

cornish language partnership

maga

Drama Kernewek

Cornish Medieval Drama

A resource and activity pack

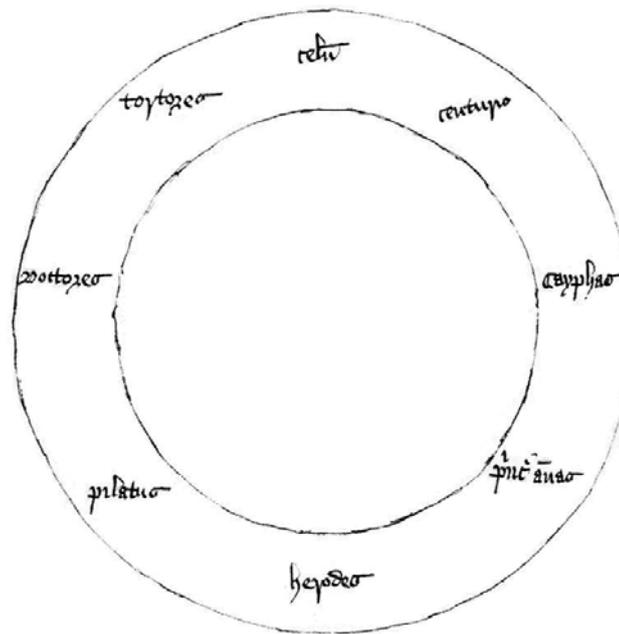
Elizabeth Stewart



Drama Kernewek

Cornish Medieval Drama

A Resource and Activity Pack



Elizabeth Stewart

Dhe gov Dominic Knutton
In memory of Dominic Knutton

First published in 2012 by
MAGA, the Cornish Language Partnership
Cornwall Council, Dalvenie House, County Hall
Truro, Cornwall, TR1 3AY
www.magakernow.org.uk

© Cornish Language Partnership 2012

ISBN 978-1-903798-85-0

cornish language partnership
maga



SYNSAS CONTENTS

KOMENDYANS	<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	4
PYTH?	<i>WHAT type of plays were they?</i>	5
PIW?	<i>WHO were these saints?</i>	7
P'EUR?	<i>WHEN were the plays performed?</i>	9
YETH	<i>The LANGUAGE of the plays</i>	11
PLE?	<i>WHERE were the plays performed?</i>	15
FATEL?	<i>HOW were the plays performed?</i>	19
PRAG?	<i>WHY were the plays written?</i>	22
HWARTH	<i>HUMOUR in the plays</i>	24
KWIZ	<i>A QUIZ to test your knowledge</i>	26
GERVA	<i>A GLOSSARY of terms</i>	27
APPENDIX 1	<i>Trial Scene from PASSIO CHRISTI</i>	28
APPENDIX 2	<i>Torture Scene from PASSIO CHRISTI</i>	29
PELLA KEDHLOW	<i>FURTHER INFORMATION</i>	30



KOMENDYANS *INTRODUCTION*

Cornwall has a unique theatrical heritage, and the plays that were written and performed here in the medieval period played an important role in the development of drama in Britain.

Through the fact sheets and activities in this resource pack, students and individuals with an interest in Cornish drama will be taken back over 600 years to experience Cornwall in the Middle Ages and find out about the plays that were performed in towns and villages around the Duchy from the 14th century through to the early 17th century.

The pack takes a cross-curricular approach, bringing together elements of history, drama, language, beliefs and design. It can be used either as a stand alone resource to give a broad understanding and appreciation of the theatre of medieval Cornwall, or it can be used to enhance projects based around any of the medieval Cornish plays. All pages may be photocopied and used as handouts.

There are eight sections, each of which comprises a combination of fact sheets and activity sheets:

- **PYTH? *WHAT?*** An overview of the types of plays that were performed in Cornwall in the Middle Ages;
- **PIW? *WHO?*** A look at the saints represented in Cornish miracle plays;
- **P'EUR? *WHEN?*** Key dates in Cornish medieval drama, shown in relation to significant dates in British and European medieval drama;
- **YETH *LANGUAGE*** An introduction to the language in which the plays were written;
- **PLE? *WHERE?*** An exploration of the out-door performance spaces used for drama in medieval Cornwall;
- **FATEL? *HOW?*** A look at how the plays were performed;
- **PRAG? *WHY?*** Investigating why the plays were written and performed;
- **HWARTH *HUMOUR*** Exploring the humour used in the plays.

The fact sheets can be used as stimulus material for teachers or as a source of information for people with an interest in Cornish medieval drama, and the activity sheets are packed with ideas for activities which can be adapted, enriched and enhanced as teachers see fit, and are designed to bring Cornish medieval drama to life.

The pack also includes: a quiz to test student's knowledge; a glossary of terms used; sample scenes from medieval Cornish plays to help students to explore themes raised in the pack; and ideas for where to go to find out more.

This resource pack has been produced by MAGA, the Cornish Language Partnership, which works with schools, businesses, community groups, individuals and local councils to develop and promote the use of the Cornish language.

MAGA, Cornwall Council, Dalvenie House, County Hall, Truro, Cornwall TR1 3AY
01872 323497
cornishlanguage@cornwall.gov.uk
www.magakernow.org.uk



PYTH? *WHAT type of plays were they?*

Everyone knows about Shakespeare and the Elizabethan theatres in London, but did you know that over 200 years before Shakespeare wrote his first play, Cornwall had it's own thriving dramatic tradition?

During the Middle Ages, religious plays were performed around Cornwall on feast days and holidays. The plays were written by clerics from **GLASNEY COLLEGE**, a monastic institution near Penryn, and they specialised in two different types of play:

- **MYSTERY PLAYS**, which were based around stories from the Bible;
- and **MIRACLE PLAYS**, which told stories of saint's lives.

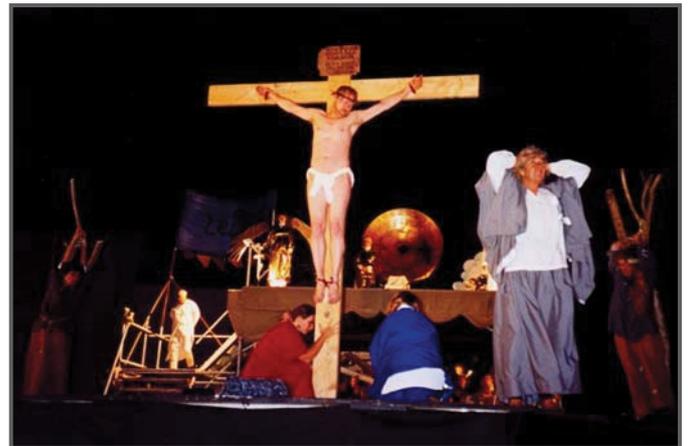
Mystery Plays

The most famous Cornish **MYSTERY PLAYS** are a trilogy of plays called the **ORDINALIA**. The first play, **ORIGO MUNDI**, tells the story of the creation of the world and other tales from the Old Testament; the second play, **PASSIO CHRISTI**, jumps ahead to the story of Jesus' trial and crucifixion; and the third play, **RESURREXIO DOMINI**, continues with Jesus' resurrection and the harrowing of hell.

There is another Cornish mystery play called **GWRIANS AN BYS**, which translates as 'The Creation of the World'. It appears to have been based on the **ORDINALIA** but it was written 200 years later by a man named William Jordan from Helston.

Surprisingly there is no play in the **ORDINALIA** about the birth of Jesus. Is this because it was left out on purpose? Or was there perhaps a fourth play that is now missing? Frustratingly, we will probably never know.

The **ORDINALIA** is a trilogy of plays, a bit like the medieval equivalent of a modern film trilogy!



Scene from a performance of the **ORDINALIA** in 2001



Scene from a performance of **BEWNANS MERYASEK** in 2012

Miracle Plays

We have manuscripts of two Cornish **MIRACLE PLAYS**: **BEWNANS MERYASEK**, the life of St Meriasek, and **BEWNANS KE**, the life of St Kea.

Until recently, it was thought that only one of the many Cornish saint's life plays had survived from the medieval period, and this was **BEWNANS MERYASEK**. But in 1999 researchers at the National Library of Wales discovered a second Cornish **MIRACLE PLAY**, which they named **BEWNANS KE**.



PYTH? *WHAT? Activities*

Before you start to explore Cornish medieval drama in any detail, it's worth thinking about the plays you already know. This way, you will be able to contextualise everything you find out about medieval Cornish plays in relation to your own previous knowledge and experience.

TASK 1: PLAYWRIGHTS

- Create a table made up of five columns either on a computer spreadsheet or on a sheet of paper. In the first column, write a list of playwrights that you know about. If you need some inspiration, you can use some of the playwrights from the list below:

Aeschylus • Aristophanes • Samuel Beckett • Aphra Behn • Bertolt Brecht • Pedro Calderón de la Barca • Anton Chekhov
Noel Coward • Nick Darke • George Etherege • Euripides • Athol Fugard • Johann Wolfgang von Goethe • Henrik Ibsen
Eugène Ionesco • Ben Jonson • Sarah Kane • Christopher Marlowe • Arthur Miller • Molière • Plautus • Friedrich Schiller
William Shakespeare • George Bernard Shaw • Sophocles • Tom Stoppard • Terence • Tennessee Williams • Oscar Wilde

TASK 2: PLAYS

- Can you name any plays written by each of the playwrights you have listed? If so, write them in the second column of your table.

TASK 3: DATES

- Do you know roughly when these playwrights were writing for the theatre? If so, add dates to the third column of your table. The dates don't need to be precise - a decade or century would be fine, just to give a rough idea of a timescale.

TASK 4: ORIGINS

- Do you know where the plays were written and performed? Try to specify a country at least (or be more specific where you can) for each of the playwrights in your list. Write them in the fourth column of your table.

TASK 5: LANGUAGES

- Do you know what language each of the playwrights wrote in? Add this to the final column of your table.

TASK 6: POINTS OF INTEREST

- Look through your completed table and pick out any points of interest, for example: what is the oldest play in your list? How many of the plays were written and performed in the UK, and how many come from other countries? How many different languages appear in your list?

Now you have an overview of your own experience of drama, it's time to start exploring Cornish medieval drama!



PIW? *WHO were these saints?*

The two surviving Cornish **MIRACLE PLAYS** follow the lives of two Cornish saints: St Meriasek and St Kea. But who were they, where were they from, and what are their stories?

St Meriasek

Meriasek was born in Brittany, the son of a wealthy duke. His father arranged for him to marry a wealthy princess but he refused to do so, preferring instead to dedicate himself to becoming a priest.

He came to Cornwall and set up an oratory in Camborne where he performed miracles and told stories promoting the Christian message. Cornwall at that time was ruled by a pagan king, Tewdar, who disliked Meriasek performing miracles and preaching Christianity. Meriasek eventually returned to Brittany and continued to preach the word of God there.

As well as the story of Meriasek's life, **BEWNANS MERIASEK** also features two other stories. One of these is about St Sylvester who heals the Emperor Constantine of leprosy by converting him to Christianity, and then saves his land from a dragon. The other is about a mother whose son is in captivity and although she prays to the Virgin Mary for his release, the Virgin Mary does not respond. The mother therefore takes the statue of the baby Jesus from the arms of the Virgin Mary's statue, and refuses to return it until her own son has been delivered from captivity.



Meriasek in a 2012 production of BEWNANS MERYASEK

Meriasek is the patron saint of Camborne. He is also sometimes called Meriadeg (in Breton) or Meriadoc, and the parish church in Camborne is dedicated to him.

St Kea

Like Meriasek, Kea too came from a noble background but opted for the solitary life of a hermit. He came to Cornwall from southern Scotland and despite long arguments with the pagan King Tewdar, he was granted land near Tewdar's hunting ground. One day Kea gave refuge to a stag that was being hunted by Tewdar. In retaliation, Tewdar stole Kea's oxen so that he could not plough his land, but stags from the wood came to pull Kea's plough instead.

In an attempt to compensate Kea, Tewdar made him an offer: that he could enclose and keep as much of the King's land as he could in the time it took for Tewdar to have a bath. Kea made a concoction to prevent the King from being able to leave his bath, and so managed to enclose a large area of his land in what is now Kea parish.

BEWNANS KE also includes a long section on King Arthur in which Arthur refuses to pay tribute to Rome and then fights the Roman emperor Lucius. When Arthur returns to Cornwall he discovers that his nephew, Mordred, has conspired with Arthur's wife, Guinevere, and usurped his crown in his absence.

The manuscript of the play has several sections missing, but we are able to fill in the gaps using a 17th century document written by a Breton who saw a performance of **BEWNANS KE**. Albert le Grand ends the story of St Kea in his *Lives of the Saints of Brittany* with Kea acting as a mediator between Arthur and Mordred.



PIW? *WHO?* Activities

BEWNANS KE and *BEWNANS MERYASEK* are the only surviving **MIRACLE PLAYS** from Cornwall, but there would have been others which are now lost. In this activity, you will carry out an investigation into other Cornish saints who might also have had **MIRACLE PLAYS** written about their lives.

TASK 1: LIST OF SAINTS

- What other Cornish saints do you know of? Create a list of them.

TASK 2: MAP

- Saints are usually associated with a particular town or village, sometimes because it is where they lived or preached. Find out which towns or villages the saints in your list are connected with and draw a map

TASK 3: CHURCHES

- Sometimes churches are dedicated to the saints who lived and worked in that area, for example Camborne Parish Church is dedicated to St Meriadoc (the Breton spelling of Meriasek). Can you find any other examples of churches dedicated to or named after Cornish saints, particularly in your local area?

TASK 4: TOWNS

- In some cases even towns and villages themselves are named after saints. There are lots examples of place names in Cornwall beginning with St Write a list of as many of them as you can think of. Then add those saints to your initial list and include the places on your map.

TASK 5: LEGENDS

- Often saints are associated with legends about how they arrived in Cornwall. For example, St Ila (who gave her name to St Ives) is said to have floated across the sea to Cornwall on a leaf. Can you find out how any other saints arrived in Cornwall?



TASK 6: BIOGRAPHY

- Choose one of the saints in your list and try to find out as much about them as you can: where they came from, where they lived in Cornwall, how they came to Cornwall, what they did in their lives, why they were made a saint, etc.
- Write out everything you discover about them in the style of an obituary that people would read in a modern newspaper if the saint had only recently died.
- Keep your notes about your chosen saint so that once you've got through the rest of the pack and learned about all of the aspects of Cornish medieval drama, you can try writing your own mini **MIRACLE PLAY** about your chosen saint.

A new play about the life of St Piran, written in the style of a medieval Cornish **MIRACLE PLAY**, is performed at Perran Sands near Perranporth every year on the Sunday closest to Piran's Day. Look out for advertisements for it in the press and go along to see it if you can!



P'EUR? *WHEN* were the plays performed?

After the golden age of ancient Greek and Roman theatre, there was no drama in Europe until the 10th century, when clerics began to dramatise scenes from the Bible and perform them in churches on feast days.

The first full play known to have been written and performed in Britain is the Cornish **ORDINALIA**. The major English **MYSTERY PLAYS** all appeared after this. Was Cornwall, therefore, the route through which medieval drama spread from mainland Europe to the British Isles? We have no decisive proof of this, but it seems very likely as there were strong links at the time between Cornwall and Brittany both linguistically and through trade.

	EUROPE	CORNWALL	ENGLAND
900	c.925 QUEM QUAERITIS (meaning 'Whom do you seek?') - a dramatised scene from the Easter story, performed in churches across Europe, in Latin, by clerics		
1000	c.935-973 HROSVITHA , a canoness in Northern Germany, writes several religious plays in Latin, modelled on comedies by the Roman playwright Terence		
1100	c.1100-1200 Three major changes occur: - drama moves from being performed inside churches to outside; - drama texts begin to be written in the vernacular instead of Latin; - plays are no longer performed by clerics but by members of the community		
1200	c.1150 LE JEU D'ADAM , one of the earliest mystery cycles, written in France		
1300			
1400		c.1375 ORDINALIA cycle written	1376 YORK mystery plays first mentioned 1392 COVENTRY mystery plays first mentioned
1500	c.1470 BUHEZ SANTEZ NONN Breton miracle play written	c.1400 CHARTER FRAGMENT - extract from a secular play written on the back of another document dated 1340	c.1421 CHESTER mystery plays first mentioned c.1450-1500 TOWNELEY mystery plays composed (performed in Wakefield) c.1450-1500 N-TOWN mystery plays composed (performed in Coventry and the East Midlands)
1500	1501 Passion play (based on the Easter story) performed at MONS in Belgium	c.1500 BEWNANS KE written c.1505 BEWNANS MERYASEK written	1569 YORK mystery plays suppressed 1575 last performance of CHESTER mystery plays 1576 TOWNELEY mystery plays banned
1600	1547 Mystery plays performed at VALENCIENNES in France		1576 THE THEATRE , the first purpose built theatre in London, opens 1592 First plays by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE performed in London
1700	1634 First performance of a mystery play at OBERRAMMERGAU in Southern Germany, repeated every ten years thereafter 1637 Albert le Grand writes the story of St Kea based on a performance of BEWNANS KE	1602 Richard Carew describes a contemporary performance of a Cornish mystery play in his "Survey of Cornwall" 1611 GWRIANS AN BYS written	



P'EUR? *WHEN?* Activities

You've seen how drama spread from mainland Europe to Britain via Cornwall, and the timelines have given you an idea of what happened when. In this activity you will use your own knowledge of history to place the dates from the timelines in a wider historical context.

TASK 1: CREATE YOUR OWN TIMELINE

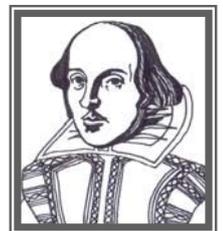
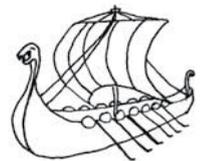
- Create your own timeline based on the one on the **P'EUR? Fact Sheet**. Use a large sheet of paper or card (the bigger the better so you can fit the information on it easily without it looking squashed). Leave plenty of space so that you can add more information as you progress through this activity.

TASK 2: MONARCHS

- Add the names of any kings or queens that you know of in the period covered by the timeline. You could look up the dates when they ruled in a book or online.

TASK 3: KEY DATES

- Add any other key dates you know about from the period covered by the timeline. Here are some suggestions which you could research and then add:
 - ◇ Which Germanic speaking settlers were established in what is now known as England by 900?
 - ◇ Which Scandinavian invaders were raiding the north of the British Isles at the start of the timeline?
 - ◇ What happened in 1066?
 - ◇ When was the Doomsday Book completed?
 - ◇ Who signed the Magna Carta in 1215?
 - ◇ When did Edward III claim the throne of France, starting the Hundred Years' War?
 - ◇ When did the Black Death kill almost half the population of Britain?
 - ◇ Which Welsh prince ended the Wars of the Roses in 1485 and became the first Tudor king?
 - ◇ When did Henry VIII form the Church of England?
 - ◇ Who was monarch when the Spanish Armada was defeated in 1588?
 - ◇ When did Shakespeare live?
 - ◇ Who tried to blow up Parliament in 1605?
 - ◇ When did the Civil War begin and how long did it last?
 - ◇ What two disasters affected London in the 1660s?



TASK 4: CORNISH HISTORY

- Do you know of any key dates in Cornish history in the period from 900-1700? Add them to your timeline as well.
- There are two particularly important dates in Cornish history: 1497 and 1549. Try to find out why these dates are important in the history of Cornwall. One of them is explored in the **YETH Fact Sheet** as it had a significant impact on language, religion and drama in Cornwall.



YETH *The LANGUAGE of the plays*

Medieval Cornish plays were written and performed in the Cornish language because people in Cornwall in the Middle Ages spoke Cornish, not English.

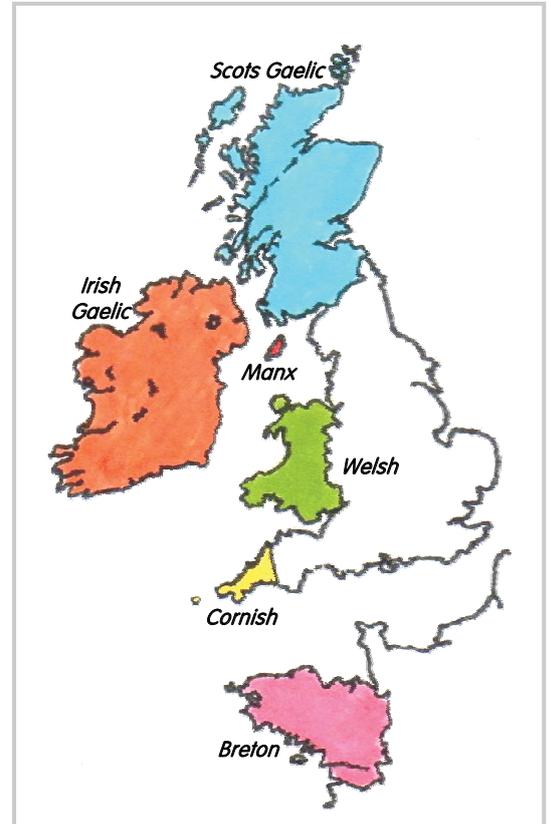
Cornish is a Celtic language, and is closely related to other Celtic languages such as Welsh and Breton. Celtic languages were spoken in the British Isles long before English existed.

The development of English

As invaders such as the Romans, Angles, Saxons, Vikings and Normans came to Britain they brought with them their own languages. In order to be able to get on with the new settlers, the native Celts, or Britons, began to adopt the settlers' languages. Over the centuries this resulted in a new language emerging which incorporated elements of all the languages that the invaders had brought with them. This new language, which was made up of a mixture of Latin, Germanic, Norse, Norman French and Celtic words, became what we now call English.

Did you know that the words 'English' and 'England' come from the name of one of the groups of settlers? They are both named after the Angles who came from what is now Northern Germany.

Meanwhile in the far western areas of the British Isles, which were further away from the lands that were being occupied by the invaders, the languages of the new settlers did not have such an impact. People in those areas continued to speak their own Celtic languages, and these developed into the six modern Celtic languages of Scots Gaelic, Irish Gaelic, Manx, Welsh, Breton and Cornish.



Map showing the six modern Celtic languages

The language of the church

When people went to church in the Middle Ages the churches were Catholic and the services were conducted in Latin. Although most people didn't speak Latin they were familiar with it from hearing it in church every week. But when the clerics at **GLASNEY** wrote their religious plays they chose to write them in Cornish because the language would be easier for the local people to understand and therefore the plays would be more effective.

In the Tudor period things began to change. In the early 16th century Henry VIII broke away from the Catholic church and established the protestant Church of England. This meant that anything which had previously been associated with Catholicism, such as ornate decorations in churches, religious iconography and religious drama, was forcibly suppressed. In England, the performance of **MYSTERY PLAYS** was banned with almost immediate effect, but the Cornish plays continued to be performed well into the 17th century because they were further away from London and less easy to control.

Another Catholic tradition that was suppressed was the use of Latin in church services. Under the new protestant faith, people were encouraged to pray using their own language. But what the new protestant laws did not take into account was that not everyone in the British Isles spoke English...



YETH *The LANGUAGE of the plays*



Edward VI

The Prayer Book Rebellion

When Henry VIII died he was succeeded by his nine year old son, Edward VI. As he was still only a boy, a group of advisors ruled the country on his behalf and in 1549 they introduced the **BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER**. The book was in English and it was decreed that church services were to be said in English from then on too.

The people of Cornwall refused to use the new prayer book and wrote to the King explaining why:

*"We the Cornyshe men
(whereof certen of us understande no Englysh)
utterly refuse thys newe English."*

The Cornish raised an army made up of ordinary people, such as farmers, miners and fishermen, and marched to Devon. At a village called Clist St Mary they met the King's army, which included mercenaries from Germany and Italy, and a fierce and bloody battle took place.

1,000 Cornishmen were killed in the battle. A further 900 were taken prisoner and executed by having their throats cut. Others escaped to Somerset but were captured and killed, with their leaders being hung as a warning to others. Finally the King's army followed the retreating Cornish into Cornwall, hanging any of the rebels that they found.

Sir Anthony Kingston led the King's army into Cornwall to deal with the retreating rebels. When he came to Bodmin he dined with the Mayor, Nicholas Boyer, who had been involved in the rebellion. Sir Anthony asked for the gallows to be prepared and after dinner he hung his host, the Mayor. Every year the hanging of the Mayor is commemorated as part of Bodmin Riding and Heritage Day.

In total approximately 5,000 Cornishmen were killed in the **PRAYER BOOK REBELLION**. That's 11% of the population of Cornwall at that time, and 22% of the male population (as those who fought in the rebellion were men).

The end of the Cornish language and Cornish drama?

The **PRAYER BOOK REBELLION** had a massive impact on the language as those who survived it had little choice now but to accept the new prayer book and attend church services in English. Proposals to translate the **BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER** into Cornish were suppressed, and English became the language of the church.

This was a significant contributing factor to the decline of Cornish and almost certainly had an impact on the performance of Cornish medieval drama. Over the next two centuries, Cornish retreated westwards until by the mid 18th century it was only spoken in the far west of the Duchy.

Revivals

At the start of the 20th century, the Cornish language was revived, and for the last hundred years it has been spoken in Cornwall as a community language again. In 2002 it was officially recognised as a minority language.

Since 1969 there have also been several performances of medieval Cornish plays, including a large scale community production of the **ORDINALIA** trilogy in St Just in Penwith at the turn of the millennium.



Cornish is now alive and flourishing in Cornwall once again. People are learning it in schools and evening classes, businesses are using it to name their products, and the Council is putting up bilingual street signs.

This activity will help you to pick out the Cornish that is all around you, and give you some useful phrases that you can use with friends, family and people that you meet.

TASK 1: PLACE NAMES

- Even if you think you don't know any Cornish yourself you use it every day in place names, most of which in Cornwall come from the Cornish language. Here are some of the most common place name elements. Try to think of examples of places in Cornwall that include these elements.

TRE – HOMESTEAD
(sometimes written **trev**, **tren**)

PENN – HEADLAND/END
(sometimes written **pen** or **pedn**)

POLL – POOL
(sometimes written **pol**)

NANS – VALLEY
(sometimes written **nant**, **nance** or **nan**)

PONS – BRIDGE
(sometimes written **pont** or **ponds**)

ROS – HEATH
(sometimes written **rose**)

CHI – HOUSE
(sometimes written **chy** or **che**)

PORTH – HARBOUR/COVE
(sometimes written **port**)

TASK 2: STREET SIGNS

- Look out for bilingual street signs in your area and see if you can spot any of the following words in them:

STRET – STREET

MENA – HILL

FORDH – ROAD

ROSVa – DRIVE

KEW – CLOSE

BOWNDER – LANE

PARK – FIELD

GARTH – YARD



TASK 3: PERSONAL NAMES

- There are also lots of Cornish personal names. Do you know anyone with any of the following names? Can you think of any other Cornish personal names and can you find out what they mean?

BOYS NAMES

Jowan – the Cornish equivalent of John
Peran – the patron saint of Cornwall
Jago – the Cornish equivalent of James
Tristan – from the medieval story of *Tristan and Isolde*

GIRLS NAMES

Lowena – a Cornish name meaning 'happiness'
Tegen – a Cornish name meaning 'pretty little thing'
Kerensa – a Cornish name meaning 'love'
Morwenna – the patron saint of Morwenstow



YETH LANGUAGE Activities

TASK 4: BRANDING

- Can you think of any products from Cornwall that have been given names from the Cornish language? Think about items of food and drink produced in Cornwall. Are there any other types of businesses that use Cornish?

GEVRIK is a Cornish goats cheese. It has been named using the Cornish word for a young goat.



TASK 5: DIALOGUES

- Below are some useful greetings in Cornish. Go through them and familiarise yourself with them. If you need help with the pronunciation, go to www.magakernow.org.uk/dramakernewek where you can listen to the phrases online.

Yow!	Hi!
Dydh da!	Hello!
Myttin da!	Good morning!
Dohajydh da!	Good afternoon!
Gorthuher da!	Good evening!
Lowena dhis!	Joy to you! <i>(a greeting that was common in the medieval plays)</i>
Piw os ta?	Who are you?
... ov vy.	I am
Fatla genes?	How are you?
Splann!	Excellent!
Yn poynt da	Very well
Da lowr	OK
Skwith	Tired
Dha weles!	See you! <i>(to one person)</i>
Agas gweles!	See you! <i>(to more than one person)</i>
Duw genes!	Goodbye! <i>(to one person)</i>
Duw genowgh!	Goodbye! <i>(to more than one person)</i>
Nos da!	Goodnight!

Pronunciation Guide

a = as in apple
e = as in echo
i = as in need
o = as in offer
u = as in French tu
y = as in system

iw = as in tuna
ow = as in blow
oy = as in ointment
uw = as in few

dh = as in this

- Get into pairs or groups of three and work out a short dialogue between you, using the phrases above. Create a scenario: decide who each of you is, where you are meeting, why you are meeting etc, and then practice your dialogue as a mini play.
- Perform your mini play in front of everyone else.



PLE? *WHERE* were the plays performed?

English mystery plays were performed on temporary structures such as carts, but Cornish plays were performed in a more permanent type of open-air theatre called a **PLEN AN GWARI**, meaning 'playing place'. They were the first theatres to be built since the Roman period, and were in use more than 200 years before the first purpose built theatres of the Shakespearean age in London.

Some **PLENYS AN GWARI** were adapted from previous uses, such as prehistoric forts or more recent fortifications. Others were purpose built, often on land owned by and close to the church as they were intended for the performance of religious plays.



*St Just in Penwith from the air, showing the church and **PLEN AN GWARI***

We know that the site of the castle in Truro, which was demolished in the 12th century, was adapted for use as a **PLEN AN GWARI** because a Tudor antiquarian called John Leland referred to it as a "playing place" when he visited Truro in 1542.

At one time there would have been a **PLEN AN GWARI** in most towns and villages in Cornwall. Although most of them have now disappeared, there are still complete **PLENYS AN GWARI** that you can visit at St Just in Penwith and Perran Round near Perranporth.

There are clues about the locations of some **PLENYS AN GWARI** in place names. For example, there is a village near Truro called *Playing Place*, and there are two places called *Plain an Gwarry*, one in Redruth and one near Goldsithney.



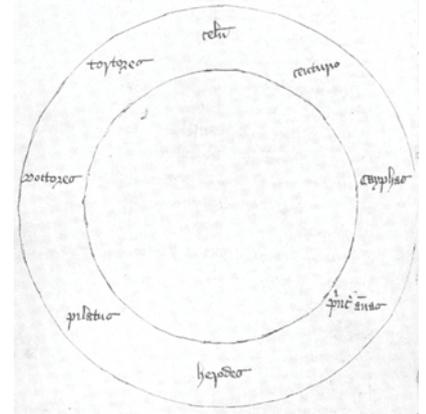
Perran Round near Perranporth



PLE? *WHERE* were the plays performed?

So what exactly is a PLEN AN GWARI?

A PLEN AN GWARI is a round earthwork with a circular performance space in the centre enclosed by a ring of banks for the audience to sit on. Wooden platforms, called **MANSIONS**, would have been built up on the banks to be used by some of the main players as their base and performance space.



The stage plan for *PASSIO CHRISTI*

There are drawings of stage plans in the manuscripts for the Cornish plays, showing which characters were based in which **MANSIONS**. This is the stage plan for *PASSIO CHRISTI*, showing the mansions of **Celu** (Heaven), **Centurio** (Centurions), **Cayphas** (Bishop Caiaphas), **Pinceps Anas** (Prince Anas), **Herodes** (Herod), **Pilatus** (Pilate), **Doctores** (Doctors), **Tortores** (Torturers).



Hell in the *ORDINALIA*

Mansions

MANSIONS were often highly decorated to represent the characters that were based there. There was usually a **MANSION** representing Heaven and another representing Hell, and traditionally Hell was represented as the gaping jaws of a beast, sometimes with special effects such as fireworks.



Bishop Caiaphas' temple in the *ORDINALIA*



Drawing of Perran Round in 1758 by William Borlase, showing the **DEVIL'S SPOON**

Devil's Spoon

One of the most interesting features of a PLEN AN GWARI was a narrow ditch running from the edge of the performing space to a wider dip in the centre, called the **DEVIL'S SPOON**. This was an early form of trap door which would originally have been covered over to enable actors to crawl along the ground, out of sight, and either appear or disappear from the centre of the performance space.



DEVIL'S SPOON at Perran Round

One example of how the **DEVIL'S SPOON** would have been used is the creation of Adam and Eve in *ORIGO MUNDI*. The actors would have crawled along the **DEVIL'S SPOON** and then appeared from the earth as if they were made of clay.

Another example is a scene in *RESURREXIO DOMINI* where the torturers are attempting to bury the body of Pilate, the man who condemned Jesus to be crucified. Pilate is so cursed because of what he did that his corpse is rejected from the earth several times. This scene would have looked hilarious because someone hidden in the **DEVIL'S SPOON** would have thrown the coffin back out of the ground every time the torturers tried to bury it.



PLE? *WHERE* were the plays performed?

All the world's a stage

Watching a play in a **PLEN AN GWARI** would have been a bit like going to see a three ringed circus today in that there would have been things going on all around you and your attention would constantly have been drawn from one place to another.

With so much going on all around the **PLEN AN GWARI**, the clerics from **GLASNEY** needed to find a way of directing the audience's attention to where the action was taking place. When a new character entered from their **MANSION**, they were given the Latin stage direction "*Hic Dux Cornubie pompabit*", meaning "Here the Duke of Cornwall (or whoever) shall parade". This helped to draw the audience's attention to that particular **MANSION** for the next scene.



*The Duke of Cornwall parading in a school production of **BEWNANS MERYASEK***

There was no stage lighting at that time so performances took place during the day to make the most of the daylight. This meant that everything was visible to the audience all of the time, including Heaven and Hell. So even when God and Lucifer didn't have lines, they were still continuously present, watching over everything.



*The **PLEN AN GWARI** at St Just in Penwith during a rehearsal for the **ORDINALIA**, showing the **MANSIONS** around the edge*

The technical term used to describe this type of simultaneous staging is a **POLYSCENIC STAGE OF JUXTAPOSITION**.

A **PLEN AN GWARI** was like a microcosm of the medieval world, incorporating Heaven and Hell, high status people such as kings and bishops, and low status people such as torturers and servants, all in one space.

This idea was passed from medieval drama to Elizabethan drama, where the new London theatres were designed to reflect the idea expressed in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* that "All the world's a stage". At the Globe Theatre, for example, the stage was referred to as the Earth; the roof above the stage, which was painted with stars, as Heaven; and the space under the stage, which was accessed by trap doors, as Hell.



PLE? *WHERE?* Activities

Now you know what a **PLEN AN GWARI** is, and have found out about what it was like to see a play in one, it's time for you to experience this for yourself by creating your own **PLEN AN GWARI** space and performing in it!

NB For all of these tasks it is suggested that you start by working with the characters and stage plan for *PASSIO CHRISTI* (see Appendix 1, with Hell substituted for the Doctors' MANSION) but feel free to use characters, MANSIONS or scenes from any of the other medieval Cornish plays.

TASK 1: DESIGN A MANSION

- Decide which **MANSION** you would like to design (Heaven, Hell or one of the other characters' **MANSIONS**) and think about what it would look like in order to represent that character or group of characters. Think about whether the character in your **MANSION** is morally good or bad, and use colours and designs to reflect this.

TASK 2: MAKE A MODEL PLEN AN GWARI

- Make a model of a **PLEN AN GWARI** from cardboard and papier-mâché or any other resources you have to hand. Remember to include the banks around the edge, the **DEVIL'S SPOON** in the middle, and the **MANSIONS**. Making a model **PLEN AN GWARI** will give you a good feel for the nature of theatre in

A team of researchers at King's College London has created a virtual reality reconstruction of Perran Round so that theatre students around the world can experience what it might have been like in the medieval performance space.



Theatron's virtual reality reconstruction of Perran Round

TASK 3: ACT OUT A SCENE IN THE ROUND

- Set up a **PLEN AN GWARI** space in the classroom with chairs as **MANSIONS** for the characters to stand on.
- Cast all the main characters from *PASSIO CHRISTI* and get them to stand on their **MANSIONS**. Everyone else can be a member of the audience, either sitting between the **MANSIONS** around the edge or in the central space.
- Perform the trial scene from *PASSIO CHRISTI*, with characters speaking from one **MANSION** to another or moving between **MANSIONS** where directed to do so. (NB this is a highly edited version of the scene intended to give you a feel for the drama, and is not a direct translation of the original script.)
- After you have performed the scene, discuss what it was like for both the performers and for the audience.
 - ◇ As a member of the audience, what was it like having things going on all around you, perhaps sometimes even behind you? How did it feel having to shift your attention from one place to another?
 - ◇ As an actor, what was it like performing in this type of space? What style of acting was required? What did you do if you were one of the characters that had to parade before they began to speak?



FATEL? *HOW were the plays performed?*

In the medieval period, plays were performed on feast days associated with the church calendar, such as saints' days and religious holidays.

They were an important community event, often being performed over several days. We know that **BEWNANS MERYASEK** would have been performed over two days, and the **ORDINALIA** trilogy would have been performed across three days, with the audience being invited at the end of each play to come back the following day to see the next part of the story.

Staging the **ORDINALIA** trilogy across three separate days was a bit like an early soap opera. Suspense was built up at the end of each play so that the audience would be keen to return the following day to see what happened next.

We know that the plays involved music and dance as well as drama.

At the end of most of the plays one of the characters would ask musicians to play so that everyone could dance.

"Pibewgh, menstrels kolonnek,
May hyllyn donsya dison"
"Pipe, hearty minstrels,
So that we may dance immediately"

The scripts specifically mention pipers, and we know from carvings on bench ends in churches what Cornish pipes would have looked like.



A modern interpretation of an **ORDINARY**

At the end of **PASSIO CHRISTI** there is no dancing because Christ has just been crucified. Instead, the audience is asked to go home and contemplate the message of the play, and return the following day to see Christ's resurrection.

The plays were performed not by professional actors but by ordinary, people from the local community.

Most people at that time couldn't read so they were instructed in their lines by an early type of director called an **ORDINARY**. The **ORDINARY**, who was possibly a member of the clergy, carried a large book with the whole of the script written in it and would prompt the actors with what to say and when.



Piper carved on a bench end in Altarnun church

There is an account by Richard Carew in his *Survey of Cornwall*, written in 1602, of the **ORDINARY**'s prompting going wrong. The **ORDINARY** instructed the actor to begin by saying, "Go forth man and shew theyselfe", but rather than doing this the actor just repeated what the **ORDINARY** had said. In frustration, the **ORDINARY** exclaimed, "Oh, you marre all the play", which was again repeated by the actor. The prompter and the actor then had a massive argument and the performance was ultimately abandoned, but not without the audience getting "a great deale more sport and laughter then 20 such guaries could have afforded."

Although this report is very amusing, it is likely that it was based on a traditional tale circulated at the time, as it is not thought that Carew attended a performance himself.



FATEL? *HOW?* Top Tips

Performing medieval drama out of doors in a large space such as a **PLEN AN GWARI** requires a very different approach from performing in an indoor theatre space. Here are five Top Tips for performing medieval drama:

1. PROJECT

When you speak normally you only use a small part of your lungs, but when performing out of doors you need to learn how to use the thin sheet of muscle below your lungs, called your diaphragm, so that you can make use of the whole of your lung space. To find out what it feels like to use your diaphragm, try the exercises on the next page.

Projecting is not the same as shouting. If you learn to use your diaphragm you can project your voice across a **PLEN AN GWARI** for hours, but if you shout you will end up with a very sore throat!

2. SPEAK CLEARLY

As well as projecting, it's important to make sure that every syllable is spoken clearly so that people can understand what you're saying. Consonants are particularly important, so don't swallow any of them or let words fade away as you would in normal speech.

You might sound a little exaggerated if you spoke like this to someone standing right beside you, but it's necessary when you're speaking across a large open space.

3. ACT BIG

When you're performing out of doors your gestures need to be big just like your voice. Bearing in mind that some of your audience could be sat on the opposite bank of the **PLEN AN GWARI** some 40-50 metres away, every gesture needs to be enlarged to make it work in that space.

Think also about your position in a group and your stance – from a distance there's nothing interesting about a group of people standing around naturally talking to one another, but if you add different stances and think about spacing and height, the scene instantly becomes more visually interesting.

4. FACE FRONT

Another feature of acting out of doors in a **PLEN AN GWARI** is that you should try to stay facing forwards, especially when you are speaking. If you turn to one side your voice will not project out to the audience so well and you cannot be seen so clearly. It may feel unnatural saying lines forwards towards the audience that are intended for the person beside you, but it's essential for engaging with the audience in this style of theatre.

You can use tricks like starting off by looking at the person to whom your lines are directed, and then turning towards the audience as you start to speak.

5. ENJOY IT

Finally, these plays are celebrations intended to be performed on feast days, so enjoy performing them! If you enjoy them yourself, your energy will transfer to the audience and the performance will be a great success.



FATEL? *HOW? Voice exercises*

Warming up the body

- To stretch the spine out, stand upright with your feet about hip width apart, then starting with your head bend forward: head, neck, shoulders, each section of the spine one at a time until your hands are touching or almost touching the floor; stay in this position for a few seconds and then to come out of it, put your hands on your thighs and straighten up again very slowly, bone by bone, with your head coming up last.
- To loosen the neck, stand up straight and bend your head slightly forward, then move it very gently backwards, keeping your mouth open, then move it to one side and then to the other. Be very careful not to push your neck too far in any direction.

Using the diaphragm

- Lie on the ground and spread your back out across the floor. Widen your shoulders and lengthen your spine and neck. This opens out the shoulders, neck and back so they are free and ready to move easily.
- Put your hands on your lowest ribs. Breathe in and sigh out, noticing the feeling of filling that section of your lungs (i.e. working your diaphragm). If the top of your chest is moving you're using the wrong part of your lungs, so keep trying until you connect to a movement around your lowest ribs.
- Stand up and pant out loud, holding one hand on the diaphragm – note the same movement as in the previous exercise (i.e. it should be around the lowest ribs, not your upper chest). Make the following sounds (**ha ha ha, he he he, ho ho ho**) still feeling for the movement to come from your diaphragm.
- Breathe in and on the out breath say a complete line or sentence, making sure to keep your voice rooted as above.
- From a standing position, choose a spot on the wall, take a deep breath in filling all of your lungs and then start humming on the out breath. Build the hum up and then break out into a vowel: **mmmah, mmmee, mmmow.**

Warming up the mouth

- Hold onto imaginary bars in front of you and shake them, keeping your mouth open and allowing your lower jaw to wobble freely. Add some noise to this.
- Stick your tongue out and point it up, down, then side to side and finally draw circles in the air with it both clockwise and anticlockwise.
- Warm up your lips by smacking them like a fish, blowing kisses and shaking them out loosely like a horse.
- Say the these out loud:

te te te	de de de	le le le	lah	(to warm up your tongue tip)
ke ke ke	ge ge ge	ke ke ke	gah	(to warm up the back of the tongue)
pe pe pe	be be be	me me me	mah	(to warm up the lips)

Tongue-twisters

- Finally, try saying some tongue twisters, e.g. **Unique New York, New York unique**, or this traditional one in Cornish:

Eus keus? Eus po nag eus? Mars eus keus, dro keus. Mar nyns eus keus, dro pyth eus.
Is there any cheese? Yes or no? If there is cheese, bring cheese. If there's no cheese, bring whatever there is.



PRAG? *WHY were the plays written?*

When you go to watch a play now what is its purpose? The most obvious answer is entertainment, and the same was true for Cornish medieval drama. But the plays written by the clerics at **GLASNEY** also fulfilled another, more educational role.

In the Middle Ages most ordinary people were unable to read or write. And even if you were able to read, you would have had to understand Latin to be able to read the Bible. Church services, as we have already seen, were also in Latin, which did not make it easy for priests to teach their congregations about the Christian message.

Throughout the medieval period the church devised a variety of visual methods to overcome this problem and to spread the word of God.

One method was to paint stories and characters from the Bible on the internal walls of churches and this was a common practice until Henry VIII broke from the Catholic church in the 16th century. Most medieval wall paintings were lost when they were whitewashed as part of Henry's campaign to purge the land of Catholic iconography, but there are good examples of Cornish church wall paintings that have been uncovered at the churches in St Just in Penwith and Breage.



Medieval wall paintings at Breage church

Another popular teaching tool was to depict Biblical stories and saints' lives in stained glass windows. This practice was again stamped out during the Reformation so many of the medieval stained glass windows were lost. The majority of stained glass windows in churches today are from the Victorian era or later.



The church at St Neot on Bodmin Moor was sufficiently out of the way for many of its medieval stained glass windows to be left in tact. These windows are particularly interesting as they appear to have been inspired by the **ORDINALIA**, with the serpent in the Temptation of Adam and Eve being in human form with what appears to be a snakeskin costume. The windows also contain imagery from the legend of the Oil of Mercy, which is mentioned in the **ORDINALIA** but not in the Bible.

The Temptation at St Neot church



The death of Adam from the Oil of Mercy legend at St Neot church



Lucifer and Christ in the ORDINALIA

The third and most successful visual method for teaching the word of God was drama, as it brought movement and life to otherwise static representations of saints and characters from the Bible.

All of the stories in Cornish medieval drama are about the battle between good and evil, and good always wins. The stories give examples of good and bad behaviour and show people the consequences of both from a Christian point of view. So as well as entertaining people, Cornish medieval drama was used as a tool to show people how to live their lives.



PRAG? *WHY?* Activities

Cornish medieval drama was written to bring the Christian message to a predominantly illiterate community. In this activity, you will explore some of the stories from medieval Cornish plays and try to work out what the morals of those stories are.

TASK 1: THREE STORIES

Below are summaries of three stories found in medieval Cornish plays. In groups, read through the summaries and then discuss what you think the moral of each story is.



The rainbow

Noah and the Flood, from the *ORDINALIA*

The world was full of wickedness, and God decided that it was time to do something about it. There was one good man called Noah, so God asked him to build a boat that would be big enough for him, his family and two of every type of animal. Noah did as he was commanded, and when the boat was ready it began to rain. The rain continued for forty days and forty nights, killing everyone except those who were on the boat. When the rain stopped, Noah sent out a dove to find land. The dove returned with an olive branch, proving that the water was subsiding, and God created a rainbow to reassure people that he would not flood the land again.

Sylvester and the Dragon, from *BEWNANS MERYASEK*

The pagan Emperor Constantine was suffering from leprosy and tried everything to get rid of it, but with no success. Eventually he was healed by Sylvester, a Christian, who converted him to Christianity.

Meanwhile, the Duke of Cornwall was being troubled by a fierce dragon. He requested assistance from Emperor Constantine, believing that he was to blame for the dragon because he had converted to Christianity. Constantine recommended that Sylvester be called, and he managed to tame the dragon through his faith in Christ.



Emperor Constantine



Adam and Seth

The Oil of Mercy, from the *ORDINALIA*

When Adam and Eve were sent out of Paradise for eating the forbidden fruit, they were promised that when the time came, they would be granted the Oil of Mercy. 999 years later, when Adam was exhausted from years of working the barren land, he decided that it was time to find out about the Oil of Mercy and so he sent his son, Seth, to the Gates of Paradise. When Seth arrived he asked for the Oil of Mercy and the guardians of the gate showed him a vision of the Tree of Life with a baby cradled in its branches. They explained that the baby was Jesus and that he was the Oil of Mercy who would save mankind. Seth returned and told his father, who died peacefully.

TASK 2: OTHER EXAMPLES

Using other stories you know either from medieval Cornish plays, from the Bible or from any other religious text, try to work out what you think the moral of each story might have been.



HWARTH *HUMOUR* in the plays

Although it sounds from the subject matter that Cornish medieval drama could be a little dry, it was in fact quite the opposite.

The clerics at **GLASNEY** knew very well how to keep an audience's attention. They made the plays funny, full of local jokes and references, and the humour they used was often very crude.

The clerics at **GLASNEY** were so renowned for the crude humour in their plays that in 1360 the Bishop of Exeter threatened them with excommunication if they didn't put an end to the "silly and harmful pastimes that were unbecoming to clerical decency".

Slapstick

Physical comedy was as popular in the Middle Ages as it is now, and whilst we currently have characters such as Mr Bean, the medieval audiences in Cornwall would have enjoyed the knock about humour of the of the torturers.

For example, in *RESURREXIO DOMINI* when the character of Pilate - who sentenced Jesus to death - dies, the torturers try to bury him but the earth won't accept his body and the coffin keeps being thrown out of the earth.

Local jokes

Cornish medieval drama is full of local references and in-jokes which the medieval audience would have enjoyed in very much the same way as we enjoy local jokes and topical references in pantomimes today.

The torturers, for example, are sometimes offered rewards for their work. Usually these rewards are plots of land or properties in nearby places such as Penryn or Helston, but in *PASSIO CHRISTI* one of the torturers is offered "all the land on *Karrek Reun*." The name of this prize gives away its worth, as *Karrek Reun* translates as Seal Rock, and it refers to a tiny, useless rock in the middle of Carrick Roads which is now known as Black Rock.

Crude humour

Considering that these plays were written by religious clerics, perhaps even monks, the humour in them can often be surprisingly crude. A good example is *Whyp an Tyn*, the name given to one of the torturers in *PASSIO CHRISTI*, which translates as 'Whip Arse.'

There are also plenty of jokes about bodily functions, particularly farting. In *BEWNANS MERYASEK*, for example, there is a spectacular farting dragon. Even in serious scenes about Christ's crucifixion there are fart gags. The most shocking of these relates to Christ when he is being tortured in *PASSIO CHRISTI*, and one of the torturers says:

"My a grys, by Godes face,
An harlot re dhellos bramrn"

"I do believe, by God's face,
The scoundrel's just farted"



The farting dragon in *BEWNANS MERYASEK*

Linguistic jokes

There are also linguistic jokes in the plays, such as the use of oaths in French and Middle English by wicked characters such as torturers and devils. Although they do also speak in Cornish, the suggestion seems to be that they are not fit to speak good Christian Cornish!



HWARTH HUMOUR Activities

The humour in Cornish medieval drama is rather surprising considering the often serious nature of the subject matter, but there must have been a reason for the clerics at **GLASNEY** to use such coarse humour. This activity will help you to explore the reasons for including such humour, and the effect it had on the overall performance.

NB For this activity you will need to use the Torture Scene script in Appendix 2.

TASK 1: ACT OUT THE COMEDY

- Set up a **PLEN AN GWARI** space in the classroom with chairs as **MANSIONS** for the characters to stand on.
- Cast all the main characters from *PASSIO CHRISTI* and get them to stand on their **MANSIONS**. Everyone else can be a member of the audience, either sitting between the **MANSIONS** around the edge or in the central space.
- Perform the Torture Scene from *PASSIO CHRISTI*, with characters speaking from one **MANSION** to another or moving between **MANSIONS** where directed to do so. (NB this is a highly edited version of the scene intended to give you a feel for the drama, and is not a direct translation of the original script.)
- As you perform the scene, look out for the different types of humour used.

TASK 2: DISCUSSION

- After you have performed the Torture Scene, bring everyone back together (actors and audience) and discuss the elements of humour and compassion in the scene. You might like to consider some of the following questions:
 - ◇ What effect does the humour have on such a brutal scene as the torture one?
 - ◇ Do you think it acts as light relief from the more serious topic?
 - ◇ Do you feel that the humour lessens the impact of Christ's suffering, or does it have the opposite effect of intensifying it?
 - ◇ Do you think the **GLASNEY** clerics trying to portray a realistic view of the world, that whilst one person suffers, other people's lives continue around them?
 - ◇ What do you think is the purpose of the humour in the plays?
 - ◇ Do you think it is effective?



Christ being tortured in the 2001 production of PASSIO CHRISTI



KWIZ *A QUIZ to test your knowledge*

Here is a quiz to test your knowledge on what you've learned about Cornish medieval drama. You'll be amazed how much you know!

At the end of the quiz there are links to the pages where you can find the answers. Give yourself one point per question answered correctly, and see how you get on!

◇ **Q.1:** What are the names of the two different types of plays that were performed in Cornwall during the Middle Ages?

For a bonus point, what is the difference between the two?



Hell in the ORDINALIA

◇ **Q.2:** Who was Meriasek?

◇ **Q.3:** Approximately when were the medieval Cornish plays written?

◇ **Q.4:** Who wrote them?



Perran Round

◇ **Q.5:** What language were they written in?

◇ **Q.6:** What was the name of the type of outdoor theatre in which they were performed?

◇ **Q.7:** What was a MANSION?

◇ **Q.8:** How was the DEVIL'S SPOON used?



The Last Supper in PASSIO CHRISTI

◇ **Q.9:** Who or what was the ORDINARY?

◇ **Q.10:** Why were the plays performed?

Q.1 page 5, Q.2 page 7, Q.3 page 9, Q.4 page 5, Q.5 page 11, Q.6 page 15,
Q.7 page 16, Q.8 page 16, Q.9 page 19, Q.10 page 22.

Answers to the questions can be found on the following pages:



GERVA *A GLOSSARY of terms*

BEVNANS KE: a Cornish **MIRACLE PLAY** about St Kea

BEVNANS MERYASEK: a Cornish **MIRACLE PLAY** about St Meriasek

BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER: a prayer book in English that was introduced in the reign of Edward VI

CHARTER FRAGMENT: section of a secular Cornish play written on the back of another document

CLERIC: a member of the clergy, such as a priest

CORNISH: the Celtic language spoken in Cornwall

DEVIL'S SPOON: a staging device in a **PLEN AN GWARI** that was used as an early form of trap door

DIAPHRAGM: thin sheet of muscle below your lungs, used for **PROJECTION**

EXCOMMUNICATION: to be cut off officially from the church, meaning that you have no hope of salvation

GLASNEY COLLEGE: a monastic institution near Penryn, where most Cornish medieval drama was written

GWRIANS AN BYS: a later Cornish drama, inspired by the **ORDINALIA**

ICONOGRAPHY: visual images or symbols used in a work of art, e.g. Christian iconography is the visual representation of people and stories from the Bible

MANSION: wooden structures built up on the side of a **PLEN AN GWARI**, used as a base for specific characters

MIRACLE PLAY: a medieval play about a saint's life

MYSTERY PLAY: a medieval play based on stories from the Bible

OIL OF MERCY: a legend relating to the death of Adam which is not found in the Bible but is found in the **ORDINALIA**

ORDINALIA: a trilogy of Cornish **MYSTERY PLAYS**

ORDINARY: an early type of director in Cornish medieval drama

ORIGO MUNDI: the first play in the **ORDINALIA**, about the creation of the world and other Old Testament stories

PASSIO CHRISTI: the second play in the **ORDINALIA**, about the life and crucifixion of Jesus

PLEN AN GWARI: an outdoor, circular theatre used for the performance of drama in medieval Cornwall

POLYSCENIC STAGE OF JUXTAPOSITION: a type of medieval staging where all locations are simultaneously visible

PRAYER BOOK REBELLION: the name given to the rebellion in 1549 where the people of Cornwall rose up in protest against the introduction of the **BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER**

PROJECTION: the technique of using your **DIAPHRAGM** to be able to speak loudly without hurting your voice

REFORMATION: the period of history following Henry VIII's break from the Catholic church

RESURREXIO DOMINI: the third play in the **ORDINALIA**, about Jesus' resurrection and the harrowing of Hell

SECULAR: non-religious

VERNACULAR: common languages spoken by ordinary people

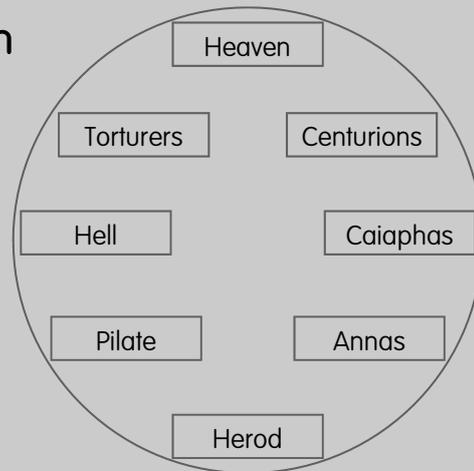


APPENDIX 1 *Trial Scene from PASSIO CHRISTI*

Cast

Jesus	Herod
God	Pilate
Michael	Lucifer
Gabriel	Devils
Centurion 1	
Centurion 2	Torturer 1
Centurion 3	Torturer 2
	Whyp an Tyn
Bishop Caiaphas	
Prince Annas	

Stage Plan



PASSIO CHRISTI - Trial Scene

Caiaphas, Annas, Herod and Pilate are in their mansions

Jesus is being guarded by Centurions in the Centurions' mansion

CAIAPHAS

Annas, what is the best thing for us to do with the traitor?

ANNAS

Let us cross-examine him, the vile rogue.

CAIAPHAS

Bring the prophet in! I want to question him once more.

Centurions bring Jesus to Caiaphas and Annas

ANNAS

Tell us the truth, without deceit or falsehood: are you Christ, the son of God, king of all the prophets?

JESUS

Though I speak the truth, you will not believe me. But you will see me sitting at the right hand of God the Father.

CAIAPHAS

So you are the son of God?

JESUS

You have said so yourself. And you will acknowledge it on the Day of Judgement.

CAIAPHAS

What is the need to wait or find witnesses, since you acknowledge it yourself? He is condemned by his own mouth.

ANNAS

Let us take him to Pilate, our magistrate, to be sentenced.

Here Pilate shall parade

The Centurions take Jesus to Pilate's mansion

CAIAPHAS

Lowena dhis, Pilate! Here is Jesus, brought to you in bonds.

ANNAS

He boasts that he is truly Christ, the only son of God.

PILATE

He is from Galilee. Send him to Herod. Galilee is under his jurisdiction.

CENTURION 1

Come on you rogue.

The Centurions take Jesus to Herod's mansion

Here Herod shall parade

CAIAPHAS

Lowena dhis, Herod!

HEROD

Welcome, Caiaphas, and cousin Annas. Who have we here?

CAIAPHAS

Pilate has sent you a rogue.

ANNAS

This is the fellow called Jesus who says he is the son of God.

HEROD

I will speak with him. Tell me, are you the son of God? Answer me now.

Jesus remains silent

HEROD

Why do you not answer? If you are God, show us. Perform a miracle here so that we can believe in you.

Jesus remains silent

HEROD

He's nothing but a fool! I find no reason to have him executed. Tell Pilate so.

The Centurions take Jesus to Pilate's mansion

PILATE

I find no blame in this man, and nor did the mighty lord Herod. Put him in prison and let him rest there a while. I will speak with him again anon.

The Centurions take Jesus to the Torturers' mansion

NB This is a highly edited version of the scene intended to give you a feel for the drama. It is not a direct translation of the script.

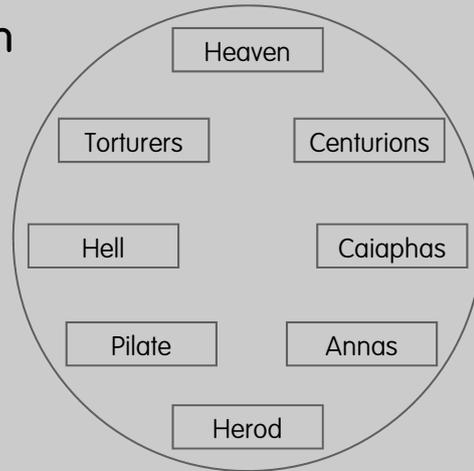


APPENDIX 2 *Torture Scene from PASSIO CHRISTI*

Cast

Jesus	Herod
God	Pilate
Michael	Lucifer
Gabriel	Devils
Centurion 1	
Centurion 2	Torturer 1
Centurion 3	Torturer 2
	Whyp an Tyn
Bishop Caiaphas	
Prince Annas	

Stage Plan



PASSIO CHRISTI - Torture Scene

The Centurions bring Jesus to Pilate's mansion

PILATE

The bishops brought you here.
What evil have you done?

JESUS

My kingdom is not of your world.

PILATE

So you are a king in some way.
You admit you have a kingdom.

JESUS

I am king over a realm
and was born to be so.
I came into the world
To bear witness to the truth.
Whoever is on the side of truth
Will hear my voice on this earth.

PILATE

But what is this truth?

Jesus does not answer

PILATE

I cannot help you
unless you help yourself.

Jesus is silent

PILATE

Torturers, come in the devils name!

The Torturers approach Pilate's mansion

PILATE

Torturers, tie this fellow to a post

And beat him, belly and back.
For this, I will give you
properties in Helston and Penryn.

WHYP AN TYN

And me, master?

PILATE

You too, Whyp an Tyn.
To you I shall give all the land
On Black Rock.

WHYP AN TYN

Oh thank you, master,
you are most generous.

TORTURER 1 (aside)

Black Rock, isn't that the tiny, useless
little rock out in Carrick Roads?

TORTURER 2 (aside)

It is. Just big enough for a seal or two.

PILATE

If he will not retract his lies
and cry for mercy,
crown the King of Jews with thorns.

TORTURER 1

I will, by my bum!
Vengeance to you, scum.
To hell with him!

The Torturers take Jesus to their mansion

TORTURER 2

Come, tie him to this post.

TORTURER 1

Take that, you scumbag!

The torturers beat Jesus

TORTURER 2

He won't cry for mercy.

TORTURER 1

I'll beat him so hard his back will break.

WHYP AN TYN

I'll beat him till he has tears in his eyes.

The Torturers beat Jesus

TORTURER 1 (to Whyp an Tyn)

You hit him like a muck spreader.

TORTURER 2

He's better at farting
than torturing people!

TORTURER 1

Come on, let's crown
the King of Jews with thorns.

TORTURER 2

Let's all pull with great strength
so that the thorns pierce his brains.

TORTURER 1

I'll push it down with all my might
so the sharp spines will pierce his skull
and his brains will spill out everywhere.

WHYP AN TYN

I do believe, by God's face,
the scoundrel's just farted!

TORTURER 1

Hail, King of the Jews!

TORTURER 2 & WHYP AN TYN

Hail, King of the Jews!

NB This is a highly edited version of the scene intended to give you a feel for the drama. It is not a direct translation of the script.



PELLA KEDHLOW *FURTHER INFORMATION*

Where to go to find out more

- Visit a **PLEN AN GWARI**. The **PLENYS AN GWARI** at St Just in Penwith (TR19 7HU) and Perran Round (TR4 9PF) are well preserved and will give you a good feel for what the medieval performance space was like.
- Watch a production of a medieval Cornish play. Keep an eye out in the press for productions such as the *Piran Play* at Perran Sands on the Sunday closest to St Piran's Day. There are DVDs available of the full **ORDINALIA** trilogy (£10) and VHS tapes of each individual play from the **ORDINALIA** (£3) from the Cornwall Arts Centre Trust, tel. 01209 323200 or e-mail admin@actcornwall.org.uk.
- Read the original plays, which are available in the following bilingual editions in Cornish and English:
 - BEWNANS KE**
Bewnans Ke, ed. Graham Thomas & Nicholas Williams, available from Spyrys a Gernow*
Bywnans Ke, ed. Ken George, available from Kesva an Taves Kernewek
 - BEWNANS MERYASEK**
Bywnans Meryasek, ed. Ray Edwards, available from Kesva an Taves Kernewek
The Camborne Play, trans. Myrna Combellack, available from Spyrys a Gernow
Silvester ha'n Dragon, ed. Graham Sandercock, available from Kesva an Taves Kernewek
Sylvester ha'n Dhragon, ed. R. Morton Nance, available from Spyrys a Gernow
 - CHARTER FRAGMENT**
The Charter Fragment, ed. Ray Edwards, available from Kesva an Taves Kernewek
 - GWRIANS AN BYS**
Gwreans an Bys, ed. Ray Edwards, available from Kesva an Taves Kernewek
Gwryans an Bys, ed. R. Morton Nance, A.S.D. Smith & E.G. Retallack-Hooper, available from Spyrys a Gernow
 - ORDINALIA**
Origo Mundi, ed. Ray Edwards, available from Kesva an Taves Kernewek
The Cornish Ordinalia 1st Play: Origo Mundi, ed. Ray Chubb & Richard Jenkin, available from Spyrys a Gernow
Passio Christi, ed. Ray Edwards, available from Kesva an Taves Kernewek
The Cornish Ordinalia 2nd Play: Christ's Passion, ed. R. Morton Nance & A.S.D. Smith, available from Spyrys a Gernow
Resurrexio Domini, ed. Ray Edwards, available from Kesva an Taves Kernewek
The Cornish Ordinalia 3rd Play: Resurrection, available from Spyrys a Gernow
- Read more about Cornish medieval drama:
 - The Cornish Ordinalia: A Critical Study*, by Jane A. Bakere, available from Kesva an Taves Kernewek
 - The Theatre of Cornwall: Space, Place, Performance*, by Alan M. Kent, available in bookshops and online
 - Cornwall's Playing Places*, by R.T. Lyon*
 - Cornish Literature*, by Brian Murdoch*
 - The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. Richard Beadle (including a chapter by Brian Murdoch on Cornish medieval drama), available in bookshops and online
- Find out more about the Cornish language using a range of resources on Skolnet Kernow, a free online resource website. Joining instructions and a password to get onto the site can be requested by e-mailing cornishlanguage@cornwall.gov.uk.
- Perform some Cornish medieval drama. A script suitable for performance by schools, with adaptations of scenes from **BEWNANS MERYASEK** and the **ORDINALIA**, can be requested from MAGA, tel. 01872 323497 or e-mail cornishlanguage@cornwall.gov.uk.

Kesva an Taves Kernewek
jori.ansell@tiscali.co.uk
65 Churchtown, Gwinear, Hayle, Cornwall, TR27 5JL

Spyrys a Gernow
shoppa@spyrys.org
01209 842394

* Currently out of print at the time of publication, but available to borrow through libraries



PELLA KEDHLOW *FURTHER INFORMATION*

Bibliography

- Acton, Viv, *A History of Truro Vol.1 From Coinage Town to Cathedral City*, (Devoran: Landfall Publications, 1997)
- Bakere, Jane A. *The Cornish Ordinalia: A Critical Study*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980)
- Beadle, Richard (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)
- Berresford Ellis, Peter, *The Story of the Cornish Language*, Redruth: Tor Mark Press, 1998)
- Carew, Richard, *The Survey of Cornwall*, ed. F.E. Halliday, (London: Adams & Dart, 1969)
- Combella, Myrna (trans.), *The Camborne Play*, (Redruth: Dyllansow Truran, 1988)
- Edwards, Ray (ed.), *Bywnans Meryasek*, (Sutton Coldfield: Kesva an Taves Kernewek, 1996)
- (ed.), *Gwreans an Bys: The Creation of the World*, (Sutton Coldfield: Kesva an Taves Kernewek, 2000)
- (ed.), *Origo Mundi*, (Sutton Coldfield: Kesva an Taves Kernewek, 1998)
- (ed.), *Pascon Agan Arluth: Passhyon Agan Arloedh: The Passion Poem*, (Sutton Coldfield: Kesva an Taves Kernewek, 1993)
- (ed.), *Passio Christi*, (Sutton Coldfield: Kesva an Taves Kernewek, 1999)
- (ed.), *Resurrexio Domini*, (Sutton Coldfield: Kesva an Taves Kernewek, 2000)
- George, Ken (ed.), *Bywnans Ke*, (Torpoint: Kesva an Taves Kernewek, 2006)
- Grigg, Erik, *Beunans Meryasek: A Study Guide*, (Redruth: Kesva an Taves Kernewek, 2008)
- Hodge, Pol, *Cornwall's Secret War*, (Grampound Road: Kowethas an Yeth Kernewek, 1999)
- Kent, Alan M. *The Literature of Cornwall*, (Bristol: Redcliffe Press Ltd, 2000)
- Kent, Alan M. *The Theatre of Cornwall: Space, Place, Performance*, (Bristol: Redcliffe/Westcliffe Books, 2010)
- Lyon, R.T. *Cornwall's Playing Places*, (Nancegollen: Taves an Werin, 2001)
- Murdoch, Brian, *Cornish Literature*, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993)
- Sandercock, Graham, *A Very Brief History of the Cornish Language*, (Helston: Kesva an Taves Kernewek, 1996)
- Stewart, Elizabeth, *Laughing with Devils: The Cornish Ordinalia in Modern Performance* (University of Warwick, 2002)
- Stoyle, Mark, *West Britons: Cornish Identities and the Early Modern British State*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002)
- Thomas, Graham, & Williams, Nicholas, *Bewnans Ke: The Life of St Kea*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007)

Picture Credits

- COVER** Meriasek - Elizabeth Stewart
- PAGE 1** Stage plan for *Passio Christi* from the *Ordinalia* (MS Bodley 791)
- PAGE 5** *Ordinalia* 2001, *Bewnans Meryasek* 2012 - Josephine Stewart
- PAGE 7** Meriasek - Phil Innes
- PAGE 8** St Piran - Steve Harris
- PAGE 10** Viking longship, Tudor rose, William Shakespeare - Elizabeth Stewart
- PAGE 11** Map of Celtic languages - Elizabeth Stewart
- PAGE 12** Edward VI - Elizabeth Stewart
- PAGE 13** Bilingual street sign - Pol Hodge
- PAGE 14** Gevrik - Elizabeth Stewart
- PAGE 15** St Just - Morek Cards; Perran Round panorama - Elizabeth Stewart
- PAGE 16** Stage plan for *Passio Christi* from the *Ordinalia* (MS Bodley 791); Hell and Caiaphas' temple in the *Ordinalia* - Josephine Stewart; Plan of Perran Round reproduced from William Borlase, *The Natural History of Cornwall* published in 1758 (Bodleian Library: Gough Cornwall 3, plate xxix, facing p. 298); Devil's spoon - Elizabeth Stewart
- PAGE 17** Duke parading - Elizabeth Stewart; *Ordinalia* panorama - Steve Tanner
- PAGE 18** Virtual reality visualisation of Perran Round by Theatron
- PAGE 19** Altarnun piper - Elizabeth Stewart; Ordinary - Josephine Stewart
- PAGE 22** Breage wall paintings and St Neot windows - Elizabeth Stewart; Lucifer and Christ - Josephine Stewart
- PAGE 23** Noah and the Flood - Rob Hogg; Emperor Constantine - Frank Squibb; Adam and Seth - Elizabeth Stewart
- PAGE 24** Dragon - Josephine Stewart
- PAGE 25** Torture scene - Josephine Stewart
- PAGE 26** Hell, Last Supper - Josephine Stewart; Perran Round - Elizabeth Stewart

Every effort has been made to trace and acknowledge the ownership of copyright. If any rights have been omitted, the publishers offer to rectify this in any future editions.