

FRIENDS OF THE TOWNER

IN THE elegant setting of the Garden Suite at the Hydro Hotel, the Alan Gresty/Brian White Ragtimers launched into their opening number, At The Jazz Band Ball, and toes tapped, heads nodded, solos were applauded and fingers drummed on arm rests.

This set the scene for an evening of tuneful jazz, beautifully played and much enjoyed by a full house of Friends of the Towner and some of their friends.

The Ragtimers, who have been playing together for nearly a quarter of a century, take their inspiration mainly from two American greats - Muggsy Spanier and Bob Crosby.

They're a seven-piece playing Chicago-style Dixieland and they boast an excellent front line with Messrs Gresty and White well to the fore on trumpet and clarinet, underpinned by a driving rhythm section.

All the favourites were programmed - South Rampart Street Parade, Big Noise from Winnetka with spectacular string bass and drum solos from Tony Bagot and John Petters, Who's Sorry Now? and a wonderful rendition of The Man I Love from pianist Jonathan Vinten who did sterling work throughout the evening.

Geoff Cole revived a 1924 favourite A June Night with some delicious trombone-playing, both muted and open.

Completing the line-up, John Crocker on tenor sax contributed some lovely touches, particularly on Honeysuckle Rose.

This was a great evening musically but it was also enjoyable for the sheer good humour of the players.

Clearly they liked each other and they were glad to be back in Eastbourne again after a couple of years' absence.