

Megabash at Holme Park – Where did it all start?

July 27th 1985 Hugh and Julie Crabtree got married and the reception was in a big tent in the gardens around Hugh's office in Pingewood. It was a DIY catered BBQ and Music event in glorious weather. Hugh's musical pals all contributed to an unforgettable day of music, fun and good company. So successful was the day that the following year it was sort of repeated in the back garden of their home in Talfourd Avenue. The following year the same thing...a tradition had been created.



In 1988 the inaugural Megabash took place back in Pingewood and the event was developed to include business colleagues as well as family and friends. The party's formula of bbq, music and real ale was a winner and together with Hugh's company Farmex, the event was hosted privately for several years. The last bash at Smallmead Farm was in 1997 and with the company's move to new premises a couple of years were taken out in 1998/99. It all got started again in the following year at Pingemead Farm and the Millenium Megabash in 2000 was bigger and better than ever. As the agricultural market fell on harder times post 2000 Megabashers generously started to contribute financially to the event. This shift from private party to a more commercial event clearly needed bigger premises. Old hands fretted about the loss of intimacy and Hugh wondered if it was possible a festival was in the making. 2003 was Hugh's 50th and local brewer Dave Maggs – a Megabash regular – also celebrated his half century and formally became a co-sponsor of the event – the last at Pingewood.



[You may know that The Reading Real and Jazz Festival started in much the same way at Reading Cricket and Hockey club. These days about 3500 people enjoy a weekend of jazz and ale and the event contributes substantially to the club's coffers]



In 2004 the decision was taken to move to RRFC and Megabash At Holme Park was born. At the same time tribute band festival Marvellous In The Park, put on by old friends Pete Lincoln and Steve Stanton was growing rapidly. A date clash meant there was no Megabash in 2005. The party started again though in July 2006 and again in 2007. Many RRFC members were Megabash regulars of old but the wider club membership didn't quite know what it was all about. "Hugh's do" seemed like it was just another private party at the club. However, in 2008 the event date was shifted to the 3rd weekend in August and the whole thing went up a gear. Formal ticketing and festival wristbands were innovated and star gatemen Danny Pratt and Mark Marnell established their great skills at extracting payment from even the most diehard club members.

Megabash at Holme Park in 2009 was widely acclaimed by party-goers of old to be the best yet and a little over £3000 was made by the club. Clearly, this thing had got serious!



Megabash "Wall of Beer" - 2009

The 2010 event over the weekend August 20th-22nd looks like really coming of age – with your support please! A bigger marquee, professional sound stage and lighting, 8 top bands and a veritable wall of West Berkshire Brewery Company ales will see the stage set for another, er, MEGA-bash. The magnificent work of Mark Everett in achieving Full Premises Licence status for the club means we can, if we choose, build this tradition into a classic family festival for members, their families, friends and work colleagues. These days, Hugh chairs a committee of club members and friends who organise the event. Tickets are on sale now for the party at the club and it pays to plan ahead to get great savings on entry costs. Camping is almost essential and this year the professionals will take the tents down and Mark's volunteer force will ensure the club is restored to a safe sporting facility following the festivities.

If you haven't been before, please make this your first time and join the fun. If you're a regular, please keep coming back and help us turn this fabulous weekend of music and great company into a major contributor to RRFC's determination to secure its future. Join the email list by emailing hugh@farmex.co.uk and we'll keep you up to date with the latest developments.

Hugh Crabtree – May 2010