

## Wickham Festival

In the past, Solent Waves articles have covered the festivals of Chippenham, Towersey, Upton on Severn and Warwick. Since we have a festival pretty much in the heart of South Hants, I thought it was time to write a bit about this great event as well.

Festivals vary enormously, some have lots of workshops, some Morris dancing everywhere, other have of dancing and ceilidhs all day and every night. Wickham has lots of good music. If you have heard many folk singers and bands, you will recognise the names. If you haven't, then this is as good a festival as you could find to dip into and spend a day, afternoon or evening listening.

The atmosphere is friendly, plenty of food outlets, a large bar and places for tea and coffee. It all takes place in a huge circus tent marquee and bringing your own chairs is the norm, though for some popular (and probably loud!) groups there'll be plenty of people standing, or dancing, at the front.

This year, I spotted Jools Holland on Thursday 2nd August when the Festival opens, then K T Tunstall, The Proclaimers and The Red Hot Chilli Pipers on Friday. The days tend to have a theme and on Saturday 4th there is a feast of folk with Bellowhead, Show of Hands, Home Service, Michael McGoldrick, John McCusker & John Doyle, Jackie Oates, Belshazzar's Feast, Heidi Talbot and Jim Causley. I'd be happy to hear pretty much all of these artists! The last day (Sunday 5th) includes The Levellers, Oysterband, Edward II and The Wurzels.

This year there will be a 2nd stage, and a Festival Folk Club and late night events featuring artists such as Karine Polwart; Huw Williams & Maartin Allcock; Les Barker; Fake Thackray; Chris Sherburn & Denny Bartley; Maggie Boyle & Paul Downes; Lady Maisery; Nancy Kerr & James Fagan; and The Askew Sisters. Festival organiser Peter Chegwyn tells me that tickets are just £10 on the door for three top-class folk acts every evening from 7.30 to 10.30 in the Community Centre.

Lots of people camp in the neighbouring field, but many also come by car, park in the field and walk down to the site. Plus there are nearby hotels and B&B's. But I'm always amused by the luxury camping run by Festival Glamping who offer Camel Camp tents that come pre-erected and equipped with airbeds, solar lights, and rugs!

Being very close to Wickham village, there is a steady flow of folk going down to the village, to watch the Morris dancing, go to the shops or pub and this leads to a nice atmosphere.

So, why not drop in and see many happy people of all ages resting on the grass (in the sunshine I hope!) and listening to great music. See [www.wickhamfestival.co.uk](http://www.wickhamfestival.co.uk) for more information

Dennis Wheeler