

Stonehaven Real Ale Festival - A runaway success

1400 attend inaugural festival...

THE first Stonehaven Real Ale Festival has been a runaway success with about 1,400 people flocking to the two-day event - and raising £3,500 for the town's brave lifeboat crew in the process.

On the opening Thursday night of the event, an astonishing 600 people enjoyed the 56 fine ales on offer at Stonehaven Town Hall, one from every brewery in Scotland. On the second and final night of the festival, more than 800 people came through the doors to enjoy the music, the craic and the company and the beer.

Festival organiser Robert Lindsay said: "It was always our aim to deliver a festival to remember for Stonehaven. We hope we've done that. "We want to thank everyone who came along over the two nights. The atmosphere was just brilliant.

"We've had so many people telling us how much they enjoyed the laid-back, friendly and easy-going feel to the event ... and they liked the ales too, given that they literally drank us dry."

However, the event, sponsored by Deeside Brewery, was about more than just a great night out and good memories. It was about raising money for Maritime Rescue Institute, the brave men and women who man Stonehaven's lifeboats.

Their dedication to the community was shown during the recent flooding when they rescued people from their homes at the height of the floods. Robert said: "All the profits from the real festival will go to MRI. We hope to have raised some £3,500 for them." MRI manager Ann Laing said: "We are just jumping for joy at this news. That is a fantastic amount that will boost our work." "We also thought the event itself was just fantastic, with everyone there having a great time. It came at just the right time to cheer Stonehaven up after the terrible flooding last week. "That is quite an achievement for the first Stonehaven Real Ale Festival and I look forward to the many more to come."

By 9pm on the final night, it was physically impossible to get any more people into the Town Hall and with drouthy ale fans fast clearing out the line-up of beers, the tough decision was made to close the doors.

The organisers said they were sorry for those who couldn't get in. They have already put in place plans for next year's beer festival, booking dates at the Town Hall for the first Thursday, Friday and Saturday of November, 2010, and possibly looking at other venues in the town.

Robert, who owns the town's Marine Hotel, said: "This was our first beer festival and we have had so much positive feedback from people. "We must thank all the volunteers who helped before and during the event, more than 80 in total. And we also have to thank the musicians, businesses and firms who gave us their support to make the festival happen. "This was our first festival, it won't be our last and the best is yet to come. See you in the first weekend in November, 2010."