

MENTMORE ARTS FESTIVAL

PRESS RELEASE 2023

£110,000+ Raised for Charity

Back in 2007 when Sue Scott was a Parish Councillor for the Mentmore/Crafton/Ledburn District, she was meeting a parishioner in Mentmore one Saturday morning. While waiting for the meeting to start she looked at the setting of Mentmore Village Green and thought it might work as the venue for an arts festival. She ran the idea past her friend Caroline Gates who runs Room No 9, the art supplies store and cafe in Leighton Buzzard. Caroline thought it was a wonderful idea and they decided they might also be able to raise a few hundred pounds to help with the restoration of St Mary's Church. A village meeting was called and, despite some scepticism, there was enough interest to form a committee and put an event together, headed up by our amazing co-founders, Sue and Caroline.

The first Mentmore Arts Festival was held in 2008 with nearly 30 artists from the local community showing their work in the more secure indoor settings of the Church and the Village Hall. The Committee were delighted to raise £4,500 allowing donations to be made to St Mary's, the Village Hall and Stoke Mandeville Cancer Care Unit. The event was so well received and the amount raised so impressive that a second Festival was immediately put in the calendar for 2009.

Deborah Hall, whose husband Roger Hale had been Rector of the Church for over 15 years, joined Sue and Caroline in 2009, bringing her knowledge of sales and marketing to the Committee. She became Chair in 2013.

2023 was our thirteenth event and with a strong core team in place, the incredible sum of **£110,765** has now been donated to charity. St Mary's Church continues to be supported together with two or three local charities which are nominated annually by the Committee. We have donated to **23** different charities over the years, including Rennie Grove Hospice Care, The National Autistic Society, Riding for the Disabled and Mind UK.

The twin venues of the Church and the Village Hall are used for every event. All the equipment is brought in from storage including lighting, display stands, hanging rails, tables etc and the Committee spends

several days setting the scene with a huge amount of support from the community.

Our refreshment marquee has become a destination in its own right. Caroline and her team have taken us from tea and cake in 2008 to the 2023 offering of delicious snacks and meals for every palate. This year over 300 lunches were served over the weekend and we had in excess of 1,000 visitors.

Other numbers have grown over the years. We now have more than 60 artists, some of whom have shown with us since the first event. It's always a pleasure to welcome them back and to have new names join us.

Income from artists, our refreshments, the ever-popular raffle, advertisers in the catalogue and the people who come and visit have all contributed to the donations we have made over the years and we are very grateful for the support our Festival receives.

Initially there was no firm target in mind but in the last few years reaching that £100,000+ milestone became a goal. We are all so delighted to have achieved this goal and our enthusiasm for continuing remains intact. New targets are under discussion!

June 2023