**Isles of Scilly set to reimagine local history with ‘Grand Ball’**

**The Isles of Scilly are gearing up to revive a legendary moment in local history, by recreating the ‘Grand Ball of Rosevear’ this March. Cornwall-based theatre practitioner and producer Bec Applebee has teamed up with the Isles of Scilly Museum to stage a range of events, creative activities and projects starting in early spring, including a ‘Grand Ball’ dance on St Mary’s with original music, a new production from the St Mary’s Theatre Club and a range of community workshops, all enabled through funding from Arts Council England.**

The fabled ‘Grand Ball of Rosevear’ is an inspirational story cited in the autobiography of Sir James Nicholas Douglass (1900). The Ball was hosted by the construction officers and men to lift the spirits of the workers building the Bishop Rock lighthouse, which was an ambitious and treacherous undertaking. The workers were based throughout the build on the isolated island of Rosevear, far away from the amenities and comforts of the main Isles of Scilly. With such dangerous and laborious work, it was felt that a Ball would lift the spirits of everyone who took part, and inhabitants of all the five islands were invited (or so the story goes) to the remote location.

Bec Applebee, who is spearheading the project, said: “The idea of this historical event is ripe with personal experience, history, intrigue, mystery, music, excitement, dance, festivities, and human connection. Rosevear is such a wild, desolate, sea quenched and inhospitable island, and the stories surrounding the construction of the Bishop Rock lighthouse are often tragic,whilst also showing great courage and ingenuity. It’s such an incredible and unlikely place to hold such an event.”

Although some exciting aspects of the project are already underway the major project launches in earnest in February 2023, with some community workshops during the half term holidays and Artists in Residence for Project Week at The Five Island Academy. The ‘Grand Ball’ project seeks to capture and celebrate the mystery, festivity and creativity of the Grand Ball of Rosevear.

Highlights from the project will include:

* + A world class team of creative practitioners and scientists working with The Five Island Academy students for ‘Project week’ in February;
  + A spectacular procession from Five Islands Academy (Friday 24th March);
  + A new musical commission and film from St Agnes Musician Piers Lewin, Full of Noises;
  + A ‘Grand Ball of Scilly’ barn dance on St Mary’s, featuring live music from the Barnacles and original songs from other fabulous local musicians (Friday 24th March);
  + An original performance from the St Mary’s Theatre Club featuring new writing from nationally acclaimed writer Anna Murphy (Saturday 25th March);
  + A story quilt made by the Lyonesse Quilters, which will feature in a new Museum on the Move display.
  + Arts and crafts activities and workshops within the community, including community bunting making and dance workshops (dates and details TBC);
  + Satellite performances from the St Mary’s Theatre Club on St Agnes, Bryher, Tresco and St Martin’s throughout the summer (dates TBC).

Bec continued: “I am delighted that together with the Isles of Scilly Museum we have been successful in securing our Arts Council England funding to enable us to research and celebrate these incredible events. This is a five-island community project, and we’ll be working hard to ensure that all the islands can access, enjoy and take part in this historic moment.”

The community is being encouraged to get involved in the run-up to the event and in activities taking place throughout the spring and summer. Visit grandballofscilly.org to find out more.

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**Editor’s notes**

The **Grand Ball of Scilly** is a creative project led by Bec Applebee in partnership with the Isles of Scilly Museum Association and funded by Arts Council England. Other partners include Creative Islands, Council of the Isles of Scilly, Five Islands Academy, St Mary’s Theatre Club, the Lyonesse Quilters, the Scilly Sirens, musician Piers Lewin and the Barnacles.

Contact communications consultant **Lucy McRobert** on 07532 344933 or [lucy.mcrobert@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:lucy.mcrobert@hotmail.co.uk) to arrange interviews with Bec Appleby or the Museum.

**Bec Applebee** is an experienced Theatre Director, Workshop leader and Producer with a keen interest in physical theatre and storytelling. She has worked with Some of Cornwall’s most influential theatre companies that include Kneehigh Theatre, Wild Works, Golden tree and Cousin Jacks theatre. She is passionate about promoting women in the workplace and creating interesting teams. She is a Traditional Cornish folk musician and singer with over 25 years of experience and an Associate lecturer at Falmouth University. <https://www.becapplebee.com>

**The Isles of Scilly Museum** <https://www.iosmuseum.org/>    
Our mission is to safeguard the traditions and the spirit of the islands and to enhance public understanding of Scillonian traditions and Scilly’s place in history. The Isles of Scilly Museum Association seeks to preserve for the public benefit matters relating to the islands’, history, archaeology and natural science.