



DEFENDER OF THE DEAD

By Sian Williams

A comedy set near Stonehenge
exploring what happens
when past and present collide

With
Eltjo De Vries
as
Zac

Directed by
Anne Pearson

Case Study: Defender of the Dead

Boiling Kettle Theatre Company

Defender of the Dead was a touring one man play presented in rural venues across the West Country in autumn 2016.

The comedy was inspired by the writer's experience as an archaeologist working in and around the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site and as a peace campaigner on Salisbury Plain in the 1980s.

This project highlights how past events in our landscape provide inspiration and opportunities to create a new, thought provoking yet entertaining piece of theatre.

Arts and landscape case study series



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Stonehenge, Avebury
and Associated Sites
inscribed on the World
Heritage List in 1986

Wiltshire Council
Where everybody matters

Creating a new touring play

Boiling Kettle Theatre Company was founded by Sian Williams (Writer/Administrator) and Anne Pearson (Artistic Director). *Defender of the Dead* is a one man play inspired by Sian's experience as an archaeologist in and around the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site, and as a peace campaigner on Salisbury Plain in the 1980s.

From the initial idea it took four years to fundraise the money needed to create a new piece of theatre, which also relied on a great deal of in-kind support to bring it to fruition.

Careful preparation was key to its success and about eighteen months were spent writing, selection a designer, actor and technician, rehearsing, securing bookings, promoting and publicising.

The aim of the project was to take an entertaining and thought provoking piece of theatre to rural venues in the West Country.

The play is text-based, a dark edged comedy, using words to create the world of a retired soldier working at night as a security guard on an archaeological excavation site near Stonehenge; a "rational" man alone in a landscape which is beautiful and eerie, peaceful and violent, sacred and profane trying to make sense of the conflicting meanings this place holds for twenty first century stakeholders: archaeologists, the heritage industry, the military, pagans – those he can let in and those he must keep out.



Defender of the Dead team:

Sian Williams - Writer
Eltjo de Vries - Actor
Anne Pearson - Director
Julie Read - Designer
John Morris - Technician



Achievements, outcomes and reflections

- Engaged with approximately 700 people at 13 rural venues
- Created a new piece of thought provoking theatre inspired by the landscape
- Strong volunteer support, commitment and enthusiasm from local communities was one of the key ingredients for success
- Positive response from a wide audience - "funny", "gripping", "realistic", "exciting" - with many asking for a return visit.
- Provided an opportunity for ex-military personnel to reflect on their involvement with the landscape
- Provided learning opportunities about local heritage and archaeology
- The project would have benefited from paid administrative support
- Funding is a challenge and new and innovative ways are needed to secure future arts projects

www.boilingkettle.co.uk

<https://www.facebook.com/BoilingKettleTheatreCompany>

Commissioners, key project partners and stakeholders:

Boiling Kettle Theatre Company · Arts Council England · South Somerset District Council · Take Art Artsreach · The David Hall South Petherton · rural venues in Somerset, Wiltshire, Devon and Dorset.

Cost: £15,000