Soprano goes from busking on the streets to dream show at cathedral

A LOCAL soprano has gone from busking and living on the streets to singing at the majestic Wells Cathedral this festive season.

In a remarkable rags to riches story Charlotte Akenhead, whose family have lived in the Wells area for decades, was spotted while singing on the streets of Glastonbury on a warm, sunny afternoon last summer.

Her dream was always to sing at Wells Cathedral, and her dream is about to come true.

On Friday, November 27, Charlotte will return to the city to present Callas Candlelight Christmas at Wells Cathedral, celebrating the music and legacy of legendary soprano Maria Callas in the atmospheric surroundings of one of Somerset's most treasured buildings.

For Charlotte it is the fulfilment of a lifelong ambition, and the evening promises to be very festive and atmospheric, with beautiful music and singing.

It is a far cry from the streets of Portugal, Wells and Glastonbury but it is her busking which has led her to this moment and she draws large crowds everywhere she sings.

It was a chance encounter with Rollo Maughfling from Glastonbury which led her to this milestone in her career.

Rollo just happens to be the Archdruid of Britain, and he heard Charlotte singing on the streets of the town so famous for its music.

She told him of her dream of performing at the great Wells Cathedral and Rollo managed to pull it off and organised the Maria Callas concert.



Charlotte Akenhead will perform at Wells Cathdral on Friday, November 27

Charlotte's life and career has had interesting twists and turns which took her to several places around the world including Porto in Portugal where she was homeless for a time.

She was determined to fulfil her dream of becoming a singer and despite all her difficulties managed to train and get her qualifications.

Her family's ties with Wells brought her back to the west country.

Charlotte's paternal grandparents, Angela and Edmund Akenhead, lived at The Old House in South Newton, near Salisbury.

As a child, Charlotte regularly visited them and has many memories of the area and the surrounding countryside. Her grandfather, Edmund Akenhead, was also a significant figure in British crossword history. He was crossword editor of The Times from 1965 to 1983, introduced the Times Jumbo Crossword and established the annual Times Crossword Championships.

Charlotte's connection with Somerset developed through her father, who moved to the county.

He initially lived in Taunton before moving to Wells, where he settled at Homechime House in Priory Road, just a short walk from Wells Cathedral.

Charlotte came back to the west country to be close to her father, he often accompanied her on her busking stints around Wells and Glastonbury, very often joining in with the singing.

Charlotte is making a name for herself on the national stage as well, and has previously performed with the London Philharmonic Choir and at the BBC Proms.

Now, following her street performances in Wells and Glastonbury, she is preparing to perform at Wells Cathedral.

For Charlotte, the concert represents far more than another performance date.

She said: "It is the fulfilment of a long-held ambition and a reminder of how unexpected encounters, encouragement and community support can help turn dreams into reality.

"When I was busking in Wells I used to look at the Cathedral and dream of one day singing inside it.

"I never really imagined that dream could come true.

"To think I've gone from singing on the streets of Wells to performing inside one of the most beautiful cathedrals in England is quite overwhelming.

"Wells has become a very special place to me, and returning here to fulfil that dream feels like a wonderful homecoming."