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## Singer goes on march back into history

By **Terry Kelly**

FIREBRAND folkie Billy Bragg took part in a Jarrow march of his own when he visited the town this week.

Ahead of his concert at The Sage Gateshead, the left-wing troubadour toured Bede's World museum in Church Bank, Jarrow.

Bragg was keen to visit the former home of the Venerable Bede, after quoting the famous medieval scholar and saint in a recent book.

Now museum officials hope the fiery songwriter could help promote the Jarrow museum in the future, possibly by staging a concert at Bede's World.

Museum director Keith Merrin, a long-time fan of the man known as the Bard of Barking, invited the singer to the museum. Mr Merrin said: "Billy spent about two hours touring Bede's World and also had a look around nearby St Paul's Church.

"He quoted the Venerable Bede in a recent book called The Progressive Patriot, and I know he's keen to examine the idea of English identity, which he feels is often hijacked by political right-wingers.

"I'm sure the name of Jarrow and the importance of the march was not lost on him either."

Besides enjoying some cake in the museum's café, Billy Bragg also toured various exhibits dedicated to Bede and the golden age of Northumbria.

Although the singer's visit was a private one, Mr Merrin said the museum would like to keep in contact with the popular left-winger.

"It would be good if Billy could help the museum in some way, and we did discuss the possibility of him appearing at Bede's World, but that's just an idea at the moment," said Mr Merrin.

He added that he was delighted when Bragg later sang the praises of Bede's World during his concert in Gateshead.

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