

Harp Retreat 2020

Maybe it was because most of us have participated in The Harp Retreat a few times before, and we know the ropes, so it was no surprise that the atmosphere was very cruisy and relaxed! As people arrived on Friday afternoon and evening, they quickly settled into the dorms and cabins, and harp music started to sound around the Port Waikato School Camp.

Having our meals catered this time was heaven! No dishes or cleaning up to do meant more time to talking harp and definitely added to the relaxed environment.

The opportunities to take our harps outside and play under the gazebo, by the river, in the outdoors chapel, or at the beach, was definitely a highlight for some of the harpists who attended and may not have done this before.

We had an unofficial renaming of the wee stream (Maraetai Stream) that runs through the camp – now known to us as “Auldryn River” and officiated by the fab harpist who brought the tune to us – Rachel Hair!

Rachel is a fantastic teacher, with a great knowledge of traditional Scottish music, and how the dance and instrumental music fit together within the different forms. The attendees learnt a strathspey, a couple of airs, a muniera (Galician tune), a polka plus other tunes, learning a lot about particular aspects of the rhythm and what they represented in the music.



Two special things about this retreat, for me, were playing "Auldyn River" down by 'Auldyn River', and enjoying the beach and harps at sunset on Sunset Beach. It was a joy and satisfying to find that I could learn from Rachel's way and pace of teaching. My resolve is to learn (some) pieces by heart - it allows for more 'heart input' I'm sure. And it helps me hear the phrases more accurately. **Christine Lowe**



I loved playing my harp outside by the river – the new "Auldyn River" – and we sat over the river in the trees while the other harps were on the main camp side. Hearing the harps on the beach was cool, and seeing the harps in the sunset was so cool. This year I felt like I learnt a lot of new music, and made new harp friends. Rachel was fun to learn from and we learnt a little bit of step dancing too. **Mandipa Mhuka**

This year the harping community was treated to another absolutely fantastic Harp Retreat! I had spent the past year looking forward to learning from the incredible Rachel Hair, and I was certainly not disappointed. She was an amazing teacher, performer, and person, and was able to clearly and effectively communicate her messages so that we were all able to make great progress in a very short amount of time. We of course had plenty of fun as well, from learning to sing a Gaelic song about the three most important things in life (apparently these are potatoes, butter, and women), to taking the harps and flutes to the beach for a sunset session.



The community that the harp retreat fosters is something really special, and everyone leaves with a head stuffed full with new tunes and techniques. I cannot recommend highly enough attending the next harp retreat! **Mikaele Ymker**