on railings next to the mini-roundabout at the intersection of Orchard Road and Old North Road. Royston Library and Tesco both kindly allowed us to create substantial window displays comprising a number of posters advertising festival events and Royston Rotary Club kindly allowed us to include a festival flyer in each one of the 2,000 programmes for the Kite Festival in August.

Press and Social Media:



The Listing magazine, as always, was very helpful in providing regular articles and updates on our activities during the year and particularly in the build-up to the festival. The Royston Crow provided some good coverage of the festival two weekends prior to the start date with pictures and an article and photos of the 2022 festival. A photo of the 2022 Community Event by Caroline Baker used by The Royston Crow is reproduced here.

Social media continues to play an important role in our marketing activity. The festival's social media presence was significantly boosted by a number of local accounts and we'd like to thank everyone who helped to raise awareness by posting, liking and sharing.

In September 2022, using Twitter now renamed X, we sent a total of 36 Tweets, earning 3,755 impressions, 1,630 Profile visits, 17 Mentions and 8 new followers to make a total of 1,097 followers. We don't seem to have exactly the same statistics available for September 2023 but sent 48 Tweets, earning 3,120 impressions, 76 likes and 7 new followers, and now have a total of 1,099 followers.

It was Facebook where the largest difference was seen between 2022 and 2023. In 2022 we published 40 posts and reached 11,135 people and the total number of people liking the Creative Royston Facebook page increased by around 30% from 615 to 803. In 2023, in the period from 2nd August to 1st October 2023 we published 110 posts and reached 47,636 people, more than a fourfold increase on less than a threefold increase in the number of posts. Strangely, we had only 792 likes in that period, a slight decrease, but it clearly wasn't for want of trying.

Schools:

As we do each year, we once again tried to involve Royston schools in the arts festival but, as mentioned above, it has clearly been a difficult for all but a few of them to find the resource to be able to do so effectively. We continue to value the involvement of the schools, particularly in their contribution to the Finale Concert, but clearly, we need to rethink our approach to the schools and find a way of redefining our relationship with them.

Royston Arts Festival 2023 Programme

Rather than run through the different events staged during the 2023 festival as has been the case in previous annual reports instead we have chosen to focus on the feedback received which follows in a later section. As has been mentioned in the previous section, details of all the 2023 festival events can still be found on the website using this link: <https://www.creativeroyston.org/2023-festival-programme-launch/>

The three main events that Creative Royston staged directly were firstly, our Community Event in Priory Gardens which in 2023 we rechristened '**Gala In The Gardens**' and this was organised by Kate Berry and took place on Saturday 30th September from 12 – 5pm. This year we were delighted that Royston Environmental Group joined with Creative Royston to stage their annual Sustain-Ability event as part of our Community Event which we think resulted in an increased footfall for both events. A link to the programme for the Gala In The Gardens can be found [HERE](#) if you wish to see all the activities available at that event.

Secondly, **Royston MusicFest** took place in during the afternoon of Sunday 1st October, organised as usual by the creator of the event, Carl Filby. You can see a list of the performers on the day by using this [LINK](#) to connect to the Royston MusicFest website where you will find further links to the websites or Facebook pages on the performing artists. As part of the publicity for this event Carl also hosted a 2-part MusicFest Special on 17th September on Royston Radio which featured all the artists due to perform at MusicFest. If you wish you can still listen to podcasts for these shows (17 & 18) by following this [LINK](#).

The third Creative Royston event and the final one of the 2023 Royston Arts Festival was our **Finale Concert** which took place on the evening of Sunday 1st October in the Church of St John the Baptist, Royston, and was organised by Phil Oddy. You can use this [LINK](#) to view the programme for the Finale Concert which we were delighted to be able to stage once more in our beautifully refurbished Parish Church for the first time since 2018. We were also very pleased to be joined for the first time by Freman College, Buntingford which is attended by many Royston schoolchildren.



In the 'Volunteers & Contributors' section we thanked Caroline Baker for her services as a photographer and here we include a few of the photographs that she kindly provided from the main Saturday (30th) to provide an impression of that day at the festival. They are mainly of the 'Gala In The Gardens' our Community Event. If anyone reading this has photos of the festival from any other day that they are happy to share

with us please send them in to info@creativeroyston.org. Photographs of MusicFest and our Finale Concert would be particularly welcome.



Left: Traditional Bharatanatyam Dance performed on stage at the Gala In The Gardens by Mum Sharada and daughter Pratheeksha

Right: The Kate Flatts Project perform their brilliant environmentally educational and entertaining show 'The Weather Machine' at the Gala In The Gardens.



Left: Royston Town Development Band at the Gala In The Gardens.

Right: One of a dozen stalls at the Royston Environmental Group's Sustain-Ability event, part of Gala In The Gardens.



Left: A few paintings from Royston Art Society's Autumn Exhibition in Royston Town Hall.

Right: a few of the photographs on display at Royston Photographic Society's Exhibition in Royston Town Hall.



Attendance

The overall attendance, i.e. number of visits, for the 2023 festival was estimated at 5,000 if including 120 views of the online film. Of this figure, the attendance for the Gala In The Gardens is the most difficult to estimate and the figure that we settled on was 1500. This was the same figure that was estimated for the 2022 equivalent to the Gala i.e. what has previously been known as our Community Event held in Priory Gardens. Part of the difficulty in estimating numbers lies in the fact that Priory Gardens is a public space and there are several entry and exit points. It would have been difficult to find enough volunteers to cover each entry point. However, whereas the 2022 event stretched for 7 hours in 2023 it reverted to something like its more usual length of 5 hours. Also, the 2023 event felt as if there were significantly greater numbers in attendance at any one time compared with 2022. If anything, it is possible that the 2022 figure may have been a slight overestimate.

In 2022 we estimated an overall attendance of 4,552 and the 2021 'hybrid' festival (online and live events) was estimated to be 2,381 or 3,470 if one includes all the 'views' of the festival website during the festival period of 23rd – 26th September.

The 2020 online festival received around 5,000 views but (hopefully!) must be regarded as a one-off and thereby few valid comparisons can be made.

The 2019 festival had an estimated 5,500 visits and is perhaps the pre-Covid benchmark to which we should aspire and was in fact a high point in itself. The estimated 5,000 visits for 2023 has restored the festival attendance to its previous levels and exceeded them in some cases. **Given that this was the first year that we have had anything like a reasonable size CRMC since 2019, with new members 'learning the ropes', we believe that the estimated attendance figure represents a very positive and encouraging achievement.**

Feedback

In 2021 we tried out collecting feedback using QR codes linked to survey questions and whilst we did not achieve a lot of response we decided to try again in 2022 as this way we would not be faced with the huge resource intensive work of collating feedback on sheets of paper and it also seemed to make sense for environmental reasons.

The results were better in 2022 but we still only received 34 responses compared with pre-Covid equivalents of approximately 400 responses using a paper-based system whereby feedback forms were handed out at events and visitors asked to complete them there and then. We discussed the issue at a CRMC meeting and decided to reinstate the paper-based system as the minimal environmental impact was likely to be far outweighed by the increase in responses. An added benefit was that we would be able to return to the 2019 position, whereby, in collecting the same responses each year, we would be able to make comparisons, spot trends and tailor some aspects of the following year's festival accordingly.

For the 2023 festival we collected 238 feedback forms of which 88 contained an additional comment of one sort or another. Many thanks to Emma Daintrey who kindly collated most of the feedback.

Here are some statistics which were compiled from the answers given on the feedback forms with accompanying comments in some cases. It should be noted that although we collected 288 completed forms, some of them were incomplete and responses were not given to all the questions.

1. Visitors were asked to rate the following elements of the festival (in left hand column):

	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Combined Good + Excellent
Event	0	4	52	177	239
%age	0.00%	1.72%	22.32%	75.97%	98.29%
Venue	1	10	54	162	216
%age	0.44%	4.41%	23.79%	71.37%	95.16%
Publicity	6	30	84	88	172
%age	2.88%	14.42%	40.38%	42.31%	82.69%
RAF Overall	0	8	79	93	172
%age	0.00%	4.44%	43.89%	51.67%	95.56%

By way of comparison here are the feedback responses for the same question in 2019

	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Combined Good + Excellent
Event	0	0	67	328	395
%age	0.00%	0.00%	16.96%	83.04%	100%
Venue	2	11	150	230	380
%age	0.51%	2.80%	38.17%	58.52%	96.69%
Publicity	8	56	172	130	302
%age	2.19%	15.30%	46.99%	35.52%	82.51%
RAF Overall	1	8	133	161	172
%age	0.33%	2.64%	43.89%	53.14%	96.03%

The comparison between 2019 and 2023 illustrates the similarity between the responses in the publicity category as well as the generally high levels of satisfaction. The high point for response about publicity was 85.47% in 2015 and the 'low' point 81.29% in 2016. All other years from 2013 were around 82%. This seems to be the pattern and does not seem to accurately reflect the quality of our marketing campaign if one compares it with the percentage response for the other three categories in the table above.

In 2023 we had a very well organised social media campaign and also attracted more businesses than has ever been the case previously to participate in the festival, which was almost entirely due to our increased marketing efforts. Perhaps there are some people who are immune to or oblivious of marketing efforts and based on our own feedback over the last 10 years that figure would appear to be between 15 -18% of the festival-going population.

2. Where did you hear about this event?

2023 Response

Web sites	The Listing	Banner/Flyer /Poster	Printed Programme	Newspaper	Social Media	Child's School	Word of Mouth	Other
31	90	36	63	12	48	15	80	23
7.79%	22.61%	9.05%	15.83%	3.02%	12.06%	3.77%	20.10%	5.78%

2019 Response

Web sites	The Listing	Banner/Flyer /Poster	Printed Programme	Newspaper	Social Media	Child's School	Word of Mouth	Other
41	124	86	76	18	41	19	141	32
7.09%	21.45%	14.88%	13.15%	3.11%	7.09%	3.29%	24.39%	5.54%

As perhaps might be expected the increase from 7.09% to 12.06% regarding where people found out about events is the most significant and also, we would guess, reflects the increasing use of social media as part of our marketing campaign.

In 2023, we put up a similar number of banners as in 2019 and printed a similar number (2,000) of flyers in time to be distributed with programmes for the Kite Festival in August and also printed and displayed many more posters for the festival itself. Nicky Paton kindly produced a set of designs for the three main Creative Royston events: - Gala In The Gardens, MusicFest and the Finale Concert, which were displayed extensively across the town. In particular, we had a much greater presence than usual in the High Street and town in particular with the greater participation of local businesses. Nevertheless, where the Banner/Flyer/Poster is concerned, it accounted for 14.88% of responses in 2019 but only 9.05% in 2023 – a fall of nearly 6% of the overall responses.

Are people becoming impervious to posters, banners and flyers? Do they pay more attention to social media or is the similar fall in effectiveness of the first with the rise in the second just a coincidence? These will be matters for consideration when marketing the 2024 festival.

3. Please state the number in your party, for each age group below:

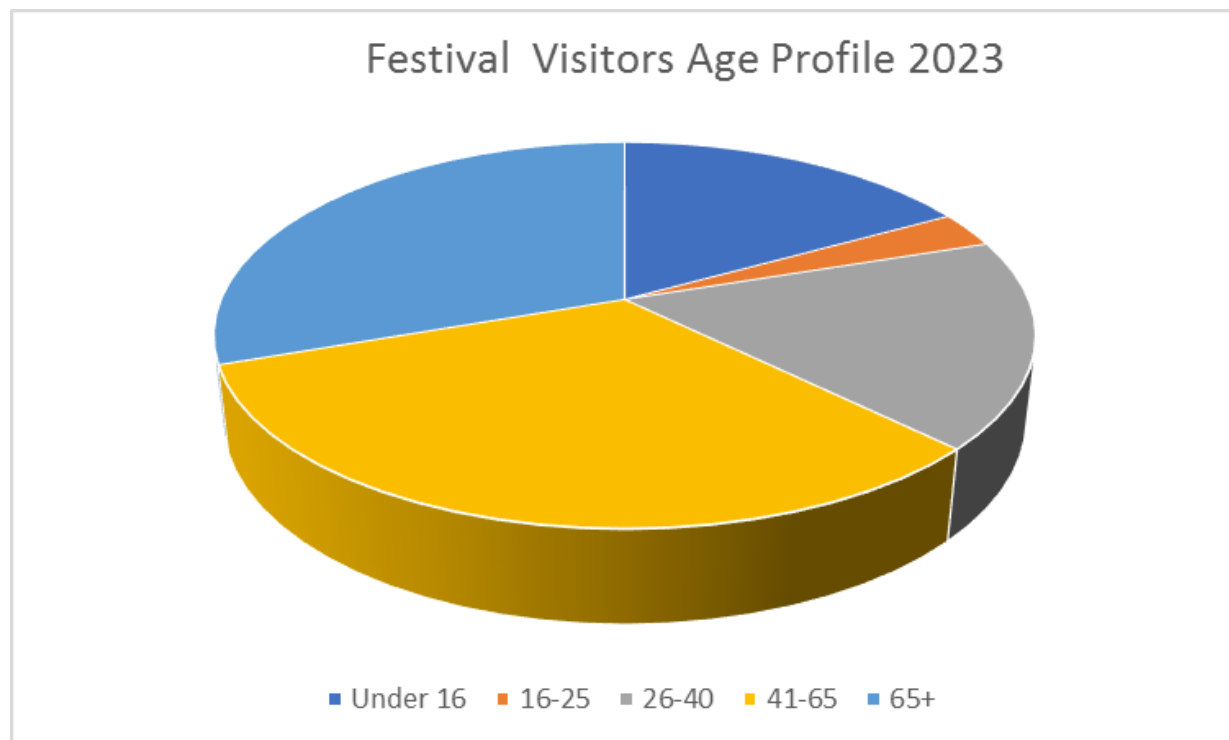
Festival Visitors Age Profile

2023

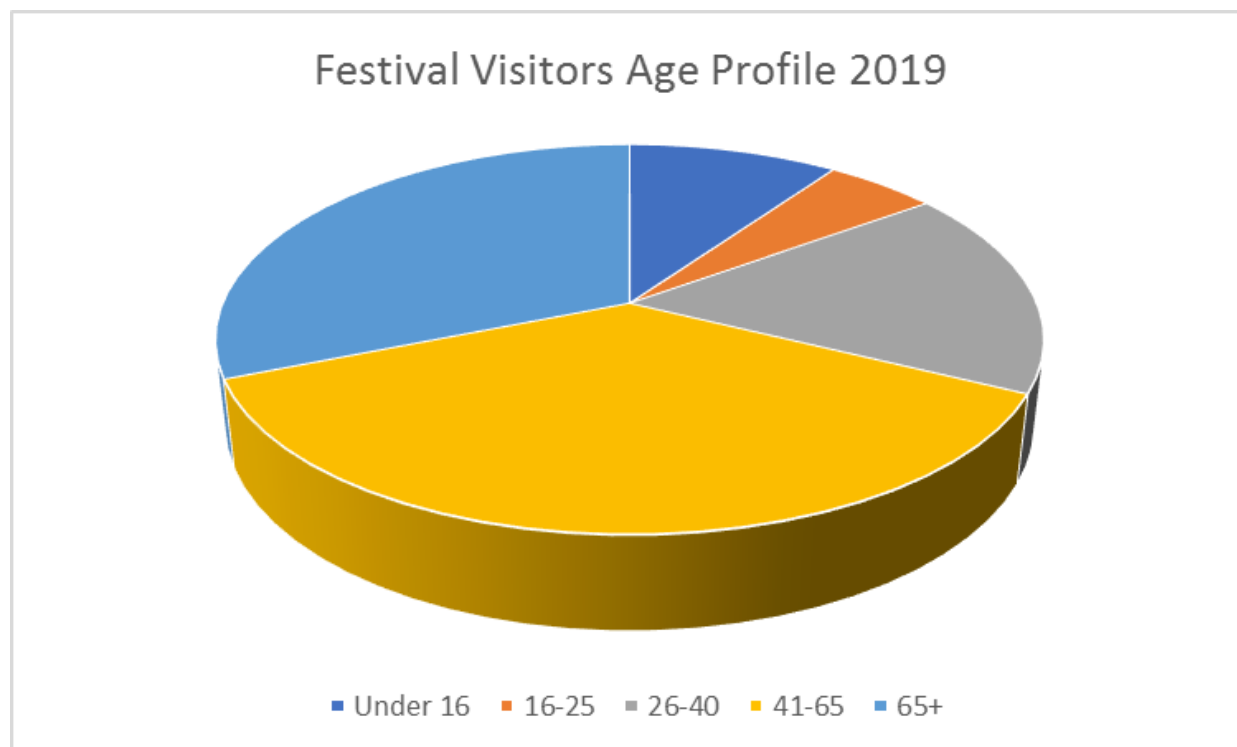
2019

Under 16	68	16.92%		Under 16	92	9.78%
16-25	12	2.99%		16-25	49	5.21%
26-40	70	17.41%		26-40	163	17.32%
41-65	130	32.34%		41-65	344	36.56%
65+	122	30.35%		65+	293	31.14%

The above figures probably look more significant in a pie chart so here is one:



Here is a similar pie chart using the data from the 2019 festival for the same question:



The message that we get from these statistics is essentially the same for both 2019 and 2023 but more so for last year's festival i.e. we need to focus our efforts on providing more of interest for the 16-25 age group.

To some extent it is always this age group that we struggle to accommodate and whilst we have got up to something like an 8% participation for occasional festivals it is clear that we need to provide more in 2024.

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Focusing still on the overall festival here are some of the comments that we received about various events that were not organised by Creative Royston.

Little English at Picture Palace	Really appreciate the picture house in Royston and the support with festival. Thanks for a lovely time.
Little English at RPP	Very entertaining and enlightening film
Little English at RPP	Well organised and professional
CADS 2 short comedies	Most enjoyable performance of Don't blame it on the Boots
Nic Wilson - Wild writing	A very interesting talk
Royston Live	Great night and good mix of music
Cambridge Wine - Argento Wine Tasting	This was a great evening. Thank you.
Cambridge Wine - AWT	I loved the little 'art of wine' exhibition to accompany the tasting
Johnson Matthey talk	Difficult to pitch the content - technical/non-technical but it was well done
Johnson Matthey talk	Great opportunity to hear from a local company. Any more would be greatly received.
RPS Exhibition	No festival banners outside town hall.
RAS Exhibition	Absolutely fabulous. Thanks
RAS Exhibition	Stunning Exhibition!!!
RAS Exhibition	This year is a particularly high standard
Flower arranging - Bloom	Thank you for a fab morning - very mindful and great for wellbeing
Arts Festival - composite	Thank you for a great weekend of kid's activities
Arts Festival - composite	Park activities were good - lots to see and do. Fabulous art on display - best year I've seen. Brochure for the festival was useful, vibrant, informative.

Event Organiser's Feedback

In addition to feedback from the public we also sought feedback from the event organisers and these were the comments that we received.

A lot of events on Friday 29 Sept - some similar. It didn't impact on our workshop, all attendees were our customers already and we heavily marketed the Arts Festival in general within the studio, there were no new people to give it a go.
This year's RAS Autumn Exhibition was the most successful for a decade. The reasons may be varied, but we noted that festival publicity was more visible than in recent years, and this will doubtless have helped to attract visitors to our exhibition.
Number of attendees felt about right for the space we had at the museum. I had to turn people away because the event became fully booked quite quickly. Perhaps in future I could host the event on two different dates so fewer people are disappointed.
We advertised this through word of mouth and our facebook page, if we do this again we may approach the schools as we were disappointed we did not get more entries.

Some of the above comments are of relevance to CRMC and others are more for the event organisers themselves. The following events are those organised by Creative Royston and the individual organisers have drawn some conclusions or identified lessons to be learned from comments received and our own internal observations.

MusicFest

The overall attendance for MusicFest was estimated at 1,020 spread across the 5 venues that participated: Conservative Club; Golf Club; Jolly Postie; Banyers House and the Heath Café. The attendance for each mini-concert is calculated from observations by several sources including the performers who give informal feedback to Carl Filby. For example, all the mini-concerts at the Conservative Club had a good attendance and in total the six mini-concerts at that venue were estimated to have had an attendance of 300. By contrast the Golf Club was not so well-attended and the overall total for that venue was estimated at 60. Of course, these may be the same people in many cases, which is why visits rather than visitors are counted for the festival overall as in many cases it may well be the same people visiting Royston Arts Society Autumn Exhibition downstairs at the town hall as visiting Royston Photographic Society's Exhibition upstairs at the same venue.

It is also difficult to work out who is there for the music in each venue. In some cases it is clear cut, but in others such as the Heath Café it is more difficult given the other activities taking place on the heath at the same time. Here are the comments we received on the feedback forms collected at MusicFest.

Jolly Postie	Friendly, all ages, little kids dancing, poor number of people not listening to music
Banyers	Good vibe, people wanting to be there for the music, listening
Conservative Club	I would love to play at next year's festival with my bluegrass/americana band
Conservative Club	Black Scar World Class Act
Conservative Club	Well done Clive - Thanks for all your hard work
Conservative Club	Excellent beer & staff
Golf Club	Need more big banners to advertise the music venues etc..Also mention that the Golf Club & Con Club are open to non-members

Although the combined approval ratings of Good & Excellent for MusicFest from feedback collected was 100%, judging by the informal feedback received from both the public and the venues, and certain issues with the organisation of MusicFest, we have concluded that the event needs something of a rethink.

Although new performers are introduced every year, the event would benefit from appealing to a wider audience, particularly younger people, which might address some of the issues with the 16-25 age group.

The event may also attract new venues if some concerts were switched to midweek when some venues would benefit more from additional custom rather than the weekend when customers are more plentiful.

Gala In The Gardens

The aim was to hold a family friendly community event highlighting the arts that was largely free for all to enjoy and that objective was surely achieved with 97% of respondents rating the event as Good or Excellent.

The event was separated into 5 different zones and you can follow this [LINK](#) to the programme for the Gala In The Gardens if you wish to see the detail of the activities available which can be summarised by zone as follows:

Performance Zone - 9 performances from 7 groups

Food Zone - Street Food Heroes brought 11 stalls

Community Zone - 7 groups (including Creative Royston)

Sustain-Ability - 12 groups represented

Kids Zone - 5 activities

Here are the comments we received on the feedback forms collected at the Gala..

Many thanks, was a lovely afternoon for our 4 year-old in particular.
Enjoyed - very nice
Really enjoyed the Sustain-Ability zone
A lovely chilled atmosphere within a mix of traditional + new activities
Walking by and saw
Indian dance was excellent
Good entertainment, friendly stalls, good food. Park clean & tidy but toilets visited at 1pm and already quite unclean & handwashing not working.
Indian dance was very good
Poor recycling facilities provided in the park
Too much music & too loud. We were stall holders and there should have been a plan for where the stalls should be.
Music far too loud. Set up organisation could be improved.

We felt that the Key areas of feedback above concerned the enjoyment of the Sustain-Ability zone; the “Good entertainment, friendly stalls, good food” and the “.. lovely chilled atmosphere within a mix of traditional & new activities”. The comments about there being too much music and it being too loud were also noted as a lesson for next year’s Community Event.

Finale Concert

The event was held in the Parish Church for the first time since 2018 and the concert sold out which presented the first challenge for the volunteers.

We received lots of comments on feedback forms which are too numerous to include, but a selection of the key points covered is shown below.

Ticketing/ seating – was an unexpected challenge!	“Separate queue needed for those without tickets” “next time I won't be relying on tickets at the door” “volunteers worked hard to accommodate us all within the Church, thank you”
Programme – praise for all performers	“Terrific concert. KJAR kids brilliant, Freman funky band, absolutely excellent” “Freman College were superb as were Women Sing” “Royston town band excellent. Hannah Long excellent”
Sound – some issues identified	“More chance to practise with sound system helpful?” “Over amplified”

Despite some difficulties at the outset finding seating for everyone and accommodating those who had not booked tickets having expected them to be available on the door, 87% of survey respondents rated the event as “Excellent” and the remaining 13% as Good.

The key points for consideration in 2024 when organising another Finale Concert are as follows:

- Simplify ticketing and manage expectations re: availability on the door. It may simply be easier to engage an online ticketing service to deal with all the ticket sales and any resulting issues.
- Maximise seating in the church – many seats taken by performers as there is no “backstage” as such.
- Sound issues were caused primarily by the late setup of a PA system by a performer and the switch to a backing track
- The comparatively late access to the Church caused by an earlier event proved to be a challenge and more time will be needed for setup and rehearsal for future concerts.

As with visitors to the Gala In The Gardens the overall response from the audience notwithstanding some obvious difficulties was very positive and the Finale Concert definitely served to end the 2024 festival on a high note.

Creative Royston Draft Financial Statements For the year ending 31 December 2023

Creative Royston Draft Financial Statements

For the year ending 31 December 2023

For approval by the Annual General Meeting on 9th January 2024

Supporting Statement

Thank you first of all to our Premier Partner, Johnson Matthey, who were very generous in their support and sponsorship in again providing the £5,000 which the company kindly donates to Creative Royston each year.

Also a big thank you to other sponsors

- The Brian Lesley Racher Trust has given us great assistance, regularly supporting MusicFest in its entirety and also making a substantial contribution to the production or distribution of our festival programme. In 2023 we were very grateful for their £3,300 funding which paid for MusicFest and the printing costs of our festival programme.
- Royston First has continued to support us and we gratefully received a contribution of £2,124 towards the festival publicity and distribution of the festival programme.
- North Herts Council kindly donated £1000 via a Community Grant which was used for a performance of 'The Weather Machine' at Gala in the Gardens which fitted with the festival theme. The Weather Mechanicals were quirky, retro, Laurel & Hardy style characters, performed by two dancers, who with humour, physicality & gentle messaging invited audiences to observe them as they grapple & strain to stay in control of the fantabulous Weather Machine.
- The Town Mayors Community Trust Fund Award kindly contributed £120 that was used for gazebos used during the festival and at the May Fayre.

I have put together an Income & Expenditure Account covering the 2023 financial year. It shows that Creative Royston remains in a healthy financial position and the organisation closed the year with a general reserve fund of **£24,183.77** which is exactly the 'Opening Balance' of **£23,161.64** plus income of **£12,974.00** minus the Total Expenditure of **£11,740.12** and 1 late invoice. Note these figures take into account one late invoice from the Diamond Learning Partnership Trust (£211.75) for the hire of the King James Academy Senior Hall for the Finale Concert in 2022 which was accounted for in the 2022 accounts.

In 2023 we have therefore made a notional 'profit' of £1,233.88 which is useful as our present event insurance requires Creative Royston to make a 'profit' at least once every 3 financial years.

Francesca Foster

Treasurer

January 2024

DRAFT Income & Expenditure Account Year ending 31 December 2023

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
OPENING BANK BALANCE	23,161.64	22,401.77			
INCOME	£	£	£	£	£
Sponsorship	5,000.00	5,000.00	0	5150	7150
Grants	6,544.00	5,500.00	0	2700	4700
Ticket Sales & Other Earned Income ¹	1,430.00	804.50	0	26.97	8750.87
TOTAL INCOME	12,974.00	11,304.50	0	7876.97	20600.87
EXPENDITURE					
Artist fees & associated expenses	3,098.33	3,150.00	1,345.00	975.00	6,071.29
Advertising & Marketing	336.36	72.14	27.00	0.00	129.20
Volunteer Costs	55.00	30.00	0.00	80.00	72.80
Equipment & materials Costs ²	2,752.73	4,033.25	104.59	373.10	1,396.67
Seed-Funding & prizes	303.26	538.29	427.50	156.75	1,154.84
Venue Costs	183.25	40.00	0.00	0.00	227.00
Insurance, First Aid and Licences	494.40	477.40	218.40	268.40	260.40
Stocks for Refreshments / Bar sales ³	256.40	168.63	21.57	0.00	210.61
Miscellaneous	145.05	13.20	0.00	77.58	52.64
Printing Costs (non-programme)	60.47	41.90	12.00	99.00	145.50
Programme Costs	4,049.43	1,507.20	1,353.60	1,359.00	3,558.73
Donation to Royston Parish Church	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,396.16
Repayment of Unused Grant (to BLRT)	0.00	0.00	0.00	256.00	
Governance Costs					
Subscriptions	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Website & IT costs	0.00	468.54	46.93	50.85	94.82
AGM	0.00	0.00	0.00	*	*
Stationery & Postage	5.44	4.08	0.00	4.56	0.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	11,740.12	10,544.63	3,556.59	3,700.24	15,770.66
PLUS LATE INVOICES	211.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	494.01
NET INCOME FOR THE YEAR	1,233.88	759.87	3,556.59	4,176.73	4,336.20
CLOSING BANK BALANCE	24,183.77	23,161.64			

* included in Miscellaneous

Notes (Applying to 2023)

1. Ticket and bar receipts from Finale Concert - £226 from library sales, £243 sold on door, £229 bar sales, £382 on-line sales. Plus £350 from Street Food Heroes

2. Including Stage & Sound System hire of £1584.66

3. Mainly wine for resale also for post-festival review evening.

As has been mentioned in the Chairperson's Statement, 2024 has been something of a watershed year, at least to the extent that we have had a full 12 members on CRMC, most of them for the first time. This was too good an opportunity to miss and discussions to consider the holding of an interim festival whilst also considering moving the festival to a Spring date were shelved, at least for the time being.

Although there appeared to be considerable support for moving the festival to a Spring date at the post-festival review / volunteer's reward evening at Royston Museum in November 2022, follow-up enquiries revealed less enthusiasm in practice and positive resistance from some quarters. The fact that the resistance came from a major contributor to the festival each year was enough to persuade the Chairperson to abandon the idea for what was planned to be his last year in office and make the most of available resources in 2023. There was also a strong argument in favour of continuing to stage the festival in the last week of September, as otherwise, with a potential threat to the Kite Festival, there was a danger that the few large public events in Royston would be concentrated in the earlier part of each year.

Looking ahead the view seems very positive with many new members on the committee now having the benefit of one year's experience of running a festival. We have only lost one committee member going into 2024 and a replacement is already lined up.

We also already have some ideas for the 2024 festival which we hope will involve an 'opening concert' for the first time since 2019.

Let's end on that optimistic note by once again thanking everyone who worked so hard in 2023 and looking forward to another, hopefully, even more successful festival in 2024.

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