



ACCESSING AIDAN

Press Release

(No Embargo)

Bamburgh Bones is delighted to announce that Hazelsong Theatre group will be presenting a specially commissioned piece called '**King Oswald Whiteblade – The Sword and The Cross**' in Bamburgh on Saturday 7th and Sunday 8th August 2021, 5.30pm.

The play explores King Oswald's time in exile on Iona, his triumphant return to Bamburgh in 634AD and the start of the flourishing of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria.

The performance, which includes traditional music, in old English is a beautiful mingling of folklore and Celtic Christian spirituality. The free performances will take place in St Aidan's Church from 5.30pm, with a chance to watch a village procession and vignettes of the performances between 1pm and 2pm on both days.

Hazelsong theatrical group was formed by artists and musicians Andy Bates, Linda Richardson, and brothers James and Sam Gillespie. They create performances which bring together storytelling, music, puppetry, theatre and ritual and all borne of the knowledge that these stories and songs are vital and very much alive. The group is named after the tree which brings wisdom and inspires prophecy and poetry in Celtic myth.

Andy Bates, from Hazelsong, described the idea behind the play: "The early 7th century in Britain was a time of turmoil, a time of warfare and shifting allegiances when pagan

fought Christian, when Saxon battled Briton. It was a time of conflict, a time of the sword. But it was also a time of visions and wonders, when holy men and heroes bestrode the land. It was a time when history became legend, and legend became myth. And in this time arose a great king, one who had fled his Northumbrian home as a child and he returned as a man, bearing the blade and the cross, to fight for the peoples and the soul of the kingdom that called for his homecoming. He was Oswald, the Whiteblade”.

Bamburgh Bones is grateful to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for supporting this special commission. For more information, visit the Bamburgh Bones website:

<https://bamburghbones.org/visit/events/> or call 07774 943157

Ends

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR

Accessing Aidan

The aim of Accessing Aidan is to develop the Crypt as an appropriate and high quality new interpretive and community facility for Bamburgh, which will deliver an enticing, inspiring and coherent experience for a variety of audiences. Ultimately, we aspire that more people who visit the village will understand Bamburgh’s significance in Anglo-Saxon times, a period often called the Golden Age of Northumbria.

The Accessing Aidan project will provide a new safe public access into the crypt, allowing it to become open to visitors on a daily basis. It will also create new interpretation in the crypt and in the church to enable visitors to learn about the story of St Aidan, the Golden Age of Northumbria and the characters who now rest in the Bamburgh Ossuary. The new visitor experience will be supported by new website which will include the ‘digital ossuary’ where people will be able to learn more about the skeletons and their excavation. A range of project activities including guided tours and walks, talks and lectures, school activities, outreach events, storytelling, creative writing and arts, an Academic Symposium and a high-profile travelling exhibition, will bring the heritage stories to life and allow the project to engage new audiences and reach beyond Bamburgh.

Bamburgh Heritage Trust

Bamburgh Heritage Trust (BHT) was formed in 2012 to provide education, interpretation and information about the history and heritage of Bamburgh. In 2016 the Trust was registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, managed by a board of charity trustees. BHT is supported by three partner organisations working together to address the heritage need and develop a more holistic heritage visitor experience.

St Aidan's Parish Church

St Aidan's Parish Church is the only church in the village of Bamburgh. It stands on the site of the original place of worship founded by Saint Aidan in 635. Almost no trace of that wooden building can now be seen (other than, perhaps, the beam in the Baptistery which St Aidan is reputed to have been leaning against when he died). The greater part of the current church was built in around 1200, with some extension in the 14th century. As well as being the Apostle of Northumbria, Aidan is rightly regarded as the Apostle of England. This parish church is therefore not only the "mother church" of the modern-day Diocese of Newcastle but also central to the history of Christianity in this land. The PCC manages the Church which includes the Crypt.

The Northumberland Coast AONB

The Northumberland Coast has been designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) since 1958 in recognition of the quality of the landscape. AONBs are a national landscape designation and together with National Parks they make up our finest landscapes. The Northumberland Coast AONB covers 135 sq kms between Berwick and the Coquet estuary. The area is best known for its sweeping sandy beaches and open views, rolling dunes and rocky cliffs, isolated islands, dramatic castles, ancient relics and rich wildlife.

The Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership

The Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership is a broad partnership of representatives from local authorities, statutory organisations, interest groups and the local community. The Partnership guides management of the AONB, offers advice to land managers and the local community and takes action to improve the wellbeing of the AONB for all those who value it, now and in the future. To carry out this work, the Partnership employs a small team which is hosted by Northumberland County Council and jointly funded by Northumberland County Council and DEFRA.

AONBs

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), along with National Parks, are considered to be the most special landscapes in the country and belong to an international Protected Landscape Family. There are 38 AONBs in England and Wales, and a further eight in Northern Ireland.