

A MUCH TRAVELLED JAZZ CLUB

1975 to 2013 and hopefully beyond

1975/6 THE CLAYTON ARMS MARLOW. Live gigs began on an irregular basis in June 1975 following on from several years of record recitals and jazz film shows under the rather cumbersome title of The Chilterns Jazz Appreciation Society. After the initial date with 'Solstice' it was a programme of local bands including Ian Smith and Mike Drake. The function room was too small for serious jazz presentations (capacity 30) and the real ale drinkers and darts players in the front bar did not appreciate the music! There were just 16 gigs.

1976/7 THE BELL AT MAIDENHEAD. Monthly. In contrast to the above, the Bell was just too big and disappointing crowds of 30 at the most were lost in the 200 capacity hall - there was a complete lack of atmosphere. Don Rendell and Pat Crumly's "Edge" were the highspots. There were only 9 gigs.

1977/82 THE FIREFLY BOURNE END. Weekly. Remembered with much affection. The pub (now closed down) had a small rear function room and it is hard to imagine that we somehow squeezed 90 punters in most Monday nights to hear some of the top names in jazz, as a result of co-operation with the Pizza Express Jazz Club in Soho. Too many highspots to list, but Sonny Stitt, Eddie Lockjaw Davis, Harry Edison, Al Haig, Wild Bill Davison, Bud Freeman, Ralph Sutton and Jimmy Witherspoon were amongst the giants who appeared. Complete bands included Alex Welsh, Humphrey Lyttelton and Barbara Thompson's Paraphernalia. 290 gigs.

1982/3 WOOBURN GRANGE. Fortnightly. Following the change of landlord at the Firefly we moved a mile to this rather weird nightclub with a grand piano. The building (now demolished) was the setting for TV's Fawlty Towers. The Belgian gypsy band 'Waso' were marvellous but probably the most memorable gig in the Club's history featured an ageing but incredible legend - Duke Ellington's greatest singer Adelaide Hall. 28 gigs.

1983/4 MASON'S BOURNE END. Fortnightly. As a result of controversy over other "goings on" at the Grange, we moved to the function room at Masons (also now closed) and had some good times: Georgie Fame, Scott Hamilton, Fapy Lafertin, Herb Ellis, Charlie Byrd and Humph. There were 2 BBC Jazz Club recordings. 51 gigs.

1984 BENSONS' NIGHTCLUB HENLEY. Not a great success despite being a comfortable place with a grand piano, and only 3 gigs. The regulars were shocked at the drinks prices and did not appreciate the bouncers on the door. An ambitious booking for the Dutch Swing College Jazz Band caused a near riot with well over 100 potential punters having to be turned away with all 100 tickets (maximum capacity) sold out in advance.

1985/1994 MARLOW FOOTBALL CLUB. Monthly. Very happy times. Only problems renewing a music licence caused our eventual departure. Highspots were many: Ruby Braff, Harry Edison, Scott Hamilton, Barney Kessel, Humphrey Lyttelton, Mike Carr, plus a magic night with Chicago blues diva Angela Brown. 120 gigs.

1995/2000 CROSS KEYS MARLOW. Small and rather cramped in the back bar, but the landlord was obliging and we stayed till he retired. It was the Frank Toms Trio most Monday nights with mainly British stars. Highspots included Spike Robinson and a meeting between Peter King and USA's Nelson Rangell. 304 gigs.

2000 THE CROWN HOTEL MARLOW. Weekly. Not an ideal location and we did not stick it long, but a guest appearance from Japanese superstar Keiko McNamara with Peter King will not be forgotten. 16 gigs.

2000/2007 T.J.O'REILLY'S MARLOW BOTTOM. Fortnightly. Large enough to house a Big Band for the first time in our history and the advantage of a friendly landlord. The Eaves Suite played host to some marvellous gigs including Jean Toussaint, Derek Nash, Alan Barnes, Gary Potter, Scott Hamilton and the Willie Garnett Big Band. However the future of the function room was in doubt during our last year. It was developed into a day nursery, but now, following the exit of one of the partners, the pub has closed down altogether. 148 gigs.

2007/???? THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION HALL MARLOW. By common consent our best ever venue: large, comfortable, good real ale, plus an enthusiastic and co-operative Legion Committee. In the first year gigs were rather haphazard due to other bookings in this very popular hall, but we have now been able to settle back into more or less a fortnightly routine on Tuesdays at 8.30pm, although we are never able to have the last Tuesday in the month due to a long-standing other function. Most of our regular favourites have now appeared usually with the resident Frank Toms Trio. Complete bands have included Gary Potter's Hot Club, Steve Taylor's Buddy Rich Tribute Band, the Five Star Swing Big Band and the hugely popular Lillian Boutte from New Orleans with her band. The BBO Big Band also moved their Charity Concerts to the Legion. During 2012 we clocked up 100 gigs at the Legion Hall but November 2012 also saw a first "Joint Presentation" at Christ Church in Marlow, when Lillian Boutte gave a very moving gospel concert, her pianist utilising the church's superb Bechstein. Further occasional events at this church are planned. See 'Forthcoming Events'.