

A NEW DAWN FOR WILTSHIRE RURAL MUSIC

by Daisy Chapman



If you've never come across the Wiltshire Rural School (a hidden gem on Gloucester Rd) you're missing out on something really special. This brilliant charity brings live music and music making workshops to communities across Wiltshire. Daisy Chapman tells us about one of their recent projects 'Keep Music in Mind'.

I joined WRM as Press Officer in January of this year, just as the doors of their Victorian building on Gloucester Road were re-opening for the first time since 2020.

Joining a small charity in the wake of a national crisis presented some challenges. The majority of our outreach work had been silenced by lockdowns, but Care Homes and Memory Cafes' doors were now ajar, tentatively beckoning us in to help repair the damage isolation can do to a mind overruled by dementia. As a musician and songwriter, I leapt at the chance to be involved in WRM's 'Keep Music in Mind' project which brings live music to Care Homes across the county.

So, after a quick set up at The Old Parsonage near Atworth, I launched into Elton John's 'Your Song', competing with the murmur of unsettled and confused residents, their daily routine having been upturned thanks to the arrival of a stranger with an electric piano... and silence fell. Not the sort of silence that makes a performance uncomfortable, but the sort of hush that hangs in the air with palpable anticipation – an expectation of something wonderful. And wonderful it was. By the second song some tears of confusion had turned to tears of joy, and they were in good company. The staff too were moved by the room's reaction as they joined in, tapping feet, swaying hands, indulging in the primal energy that music provides, and the endorphins it releases. As my performance closed, one lady got up from her chair and quietly

left the room. Only then did the staff realise that this was the first time she'd ever sat still for longer than the time it takes to drink a cuppa. 45 minutes of pure pleasure, relaxation and joy.

We are only now seeing how damaging the last two years have been for certain groups, starving the most vulnerable from access to live music. Which is why our other flagship project 'Visible Voices' has also proven so successful. At the end of this year we will be releasing a CD of collaborative songs. Local song writers teamed up for writing sessions with isolated communities such as Doorway, Erlestoke Prison, Stepping Stones and Mill Street Club and the results are outstanding.

"...healing our county with music."

Wiltshire Rural Music is going from strength to strength healing our county with music. It is my pleasure to be part of it!

Get involved with WRM:

- Weekly and monthly string and wind ensembles
- Monthly lunchtime 'Tune @ Noon' concerts
- Room hire, tuition, ABRSM exams.

Find out more -

www.wiltshireruralmusic.co.uk

Do you attend any groups that you'd like to share with Celebrate. We'd love to hear more!
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