

Tales of a Long Conflict

Education Pack

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Photography courtesy of James Reader, Front Row Films,
Drawings from Harvey, Mark, Andrew and Thomas

About this resource

This resource is designed to support our touring production of *TLC: Tales of a Long Conflict*, and provide you with additional creative activities to enhance your visit to our play. It is designed for Key Stage 2, but can be adapted to other ages.

The learning and education pack contains information on the preproduction of the show, including creative story writing, historical context, building characters and themes. Within these key areas you will find useful information, activities, and tasks that you can set for your group in order to develop their knowledge about The Battle of the Somme, World War One and the Border Regiment's involvement.



Illustration by Katie Lock

Prism Arts Studio Theatre

Prism Arts is an arts charity based in Carlisle, running courses that specialise in participatory and inclusive arts. We have been delivering great arts projects for people with disabilities for almost 30 years. All our work is delivered by professional artists.

Prism Arts Studio Theatre is a theatre course at Prism Arts studio in Carlisle, Cumbria. Company members with learning and other disabilities create, perform and tour their own unique productions.



Story

TLC: Tales of a Long Conflict

In remembrance of the centenary of the Battle of the Somme and adapted from real stories, this play focuses on the impact of war on families and home life.

Supported by Heritage Lottery Fund, the play has been developed with help from Cumbria's Museum of Military Life using a mixture of shadow puppetry, projection, spoken word and music from the period. The story is inspired by the men of the Border Regiment who fell in combat.

The members of Prism Arts Studio Theatre have devised all aspects of the production. With the audience at either side of the performance area, the play takes up the No Man's Land of the theatre. Following seven different stories, we give an insight into how The Battle of the Somme affected individuals, highlighting the impact of war on a personal level. This play deals with themes of love and loss, hope and hopelessness.

To develop the production, Studio Theatre members researched into their family histories and discovered personal connections to fallen soldiers, along with research visits to Tullie House, Cumbria's Museum of Military Life and The Devil's Porridge Museum, to delve deeper into the conditions of war, both for those in the trenches, and for those left behind.

Prism Arts Studio Theatre used archive material from Lead Artist Ali McCaw including postcards, letters, photographs, army memorabilia and more from her relative 2nd Lt. Percy Braidford MC who fought in the Battle of the Somme.



2nd Lt. Percy Braidford MC
On the day he was leaving the front line, September 21st 1917, he went to say farewell to the men in the trenches at Passchendaele. On the day, there was no fighting in their sector, but a rogue shell came over and Percy was killed.

Characters

World War One and The Battle of the Somme had a huge impact on life for everyone in Britain, from farm hands, to bakers and from nurses to munitions girls. The characters in the play are from all walks of life and we explore how the Battle of the Somme affected people in many different situations.

With help from Cumbria's Museum of Military Life, Studio Theatre members created the characters and stories by researching into past events, reading letters and archive materials from the war, they built up a picture of each character, before bringing them to life through performance.





Introduction to World War One

World War One, known as The Great War, involved nearly 30 countries across the world. Fighting stretched from Northern France through to Russia, and also involved places such as China, the Caribbean and South America.

The fighting quickly reached a stalemate, with both sides digging in, creating lines of trenches across Europe. The trenches stretched for miles, and offered the men shelter from the enemy.

Millions of men from all over Britain enlisted to fight for their country and along with huge quantities of munitions and equipment they were sent to the front line.



The Cumberland News announce the start of World War One.

The Battle of the Somme

Fought for 141 days, from 1st July to 18th November 1916, The Battle of the Somme was a huge battle which took place in France. It is a well known battle in The Great War, and highlights the futility of trench warfare as over a million soldiers were killed or injured on both sides. The first day is still the most disastrous loss of life the British Army has ever suffered, with 20,000 men killed and 40,000 injured.

For five days before the Battle, the British Army had fired artillery nonstop at the enemy to destroy their weapons, defences and the barbed wire. There was more artillery fired that week, than in the previous 18 months at war.

The explosions on July 1st was so strong that it was felt in London over three hundred miles away!

As the British Soldiers headed over the top of their trenches and approached the Germans, they realised that their attempts to weaken the Germans had had little success. Clear weather made it perfect for the Germans to see them coming and could clearly aim their attacks at the exposed soldiers.

War Propaganda

When the Great War began, Britain was the only major power not to have a conscripted army. It quickly became clear that the small professional British Army was not large enough for a global conflict.

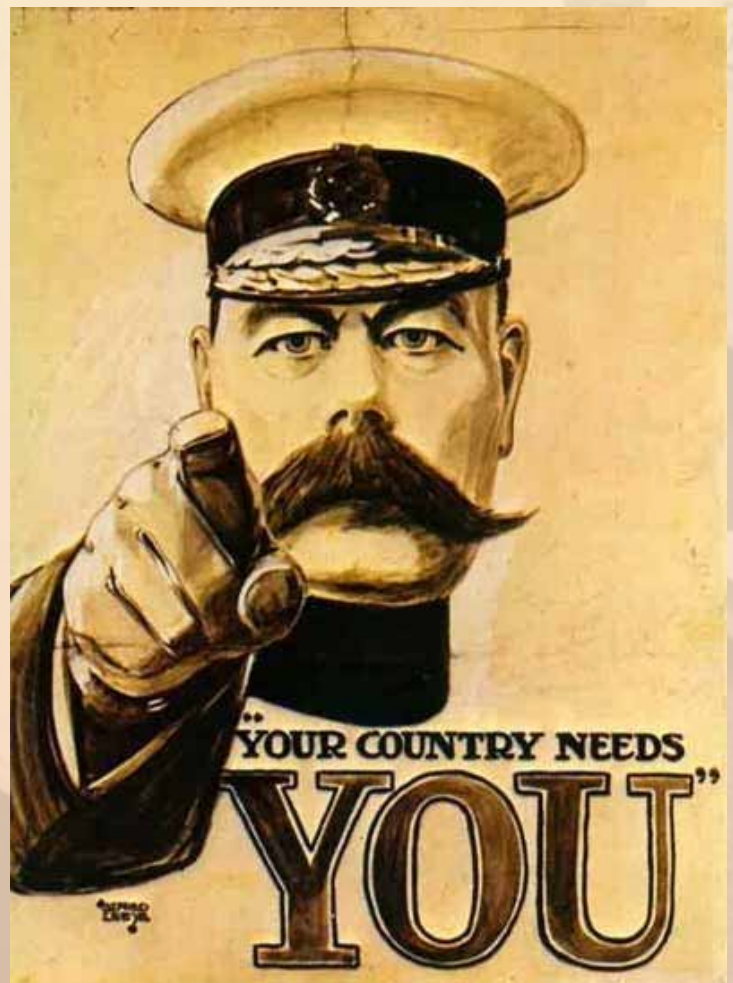
The War Propaganda Bureau was created in 1914 to encourage men to enlist, and utilised the skills of writers such as H.G Wells and Thomas Hardy, along with artists, journalists, and advertising professionals.

Propaganda posters often glorified war as a big adventure and portrayed the soldiers as heroes, some depicted woman and children supporting the men at war. War propaganda was very successful, with thousands of men enlisting, and many 'boy soldiers' also enlisted, lying about their age.

Sidney Lewis was the youngest soldier who fought in World War One. He enlisted at just 12 years of age, and fought in the Battle of the Somme at 13, in the 106th Machine Gun Company of the Machine Gun Corps. He was then found out by his mother, and discharged.

Many volunteers joined 'Pals' battalions, drawn from local communities or places of work, serving alongside relatives, friends and workmates. Enlisting together, training together and fighting together brought great camaraderie for the men, and great pride in the communities back home. The Lonsdale Pals, made up mainly of men from Cumberland and Westmorland fought on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme on 1st July 1916 and suffered over 500 casualties out of 800. Only 3 out of 26 officers survived.

In *TLC: Tales of a Long Conflict*, we used propaganda posters to create props, such as masks depicting the thousands of men sent to war, these are shown as we see one underage character repeatedly try to enlist.



Lord Kitchener calls for men to sign up and fight for their county.

Field Hospitals

Working in a World War One hospital was not for the faint hearted.

In front line hospitals, surgeons and military nurses were operating in tented 'trauma centres', frequently within earshot of the fighting.

Overwhelmed with the amount of injured men, many had little to no equipment, and had to deal with horrific injuries.

Sir Henry Souttar, a distinguished surgeon, described the situation he encountered setting up his hospital in a Belgian town.

"We had no knives, and no artery forceps, and not a stitch of catgut. Some Belgian doctors who had been working there lent us a little case of elementary instruments, and that was absolutely all we had. In four days we admitted three hundred and fifty patients, all of them with injuries of the most terrible nature. Arms and legs were torn right off or hanging by the merest shreds, ghastly wounds of the head left the brain exposed."

Doctors and nurses were stretched to the limit, often looking after up to 2,500 patients at any one time, providing emergency care for men before they could be evacuated away from the front line.



Casualties from the Somme were among patients in Murrell Hill House Hospital 14th July 1916. Ashley Kendall
Image from 'Carlisle in the Great War' by David Carter, published 2014

Ghosts and Apparitions

There are many stories from The Battle of the Somme where soldiers tell of ghosts and apparitions protecting the soldiers from danger on the front line.

The most famous of these stories is *Angels of Mons* from 1914 where British troops claim a ghostly figure appeared and protected them from the German troops as they retreated. This story has been investigated many times, but no-one really knows what happened at the retreat of Mons.

Other ghost stories from the front line appear in soldiers' diaries and letters home, many recall seeing old Colonels or Sergeants who were injured, but appeared again for a short time, and other recall seeing family members and loved ones who drew them away from danger. Other times the spectres took the form of white clouds or strange lights.

On July 1st 2016, actors dressed as First World War soldiers entered shopping centres, train stations, car parks and high streets, handing out cards bearing names of the fallen in a touching tribute to those who died exactly 100 years ago to the day. This commission from Jeremy Deller was inspired by the ghosts of fallen soldiers seen by those from the front line. Read more about this project here becausewearehere.co.uk



Munitions Girls



Image from The Devil's Porridge Museum in Gretna

As part of Studio Theatre's research they visited The Devil's Porridge Museum in Gretna.

Stretching for nine miles, HM Factory Gretna employed 30,000 workers at its height, to manufacture RDB Cordite, a new type of munitions propellant used in soldiers' bullets and shells.

Nearly 12,000 female workers flocked to HM Factory Gretna, from all over Scotland, the north of England and Ireland, to play a vital role during World War One, releasing men to enlist for the front line.

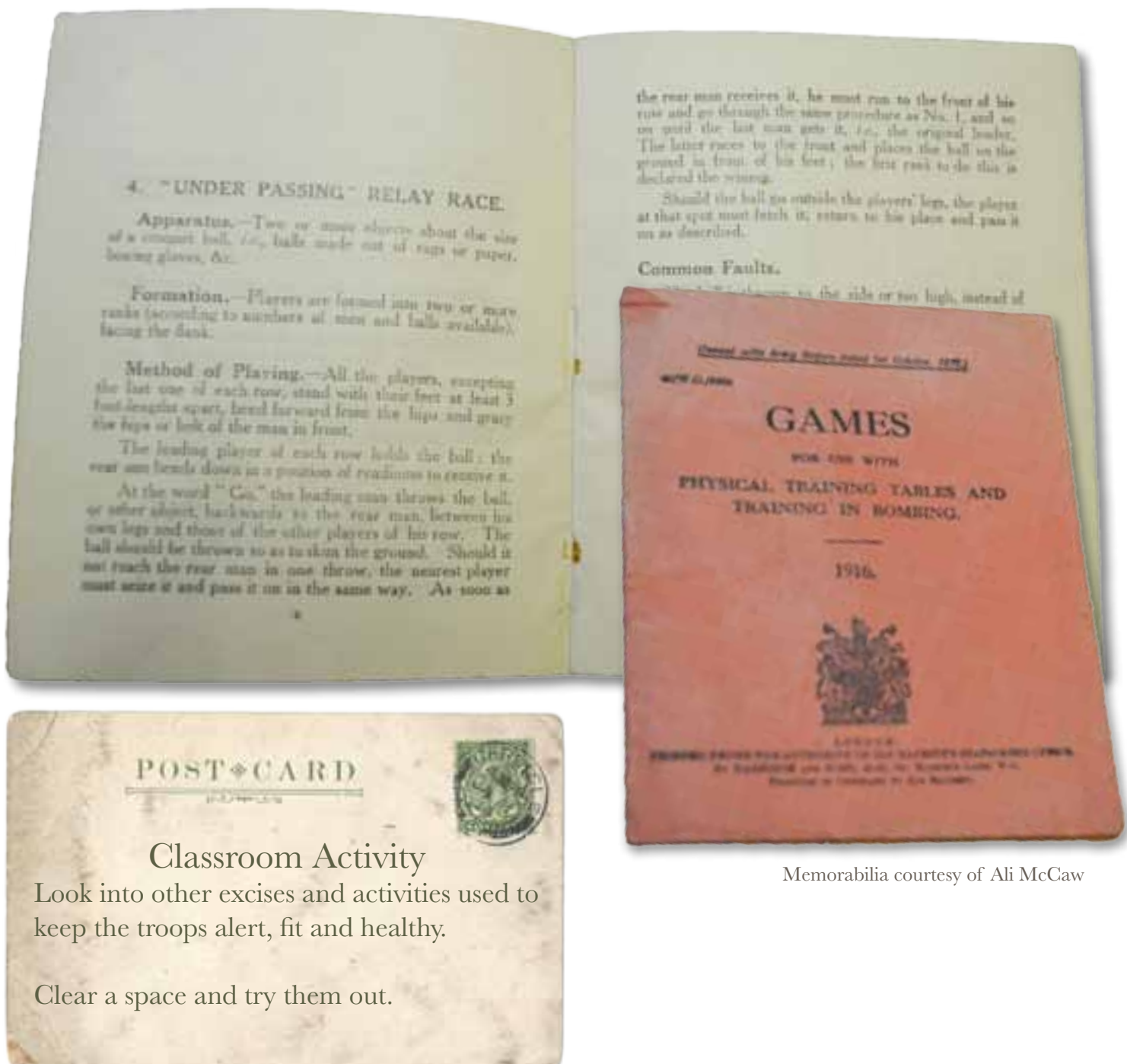
Their efforts to produce thousands of tons of cordite was rewarded with excellent housing, leisure activities and a generous wage.

These dedicated ladies risked their lives (and limbs!), working with dangerous explosives and proved they were equal to performing tasks traditionally done by men.

Keeping Alert and Active

To get into character, Studio Theatre used warm-ups which the troops were given in the trenches. Taken from *Games, for use with physical training tables and training in Bombing, 1916* (pictured).

Percy Braidford's memorabilia inspired Studio Theatre to use the same exercises as the troops.



Memorabilia courtesy of Ali McCaw

No Man's Land

The space between the two enemy army's is known as No Man's Land. Either side was defended with mines, and barbed wire, which troops had to navigate and destroy to make their attacks.

During the Battle of the Somme, the British Soldiers advanced slowly over No Man's Land, believing the German defences to be destroyed. Instead, they were met with a hail of machine gun fire, quickly cut down. Soldiers dived for cover in shell holes, many of them were injured and had to wait for rescue.

Many Victoria Crosses (the highest honour in the British Army) were awarded to soldiers for pulling men out of shell craters in No Man's Land. These included Captain John Leslie Green from the 46th Division at Gommecourt, who pulled numerous wounded men to safety, before being shot down by German fire, all on the first day of the Battle of the Somme.



We explore the bravery and camaraderie of the trapped soldier trapped in shell craters, during the play in the story 'No Man's Land'.

War Horses

Horses have been used in war for around 5000 years. Their earliest jobs would have been pulling chariots, as saddles and stirrups had yet to be invented.

World War One has an almost unprecedented death rate of horses. Estimates range from 100,000 to a few million horse deaths.

Memorials to the brave and strong horses are dotted around Britain, including the memorial to the animals in war (pictured right) at the Devil's Porridge Museum in Gretna.

Many horses got caught in trenches and by barbed wire, and by the end of the war, horses were used less and less due to technology moving on, and mechanised tanks and artillery becoming easier to use.

Many soldiers developed strong bonds with their horses, with some soldiers risking their lives to save their companions.

Michael Morpurgo 1982 children's book '*War Horse*' was inspired by real stories of horses being sent to war. It tells the story of one horse who is bought by the army, and follows his owner's journey to try to return him home safely. Later adapted to a play and a film in 2011, you can find more information and classroom activities on their website <http://www.warhorseonstage.com/learning/>



Dulce et Decorum Est

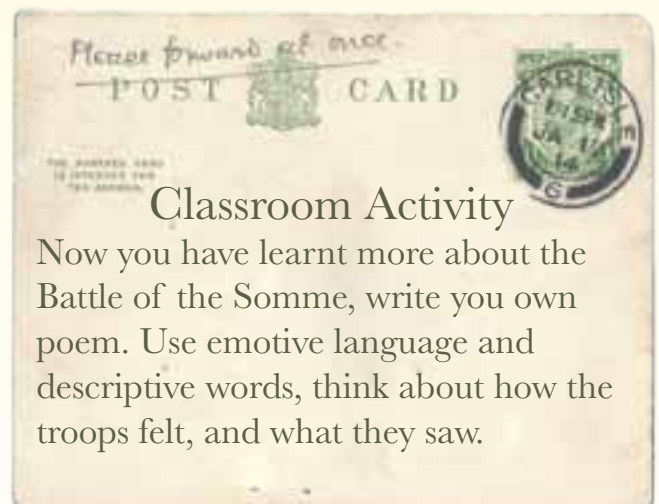
Wilfred Owen

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.—
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.



Classroom Activity

Now you have learnt more about the Battle of the Somme, write your own poem. Use emotive language and descriptive words, think about how the troops felt, and what they saw.

Gas Attacks

The haunting poem by Wilfred Owen on the previous page tells of a real horror of the war, as the men were leaving the front line, exhausted and ‘*drunk with fatigue*’. The men are caught in a gas attack, and scramble to put on their masks, followed by the chilling line ‘*but someone still was yelling out and stumbling*’. Owen goes on to describe the true horrors of war, presenting the terrible reality of trench life, with the soldiers described as being ‘*like old beggars*’.

‘The old Lie: Dulce et Decorum Est, Pro patria mori’

It is sweet and honourable to die for your country

Chemical warfare was used in World War One to disable, slow, and injure troops. A common fate of those exposed to gas was blindness, chlorine gas or mustard gas being the main causes. One of the most famous First World War paintings, *Gassed by John Singer Sargent*, captures such a scene of mustard gas casualties which he witnessed in July 1918.



This scene is mirrored in *TLC: Tales of a Long Conflict* as we see a brave soldier leading blinded men out of danger.



The Germans

A child's drawing of a soldier, likely a German soldier from World War I, wearing a blue uniform with a yellow belt and a black helmet. The soldier has a large head, blue eyes, and a mustache. The drawing is done in a simple, sketchy style with visible pencil or crayon marks.

It's sometimes easy to forget that the German soldiers manning their trenches had similar lives and upbringings to the men fighting for Britain.

The German soldiers endured a week of heavy shelling at the front line, before the British and French troops advanced towards them on that first day of the Battle of the Somme.

Despite the British attacks being relatively unsuccessful, by the end of the battle in November, the Germans had lost around 500,000 men.

In total, over 1,000,000 men lost their lives in this futile battle, which advanced the British front line by six miles.

Missing in Action and Remembrance

There are several reasons a soldier could be missing in actions, from being killed in a large explosion and buried beneath the upheaval of earth, or the force of the shell could have destroyed their bodies.

First World War soldiers wore identity tags so that they could be recognised, but these were easily lost.

Many thousands of Somme soldiers were declared missing.

The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, built between 1928 and 1932, bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men who died in the Somme sector, and have no known grave.

Despite taking place 100 years ago, fallen soldiers are still being discovered and identified due to building works in France. Recently, in 2014, a soldier from Newcastle was discovered when a road in Thiepval was widened. He had been reported missing on 1st July 1916.

Many soldiers were found without being able to be identified, and buried in graves with headstones stating 'A Soldier of the Great War' and 'Known Unto God'. 'The Unknown Warrior' is buried in Westminster Abbey as a memorial to the dead of World War One, particularly to those who have no known grave.

Cumbria's Museum of Military Life are currently displaying '*Voices from the Somme*' a commemoration exhibition, which is on until 20th November and have a wealth of information on their website. For more information and resources visit www.cumbriasmuseumofmilitarylife.org.





Tour Dates 2016

To book tickets, please contact the venues directly.

The Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal

Wednesday 2nd November, 1.30pm, Tickets £6

Box Office: 01539 725133, www.breweryarts.co.uk

Cumbria's Museum of Military Life, The Castle, Carlisle

Friday 11th November, 10.00am

An extract of the play will be shown as part of Armistice Day.

Rosehill on the Road:

Lakes College West Cumbria, Lillyhall

Thursday 17th November, 1.30pm, Tickets £6

Box Office: 01946 692422, www.rosehilltheatre.co.uk

Theatre by the Lake, Keswick

Friday 18th November, 1.30pm, Tickets £5

Box Office: 017687 74411, www.theatrebythelake.com

The Old Fire Station, Carlisle

Monday 28th November, 1.30pm, Tickets £5

Box Office: 01228 598596, oldfirestation.carlisle.city

Approx. Running time: 1 hour (no interval)

Suitable for ages 7+

