



## FOLK ON FOOT'S MATTHEW BANNISTER STRIDES OUT ON FESTIVAL-TO-FESTIVAL 'BIG WALK' TO HELP MUSICIANS

See Matthew's message: <https://tinyurl.com/2sjz7ynr>

The host of the multi-award-winning **Folk on Foot** podcast, **Matthew Bannister**, is to set off on a **180-mile** sponsored walk this summer to raise money for the charity **Help Musicians**.

The former controller of BBC Radio 1 and presenter of Radio 4's weekly *Last Word* programme will start his trek at the **Wickham Festival** in Hampshire on **Friday, August 4** and finish two weeks later at the **FolkEast Festival** in Suffolk which runs from **August 18-20**.

Matthew, who launched Folk on Foot in 2018, has invited myriad folk musicians to join him at pubs where he is staying along the trail each evening for informal, morale-boosting gatherings of songs and tunes. Confirmed artists include some of the finest names in folk - **The Young'uns**, **Martin Simpson**, **Bella Hardy**, and **Show of Hands' Steve Knightley** joining forces with **Johnny Kalsi** (*Afro Celts*, *The Dhol Foundation*).



L to R: Martin Simpson, Johnny Kalsi & Steve Knightley



**Rowan Piggott & Rosie Hodgson (left) and Knight & Spiers**

There will be a rich mix of duos, from **Peter Knight & John Spiers** to **Megson, Honey and the Bear**, **Janice Burns & Jon Doran**, **Rowan Piggott and Rosie Hodgson of The Wilderness Yet** and **Sid Goldsmith** and **Danny Pedler** of **Tarren**.

Others joining Matthew will be flautist **Eliza Marshall** (*Ranagri/Freedom to Roam*) and traditional folk musician **Jon Wilks**, singer-songwriters **Kirsty Merryn** and **Katie Spencer** and Brighton band **Bird in the Belly**.



**Kirsty Merryn (left) and Bella Hardy**

The route will take him from the rolling countryside of **Hampshire's** Meon Valley to a finish line in the grounds of **Suffolk's** glorious **Glemham Hall** where the FolkEast festival is staged, traversing **Berkshire**, **Greater London**, **Hertfordshire** and **Essex** en route.



He will pass novelist's Jane Austen's house in **Chawton, Hampshire**, traverse **Colne Valley Park** on the western flank of London, stay in picturesque **Eton** with its famous college, follow the tree-lined Long Walk at **Windsor**, cross the great Roman road of **Watling Street** and walk along stretches of the **Grand Union Canal** - the principal navigable waterway between London and the Midlands.

Matthew's final overnight stop at **Campsea Ashe, Suffolk**, will see him welcomed and entertained by the multi-award-winning patrons of FolkEast, **The Young'uns** (left).

The next day (**Friday, August 18**) Matthew is due to arrive at FolkEast where he will be danced over the finishing line by members of Gloucestershire's **Boss Morris**. Describing themselves as a 'all-female prog Morris side' they famously performed alongside indie rock group Wet Leg at this year's Brit Awards.

**Members of the public are invited to join Matthew along the way, leaving their footprint for just a mile or two or a whole day.**

Matthew said: "During the pandemic lockdowns Folk on Foot listeners raised an amazing £327,000 to support musicians who had lost their livelihoods. Half was divided between the scores of artists who took part in our four online Front Room Festivals and the other half went to Help Musicians.

"The lockdowns may be a distant memory, but the problems faced by musicians haven't gone away. Many are dealing with mental or physical health issues or financial hardship and Help Musicians and its sister charity Music Minds Matter do a brilliant job of supporting them to build secure careers in what can be a very challenging and precarious industry. That's why I've decided to tramp 180 miles across the South East of England to raise money and awareness. Music and musicians have been vital throughout my life, raising my spirits when I was down, helping me to celebrate important moments and bringing me joy every single day. This walk is a small way of saying thank you."

**Sarah Woods**, Interim Chief Executive at **Help Musicians** welcomed news of Matthew's quest. She said: "Folk on Foot, and folk music lovers across the U.K, have been true friends to Help Musicians, with significant funds raised to help musicians survive during the pandemic; making a positive difference to their lives and careers.

Music brings so much joy to us all, but sadly those who work in music suffer more than others from poor mental health. Music Minds Matter has seen a 200% increase in calls to its helpline during the last two years, showing how much still needs to be done to achieve positive wellbeing for all those who work in music. Demand for help continues to rise, and as a charity that relies on the generosity of donors to support its work, all funds raised from "The Big Walk" will go directly to funding support and services to support the mental health of those in real need. A massive thank you to Matthew for this inspirational fundraising initiative."

Matthew aims to take to the stage on the opening Thursday night of Wickham Festival at the end of Show of Hands' headline set to tell the audience about the walk starting from the site the following morning. **Wickham Festival** organiser **Peter Chegwyn** said: "We are honoured that Matthew has chosen to start his Big Walk at Wickham. It's a great thing to do and a fantastic cause and I hope it raises a lot of money and awareness.

"We have a brilliant crowd at Wickham and I am sure they will turn out in their numbers to give Matthew a good send-off and some donations. It will be a wonderful way to start what promises to be another terrific event for us. I am just sorry Matthew won't get to see much of it as he will be walking while we are all enjoying fantastic music and hopefully the sunshine.

"It's just as well Matthew is not starting his walk here on Saturday night - otherwise our headliners, The Proclaimers, would have him walking 500 miles - and 500 more! We wish him all the best for this venture and hope to see him at Wickham next year for a more relaxing weekend!"

**Becky Marshall-Potter**, co-director of **FolkEast**, said the three-day festival was delighted to be part of Matthew's epic walk and looked forward to cheering him over the finish line.

“Musicians, technical crew, promoters, venues and festivals are working together to build back an industry that was floored by the pandemic and is now facing the effects of the cost of living crisis. By supporting our musicians, we support the whole of this internationally respected industry and those who work within it. So, polish up your walking boots and tramp on!”

You can support Matthew in many ways:

- Make a donation at [www.folkonfoot.com/bigwalk](http://www.folkonfoot.com/bigwalk)
- Join him for part of the walk (his route map can be seen at [www.folkonfoot.com/bigwalk](http://www.folkonfoot.com/bigwalk))
- Spread the word on social media using the hashtag #FoFBigWalk23
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## ROUTE STOPOVERS & ARTISTS

DAY 1: Friday 4<sup>th</sup> August: **The Thomas Lord** [ROWAN PIGGOTT AND ROSIE HODGSON OF THE WILDERNESS YET](#)

High Street, West Meon, **Petersfield**, Hampshire GU32 1LN

<https://www.thethomaslord.co.uk>

DAY 2: Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> August: **The Swan Hotel** [STEVE KNIGHTLEY AND JOHNNY KALSI](#)

High Street, **Alton**, Hampshire GU34 1AT.

<https://www.greenekinginns.co.uk/hotels/swan-hotel-alton/>

DAY 3: Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August: **The Winchfield Inn** [ELIZA MARSHALL; JON WILKS](#)

Station Road, **Winchfield**, Hampshire RG27 8BX

<http://www.thewinchfieldinn.co.uk>

DAY 4: Monday 7<sup>th</sup> August: **The Royal Foresters** [MARTIN SIMPSON](#)

London Road, **Ascot**, Berkshire SL5 8DR 01344596480

<https://www.theroyalforesters.co.uk>

DAY 5: Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> August: **The Crown and Cushion** [JANICE BURNS AND JON DORAN](#)

Eton High St, **Eton**, Berkshire SL4 6AF

<https://www.thecrownandcushioneton.co.uk>

DAY 6: Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> August: **The Coy Carp** [KIRSTY MERRYN](#)

Coppermill Lane, **Harefield**, Uxbridge, Greater London UB96HZ

<https://www.vintageinn.co.uk/restaurants/london/thecoycarpharefielduxbridge#/>

DAY 7: Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> August: **Moor Mill Pub and Restaurant** [HONEY AND THE BEAR](#)

Smug Oak Lane, Bricket Wood, Colney Street, **Radlett**, Herts AL2 3TZ

[https://www.beefeater.co.uk/en-gb/locations/hertfordshire/moor-mill?cid=GLBC\\_40015055](https://www.beefeater.co.uk/en-gb/locations/hertfordshire/moor-mill?cid=GLBC_40015055)

DAY 8: Friday 11<sup>th</sup> August **The Practitioner Bar** [MEGSON](#)

76-78, Fore Street, Hertford SE14 1BY

<https://www.thepractitionerbar.co.uk>

DAY 9: Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> August: **The Prince of Wales** [SID GOLDSMITH AND DANNY PEDLER OF TARREN](#)

Green Tye, **Much Hadham**, Herts SG10 6JP <https://www.facebook.com/people/The-Prince-of-Wales-Green-Tye/100063664595183/?rdr>

DAY 10: Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> August: **The Swan Inn** [BIRD IN THE BELLY](#)

The Endway, Great Easton, **Dunmow**, Essex CM6 2HG

<https://www.facebook.com/people/The-Swan-inn-Great-Easton/100066627468551/>

DAY 11: Monday 14<sup>th</sup> August: **The Green Man** [KATIE SPENCER](#)  
3, Church Lane, **Toppesfield**, Essex CO9 4DR  
[https://www.facebook.com/greenmantopps/?locale=en\\_GB](https://www.facebook.com/greenmantopps/?locale=en_GB)

DAY 12: Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> August: **The Crown Hotel** [KNIGHT AND SPIERS](#)  
**Long Melford**, Suffolk CO10 9JL  
<https://www.thecrownhotelmelford.co.uk>

DAY 13: Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> August: **The Greyhound** [BELLA HARDY](#)  
2, Ipswich Road, Claydon, **Ipswich**, Suffolk IP6 0AR  
<https://www.greyhoundpubclaydon.co.uk>

DAY 14: Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> August: **The Duck** [THE YOUNG 'UNS](#)  
Station Road, **Campsea Ashe**, Suffolk IP13 0PT  
<https://www.theduckcampseaashe.co.uk>

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Matthew Bannister** is a broadcaster and former BBC Executive. As well as hosting his own podcast *Folk on Foot* he is the presenter of Radio 4's weekly obituary programme *Last Word* and has fronted shows on Radio 5 Live and the BBC World Service.

In the 1990s he held a number of senior positions in BBC management. As Controller of Radio 1 he repositioned the network to attract a younger audience and support new UK music, a project often credited with being behind the success of Britpop.

**Folk on Foot** launched in August 2018, bringing together three of his passions – folk music, walking and telling stories in sound. In each episode Matthew goes walking with a top UK or Irish folk artist in a landscape that has inspired their music and they sing and play on location. There are now over 60 “walking” episodes online featuring the cream of UK and Irish folk talent and featuring locations from Shetland to the South Downs, Devon to Derry. *Folk on Foot* has won or been nominated for many awards, including Gold Lovie and Audio Production Awards and Silver ARIA and British Podcast Awards. This year (2023) it was nominated as Best Specialist Music Show and Best Music Special at the ARIAs – the audio industry equivalent of the Oscars.



**Help Musicians** is a charity for professional musicians of all genres, both in work and in retirement.

<https://www.helpmusicians.org.uk/>