

Burghfest 2023

The weekend of the 22nd and 23rd September, saw the return of Burghfest to Burghfield Common, the annual Beer and Music Festival for Thames Valley Air Ambulance organised by the fundraising group – the Burghfield Santas.

The event was a phenomenal success, with nearly 2,500 adults attending over the two days. Despite the growth over the last 7 years, Burghfest remains a 'local' event - the statistics show that 92% of online tickets were sold to people from Burghfield and Mortimer; with 4% Tilehurst and 3% Reading, and 1% people coming from further afield, mostly staying with friends for the weekend!

This year 125 local volunteers completed 190 shifts – from Event Ambassador to Bar Staff and Ticket Desk. The Do Your Bit (DYB) coin scheme, where volunteers can raise money for their own charitable good cause, in exchange for their time, has earned those causes £5,000. These included the local schools of Burghfield St Marys, SUN and Garlands, Tadley RFC, the Toy Library and Scout and Guides groups.

50 Cask, and Craft Ales from 20 local breweries were on offer, along with 12 local ciders – with over 6,000 pints served in total over the weekend. This year the house gins were also local – from Hawkridge Distillery in Newbury... now we just need to find a local Vineyard for local Prosecco!

The Music Stage again provided a highlight with DJ Chris Skerritt, [Dirtbag](#), [Majestix](#), [The Small Strings](#). [Myld Stallyns](#), [The Corsairs](#), [Savour the Flavour](#), [Sonic Weapon](#), [Myld Stallyns](#), [BlindSpot](#), playing for free in aid of this charity event, including two bands founded at the Willink School (Blind Spot, and Myld Stallions), and of course, many people's highlight of the year, the incredible [Murdoch's Crazy Eye](#) provided an energetic finale on Friday night.

The stage crew pulled off a dazzling show, using local talent, the majority of whom are current, or ex-Willink pupils, with their interest sparked in school drama studies. Our local area with Burghfest and the events from Mortimer Music Live have become a springboard for talent into the industry – with many careers launched (One ex-Willink pupil even flew back from the Morrissey Tour to support Burghfest this year!)

In line with most things overall event costs increased 20% this year, largely due to increased costs of insurance, fencing and security. This is essential expenditure to ensure we maintain our legal duty to prevent under-age consumption of alcohol on the Premises. We also introduced a new queuing system and bag check, which was a great success, with queues lasting no more than 15min at peak on Friday, and with some changes to rotas, reduced further on Saturday. Marquees have also significantly increased in costs across the industry, but given the weather on Friday turned out to a worthwhile investment.

We did reduce spend on the stage and lighting, but believe we still provided an excellent opportunity and promotional platform for the bands playing in exchange for their freely given time and talent.

We apologise to residents that were inconvenienced by the restriction of access to and area of the recreation ground during setup, this was introduced following other residents' feedback in 2022 on the dangers of vehicles and equipment to dog walkers. Due to the weather forecast we also initiated site build a day early, to ensure that heavy vehicles completed their work before the rain, this proved beneficial as the ground is largely unscathed – despite being under an inch of standing water on Thursday evening.

Again this year we managed to avoid any use of the main football pitch, using pedestrian barriers, instead of tape to secure the area – this worked incredibly well, and was also well-worth the additional expenditure.

This year, following a survey consultation, we opted to reduce the charge for bar entry, and apply it to all adults attending, whilst a difficult decision, this largely proved popular. The total number of Adult's paying entry increased by 30%, but interestingly – this also drove an increase in drinks token sales – in line with the feedback from our survey earlier in the year; that people only wanting one drink, did not want to pay for the bar access. 78.5% of survey responders voted for this change, and it allowed us to spread the costs of the event more fairly to those benefitting – as the security, stage, insurance and marquees are the largest expenditure items for the event (~£40,000 of the ~£60,000) and are used by all attendees.

In 2023 we managed to secure agreement for 'unlimited wristbands' from the fairground, but again, following the results of the survey, we reduced the duration. This was hugely beneficial, as in 2022 we had significant issues with queue lengths, and unruly behaviour from older teenagers pushing in front of younger ones – by splitting the wristbands into 2 hour slots, the queues were never unmanageable. We also introduced a reduced price, and height restrictions for younger children, so they could enjoy the smaller rides without being surrounded by older children and teenagers.

We take our responsibilities towards Charity very seriously, and as a registered fundraising group for Thames Valley Air Ambulance, we need to ensure that our events are profitable for the charity, and with weather, increasing costs and the nuance of people's behaviour, it can be very difficult to manage this balance, whilst ensuring minimal impact to the community, and remaining inclusive for all our local residents. We still have a few days left to ensure all payments and accounts are reconciled, but at the moment it is safe to say, this has been the best Burghfest yet, in terms of fundraising – with a figure around £25,000 to be given to Thames Valley Air Ambulance and our Do Your Bit Coin partners. We were also awarded a £1,500 grant towards the toilet provision for Burghfest by Burghfield Parish Council, but given the event success this year, we will decline this, in the hope the money can be put towards the Burghfield on Ice event for the community in December, or another community activity.

We offer sincere thanks to our local area, especially those living close to the recreation ground for their continued support and patience. But also to the army of volunteers that give their time up to support us and make this event so successful, especially the small but significant number of under 25 years old who are the future to sustaining the volunteering ethos behind Burghfest.

And finally some names behind the Event, who really do need thanking and recognition given to their time and continue effort to make this event the success that it is:

The Organising Committee, who have given up many evenings and weekends over the last few months to get this event ready: Glyn Townsend, Christian Frankum, Tim Ansell, Gareth Green, Dave Harper, Robin Smith, Ian Morrin, Kev Strong, Sylvester De Koster, Dave Kilshaw, Ryan Saunders, Duncan Godding, Charlotte Samuel, Dave Godwin, Kailee Godding, Chris Thomas, Andy Courtnage

Music and Stage: Ryan Saunders, David Kilshaw, Paul Nixon, Paul Mortimer, Nick Moxley, Louis Martin, Harley Wing, Ollie Henwood, Charles Kilshaw, Hugh Kilshaw, Heath Garey, Ben Hibberd, Jasper Morrin – and of course Burghfield's answer to Ant and Dec – Shane and Alex!

And all the volunteers (over 125 of them, many doing more than one shift):

Our Volunteer Co-Ordinators

Julian Redding, David Russell, Jeff Kent, Julian Redding, Jane Ansell

Ensuring you had a great time – the Bar Staff, Ticket Desk, Event Ambassadors:

Owen Townsend, Adam Sculthorp, Imogen Sculthorp, Chris Lambert, Wayne Lewis, Stuart Allen, Lynne Nash, Ben Twomey, Richard Harlen, Monica Gonzalez-Jones, John Foote, Adam Dew, Caroline Dew, Anna Shaffrey, Ruth Shaffrey, Nicola Trust, James Trust, Fiona Jones, Ben Hibberd, Julia Komornikova, Robyn Thorrington, Marischka de Koster, Nicola Morrin, Nicola Skerritt, Yvonne Hounsome, Hannah Russell, Jane Ansell, Graham Jones, Anne Faulkner, Julian Redding, David Russell, Adam Rosser, Nadia Rosser, Anna Vine, Jeff Kent, Lucy Stewart, Kevin Mortimer, Tim MacCawley, Haydn West, Helen Townsend, Amanda Fox, Alison Smith, Zara Pither, David Gregory, Martin Wells, Deb Robinson, Georgina Fulford, Kirsty, Samara, Dave Miller, Andy Courtnadge, Pip Mahoney, Catherine Sharratt, Julie Green, Emma Simpson-Holland, Finley Simpson-Holland, Stuart Simpson Holland, David Friend, Andrew Macphail, Sarah Macphail, Ian Goodall, Beth Greaves, Chloe Tanner, Christine Batchelor, Kodi Batchelor, Les Paine, Sarah Strong, Ken Barker, Samantha Eggleton, Colin Rudd, Paul Gunstone, Anirban Das, Al, Mee, Amanda Burton, Alison Brindley, Mat Grover, Jackie Lewis, Rebecca Streeter, Liz Slocombe, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Penny Kent, Tracey Harper, Laura Strapp, Donna Kearney, Deborah Griffiths, Ellen Goodall, Elaine Girdler, Lintilla Hampton, Kelly Wheeler, Nicole Graham, Jennifer Ingleby, Owen Pither

The hard graft of Site Build and Take-Down:

Sylvester de Koster, Adam Sculthorp, Alasdair Robertson, Tim MacCawley, Jeff Kent, Chris Russell, John Foote, Dave Miller, Paul Gunstone, Anirban Das, Adam Sculthorp, Chris Lambert, Kevin Mortimer, Tim MacCawley, Jeff Kent, Chris Russell, John Foote, Dave Miller, Jerry Muscroft, Andy Courtnadge, Duncan Todd, Anirban Das, Al, Stuart Allen, Adam Sculthorp, Richard Thorrington, Aidan Dalgleish, Chris Paul, Richard Thorrington, Chris Lambert, Adam Dew, Caroline Dew, Aidan Dalgleish, Kevin Mortimer, Tim MacCawley, Amanda Fox, Jeff Kent, Deborah Griffiths, Paul Gunstone, Anirban Das, Duncan Todd, Emma Simpson-Holland, Finley Simpson-Holland, Stuart Simpson Holland, Asha Alder, Beth Greaves, Ben Hibberd, Chris Skerritt

And not forgetting our headline Sponsors: **TK Travel, Appcado, BatesWilcox, BlueSKY, Macbeth, Protect and Invest, Tactical Facilities Management, J Mould Recycling, Lex Marquees & Hi Sense Commercial Displays**

Lastly our Barrel sponsors: AJ Rowe, Bahgecha Restaurant, Bracknell Ale and Cider Festival, Burghfield Running Club, Chef Roots, Country Lane Catery, Dads Shop, Elmbank Mortgages, Englefield Estate, Heavenly Bodies, Marshall's Pet Food Store, Meridian Marquees, The Harper Arms, Mortimer Dramtic Society, Nisa Local (Burghfield) , The Fruit Shop – Wellers, The Hatch Gate, Warings Bakery, ThreeTwoNine, Bracknell Rugby Club, The Nags Head Reading

Thank you to everybody mentioned above and to you all for supporting Burghfest.... Looking forward to starting the plan the next one in 2024, we had our lessons learned review already, and have

several areas of improvement identified for next year, as we continue to improve the experience of Burghfest for all!

Burghfield Santas