



VERSE IN THE NEURO-VERSE

featuring 14th
'Bard of Northampton':
Willow Johns



SINCE FIRST MEETING WILLOW IN 2024, WHEN SHE ATTENDED THE GROUP FOR A WHILE, IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT SHE HAD AN INCREDIBLE COMMAND OF SPOKEN & WRITTEN WORD AND A GROWING PASSION SURROUNDING IT.

SHE CAME IN TO LEAD A WORKSHOP WITH US IN SEPT 2025 & WE CO-WROTE A POEM WHICH WILLOW THEN COMPILED. WILLOW HAS SINCE WON THE COMPETITION TO BECOME THE 14TH BARD OF NORTHAMPTON!



A short Bio by Willow - 14th Bard of Northampton!

SHINE COMMUNITY POEM

Written at a Shine poetry workshop and performed in Round 3 of the 2025 Bardic Picnic.

Something happens in church halls
In community centres with flickering
lights
At weekly sewing groups
Committee planning meetings
Around wobbly tables
Over tea and biscuits
Under leaky roofs
Magnolia walls littered with posters
A beacon SHINES and the work is
done
The work of togetherness and
common focus
Clashing heads and frantic
scribblings
Through wind and rain and
missed buses
Something transforms
In the squeak of pen against
whiteboard
The roar of conversation
Over a boiling kettle

When I applied for the competition to become the next Bard, I was not expecting to win. The theme was Community, and I was so new to the local poetry scene I really did not know what to expect!

So I wrote what I knew, using my poetry as a window for others to see and feel the world the way I experience it as a neurodivergent person.

When I made it to round 3 (much to my own disbelief), I spoke about the impact that community art groups had on my life and the lives of so many people around Northamptonshire.

I wholeheartedly believe that these spaces are a kind of tangible magic, helping us foster connection and support talent to thrive in unlikely places.

I would not be 14th Bard without the amazing arts facilitators, teachers and community organisers supporting neurodivergent and disabled artists across Northamptonshire. This win is shared with all of you ❤️ (now if only someone could help me with the admin, that would be great!)

