

Roll up, roll up, for the Steyning Festival!

If you try to find St Cuthman's Port on the map you will need a very old one made in Norman times. Much has changed since then. St Cuthman famously put down his wheelbarrow containing his mother and their possessions at a particular spot and there he built a church. The spot on the map is now called Steyning and a sculpture of St Cuthman with his wheelbarrow sits looking at the church which bears his name.

If he were to turn his head in the other direction later this month he would see a Big Top on the field behind him and find himself involved in probably the largest festival in the country to be organized and run by volunteers.

The Steyning Festival happens every two years and it opens on Saturday 26th May. It is a vibrant mix of music, theatre, dance, talks, walks, and community events. It is friendly, warm, and stimulating and has treats in store for everyone who comes.

Amongst the big names are Barry Cryer, Robert Webb, John Torode of Masterchef, Herbie Flowers, Julia Donaldson, Sir Malcolm Rifkin, Dame Floella Benjamin, and Simon Nye, author of the popular *The Durrells*, the latest series of which has just hit our screens.

But look beyond the big names and you find a fascinating mixture of interesting topics – anything from life on Mars, the science of singing, and the green revolution, to the relationship of Russia with Europe (particularly prescient!) – and events to delight,

entertain and challenge. The full list is on the website but let us guide you to a few that you might otherwise miss.

You could try your hand at singing along with Buggy Malone, take part in the Young Dancer of the Year event, find out about winning the carbon war in the Green Revolution, hear about the legacy of the First World War poets, enjoy the Steyning Live Lounge 10th anniversary gig, or be part of A Breakin' Convention which includes master-classes on the art of hip-hop and streetfunk.

If all that's too active for you, you could take a sedate stroll to enjoy the Wiston Wonders, or you could sink a pint or two as the rag bag collective of musicians, wordsmiths, artists and vintage and classic car fans, known as the Raz Up, return for another year.

There are many events designed with children in mind, almost 20 of them. There are opportunities to meet the Gruffalo – and its creator - but there's also a Pirate Adventure and a chance to do your own art work in a giant mural under the expert guidance of children's author and illustrator, Nick Sharratt. The adults, incidentally, can share breakfast with Julia Donaldson in the Big Top and discover why she is so passionate about providing books for children with hearing difficulties. And talking of the Big Top, youngsters can learn or improve their circus skills!

For music lovers one of the highlights must surely be a concert featuring Leonard Bernstein's setting of the Chichester Psalms and a newly commissioned work by Malcolm Singer. And talking of singers, you can learn all about the science of music in an entertaining and copiously illustrated talk by consultant radiologist and musician,

Malcolm Johnston. If you prefer jazz or folk music that's on offer too. And for the young at heart there's a Soul II Soul DJ set with Grammy award-winning Jazzie B, who has worked with some of the biggest names in the contemporary music scene.

If you're sure you know all about Sussex you can test your skill under the invigilating eye of local history guide, writer, and teacher, Kevin Newman and have some fun as well.

Sarah Burns and Alice Garner will help you create your own custom-made Steyning Revolutionary bag.

There is theatre and comedy too and much else besides. If you are a lover of literature you can hear Salley Vickers, Sarah Dunant, Amanda Craig and Sarah Gristwood discussing their latest books. There are talks a-plenty about authors of the past, a short story competition, and a crime writers' panel.

But what you really will not want to miss is A Night with Thick and Tight, two Ballet Rambert trained dancers with an off the wall take on – well it's impossible to describe – you just have to experience it!

And that wheelbarrow? It could come in handy at the community fun day in front of the Big Top. St Cuthman had better keep an eye on it. He might even take part!

Tickets available from the Steyning Bookshop or online at www.steyningfestival.co.uk

