

Detailed Programme

This is the detailed programme of individual shows, workshops and events that will take place over the festival weekend. For details and photos of the Performers, please refer to the website.

Saturday Day 19th July 2025

Marquees:

Purple Marquee

10.00 - 11.00am *Prophecy of Merlin – Mike O'Connor and Barbara Griggs* (Age A, 8+)

An acclaimed synthesis of words and music in which folklore joins history, and stories come to life.

The year is 936. The Prophecy of Merlin, an ancient and precious Cornish book, traces the lineage of the kings of Cornwall, and is an icon of Cornish nationhood. Stolen by Saxons, it lies in Exeter monastery.

But then King Athelstan, hungry for land, banishes the Cornish to beyond the River Tamar. Britons in Devon become refugees.

Listen, become part of their story. Join them, as refugees become fugitives. Follow their path to freedom, secretly bearing a priceless treasure; beset by danger, but sustained by the land and its legends.

11.15am - 12.15pm *The Glory and The Pity – Sef Townsend* (Age 11+)

Sef tells stories from the time when medieval Spain was a multi-cultural hub, where Muslims, Christians and Jews lived in relative harmony, for 800 years. The cross fertilising of language, custom, songs and poetry resulted in wonderful tales and romances set at this fecund time of coexistence.

“He speaks with honesty about the complexities of history, conjuring an authentic vision of a time of dynamic harmony and tension. The stories are romantic, human, timeless, told with a delicate touch and warm rapport with the audience. The collection of tales is seasoned with songs across multiple languages. It’s a banquet of imagery, reaching something truly sublime” Tim Ralphs.

12.45 – 1.45pm Concert - Michell, Pfeiffer & Kulesh (Age F)

Michell, Pfeiffer & Kulesh are an all-female close harmony folk trio that brings together the exciting talents and exquisite voices of award-winning singers and songwriters Odette Michell, Karen Pfeiffer and Daria Kulesh.

Their stunning three-part vocal harmonies bring to life spellbinding folk tales, expertly woven together with a vibrant international twist - a project that would never have transpired had it not been for the lockdowns, when three of the busiest female performers on the folk scene found themselves somewhat less occupied than before. Introducing Stage winners at The Great British Folk Festival 2023, by public vote, they wow their audiences with a deeply moving, exciting and unique live show. Theirs is a unique cross-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-instrumental collaboration, turning familiar folk tunes into something fresh and powerful.

2.00 - 3.00pm Overlapping Stories - Donnelly and South (Age F)

A TAPESTRY OF WORDS & WONDER, MUSIC AND MAGIC - Renowned contemporary folk duo Keith Donnelly and Lauren South weave together the perfect combination of storytelling and song in their Overlapping Stories set. Each tune and tale is a beautifully crafted 'standalone' piece, but each one also interweaves and overlaps with the others to produce something truly unique. If you're a fan of tales of wizards and ghostly goings-on, if you fancy hearing a song about Tír na nÓg or Icarus, if you'd like a touch of mayhem and madcappery, don't miss Lauren & Keith's 'Overlapping Stories'.

3.15 - 4.45pm Sailors, Shipwrecks and Shanties – Colin Urwin and Lisa Schneidau (Age 10+)

The folk tales of our islands are scattered with tall tales of the high seas, mysteries of the unknown world beneath the ocean surface, and the coast where human life meets the salt sea. Immerse yourself in these marine stories with a twist from England and Ireland, told by Lisa Schneidau and Colin Urwin.

5.30 - 6.30pm Ghost of a Sailor: Talking Blues – Pete Morton (Age F)

An unruly mix of storytelling, comedy and song, wrapped in the tradition of the talking blues, told by *Sailor Swift*.

The restless spirit of a shipwrecked 17th Century mariner is now resident in a harbour tavern where he sings his favourite ditties with all, and shares his tales of history, love and encounters with famous customers and revellers.

Red Marquee

10.00 - 11.00am Concert – Sonya Smith (Age F)

Welcome back Sonya! Sonya Smith writes emotive, cathartic, lyrically rich, storytelling songs, about the balance of life, in all its shades of dark and light. These are songs of passion and pain, loss and redemption, discovery and self-worth.

"Stunning and unique ... a tremendous song writer, Sonya Smith has got an absolutely gorgeous beautifully haunting voice. There's something really captivating about her when she performs live that you get locked in – brilliant music ... Her distinctive tone and sound penetrates the soul." Michaela Wylde - BBC Radio Presenter and Musician, 2022.

11.15am - 12.30pm Ace of Clubs – Tellers from the Storytelling Clubs (Age F)

There are many storytelling clubs around Britain, but their role is often underrated. Each has their own particular character and format, but crucially they bring together like-minded folk, who enjoy listening to, or telling, stories. Many are led by one or two experienced and confident tellers, possibly who work as professionals, and they often feature have guest (professional) tellers, but also there is the opportunity for anyone to tell a story 'from the floor'. This gives everyone a chance to participate and gradually develop their own story skills, in front of a live audience. We know that many professional storytellers started by telling at a local club and honed their skills from there.

When planning this year's festival, the FatE Committee were talking about the importance of grassroots storytelling clubs, and were reminded of a feature of past festivals which was ripe for revival. This was envisioned as a festival spot for clubs to show off their 'in-house' talent, those storytellers who love telling tales, and although they do not perform professionally, are often the life-blood of many clubs. The call-out received an enthusiastic response, so here is the result: **Ace of Clubs**. It is hoped you enjoy this show and, who knows, this may help to inspire more future storytellers to give it a go!

FatE is featuring four clubs from different parts of the country, each club has put forward a regular, but non-professional, teller. More details of tellers will be available on our website before the festival. Tellers are:

Lynette Hill – Feast of Fools (Northamptonshire)

<https://www.storyfeast.uk/>

Belinda McKenna – Three Heads in a Well (Surrey)

<https://surreystorytellers.co.uk/threeheadsin%20a%20well.html>

Pete Sturgess – Beeston Tales (Nottinghamshire)

https://www.facebook.com/groups/beestontales/?locale=en_GB

Helen Wales – Cardiff Storytelling Circle (South Wales)

https://www.facebook.com/groups/1491740927748170/?locale=en_GB

12.45 - 1.45pm *Tales of Exile and Sanctuary* – *Gauri Raje* (Age 10+)

'Tales of Exile and Sanctuary' is a tapestry of stories from around the world exploring the human questions of exile and refuge. Some of the questions it asks are: What are the exiles we carry? What are the exiles that stories make familiar? What are the beauty and horrors of sanctuary? And what is nourished through sanctuary? Gauri Raje brings together a tapestry of stories woven together from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, India and the Horn of Africa based on her work with refugees and long-term migrants to the UK.

2.00 - 3.00pm *Grimm's Sheesha* - *Peter Chand* (Age 12+)

Commissioned originally to mark the 200th anniversary of the first publication of 'Grimm's Household Tales', British Punjabi storyteller Peter Chand has brought together a collection of stories from South Asia that place a mirror, 'sheesha', to these fascinating tales. Many of these stories are widely believed to have their origins in the East, having reached Europe through traders, gypsies, travellers, migrants, and those that were fond of a good yarn! Variants of well-known stories such as 'Cinderella', 'Tom Thumb', and 'Hansel and Gretel' are reflected through this sheesha, and the result is a vibrant, unique, and alternative view of the tales that we think we all know ...

3.30 - 4.30pm *Where There's Brass* – *Tom Kitching and Marit Fält* (Age F)

Tom's new show documents six months living in the London waterways community, making the long journey across England from Manchester on a traditional narrowboat, built in 1937. 'Where There's Brass' tells the story of the contemporary London waterways - a floating slum at worst, a bohemian, alternative, vibrant community at best. It is a love letter to the waterways, and a rallying cry for what they can be in the future. Stories old, and new, interwoven with a specially composed suite of music, underpinned by Tom's long-term accompanist, the brilliant Nordic mandola player Marit Fält.

4.45 – 5.45pm *The Young Storytellers Festival Showcase* – *Ailsa Dixon, Ffion Phillips, Iris Skipworth and Macsen Baglin* – *introduced by Fiona Collins* (Age A)

These talented young storytellers have all won the National Young Storyteller of the Year Competition, and here they will give you a flavour of their stories.

Ailsa Dixon is a traditional storyteller / musician deeply rooted in place and passionate about sharing traditional tales and unheard histories. She specialises in Scottish stories and is particularly interested in narratives with feminist and environmentalist themes, including international myths, legends, and wonder tales. She often incorporates traditional song, folk cello and clarsach into her compelling performances. Collaborative work includes the critically acclaimed 'Land Under

Wave' and 'Hear Us and Hasten', and she is due to present her solo show 'Cassandra' at the Edinburgh Fringe in August.

Ffion Phillips is a bilingual storyteller / musician with a passion for breathing new enchantment into old tales and reworking scraps of forgotten material into fresh stories. Her work explores feminist and environmentalist themes, with much of her repertoire rooted deeply in her native Eryri, while also adventuring to stories further afield. She has performed at a wide range of festivals, including *Beyond the Border*, *Aberystwyth* and the *Eisteddfod Stomp Stori*, and brought her collaborative show 'Hear Us and Hasten' to the *Edinburgh Fringe*, where she will be performing her new work 'Aderyn/Bird' in August.

Iris Skipworth has won National Young Storyteller of the Year, she then established the Manchester based storytelling club, *A Sting In The Tale*. As well as curating a stellar monthly line-up for Sting (<https://www.facebook.com/astinginhetaleclub>) Iris also runs storytelling workshops in schools and mental health facilities. In January 2025 she helped to set the *Guinness World Record* for the *Longest Continuous Storytelling Session*, whilst performing at *Marrakech International Storytelling Festival*. She will be performing this summer at *Whitby Folk*, *Sidmouth Folk*, and online with her third edition of a *Storytelling Calendar*.

Masen Baglin has been a storyteller for some years now at festivals and events across Wales, England and Ireland, in various settings including castles, heritage centres and libraries. He was a featured teller at the *Gathering of the Society of Storytellers* in 2024. He was honoured with the title of *Young Storyteller of Wales* in competition at *Aberystwyth* in November. Before this he had won the under-15s category twice. Having just completed his A' levels, he hopes to study in the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. He's a keen musician who is interested in dance and other aspects of folk culture.

6.00 – 7.00pm *The Snake Witch and the Grinning Castle* – Sarah Liisa Wilkinson (Age D)

A young woman rejects the crown, a house falls apart, and a witch hitches a ride ... Sarah Liisa Wilkinson casts a contemporary eye over an ancient, entangled Finnish fairytale. Enter a place of promises, snake love, expectation, and the things we won't let go of – so we can discover what it takes to know who we are.

Family Marquee

9.00 – 10.00am *Qi Gong: Start your day in a positive way!* – Nicola Day of Beautiful Flower Tai Chi (Age A)

Allow yourself to be lead through a series of exercises by Nicola Day, who is an international Gold Medallist in Qigong: the ancient Chinese exercise system

designed to improve mental, emotional and physical health. Improve your day with beautiful, soft exercises, giving yourself an acupressure massage and the space to breathe and connect with nature.

*Drop-in session (no need to sign up at the Box Office) – young children must be accompanied by an adult.

If weather is dry and fine – this will be relocated to the lawn in front of the Orangery.

10.15am - 12.15pm Children's Craft Workshop - Seaside and Pirate Crafts – Crate Stuff (Age A, B, C)

Join the team from Crate Stuff to make a bounty of sea and pirate themed crafts. Need somewhere to keep your private treasure? Want to make some music makers for a shanty band? What's your favourite sea creature? Give some junk a second life and stop it ending up in the ocean. All ages, just drop in and get creative!

*Drop-in session (no need to sign up at the Box Office) – young children must be accompanied by an adult. Please let the workshop leaders know if your child has an allergy to pvc glue or similar products.

1.00 – 2.30pm Theatre Workshop Creating a Story-Play: A Participatory Session for Everyone – John and Carolyne Revell (Age A)

John and Carolyne invite you to enter into an enchanted realm as a simple, yet compelling, story is woven into a participatory performance piece with spoken word, dramatic dance, and mesmerising music. Together you will venture along the winding path, through a faerie-tale forest, on a quest to recapture lost and stolen stories whilst encountering enigmatic characters, such as the Lady in the Attic, Briar Rose, the Ancient Forester, and the Spindlesnuffers, along the way. And – there is even an opportunity to perform your story for other festival-goers on Sunday afternoon.

Open to all ages and levels, but young children should be accompanied by an adult.

There are 2 workshops, sign up for one or both. Maximum 20. Please sign up at the Box Office.

3.00 – 4.00pm Watery Tales of River and Sea – Sef Townsend (Age 7+)

The people and animals in these stories spend their time in, under, or on the water and their lives are full of adventure. We hear of a boy who needs to find a special fish for his mother ... or else, and there's a girl who fought off pirates to save her father, and then later became a famous pirate herself; the mighty River Thames used to freeze over in winter and people had parties on the ice, with puppet shows, sleigh rides and hot food stalls; and then there's the tale of how sailors voyaged to the cold coast of Greenland and brought a story back with them of an old lady and a baby polar bear.

For more children's activities see: *The Birchwood, and Walled Garden (Storywalk)*.

Other venues:

Orangery

Note – if weather is very hot, these sessions may relocate to **the Barn**.

10.00am – 11.30am *Storytelling Workshop Reaping What You Sow* – Dave Tonge (Age D)

Dave Tonge's workshop explores techniques in terms of story content and performance styles that help draw a group in and put them at ease. These techniques encourage greater intimacy with an audience, no matter how large. There is particular emphasis on telling stories to a non-storytelling audience, a group outside the sphere of storytelling club and festivals, people who are unsure of what storytelling is all about. It's a storytelling workshop that seeks to show that a good storytelling performance starts long before the first story is ever told. It also focuses on how a storyteller can share stories rather than just tell them to create a bond between performer and listeners so that the teller gets as much out of the performance as their audience does.

Max 20. Intermediate Level. Please sign up at the Box Office.

2.30 – 3.30pm *Poetry Workshop Ninelines* – Paul Elwell (Age 12+)

Join Paul Elwell in a writing workshop to encourage you to write your own poetry. You will be provided with tips and techniques for composing a poem of nine lines – a nonet – which is an 'ancient' poetic form. Here Paul shows you his secret technique for creating your own compositions. The poetry themes will be 'Light'.

Max 20. Sign up at the Box Office. All levels.

4.00pm – 5.00pm *Talk The Archaeology of Nursery Rhymes* – Jenny Moon (Age F, 14+)

Nursery and children's rhymes often had their origins in situations that had nothing to do with children. For example, they might be satirical stories of political events that spread through communities, where honest comment would be dangerous. In the talk Jenny looks at a number of rhymes (you would be surprised how many will be familiar!) and the stories that may lie behind them. (Please note: Jenny does not

claim that there is any original research around her accounts. The session is for general adult interest.)

Max – venue capacity, no need to sign up.

Note!! Although this is about Nursery Rhymes, it has complex content, and some explorations of adult themes in nursery rhymes, which are **not suitable** for children under 14.

5.15 – 6.45pm *Storytelling Workshop Sparkling or Soggy? Storytelling and Water*
– Lisa Schneidau (Age F)

Lisa Schneidau is an established storyteller, and author of '*River Folk Tales of Britain and Ireland*' and '*English Folk Tales of Coast and Sea*'. This workshop is all about stories of lakes, rivers and seas. Lisa says: "We will explore the language of water, use story games to bring out the magic of water in our storytelling, and consider adapting and creating new stories of flow and tide".

Bring along a short story that features water in some form and learn how to develop your tale further.

Max 20. Some experience required. Please sign up at the Box Office.

The Barn

12.30 - 2.00pm *Workshop – Story Round for Young Storytellers* - session led by Amy Douglas and Fiona Collins (Age – up to 25 – ish!)

FatE organisers were delighted, last year, to have feedback from a parent who had heard their offspring telling a story for the first time in one of the story rounds. They had not even known that their child had started telling stories and were amazed to hear them telling a tale with such confidence. So, young storytellers - who do you want to surprise with your burgeoning talent? Rather than just listening to stories, you now have an opportunity to tell one, and who knows where might this lead ...? Tales can be up to 15 minutes so get practising.

The Birchwood

4.00 – 5.00pm *Woodland Activities and Stories* – Sue Bailey (Age 6+)

Hapazome and log dogs. Join Forest School leader, Sue Bailey for some woodland crafts and stories. You'll listen to a tale or two and use natural materials to create a log dog and some forest bunting.

Walled Garden

Various times: *Tricks from the Poopdeck – Pirate Andy (aka Andy Harrop Smith)*
(Age A)

Watch out for the Walkabout Pirate! It's 'magic ahoy' as Andy wanders the FatE site with the 'Dangerous Magic Show'... sharks, saws, shackles and, of course, ropes. Prepare to be amazed ... sort of! Yo, ho, ho! and a bottle of rum. Well, there was until it disappeared!

Walks (please meet in the Walled Garden):

11.00am – mid-day Storywalk *Where's Jack? A storywalk to find Jack – Sue Bailey*
(Age 4+)

Jack Tales (and maybe one for Jill too!). Sue Bailey leads this story walk following clues to find Jack, with tales about Jacks who chop down beanstalks, build houses, eat no fat, or just sit in the corners. But why should Jack have all the fun? If we find Jack, let's make up a tale together, for Jill.

3.00 – 4.00pm Storywalk *with Gauri Raje* (Age A)

Join Scottish-Indian storyteller Gauri Raje in a stroll through the beautiful grounds of Hopton Court. Gauri will delight you with a selection of short stories as you enjoy the beautiful countryside.

For Saturday evening events – see separate document.