

THREE SOLWAY CHURCHES HISTORY PLAY

The following short play has been used in full, and in part, effectively in all of the Three Solway Churches. It is based on the wording of the time-line of granite slabs along the churchyard path in Burgh-by-Sands, with the addition of the story of Bowness Church bells and the building of the Norman motte and bailey castle at Beaumont, on the site where the church now stands, which was also once the location of a Roman milecastle.

The play can take as little as 15 minutes, or be expanded to take longer. Narration by pupils and or teaching staff.

Re-enactment outfits are available for use in Burgh-by-Sands Church: Emperor Hadrian x 1, Roman soldiers x 5, Celtic saints x 6, King Edward I x 1, Prince Edward/King Edward II x 1, King Edward's Court x 15, and local people/Border reivers x 7 – mixture of male and female. Accessories – helmets, crosses, crowns and soft-play swords etc. are also available.

Children in the church choir stalls, the Emperor Hadrian steps forward and surveys the area where his wall will be built.

“The Romans invaded Britain, they were a mighty army” (children descend from the choir stalls, and with the Emperor at the front, march up and down the aisle/s of the church and back saying “sin, dec, sin, dec.....” (or left, right, left, right). Come to a stop with the Emperor at the front.

“Their Emperor was Hadrian and in 122 he caused a Wall to be built from Northumbria to Bowness on Solway” (“Emperor” mimes instruction to build the Wall) “Milecastles were constructed along its length, and one was built at Beaumont. At Burgh the Fort of Aballava was built and the Fort of Maia at Bowness”. (Children mime building activity).

“In 410 the Roman Empire ended” (Children dejectedly return to choir stalls).

“From 400 to 700 Missionary work by Celtic Monastic Saints Ninian, Patrick, Columba, Kentigern, Aidan and Cuthbert brought Christianity to this area” (children dressed as Holy Men and carrying Bibles and small crosses take the same aisle route as the “Roman Army” and as they reach the choir stalls all the other children hold up small crosses to indicate spread of Christianity).

“In 1092 William II added Cumberland to his English Kingdom” (Map held up with a Crown held above it). “A Norman Motte and Bailey Castle was built where Beaumont Church now stands”. (Mime building activity on a hill)

“By the early 12th century, the first church was at Burgh” (Larger cross held up). “In the late 12th century, the present church was built at Burgh on the site of the Roman Fort of Aballava” (Children mime building activity).

“In 1307 King Edward I died on Burgh Marsh on his way to wage war against the Scots” (children mime this event) “and his body was brought to this church to lie in State”. “King” lies down (A processional “bier” with King Edward’s “body”, a purple pall over it and a crown to place on top is available as part of the learning materials at Burgh Church) and the Court came, with his heir, to pay homage. His heir was proclaimed King Edward II in Carlisle on the following day”. (Children mime these events).

“The area became increasingly lawless as Edward II was a weak King”. (“Edward II” stands and looks a bit helpless while the children act out a lawless area!) “The population was very frightened and needed somewhere to shelter in safety. They built Burgh Church’s west tower, where they would be safe”. (Children mime frightened population, building activity and then sheltering safely).

“During Border Raids the Church bells at Bowness were stolen, and when the people who took them were pursued by local people, realising they might be overtaken, they dropped the bells into the Solway Firth. People from Bowness then went to Scotland and stole two bells to replace the ones they had lost and they are still in Bowness Church”. (Children mime these events).

“In 2007 His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent visited Burgh-by-Sands to mark the 700th Anniversary of the death here of King Edward I and his lying in State in Burgh church” – children “hooray”.

“We pause between the past and the present” (representing the penultimate stone in the time-line, which is blank, to indicate a pause before the present)

“In 2014 the Three Solway Churches’ Development Project was completed and brings all this history to life for many more people in the future” (Children “Hooray”!)

Children and Narrator together “Your visit is part of the history of this place. Peace be with you”. (The wording of the final time-line stone)



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