

## Close Encounters of The Christian Kind

By Sharron Hardwick

Pembrokeshire's third Encounter event, organised by the Encounter team (Pembrokeshire Young Baptists), took place last Saturday. Six hundred plus guests enjoyed great family fun at Folly Farm's Vintage Fair.

After the rides, guests entered Follies theatre. The Encounter team handed out glow bracelets and bubbles. Steve Lee welcomed guests, opening with a quiz, where locals joined him on stage to answer questions; Young Matthew, Pembroke, was the winner.

Encounter's Steve and Sue introduced the brilliant New Generation Music (NGM) Worship band: Lead singer/acoustic guitar: Andrew Baker; female vocals: Kat Cheadle; lead guitar: Jonathon Darley; bass: Tom Glasson; Drums: Rob Morgan; Key boards: Dan Goudie with Paul Crago, and Dave Robinson lighting and sound technicians. The audience cheered and sang enthusiastically as they played.

Laura Cheadle, NGM, came on stage saying "All I can see is glow sticks – this place is awesome!" Laura and the band travelled from Thornbury, Bristol, for Encounter 10.

"NGM are a bunch of Christians who love Jesus. We train up young people in the arts; sending them out to perform. We produce Cd's and books " Laura explained.

Laura asked "What did you come here to encounter tonight? Rides, food, friends and family? The one thing I came here to Encounter was God. Are you up for this? I believe in God and want you to encounter him tonight."

Laura shared some stories about encounters: "There's something about an encounter that doesn't leave you unchanged. I believe in a God who is desperate for an Encounter with us. Some of you may or may not have thought about this, God doesn't want us at arms length. "

One story Laura shared was about Naomi, who took part in NGM's summer school. After a meeting Naomi wanted Laura to pray with her. She was a beautiful 16 year old dancer, but struggled with the way she looked. She could not even look in the mirror, had developed an eating disorder and was self harming. She wanted God's help.

"My God is really good at putting people back together. Before we prayed there was a darkness over her. I felt I heard God's small voice say `Tell Naomi I'm taking the shackles off her feet so she can dance.` "

Not sure what this meant, Laura started to pray. After half an hour, Naomi reached down and touched her toes; then jumped up and danced excitedly!

"Naomi had a life long problem with her ankles, and couldn't touch the floor. Not only did God heal her inside, he healed her legs too! Half hour with God, her life was completely, utterly changed. She's still the same now!"shared Laura.

Laura then introduced Hannah Franklin who sang a number of beautiful songs including "Just One Look" about Hagar's encounter with God from the Bible.

"Even if you are completely bored of Church, not even considering God, feel at rock bottom or on top of the world; God loves you, knows you and wants to encounter you tonight. Do business with God, talk to him, meet with God today." encouraged Laura.

Laura finished with a prayer, giving people a chance to respond to what they had shared and Steve re-introduced the band who played a few songs after cry's of "encore!".

After the event, encounter's media representative, Sharron Hardwick, spoke to a few guests who shared their reactions:

Natasha Fiddy, Manobier said "It was good fun, I enjoyed it even more than last year. The singers were brilliant." Mili Sandifer-Smith, Pembroke, agreed saying: "They are all really talented and into it. Laura was really good. I thought it was good how Hannah was writing songs from the Bible."

Kilgetty's Brian Davies thought it was "Absolutely great, enjoyed every minute of it!" Summarised as: "Lovely" by Sylvia John.

Encounter news and events can be found at [www.encounterwales.org](http://www.encounterwales.org) and on Facebook

Photographs were taken at Encounter 10 by John LLewellen

