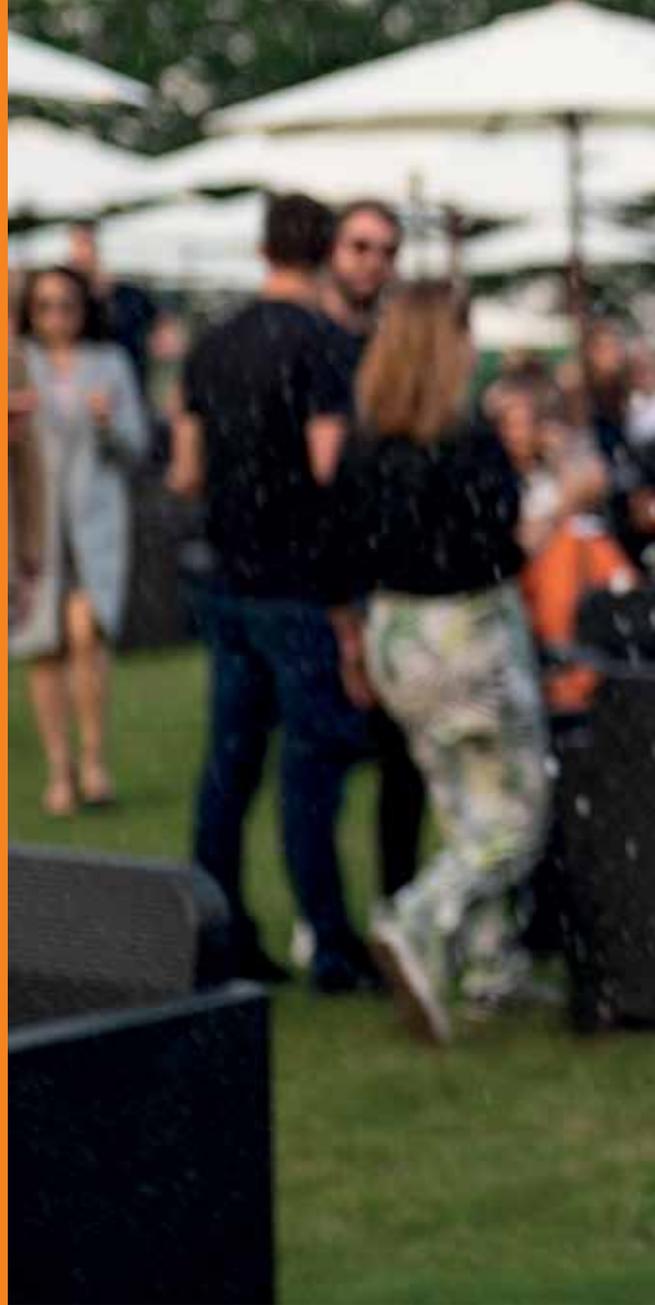


Cheshire goes POP-UP

From Dancing Queens to Killer Queens, Ibiza DJs to Kidchella, the 2021 Tatton Park Pop Up Festival was the place to be seen. Now the lakeside extravaganza is back with dozens of events spanning three months. Rebecca Hartley, the entrepreneur who's got the county popping, talks to Joanna Drake



This year's six-week, height-of-summer Tatton Park Pop Up Festival has something for everyone, with daytime family entertainment running alongside exciting evening events.

The summer of '22 line-up includes returning favourites such as Mania – The Abba Tribute, The Greatest Show and Symphonic Ibiza, along with new productions including Disco Classical's Classic Decks show, Martin Kemp Back to the 80s and an electrifying opening night featuring Rocket Man – a magical night in tribute to Elton John.

Last year's launch came amid continuing uncertainty over lockdowns but was a triumph with its socially distanced set-up and varied productions that entertained thousands of visitors, many of



whom were going out-out for the first time in more than a year.

The festival is the brainchild – and inspired gamble – of Knutsford-based Rebecca Hartley, CEO of Knutsford-based Saving Grace Events.

‘The response to last year’s festival absolutely blew me away. It resonated with so many people and in a deeper way than I was expecting,’ she says.

‘Being able to get together with friends and family and enjoy a live entertainment experience in a safe way was an incredible experience after a year or more of not being able to do these things.

‘I’m not sure people had realised quite how much they missed the magic of communal experiences until they lived them again. It was emotional and very powerful, and I felt privileged to be part of it.’

ABOVE:
Tatton Park Pop Up Festival – the event that puts the fizz into a Cheshire summer

BELOW:
Oh what a night at Tatton Park Pop Up Festival

Last summer, tens of thousands of people visited the festival site, located next to the Tatton Park lake with stunning views over the water and spectacular sunsets behind the stage. With more than 40 acts planned for this year’s event, Rebecca expects in excess of 25,000 people to attend across the summer.

‘It was always the plan to bring the festival back this year,’ says Rebecca. ‘We’ve made some small changes’, but the experience will largely be around improving on the same as 2021 – a beautiful setting, the best entertainment, private squares for all guests, VIP experiences, table service and premium food and drinks.

‘Because Covid regulations have been relaxed, we’ll also offer a walk-up bar service this year and we’ve been able to add more seats per event – but without losing that intimate feeling that made last year’s event so special.’

Making the event special was always the priority for Rebecca and her team. As a Knutsford resident, Rebecca wanted to give something back to her community after the





turbulence of the pandemic. 'It's a celebration of life and everything that I love,' she says.

'I was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 37 and underwent a year and a half of gruelling treatment. As I recovered I decided to make a change. I left my nine-to-five job and created Saving Grace Events, working with businesses and individuals to create exciting events.

'In the years that followed, I also lost both my parents and my older sister, Michelle. It was the darkest of times for me yet I found that I wanted to do something that brought happiness and joy back to my life and the people around me,' she adds.

This ultimately led to the creation of the festival, as Rebecca sought to design something to celebrate life.

Influenced by other outdoor festivals, the Tatton Park

Pop Up brought something new to Cheshire – a sunshine extravaganza of live performances, great food and drinks, set against an incredible backdrop.

For Rebecca, Tatton Park was the only choice for location. Its size, accessibility and popularity make it a natural site for the festival.

The lakeside setting provides an air of luxury to spectacular evenings of live entertainment, in conjunction with high-end drinks brands including Moët et Chandon, Whispering Angel and Grey Goose vodka.

Following her breast cancer diagnosis, Rebecca began supporting the breast cancer prevention charity, Prevent Breast Cancer, later becoming an ambassador.

Prevent Breast Cancer is the festival's official charity partner, with donation and merchandising opportunities at each event to help the

ABOVE:
Kidchella at
Tatton Park Pop
Up Festival

charity raise vital funds.

This year's line-up includes a return for many of last year's sell-out shows.

The wildly popular Jurassic Earth is back on Sunday, June 25 – a roarsome event for dino-mad little ones, which sees Jurassic beasts roam through the crowds in an impressive storytelling show.

Other family favourites, such as a Princess Tea Party, The Greatest Show and Kidchella – the ultimate Coachella-inspired festival experience for children – are all on the bill while Mania – The Abba Tribute returns on Sunday, June 26 and Sunday, July 31.

'This year we'll have more in the way of crowd experiences,' says Rebecca. 'It was tricky last year due to coronavirus restrictions, but we have everything from circus performers to glitter make-up bars planned to add special extras.'



Photo: Carl Sukonik

TATTON PARK POP UP FESTIVAL IN NUMBERS

2000
BOTTLES OF FIZZ

200 HOURS
OF ENTERTAINMENT

34 SEPARATE
SHOWS

25,000

PEOPLE EXPECTED TO VISIT

‘The lakeside setting provides an air of luxury to the spectacular evenings of live entertainment’



There’s plenty to keep the grown-ups occupied, too, with DJ nights such as Symphonic Ibiza on Saturday, July 2, through to nostalgia events such as Back To The 90s on Friday, July 29 and an ‘80s night fronted by Martin Kemp on Thursday, August 4.

A highlight last year for Rebecca was a performance by The Real Thing, who supported Craig Charles Funk and Soul Club.

‘My sister loved The Real Thing and to be able to sit with my family and friends in a safe, open environment and listen to her favourite songs was indescribable. It meant such a lot to be with all the people who’d loved her and remember her in that way. It was incredibly moving, especially considering the fact we were in a pandemic and hadn’t been able to join together like that for so long.’

Craig Charles is back on the bill this year with a show on

TOP: Rebecca Hartley on the lakeside site of her Tatton Park Pop Up Festival

ABOVE: The summertime setting at the Tatton Park Pop Up Festival

Thursday, July, 7, bringing his mix of funk and soul to Tatton once again.

‘Tatton Park Pop Up Festival really does have something for everyone. That’s why it touched so many people last year and why we’ve had such an amazing response to this year’s festival already,’ says Rebecca.

‘We’ve all missed out on so much over the past two years. We’ve missed parties, celebrations, nights out, family events and so much more. Being able to get together again and enjoy ourselves is really special now – it was always important but now that we’ve seen how precious it is, it really is something to be celebrated.’

‘The festival gives people in Cheshire the chance to get together with their friends and family, let their hair down, sing, dance and have a bloody good laugh! And importantly we can do that in a safe way.’

‘It’s outside, there’s distance between groups and no queuing at busy bars, so even those who are still cautious about Covid can enjoy themselves safely.’

With an impressive line-up complemented by beautiful scenery, exceptional food and drink options, table service and private squares for each group, the Tatton Park Pop Up Festival is looking likely to be the place to be in the summer of 2022.

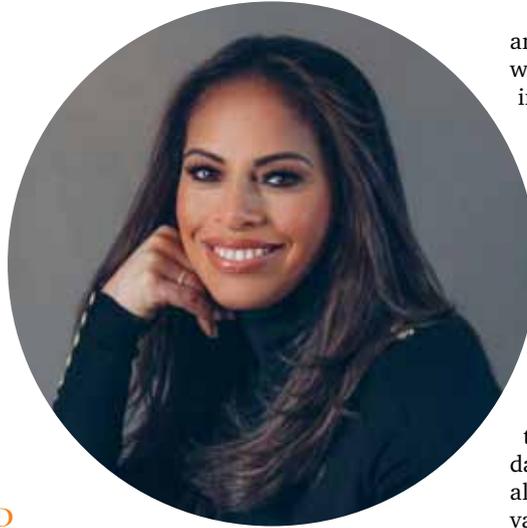
And beyond? ‘The plan has always been to keep growing the festival,’ Rebecca says. ‘We’ll be coming back next year, and the year after that, and the year after that. We’ll keep running this amazing show as long as people want it. After all, what better place to create an experience like this than Cheshire?’

Tickets are on sale now at tattonparkpopupfestival.co.uk ▶

MY CHESHIRE LIFE – Rebecca Hartley

WHERE DO YOU LIVE IN CHESHIRE AND WHY?

In Knutsford. I've lived here for the past 13 years. Knutsford is such a warm, friendly town and has so much to offer; from the great outdoors to the iconic Tatton Park, good restaurants and lots of unique local shops. I have my two businesses – Saving Grace Events and the Tatton Park Pop Up Festival – based here too, so it really is home to me in many ways.



WHERE DO YOU HEAD FOR A HEALTH-KICK?

WB FitFarm in Mobberley is brilliant. It's run by my good friend and the best personal trainer ever, Dan Worthington. It's fun and varied, and I really enjoy training outdoors, especially in such a beautiful countryside spot.

AND TO INDULGE?

The food at The Coast in Prestbury is outstanding and again the service is amazing. Both of my businesses are built around exceptional customer experiences, so I value this in others, and Blair Glen, who owns The Coast, and his team embody this. And on another note, the garlic prawns are the best I've ever tasted.

WHERE ARE YOUR FAVOURITE PLACES TO SHOP?

In Knutsford I'm obsessed with the Pulse of Perfumery for a great consultative and personal service. They've just opened a new store and the scents are to die for: my two favourite perfumes are exclusive to them in the UK.

I like Suka in Hale for casual clothes and the woman who owns the shop is lovely, and Daniel in Alderley Edge for shoes. For food, Waugh Brow Farm Shop in Mobberley is outstanding and again offers amazing service.

WHERE DO YOU GO TO RELAX?

The Mere Resort and Spa is literally a few minutes' walk from my house. Although I'm a member, I really don't use the gym enough but it's my absolute go-to for a lovely relaxing spa day. It's 'unpretentious class', as my dad would say.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE BUILDING IN CHESHIRE?

Right now, it's the Station House on Adams Hill in Knutsford because this landmark is currently being restored to its former glory and is about to become our brand-new offices. We have two beautiful floors of an exposed brick, purpose-renovated space and I am beyond excited to move in. It feels like the business is growing up and moving there coincides with the fifth birthday for Saving Grace Events, so there will definitely be a double celebration.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE FINEST VIEW IN CHESHIRE?

I have to say running the festival last year meant I got to see Tatton Park in all its glory, at all hours of the day and night, and it's more incredible than I even realised.

The view of undisturbed deer at sunset, morning skies at 6am

and the tranquility of the lake when you are the only person in the park are pretty special sights. We also created lots of drone footage as part of our promotional material, which really makes you appreciate the sheer scale of the park from a bird's-eye view.

WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY?

Family, it's the single most important thing in the world to me. Having lost my mum, dad and big sister, Michelle, all in the last few years, I really value the people that are most special to me.

WHAT DO YOU MISS MOST ABOUT CHESHIRE WHEN YOU'RE AWAY?

My home, it's my little sanctuary. Before my dad died, he encouraged me to create the space I wanted and now when I close the door, light my candles and put my music on, there's no place I'd rather be.

HOW WOULD YOU SUM UP YOUR CHESHIRE LIFE?

My life in Cheshire consists largely of being a mum to my 15-year-old son (and absolute best friend), Zach. He is my world, and I am so proud of the young man he's becoming. That involves school runs, hosting sleepovers, shopping for clothes I wouldn't have dreamed of owning at 15 and being an unpaid, unappreciated taxi driver.

Outside of that I work a lot but that's what being a business owner is all about, you can rarely switch off and, if I'm honest, I thrive on it.

And when I'm not working, you'll find me shopping (too much), socialising with friends and family, drinking wine at the Dun Cow in Ollerton, unwinding at the spa or enjoying one of the many countryside walks Cheshire has to offer. ♦