

GLEN BUGLASS

Chris Arnold – The person who dreamed up this idea is Glen. In fact I first met Glen in Stowe field watching the performance. I didn't know who he was and I said "Hello, are you part of this?"

He replied "Yes, I invented it!"

Glen - Good afternoon everyone, thank you for inviting me, it's very nice to be here.

Stories about the first Lichfield Mysteries: Well, it nearly killed me, that's the first thing to say, it really did; and several other people as well: I saw Kevin's face there - he nearly died; Colin Ablett – he should have died, but once again, he didn't. The thing about what's been achieved and what's going on to be achieved is something that... I dreamt this idea up in the bath one day, seriously I did. There I was in the bath, nothing else to do, and then the idea firmed itself up on a train ride into Birmingham that same morning. The whole thing about the three stages, having the town, the church and the countryside of Lichfield represented, like the Bible is really. Having it over two days rather than one because, being in showbusiness for quite a while, realising that everybody likes to do the show at least twice. The third time usually goes wrong, but certainly to do it twice means you get the idea of the day being born and dying and then rebirth to go on to the fruition which is a nice artistic idea for the Bible and Christianity and all of those things.

The thing that the Lichfield Mysteries is about for me is belief and passion, those two key concepts. You guys have had the belief and the passion for ten years now to carry this thing through, to make it what it always was in Medieval times: a tradition where ordinary people come together to celebrate their place, their culture and their abilities. I know that various people have found a tremendous amount of things from being involved in the Lichfield Mysteries: 'The greatest thing I've ever done' – I've heard people say that - 'the greatest thing I've been involved in'. But any arts endeavour should be life-changing, it should be about moving people on from one place to another. Certainly for me it's done that, because we came to the end of the Lichfield Mysteries in 1994 and we were on our knees with exhaustion, the group that did it, but elated as well at the same time. Off the back of that I managed to get a job working in Walsall for their Community Arts Team, where I still work, and I have a career now that I'm extremely happy with. I know that the Lichfield Mysteries was the turning point, if I hadn't done them I don't think I'd have been employed there, so it was a life-changing thing for me.

My story: I do have one and it's to do with money, because Colin alluded to the fact that we did everything on tick, on peoples' goodwill, but some extraordinary people gave us some goodwill. We've got to think about this belief thing and this passion thing as well. Colin Ablett was, I think, the first person that I talked to about the idea and he said "Well Glen, if you're gonna do it, I'm sure it's gonna work. I'll be the chairman and you can do all the work!" Which is not completely true, he worked his socks off.

There was a man called John Lang, I don't know if you remember him, the very Reverend John Lang, the Dean of Lichfield Cathedral. I was at one meeting with him in this massive office at the manse and I told him this barking idea about doing a play which was going to have 600 people in it, go on over two days and reflect the Bible. He sat down, looked at me, went to this green baize table in which the lid opened and inside there was a filing cabinet. He took out one sheet of paper, put it down and wrote 'premises' – I saw him do it – and put it back in there. Then about three days later I had a phone call from the guy who runs all the properties for the diocese of Lichfield who said "I've got a school for you and a house if you need it."

Did he think I was going to move to Lichfield? But that was the mark of that man.

There was another man, he's probably the black sheep of the family, whose name is John Myatt. He bankrolled me to actually make it possible for me to be able to live, you know, to buy potatoes for these fine girls, cos we are a Celtic family so we do like potatoes; and to make it possible for me to be able to spend two years doing it. It wasn't a great deal of money, it was £6,000.00, but artists live on air, don't they, and I proved it. Anyway, he bankrolled it and, when the police had finished interviewing me about this great crime which this man had done in forging the Sutherland sketches, or something they were called, the policeman went away saying "That's the first and only time that I've ever heard of a villain giving away his ill-gotten gains." That's what the man said!

So I'd like to record my thanks to John Myatt, to John Lang and to Colin Ablett, for believing in me to actually make it happen.

Then Lichfield itself, actually trying to persuade Lichfield that it could work, was two years worth of really hard graft; but you did, everybody believed it. The Ryknild Rabble were fantastic, they were the first 'nut' group to turn up. I realised, meeting Bob Dalrymple and Co, that it was going to work fine, because it was all pretty insane.

We've got to think about the artists as well, because the artistry of the project: Robert Leach writing those scripts – Robert Leach was my teacher at university where I did a drama degree in Birmingham – and both of us were very interested in political theatre, but political in the sense of involving people in theatre, rather than it being agitprop or whatever. He wrote a fantastic script that I know you're still using. Diana Duncan, God rest her, what a fantastic theatre designer. We're very privileged, we've got Heather Wastie, the musician, here today, who I've had the great privilege of working with right through these past ten years. She's a superb community musician and going off to do even greater projects in Solihull.

So, we're all fine, you're all going to do it again in 2006 – only two years away, I hope you're well on with the organising. I'm going to wish you all very well for that, it's very nice to be here this afternoon. It was a life-changing experience for me and that's how it should be for everybody, so enjoy it and get your lives changed.

Remember the power of the arts!