

Appendix 4.9 Bodmin Play

Participant observation

1st Sat in July 2005 -2010

Photographs

Bodmin Riding and Heritage Day

Summary

The Author was invited to take part in the Bodmin play in 2005

The play is a revival of the Bodmin Mock Mayor custom translated into a modern mummies style. The Beast of Bodmin becomes the spirit of Cornwall who is hunted, captured and tried by a jury of Bodmin dignitaries (The Ragadasiw – forefathers) lead by Justice Jan Tregeagle, for crimes against the (English) establishment. Witnesses are summoned in the form of historical figures such as Flamank and Angove (leaders of the 1497 rebellion) and contemporary characters such as Miss Minx a television personality with a second home.

The outcome, with the support of a vociferous campaign on the part of Bodmin children to “free the beast”, is the exoneration of Cornwall’s spirit in the form of the beast and the castigation of the establishment.

Although initially introduced with a detailed written script which was carefully rehearsed the play evolved over the six years to date to become much more communal in authorship with a series of improvised sketches within the framework of the original narrative. These improvised sketches can incorporate contemporary issues. For example when the local MP, Dan Rogerson, took part in the play in 2009 against a background of news coverage around MPs expenses his lines involved an assurance that his character would not be claiming expenses. Local people have grown into the characters and the social context of the play is also enhanced by the action of the Helliars, the hunters, played by young people whose task it is to chase the beast around the town with much shouting but little to rehearse. Despite this modern interpretive creativity and vision of a future Cornwall, the play nevertheless has continuity with the traditions of the past and uses these as a medium for comment. In particular the use of masks, bizarre costume and the creation of large hairy pantomime “beast” are anchored firmly in Cornish guizing tradition.



Cast / Ragadaziow

worthies of the Borough:

Justice Jan Tregeagle - wants eradicate beastliness

Timmy Clark /Black Hunter - meek and mild/transforms to 'devil'

Tommy Trewartha - everyman, drunkard, wise fool

Alf N Safety - jumped-up paper-pusher

King Henry English - King Athelstan/
Henry etc combined

An Gof and Flamank - Cornish Heroes

Sir Anthony Kingston -reprisal-monger

Oliver Crapwell - roundhead

Isabard Grimly Cunard—capitalist

Doctor Lazar St Lawrence - analyse this

Ms Meeja Minx - celebrity bimbo

St Petroc - our man



Ragadaziow Piper



Helliers, Beast and Casket for St
Petrock's Bones

Synopsis

10:00 Mt Folly Procession of Petroc's bones enters space (including Ragadaziow) Tregeagle creates alarm; The Beast has been sighted Ragadaziow send out the Helliars to hunt the Beast (promise beer as reward) Helliars hunt Beast around the town

10.30 - 3.30 Trial enacted at various locations in Bodmin using puppet beast while the full size one pub crawls with the Helliars. Tregeagle delivers damning accusation Ragadaziow (the Jury) don masks to take part Black Hunter defends the Beast by showing scenes from the past The Beast is Attacked by King Henry, has its tongue ripped out, by Kingston is gelded by Cromwell and put to work by Cunard Helped by St Petroc (splinter out of eye) Black Hunter sums up Judgement is made Black Hunter demands due payment (Tregeagle's soul) Tregeagle is pursued instead Beast is 'freed'

4pm Mount folly Trial repeated with the full sized beast

Cornish Guardian report 9th July 2009



beast is tried on Mount Folly.

■ The trial over, Bodmin beast's hellers Lee Jones and Andrew Parkin.

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BODMIN'S schoolchildren were the survivors of Rading and Heritage Day when the annual event proved to be one of the wettest yet.

Despite the near torrential rain, pupils from the town's four junior schools turned out in force to smile and dance through the streets and cheer up shoppers and the brave souls who had come to enjoy the entertainment.

There were several people dressed in medieval costume, although those in tight suits must have particularly suffered from the rain.

And the beast too, along with its captors, looked wet and bedraggled as they brought it to be tried by the elders of the town, watched by a crowd of around 100 people on Mount Folly.

But despite the weather, organisers were pleased with the way the day passed out.

Organising committee chairman Maggie Little said: "We thought with all

the rain throughout the day that it might have been a wash out, but thanks to the people of Bodmin and especially the children, we had a successful day.

Committee member Anne Kerriehue added: "It was the worst weather I can ever remember on Heritage Day. However, despite the downpours, there were many positives.

"The craft fair was a success, the beast went into every nook and cranny of the town and the children of Bodmin did us proud."

Robartes Junior School won first prize, but because of their sterling efforts, all the schools were awarded prizes on the day.

On Sunday, the weather was much kinder for the procession of St Petroc's bones, and organisers say this will continue to be held the day after Heritage Day in future years.

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