

REFUGE

The English Civil War on Dartmoor

Including a brief relation of the pursuit of *John Elford* and the lamentable tale of the *Cavalier of Blackadon Tor*



Friday 11th March: *Manaton Parish Hall* (preview)

Saturday 12th March: *Manaton Parish Hall*

Tuesday 15th March: *Belstone Village Hall*

Thursday 17th March: *Meavy Parish Hall*

Friday 18th March: *Moretonhampstead Parish Hall*

Saturday 19th March: *Moretonhampstead Parish Hall*

REFUGE

text by Mark Beeson, with input from Lucy Hirst and MED Theatre’s Young Company

Alice Smerdon
Bess Smerdon
Anne Elford, daughter of Elford by his second wife Anna, living with Alice
Grace Elford, daughter of Elford by his second wife Anna, living with Alice

Katherine French, farmer’s wife
Esther French
Hannah French
Martha French

Oliver Cromwell

John Elford
Sarah Elford
William Elford
Nathaniel Elford
Prudence Northmore, Elford’s maidservant

May Gubbins
Annis Gubbins
Uh Gubbins

Francis Drake

Agnes Andrew, cousin of Katherine French
Ellen Nosworthy, widow and innkeeper
Anthony Rede, tinner
Bartholomew Ford, mason’s apprentice

Lt Richard Hele, Royalist officer
Lt Jack Hamlyn, Royalist officer
Nicholas Creber, soldier
Thomas Saunders, soldier

Musicians

Music and Front of House
Floor canvas
Mask
Costumes
Movement workshop
Publicity design
Assistant stage manager
Tour assistants
Direction

RACHEL CAVERHILL
JESS BOLTON
LAURA WILSON
MAE HOUSEGO

CONNIE BOLTON
MADDY EARP
MADISON MACDONALD
POPPY BECK

MARK WOOLNER

TOM GREEVES
KAY ARWEN
ANGELO ARWEN
LILO ARWEN
CLAIRE SMITH

LUCY PATRICK
EVIE FAULKNER
EMERALD WORSLEY-CUSTANCE

DAVID PANTON

FIONA LOFTHOUSE
CHRISTINE HOLDING
JOHN YOUNG
JONATHAN HIBBS

OLI STRATH
SAUL JENNER
EDWARD ROGERS
BEN CAVERHILL/STEPHEN TERRY

JONATHAN HIBBS (Flute)
LUCY PATRICK (Drum/Thumb piano)
GILLIAN WEBSTER
OLIVIA YOUNG
LINDA LEMIEUX
FIONA AVIS
ROSALYN MAYNARD
SARAH VIGARS
NORA OLSEN
BECKY DOBSON, SUVI REHELL
LUCY HIRST
ABBY STOBART
MARK BEESON

Thank you to all our volunteers - especially Christine Holding, Ellie Head, Helena Cronin and Nicky Hodges for props, Alison Hastie for leatherwork, and Miranda Martyn for rehearsal assistance. Thank you to Dr Tom Greeves and Dr Ian Mortimer for discussions on the history of the period.



Elford’s cave on Sheepstor, also known as the Pixies’ cave

Note on history and image

The war that tore communities apart across the country in the middle of the 17th century saw armies traversing Devon as much as any county in England, leaving devastation in their wake for the local inhabitants. Royalist commanders Ralph Hopton, George Goring and Richard Grenville led the Royalist forces in Devon between 1643 and 1646. Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex, came there with a Parliamentary force in 1644, before he was disastrously defeated by the King at Lostwithiel in Cornwall. Finally late in 1645 Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell brought the Parliamentary New Model Army to crush Royalist resistance, first at the battle of Bovey Heath on the eastern slopes of Dartmoor (January 9th 1646), then at the battle of Torrington (February 16th, 1646). Cromwell then went into Cornwall, but on his return passed through Tavistock and Okehampton. Fugitives from either side felt they needed a safe hide-out to avoid the wrath and vengefulness of the enemy; and the remote terrain of Dartmoor provided that. Blackadon Tor, above the confluence of the East and West Webburn Rivers, is the site of one such episode – according to Dartmoor’s pre-eminent chronicler, William Crossing, in his book *Gems in a Granite Setting* published in 1905, a cavalier hid here from the Parliamentarians, and was brought food every day by the young woman to whom he was betrothed. Meanwhile by chance he had come across another young woman from the district, who in Crossing’s words ‘brought him... kisses’.

John Elford, of Sheepstor, Dartmoor’s first identifiable artist in the modern sense of the term, was another who is said to have hidden from his enemies in a cave, this time during Cromwell’s Protectorate after the bulk of hostilities were over. We know from the diary of the radical vicar of Sheepstor John Syms (transcribed for us by Dr Tom Greeves from a manuscript in the British Library) that Elford’s family were orginally sympathetic to the Parliamentary cause, and Elford himself was both a member of the Long Parliament of 1640, and later a magistrate under Cromwell’s regime. His outspoken comment written provocatively on the front page of the Meavy Parish Register ‘a saevitia et ignorantia puitanica libera nos domine’ shows the extent of his disillusionment. Early in 1655 a Royalist conspiracy led by Colonel John Penruddock was defeated by the New Model Army at South Molton in North Devon. It was probably in the aftermath of this revolt that Elford went into hiding.

The image of the Phoenix is still visible on the relief sculpture in Sheepstor Church which Elford designed for his first wife Elizabeth Copplestone. The Phoenix is a multi-referential symbol - it was a mythical bird which is supposed to have risen out of the ashes of its own immolation, but it was also a palm tree known as the Tree of Life, and a red madder dye which came from Phoenicia. Dido, legendary Phoenician queen of Carthage who threw herself onto a pyre and in the process is seen as enabling the birth of Roman civilisation, is described by the poet Virgil as ‘Phoenissa’, which alludes to all of these. The Royalist poet Sidney Godolphin was engaged in writing a long poem about Dido when he was killed in a skirmish with Parliamentarians on the steps of the Three Crowns in Chagford in 1643. Elford also refers to the Phoenix on the memorial to his third wife Mary Gale in Widecombe Church, and his ‘hourglass’ or ‘sundial’ monument over the church porch at Sheepstor, as well as being a puritanical admonition on the brevity of life, is a version of the Green Man, itself related to the image of the Tree of Life. Here we can see art bringing the two sides together and laying some part of the foundations for the Restoration in 1660.



Left: the Phoenix on the relief sculpture memorial to Elford’s first wife in Sheeps- tor Church.
Right: the ‘hourglass’ or ‘sundial’ monu- ment over Sheepstor Church porch, with Elford’s signature on it, dated 1640.



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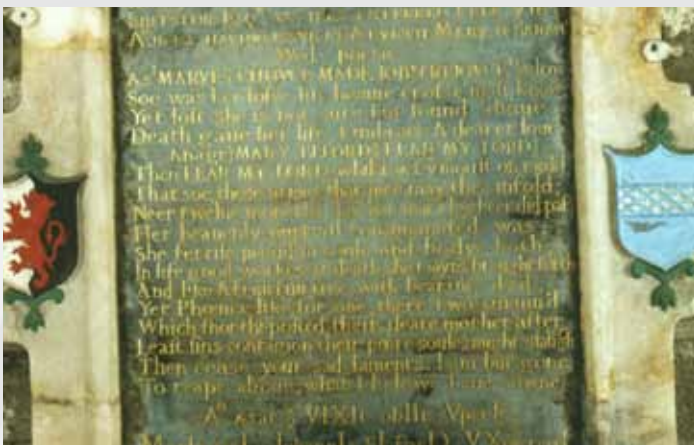
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Elford's monument to his third wife Mary in Widecombe Church