

Another great concert!

Salisbury Solicitor and spinal cord injury specialist, Denise Broomfield dipped her toe further into the music promotion business on the 24 March 2007 by arranging a second concert for patients in the Duke of Cornwall Spinal Treatment Centre in Salisbury.



Stu Hanna and Debbie Palmer are Megson.

Denise first hatched her plan to bring a programme of live music into the Spinal Centre in 2006 when she arranged for Devon duo *Show of Hands* to come and play a live concert for the patients. "I know quite a lot of musicians", says Denise, "and fortunately they are very generous with their time and energy and are happy to come and give a performance to the patients. I already have another four musicians who have offered to come and play and as I intend to organise two concerts per year I have enough musicians to run the programme until 2009!"

The concerts go down really well with the patients. There have been a number of studies recently about the positive benefit of music, whether listening or playing, to long-stay hospital patients. Denise says, "The wonderful thing about arranging the concerts is that patients get to see the quality of performance they would see if they paid £20

and went to a theatre. All of the musicians I book are professionals and I choose them carefully, not only for their musical ability but for their outgoing natures so that they will be happy to stay and talk to the patients after the concert".

The musicians who played at the Spinal Treatment Centre in March are a duo called *Megson*. Stu Hanna and Debbie Palmer are both in their 20s and originally from Middlesbrough. "I think Stu and Debs are going to go a long way", says Denise. "I first came across them back in the autumn of 2005 when they were supporting Seth Lakeman at a concert in Marlborough. I saw them again at a Festival in Abbotsbury last year and thought they were just stunning. One of the attractions of Stu and Debbie, as far as playing in the hospital is concerned, is their age. Many of the patients in the hospital are young and I thought it would be really good to bring in musicians who are their contemporaries."

Stu plays mandola and guitar and he and Debbie both sing. They sing some traditional songs about Middlesbrough and the north-east but are branching out into more non-traditional songs with the advent of their second album. Their new album *The Smoke of Home* will be released in July this year.

"One of the very interesting things about bringing live music into the spinal treatment centre", Denise adds, "is that I get to see how the musicians perform without any production or enhancement of

their voices. It takes some considerable talent to be able to sing for an hour without even as much as a microphone".

After the concert Denise's firm, Bonallack and Bishop, provide a buffet for the patients to enjoy and everyone gets a chance to talk to the musicians, Denise and her colleagues. "The buffet always goes down extremely well", says Denise. "We make an effort to lay on a really good spread and for people who have had to endure the famous 'hospital food' for a number of months, something different is very welcome".

The concerts were an experiment and Denise is very pleased that she has now been given the formal go ahead to arrange two concerts per year for the foreseeable future. "I really enjoy arranging the concerts", Denise adds, "but it can get a bit nerve wracking – particularly as you never quite know who is going to turn up and whether people are going to enjoy the music. The patients' response to *Megson* was most enthusiastic – I almost thought that they were not going to let them stop performing!"

Denise will be planning another concert for the autumn.

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