

Creative
Royston

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Festival programme cover image: 'King Crow' by Sonja Riese.

Festival Premier Partner: **Johnson Matthey**

Annual Report 2025

ROYSTON ARTS FESTIVAL & EVENTS

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Mary Antony: Town Council Representative
Martin Berry: Rotary Club Representative & Gala Organiser
Cath Boughton: Marketing Lead
Liz Cox: Community
Carl Filby: Chair & Websites administrator
Lucy Forrest: Member & Volunteer
Fran Foster: Treasurer
Deborah Fox: Member & Volunteer
Ivana Kisegi: Volunteer Coordinator
Phil Oddy: Book Fair Organiser
Vacancies: Vice-Chair & Secretary

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

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

Chairperson's statement

It came as something of a surprise to find myself once again as Chairperson in 2025 as I had intended to step down from the committee at the end of 2024 but the sudden resignation of the previous Chairperson, owing to work pressures, provoked something of a crisis. Being retired, I don't have any paid work pressures and I was therefore best placed to step into the vacuum. I did so with the caveat that we would need to be realistic about what we could do with a reduced Creative Royston Management Committee (CRMC) as 5 people had stepped down going into 2025. An added pressure was that we were unable to fill the posts of Vice-Chair and Secretary at the 2025 AGM and I was very grateful to Fran Foster for agreeing to stay on as Treasurer.

As I hoped to repeat the success of the Opening Night Concert in 2024 and would need to organise the Finale Concert as well it became evident from an early stage that I would be unable to run Royston MusicFest in 2025. However, I had also come to the conclusion that it would be good to have a break from MusicFest as I thought that the format had become a bit tired and there was less enthusiasm from some of the venues which had also decreased in number.

The first priority was to recruit more committee members and we did gain 2 more at an early stage but a crucial development came when the Rotary Club of Royston agreed to organise our Gala In The Gardens. Creative Royston would not otherwise have had the capacity to stage that event and I am very grateful to Martin Berry and his immediate team who organised that event along with all the other volunteers from Rotary who stepped in to help on the day.

We chose as our festival theme 'Then and Now' to provide an open ended link between the past and the present, one which we hoped would allow some event organisers to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the death of King James the First who had such strong links with Royston. Personally, I don't think we celebrate Royston's history and such links as well as we might do so I was delighted that we managed to arrange for The Marquess of Winchester's Regiment, a group of Civil War re-enactors, to visit Royston in their colourful costumes and parade through the town accompanied by their impressive sounding military drums from that era.

It was also pleasing that Royston Library staged a very interesting talk on King James; the Revd Dr Steven Sivyer gave an organ recital featuring some pieces probably known by King James; King James Academy Junior Choir performed some traditional songs at the Finale Concert to commemorate King James, and several other event organisers did their best to embrace the festival theme, as we did with the front cover image on the festival programme which is replicated on the front cover of this report.

Altogether there were 50 events listed in the 2025 festival programme which represents a substantial effort on the part of CRMC, other event organisers and our wonderful volunteers. I am very grateful to all three of those groups for all the time and energy that they have put into making the 2025 festival a success and helping to cement its place as one of the most important and well-attended events in the Royston Calendar.

I am also grateful to all our sponsors and those who have supported the festival in other ways and 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.

As is now our standard practice 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 2026

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.

These people offered their time and skills in 2025 and we offer them our sincere thanks:

Lisa Adams, Jonathan Berks, Ruth Brown, Greg Cochrane, Graeme Dargie, Emma Gates, Lynn Grove, Helen Filby, Robbie Filby, Tina Filby, Ray Finlay, Elizabeth Freeman, Chris Lee, Tatiana Moreno, Graham Palmer, Rok Podgraisek, Dinta Taylor, plus a special thanks is due to Brian Harvey who acted as Compere for the Gala in the Gardens and many other Rotary Club members who acted as volunteers for the same event.

The individuals, groups and local businesses which actively participated in the 2025 festival (not including paid artists):

Kay Blayney; Bow Books; Curwens; Glazed Creations; staff and pupils of Freman College, Buntingford; The Friends of Therfield Heath Plein-Air group; Johnson Matthey; Jolly Postie; Kelly's Kitchen; Sarah Kerrison – Hertfordshire Libraries Archives; staff and pupils of King James Academy Royston; Jean Kosse; Hafida Lafita; Hannah Long; Marquess Of Winchester's Regiment; Meldreth Village Hall; Old Bull Inn; Revd Dr Steven Sivyer; Royston Arts Society; Royston Cave; Royston First; Royston Library; Royston Live; Royston Masonic Hall; Royston Museum; Royston Parish Church; Royston Photographic Society; Royston Printmakers; Royston Town Band and Development Band; Royston Ukulele Band; Royston Writer's Circle; Jude Simpson; Stagecoach Performing Arts; Theatretrain; The Royston Trio; Trinity Life Church; Unicorn Folk; Jennie Vee, and WomenSing.



Details of the financial contributions by our sponsors can be found in the supporting statement to our 'Income and Expenditure Account', but we would like to take this opportunity to thank them again along with other supporters of the 2025 festival.

Organisations which contributed financially or in-kind in 2025:

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 third year's payment in a 3-year support programme.

We also thank the **Brian Leslie Racher Trust** which has regularly given us great assistance, supporting Royston

MusicFest in the past whilst also funding the printing of our festival programme and this year the appearance of The Marquess of Winchester's Regiment.

Royston First Bid once again kindly covered the costs for the distribution of the festival programme, which we were pleased to have for the third year running after the interruption from Covid.

Royston Town Council made their rooms available for festival planning meetings and we thank the Town Council Staff for all their assistance during the year from providing us with printing facilities for posters to lending weights for use with gazebos during the Gala In The Gardens.

Tesco contributed wine for the Library-hosted talk 'Royalty In Royston' by Sarah Kerrison and also allowed us to mount a window display of posters leading up to the festival, as did **Royston Library**.

The Listing provided design and marketing expertise and additional publicity on a regular basis and the proprietor, Cath Boughton, once again kindly led our marketing campaign for which we are very grateful.

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.

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Creative Royston Competitions

In 2024 we took a different approach to recent years in respect of the art to be used on the cover of our Festival Programme. We invited local artists belonging to Royston Arts Society to submit their paintings relating to the festival theme, and selected one from among them to be used on the front cover.

We did the same in 2025 but whereas there were enough entries in 2024 for Royston Library to host an exhibition of the entries (Royston Arts Society gave up their display boards for that purpose) that was not the case in 2025 though the quality of the entries was excellent. That can be seen from the winning entry by Sonja Riese which provided a striking front cover for the festival programme, utilising the festival theme of 'Then and Now' with her drawing of a slightly anthropomorphic version of a Crow wearing King James the First headgear and wearing a medal showing King Charles the Third. A £50 prize was again awarded to the winning artist but all the entries are highly commended.

Creative Royston Events in 2025

In 2024 the festival had an **Opening Night Concert** for the first time since 2019 featuring the award-winning folk duo 'Megson' who performed in Royston Parish Church. That concert was jointly organised by Megson and Carl Filby the latter taking on the task again in 2025 for Creative Royston which provided the volunteers on the night to check tickets, act as ushers and staff the bar. Despite the high quality of the acts, Tin Giants and Bird In The Belly, the concert sold only half of the tickets that last year's sell out of 150 achieved. The feedback from the audience was very positive and the concert was clearly enjoyed by the attendees but perhaps the 'folk' genre with which both bands are associated served to put people off, or perhaps last year's sell out just indicates how popular Megson are.



Feedback comments from the concert:

- *Royston lucky to be entertained by such musical talent.*
- *Fabulous evening*
- *Andy the sound guy did an awesome job – very difficult but brilliant. Bands were superb. Thank you.*
- *Great event*
- *Very good- Maybe more choice in drinks.*
- *It's a great arts festival with variety and high standard of events which are inclusive.*

As reported earlier, the **Rotary Club of Royston** kindly agreed to organise our **Gala In The Gardens** on Saturday 20th September as we did not have the capacity on CRMC to do so. The event was unusual in another respect being on the opening weekend of the festival rather than the main Saturday which was partly for the convenience of Rotary and partly because Creative Royston thought it would be worth moving it to provide an early publicity opportunity for the rest of the festival.



Martin Berry put together a small core team from Rotary including Dinta Tailor, Graeme Dargie and Jonathan Berks to organise the Gala and there were assisted by numerous other volunteers from Rotary on the day. Last year's attendance at the Gala was estimated at 1500, which was perhaps a little optimistic and this year's estimate of attendance is a more realistic 1,000. This is very pleasing considering that the 2024 Gala was an hour longer at 5 hours and the 2025 event was also hit by the sudden appearance of a very similar charity event on the Saturday prior to the Gala. There was no consultation by the organisers of this event with Creative Royston beforehand but inevitably some people who

attended the charity event will have chosen not to also attend a similar event in the same location so soon afterwards.

The day itself went very well with a range of entertainments on the stage including Sky West who provided two sets of music and the PA System with Brian Harvey from the band kindly compering the stage entertainment for us. Street Food Heroes provided the food and old favourite Mr Bubbles entertained the children and FREE face painting and a children's play area was also provided. The event started with a procession by the Arco Isis samba band who also gave a performance along with Royston Town's Development Band and Cambridge based singer-songwriter Rhys Wilson. This year a decision was taken to use the bandstand with a large gazebo providing a roof which saved at least three thousand pounds on the cost of hiring a purpose built stage with accompanying sound system and staff which was not always used or particularly liked by the performing artists in 2024. The use of the bandstand brought the audience nearer to the acts and, despite some issues with the generator, the new approach worked very well.

Feedback comments from the Gala:

- *Good vibes*
- *Very friendly staff!!*
- *Not raining – Good Fun. Need a coffee stand.*
- *Lovely day but rail replacement bus service so we drove. Couldn't find a parking space so we had to leave.*
- *Family friendly inclusive event.*

On the day after the Gala, on Sunday 21st September, Creative Royston staged two sessions of an **International Cookery Experience** at St Thomas' Catholic Church. Hafida Lafita explained how to cook a Tunisian lunch and provided tastings for the first session and CRMC member Mary Antony repeated that format for the second session, this time with South Indian Food being. Tickets sold well and 24 and 30 people attended the events respectively out of a maximum possible of 40 places each. **No feedback available.**



The next Creative Royston event came on Saturday 27th when Civil War re-enactors **The Marquess of Winchester's Regiment** turned up in their colourful 17th century costume to interact with festival visitors and residents at various festival venues across Royston including: Royston Museum, Royston Parish Church, Royston Library and the Old Bull Inn. King James I had a secondary court in Royston, when he died exactly 400 years ago in 1625 and was succeeded by his son Charles I whose disagreements with Parliament were the cause of the English Civil War. The historical costumes they wore were hand stitched to ensure they had an authentic look and your Creative Royston Chairperson had a very enjoyable and interesting few hours talking to the very knowledgeable members of the Regiment about their costumes and the Civil War, as did many other people who came along to see them. They marched through the town between venues and drew admiring looks from those who saw them and were the subject of many photos though it was a shame that the town centre was relatively quiet for a Saturday afternoon. They also brought with them a few camp followers, all in costume, who set up in the Parish Church and demonstrated to all those interested a traditional way of making butter. It was delicious!



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No feedback available.

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At the same time in the Parish Church, CRMC member Phil Oddy (pictured) was overseeing the running of the **Book Fair** that he had organised for the second year running though with a change of venue from last year. The event allowed 30 local writers to showcase and sell their books and additional entertainment was provided with talks and readings covering fiction, non-fiction and poetry. The attendance was similar to last year's and in that sense a little disappointing, given the larger venue, but there were external factors which were thought to have affected attendance. Firstly, there should have been a cafe serving refreshments at the Church whilst the Book Fair was taking place, and secondly, the holding of the Gala on the previous weekend meant that there were a lot less people around in the town centre who might have dropped in. These are important lessons to learn for future events and the absence of the Gala on the second Saturday was thought to have adversely affected attendance at other festival events as well.



No feedback available.



Our **Finale Concert** on Sunday 28th, being the final event of the festival in 2025, reverted to its original name and was organised by Carl Filby aided by a large team of volunteers on the night.

As usual, it was a showcase of Royston's local musical talent and was once again kindly compered by Soprano Hannah Long who added a touch of class to the concert with her accompanist Martin Goodchild, performing songs by Dvořák, Novello, Lloyd Webber and Gershwin.

Our talented vicar the Revd Dr Steven Sivyer performed Jeremiah Clarke's Trumpet Voluntary and Widor's Toccata on the Church organ and WomenSing performed 3 popular songs with their usual verve under the direction of Linda Bance and

boosted the community singing at the end. Royston Ukulele Band performing for the first time brought a breath of fresh air and enthusiasm to the evening leaving everyone smiling at the end of the first half.

The young pupils from King James Academy gave us a glimpse of their musical talent with a lovely selection of well-known and traditional songs and the talented older students from Freman College, Buntingford impressed us once again with their musical virtuosity. Royston Town Band finished the concert in the traditional manner with an accomplished performance and a rousing accompaniment to the community singing of **I Vow To Thee My Country**. Ticket prices were held at last year's level of £7 for adults and £3 for 16s & under and the 150 tickets available to the public were snapped up soon after going on sale with around 120 performers adding to the attendance figure.

Feedback comments from the concert:

- *New time makes eating problematic! Great concert as always.*
- *Really enjoyed, well put together.*
- *Ukulele band a welcome addition*
- *Thank you for all your work in our community*
- *Well organised and entertaining across this age range*

- Is "I Vow To Thee..." a tradition? Please say yes! What a fab way to end what a fabulous + varied programme – such a treat.

- Thank you for making the Finale Concert earlier – it makes a big difference!

- Keep it up!

- Royston Town Band are good (v good!) but they shouldn't take up so much of the show! (just like they did last year) Say 15 mins instead of 30. Very enjoyable.

Using the MixCloud service paid for by **Unicorn Folk**, Carl Filby created three podcasts for festival-goers, one to preview the festival events with some material re-used from the 2024 podcast, another to preview the artists performing in concert during the 2025 festival and the third to celebrate 10 years of **Royston MusicFest** the absence of which this year was noticed by at least one festival-goer as can be seen from the feedback received. You can still listen to all 3 podcasts if you use this link to [Unicorn Folk](#).

CRMC member Deb Fox also put in a lot of effort to try and get some films into the festival initially as an outdoor event which faltered when it became clear that the timescale for permissions from the Heath's Conservators was prohibitive. The ongoing situation with the Picture Palace meant that the facilities for an indoor festival were also not available.

Other Events in 2025

The following are mainly the larger events or those where we have received a significant amount of feedback and it is not possible to include a description of all the other events, though the absence of an event in this section is not an indication that it is less highly valued. Some organisations are in a position to do more but we appreciate all the contributions, however large or small, that we get from external event organisers and without which the festival could not be truly representative of all the creative activities taking place in Royston.

Royston Arts Society Autumn Exhibition has been an integral part of Royston Arts Festival since the early 1980s when the date was moved to the last weekend in September and again since the revival of the festival in 2007. It usually draws the largest attendance of the non-Creative Royston events and in recent years has typically exhibited 400 – 450 framed and unframed paintings by around 60 – 70 mainly local artists, including RAS members and non members. In addition, many artists sell copies of their paintings in the form of greeting cards so there is always a good display and admission to the exhibition has always been free. There was no significant feedback for this event but RAS provided some useful statistics including the estimated attendance of 687 for the whole event. This was down on 807 for last year but whereas initially it was thought that the lack of an event in Priory Gardens had caused the downturn, closer analysis revealed that the largest drop in attendance was on the Sunday. Despite this the number of picture and card sales were up on 2024 as was the value of sales which were the second best sales over the last decade or so in 2025, the best being in 2023. This was achieved without selling any really expensive paintings, the highest value in 2025 being £180 whereas in 2024 one painting sold for £450 and in 2023 two sold at around £300, so overall it was regarded as a very successful exhibition.

The RAS Autumn Exhibition takes place in the Heritage (or lower) Hall and has for some years now been joined in the Hardwicke (or upper) hall by the **Royston Photographic Exhibition** and in 2025 the latter consisted of a display of around 50 photographic prints taken by their members. Entry was also free and the exhibition drew an estimated 450 visitors. Here are some of the comments that came with feedback from the event:

- Superb quality photo exhibition as always – wonderful stuff! Thank you!

- Excellent as always! Better signage & signposting from Art Exhibition to photography (footsteps on floor?) due to nature of building.

- Great photos! Could the photos be displayed locally in unusual places throughout the year!

- Photo exhibition is the highlight of the year.

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On Wednesday 24th our sponsors Johnson Matthey put on a talk at The Old Schoolhouse which looked at JM's record in helping to pioneer clean air technology for over 50 years and took a peek into the future of creating a cleaner planet. The talk was hosted by Jayne Foster and given in two main parts by James Butlin and Chris Morgan, all JM employees, and entry was free and accompanied by a glass of wine or two. We are sure the wine played no part in eliciting the following comments in the feedback:

- *Fascinating evening. Thanks!*
- *Very informative.*
- *Excellent talk – informative and positive for Royston.*
- *Good to have input from a major Royston employer.*

The Royston Trio Open Studio featured three local artists, Sue Hartga, Joan Munden, and Sue Sanders, known as "The Royston Trio" who held a joint open studio of art works and a display of printmaking techniques old and new reflecting the theme of the festival. Entry was free with no booking required at specific times for about 5 hours in the middle of Fridays and Saturdays on both weekends of the festival and another 3 hours on the Sundays.

The event attracted 74 visitors, around a quarter from outside Royston, which is excellent considering the somewhat out-of-the way residential location and the Trio provided comprehensive feedback on their experience of staging the event, including some innovative ways of advertising which could well be usefully employed by the festival team in 2026. Here is a small selection of the comments received on the event:

- *So lovely to see lots of inspirational work*
 - *I like the catsparkle and the windows*
 - *Lovely art and lovely people*
 - *Each artist has a wonderful individual style and it was lovely to have the techniques explained to us.*
- Please repeat.*
- *What talent! Well done ladies, most enjoyable.*
 - *Very enjoyable visit and lovely to see such wonderful art*
 - *Pure joy, what a beautiful experience connecting with accomplished artists hearing their unique stories and having the privilege of enjoying their exquisite art and thank you ladies for a wonderful afternoon.*
 - *Absolute bliss to walk around. I loved the printing demonstration of how to do it.*

The Revd Dr Steven Sivyer repeated the success of last year's **Organ Recital** with another such event in Royston Parish Church and the event included some well-known and popular pieces such as Widor's Toccata as well as more contemporary composition for royal occasions, such as Walton's Crown Imperial. Others pieces were specially chosen to mark the anniversary of the death of King James picking up the festival theme of 'Then and Now'. Tickets were excellent value at £10 for adults or £3 for under 18s and the event attracted an audience of 90 some of whom left the following comments in feedback:

- *Really appreciated the video close up views of hands & feet – amazing.*
- *Long may it continue*
- *Fabulous evening!*
- *It would be great to have Steven Sivyer do a session explaining and demonstrating how the organ works and what all the stops, knobs and peddles do, either as a stand alone event or as part of a future concert.*
- *The 2 cameras are amazing! Although I enjoy the classical organ music I'd love to hear something more popular e.g. Phantom Of The Opera.*
- *Superb!*

Royston Library entered wholeheartedly into the festival and staged a talk on **Royalty in Royston: James I and his links to Hertfordshire** which was researched and delivered by Sarah Kerrison from the Archives and Local Studies section of Hertfordshire Libraries. Tickets were a bargain £5 including a glass of wine and 46 people attended, effectively a full house. The Library also staged **Craft, Create and Celebrate**



on the final Saturday which was free to attend for children between the ages of 4-10. The event looked at the history of Hertfordshire Libraries, and created individual Reader's Tickets, booklists and collage bookmarks. The Library also hosted an

exhibition of the art work of King James' Academy students and was also one of the venues for **The Marquess of Winchester's Regiment**. Feedback from the talk included the following comments:

- *A very good speaker, very clear & very interesting*
- *Interesting talk. Learned derivation of Union Jack flag. Unexpected bonus.*
- *Further talks like this on aspects of Royston would be welcome.*
- *I found it difficult to book this talk on James I on the Library website.*



We are also grateful to Royston Museum for staging a variety of events throughout the festival starting with a talk **In Ernest, Discovering the works of E.H. Whydale** by the Visitor Experience Officer Rhian May. This was followed up by **Print On The Press; Come and Create – Playful Patterns (2 Sundays); First Impressions: Kids Printing Workshop** and **Print and Prosecco**. No feedback comments were recorded but the events attracted over 180 visitors/participants as can be seen from the Attendance Figures which follow later. The Museum also kindly acted as a venue for the Marquess of Winchester's Regiment (pictured getting ready to leave the Museum).

Once again we are very grateful to all the event organisers and their efforts are too numerous for all to be mentioned here.

Additional comments about the festival as a whole:

- *Improve publicity on social media – my 25 year old daughter unaware of arts festival & frequent user of instagram*
- *Please can we have something like a classical music evening? In the 1980s version we did and it was remarkably popular, as were evenings of combined literature & music, usually following a theme – nothing too highbrow but interesting & gentle.*
- *It's a great arts festival with variety and high standard of events which are inclusive.*
- *Disappointed no daytime craft workshops only kids stuff. No daytime music as in the Banyers in the past. Disappointing and not a patch on previous years.*
- *Congrats to the whole team as it is a lovely annual event in town. Well done, keep up the excellent work!*

So, clearly there is room for improvement and we will take all the above feedback comments into consideration when planning the 2026 festival as we have done in previous years.

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Marketing and Promotion

In 2025 as in the two previous years CRMC has been very fortunate to benefit from the professional expertise of Cath Boughton the proprietor of The Listing magazine and once again she has led our marketing efforts with some assistance from Lucy Forrest. We thus benefitted from a proper marketing strategy guided by a marketing plan with a focus on 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.

As we did in 2024 we used the template developed for the 2023 programme by then CRMC member Nicky Paton with Cath overseeing the design and Lucy helping with the tabulation of events for the 2025 festival printed programme. We were also fortunate to have a very high quality response to our competition, run in conjunction with Royston Arts Society, to create a front cover for the festival programme. This resulted in the brilliantly apposite painting by Sonja Riese being chosen for the front cover of the programme and used again for this report.

We again used The Listing Magazine as we have for many years as the best way to distribute the festival programme around 7,800 households in Royston itself and 9,500 households in the villages surrounding Royston and this cost was kindly covered by Royston First.

Owing to the regrettable demise of Royston Radio we were unable to publicise the arts festival 'on air' but instead utilised podcasts with the assistance of Unicorn Folk as mentioned earlier. As the 'listening' figures show in the 'Attendance' section below this was not as effective as in previous years but better than not replacing the radio publicity with anything at all.

Otherwise, we used social media, mainly [Facebook](#), and the festival websites, including the Royston MusicFest website which still has something of a following and also benefitted from publicity through the Unicorn Folk website which hosted information about the festival concerts and ticketing links. The [festival website](#) was also used to host a copy of the printed programme and provided updates on any changes or cancellations of which there were a couple.

We followed a planned programme of posts on Facebook and utilised Mailchimp to send out a newsletter to subscribers which was also hosted on the website.

Banners, posters and flyers:

In the absence of MusicFest and an early Gala we utilised older banners and new recyclable ones were only purchased for the Gala. Banners were displayed at Tesco roundabout, Royston Rail Station and Royston Town Hall. Royston Library and Tesco both kindly allowed us to create substantial window displays comprising a number of posters advertising festival events. We also placed posters on the 6 Community noticeboards in Royston as far as space on them allowed and also distributed posters around a number of businesses in Royston town centre.

The **Marketing stats** shown in the table below were kindly compiled by Cath Boughton and further information on the effectiveness of various forms of publicity can be found in the 'Feedback' section later on in this document.:

Marketing Activity	2025	2024	2023 for comparison	2022 for comparison
Digital programme views	141 ¹	561	189	
X (formerly Twitter)	3 tweets pre Festival in Feb, March, May 1031 followers Decision not to use X as it isn't possible to schedule posts from Meta	60 tweets analytics data now only available on premium version 1060 followers	48 tweets 3120 impressions 1099 followers	36 tweets 3755 impressions 1097 followers
Facebook	104 posts 19,031 post reach Views 82.1k Content interactions 1.1k Link clicks 196 Profile visits 850 1105 followers	99 posts 21,300 reach views 40.3k content interactions 1.2k link clicks 758 profile visits 2.1k 1090 followers	110 posts 47,636 reach content interactions 1.5k link clicks 301 profile visits 1.9k 792 followers	40 posts 11,135 reach 615 followers
Instagram	154 posts/stories 770 reach 11.2k views 236 content interactions 550 followers	99 posts 1.4k reach 6.8k views 277 content interactions 483 followers	110 posts data unavailable	40 posts data unavailable
Facebook & Instagram paid for campaign	No paid for campaign in 2025	£50 budget 6,274 reach 13,809 impressions 502 link clicks	£50 budget 34,259 reach 43,508 impressions n/a link clicks	
Mailchimp	6 emails sent Analytics have now been removed from the free version of Mailchimp	10 emails sent 60% open rate 6% click rate 116 contacts +18 new sign ups gained from the festival feedback forms - these will be added in for 2025	-	-

Note 1. The reduction can be explained by the fact that socials posts just took people to Creative Royston website this year and not to the digital programme

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Attendance

A table of the attendance numbers for 2025 can be seen below from which it is evident that a number of attendance figures have still to be acquired so the total may change. In two cases below we have made conservative estimates (in red) of the number of people who might have seen the two exhibitions in question where such numbers could only be something of a guess at best. The same point should be made about the estimate for the Gala In The Gardens of 1,000 which is considerably below last year's rather optimistic estimate of 1,500 attendees. The absence of MusicFest (700 attendees last year) and Barkway LitFest (250) means that the attendance figures are inevitably down on last year (4,684) and previous years. However, given the absence of those two events, necessary in the first case and deliberate in the second, and the significant loss of experienced committee members, the final attendance figures can be seen as quite respectable compared with past festivals.

Bow Books	Between Borders: Then and Now with Kay Blayney	48
Bow Books	Talking To A Pie About Walking The Dog	6
Creative Royston	Opening Concert - Tin Giants & Bird In The Belly	75
Creative Royston/Rotary Club	Gala In The Gardens	1000
Creative Royston	International Cookery	54
Creative Royston	Marquess of Winchester's Regiment	200
Creative Royston	Local Writers Book Fair	80
Creative Royston	Finale Concert	150
Friends of Therfield Heath	Paint The Market	
Glazed Creations	Grownup Glazing	
Jennie Vee	Student Art	
Johnson Matthey	Pioneering Clean Air Talk	18
Jude Simpson	A Noise Annoys	25
Meldreth Village Hall	Hungrytown In Concert	
Royston Arts Society	Royston Arts Society 2025 Autumn Exhibition	687
Royston Cave	Then and Now	8
Royston Museum	Printmakers Exhibition	100
Royston Museum	Whydale Talk	26
Royston Museum	Print On The Press	73
Royston Museum	Come and Create – Playful Patterns (2 Sundays)	63
Royston Museum	First Impressions: Kids Printing Workshop	9
Royston Museum	Print and Prosecco	11
Royston Parish Church	Organ Recital	90
Royston Photographic Society	Photographic Exhibition	450
Royston Library	KJAR Students Exhibition	100
Royston Library	Craft, Create, Celebrate	44
Royston Library	"Royalty In Royston"	46
Royston Live	Smith & Brewer In Concert	40
Royston Trio	Open Studio: Sue Hartga, Joan Munden, Sue Sanders	74
Stagecoach	Stagecoach Workshops	
Theatretrain	Theatretrain Workshops	
Unicorn Folk	Podcasts for Royston Arts Festival	47
	Total estimated attendance	3524

Feedback

We collected completed feedback forms from over 100 visitors to the festival this year which together represented over 200 people in total. Not as good as in some previous years, but certainly better than the 40 returns one year when we tried to collect feedback by electronic means alone. We also made an electronic feedback form available on the festival website in 2025 but did not receive any responses at all.

Respondents were presented with a choice of deciding between four options on the feedback forms being Poor, Satisfactory, Good, or Excellent when rating 'The Event', 'The Venue', 'Publicity' and 'RAF Overall'. Not every respondent ticked all the boxes hence the slightly different number of responses in each category and the responses are as follows.

	<u>The event</u>				<u>The venue</u>			
	P	S	G	E	P	S	G	E
Grand Totals Numbers	0	0	16	95	0	1	26	82
Grand Total percentages	0	0	14.41	85.59	0	0.92	23.85	75.23

	<u>Publicity</u>				<u>RAF overall</u>			
	P	S	G	E	P	S	G	E
Grand Totals Numbers	0	6	51	48	0	3	29	54
Grand Total percentages	0	5.71	48.57	45.71	0	3.49	33.72	62.79

They were then asked how they heard about the event and given a range of choices as follows:

	<u>How did you hear about event?</u>			
	Websites	Listing	Banner/ Flyer /Poster	Printed Programme
Grand Totals Numbers	30	49	18	38
Grand Total percentages	15.38	25.13	9.23	19.49
Last year % rounded	10	26	13	15

	<u>How did you hear about event?</u>				
	Newspaper	Social Media	Child's School	Word of Mouth	Other
Grand Totals Numbers	3	14	6	25	12
Grand Total percentages	1.54	7.18	3.08	12.82	6.15
Last year % rounded	3	12	2	17	2

Further information was then sought about the use of town facilities and the age ranges of the party:

	<u>Have been to RAF before?</u>		<u>Did You use any Town Facilities</u>	
	Y	N	Y	N
Grand Totals Numbers	89	21	64	42
Grand Total percentages	80.91	19.09	60.38	39.62

	<u>Age range</u>				
	U16	16-25	26-40	41-65	65+
Grand Totals Numbers	18	0	12	85	100
Grand Total percentages	8.37	0	5.58	39.53	46.51

Annual Report 2025

Compared with 2024 there was a small increase in the percentage of people that gave feedback who thought that the overall festival was "Excellent" (from 61.5% to 62.79) .

Likewise the percentage of people who rated the individual event that they gave feedback for as "Excellent" also increased from 76% to 84% to 85.59% with the remaining 14.41% all rating the events as "Good".

Surprisingly perhaps the number of people who heard about the festival via social media fell from approximately 12% to 7.18%. The most effective form of publicity The Listing magazine held steady at 25.13% and also distributes the vast majority of the printed programmes which account for a further 19.49% up from approximately 15% last year. The festival websites (possibly boosted by Unicorn Folk) also increased from approximately 10% to 15.38%.

Over the years we have tried to make sure that we put on events that appeal to all age groups but it is clear from the statistics above that we have totally failed to do so in respect of the 16-25 age group in 2025. Whilst it is somewhat inevitable that figures will be low in this age group with Royston schools not having a sixth form and students often disappearing to University from 18 to 21 or 22 there is still clearly a gap that needs to be filled and we will need to give this some attention in the planning for the 2026 festival.

Creative Royston Draft Financial Statements For the year ending 31 December 2025

Creative Royston Draft Financial Statements

For the year ending 31 December 2025

For approval by the Annual General Meeting on 21st January 2026

Supporting Statement

Thank you to our Premier Partner, Johnson Matthey, who were once again very generous in their support and sponsorship in providing the £5,000 which we understand is in the process of being paid and is therefore included under 'Income'.

Also, a big thank you to other sponsors

- The Brian Leslie Racher Trust has given us great assistance, regularly supporting MusicFest in the past and in 2025 their £2,325 contribution covered the printing of our programme and the appearance of The Marquess of Winchester's Regiment.
- Royston First has continued to support us, and we gratefully received a contribution of £2,484.99 for the distribution of the festival programme.
- We also received other income totalling £3,187.77 from tickets sales and contributions from traders at the Gala In The Gardens, and including £351.92 of interest from £10k held in a deposit account for the year to August 2025.

I have put together an Income & Expenditure Account covering the 2025 financial year. It shows that Creative Royston remains in a healthy financial position and the organisation effectively closed the year with a general reserve fund of £25,149.31 which is exactly the 'Opening Balance' of £22,415.42 plus income of £13,672.76 (inc £5k from Johnson Matthey) minus the Total Expenditure of £10,938.87.

In 2025, once the £5k sponsorship from Johnson Matthey has come through we will have made a profit of £2,733.89 which leaves us in a healthy financial position. Our present event insurance requires Creative Royston to make a 'profit' at least once every three financial years so this balances the loss made in 2024 and takes the pressure off to make a profit in 2026.

Fran Foster

Treasurer

January 2026

DRAFT Income & Expenditure Account Year ending 31 December 2025

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
OPENING BANK BALANCE	22,415.42	24,183.77	23,161.64	22,401.77	25,958.36
INCOME	£	£	£	£	
Sponsorship ¹	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	0
Grants	5,484.99	5,556.64	6,544.00	5,500.00	0
Ticket Sales & Other Earned Income ²	2,835.85	2,175.53	1,430.00	804.50	0
Interest	351.92	0.00	0.00	0.00	0
TOTAL INCOME	13,672.76	12,732.17	12,974.00	11,304.50	0
EXPENDITURE					
Artist fees & associated expenses	2,260.00	2,170.00	3,098.33	3,150.00	1,345.00
Advertising & Marketing	141.23	564.54	336.36	72.14	27.00
Volunteer Costs	0.00	0.00	55.00	30.00	0.00
Equipment & materials Costs	1,341.29	5,324.68	2,752.73	4,033.25	104.59
Seed-Funding & prizes	268.21	565.37	303.26	538.29	427.50
Venue Costs	660.00	377.00	183.25	40.00	0.00
Insurance, First Aid and Licences	474.90	492.90	494.40	477.40	218.40
Stocks for Refreshments / Bar sales ³	283.81	169.07	256.40	168.63	21.57
Miscellaneous	0.00	0.00	145.05	13.20	0.00
Printing Costs (non-programme)	60.50	124.74	60.47	41.90	12.00
Programme Costs	4,610.92	4,712.22	4,049.43	1,507.20	1,353.60
Repayment of Unused Grant (to BLRT)	675.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Bank charges ⁴	45.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Governance Costs					
Subscriptions	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Website & IT costs	117.59	0.00	0.00	468.54	46.93
Stationery & Postage	0.00	0.00	5.44	4.08	0.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	10,938.87	14,500.52	11,740.12	10,544.63	3,556.59
PLUS LATE INVOICES	0.00	0.00	211.75	0.00	0.00
NET INCOME FOR THE YEAR	2,733.89	-1,768.35	1,233.88	759.87	-3,556.59
CLOSING BANK BALANCE⁵	25,149.31	22,415.42	24,183.77	23,161.64	22,401.77

Notes (Applying to 2025)

1. We understand that £5k from Johnson Matthey is in the process of being paid.
2. Other Earned Income includes bar sales at the Opening Night & Finale concerts and Contributions from Street Food Heroes & stallholders at the Gala in the Gardens.
3. Wine and soft drinks for resale at events + food & refreshments for AGM & artists.
4. Bank charges introduced April 2025
5. £10,000 held in 2.14% deposit account maturing 8/9/26

Looking Ahead

The 2026 festival will present a number of challenges the most pressing of which is the loss of a further 4 festival committee (CRMC) members which means that some roles are unfilled and will have to be covered by others which is far from ideal. So, far anyone reading thus far, we are in fairly urgent need of someone to take over the marketing role, though Cath has kindly promised that The Listing will continue to assist where possible. The Secretary's office will likely remain unfilled following the 2026 AGM and will probably be covered again by the Chair and someone will need to take over the essential Volunteer Co-ordinator's role.

CRMC could really benefit from one or two newly retired people who have the time and energy to stage a Creative Royston event, with some guidance from experienced members of CRMC whilst that experience is still around.

In 2025 we tried very hard to learn some lessons from the 2024 festival and in doing so we, moved the Gala to the first weekend but will reconsider for 2026; saved a lot of money on the stage for the Gala; brought forward the timing of the Finale Concert which was a success; ditched Barkway LitFest mainly because we perceived it as being too commercial for our aims, and experimented successfully with the use of a card reader at our concerts. We will try and learn similar lessons from the experiences and feedback for 2025 that have been mentioned in the report.

Our biggest success for 2025 was working with Royston Rotary Club and without that partnership the festival would have been a much poorer event in 2025. We hope that we can continue with that relationship in 2026 and perhaps work in partnership with other organisations as we try and do with all our wonderful event organisers.

We have already found increased support from and worked more in partnership with the newly appointed and reorganised Town Council staff and are grateful for all their support. We are working with them to stage a joint event 'Welcome To Royston' on Sunday 1st March which may provide an opportunity for arts, crafts and other leisure activity and sporting groups in Royston, including Creative Royston, to attract new members.

So, entering 2026 we are optimistic that we will be able to stage a Royston Arts Festival which is worthy of the name but of course recognise that will depend, as always, on the extent of the support that we get from the rest of the Royston community.
