

The History of Hull

Aim:

This piece was originally devised for a performed at an event in mid-2016 to encourage and inspire Hull churches to engage with the City of Culture 2017. It has subsequently been performed as street drama at the Hull Freedom Festival.

Performers:

Six performers in a row, plus a seventh needed for sound effects (SFX).

Props & Notes:

The six have their props to hand.

There is an A-frame easel with cards with relevant dates and some other images.

It benefits from a number of short sound effects, lots of silly props, and LOTS and LOTS of energy.

The History of Hull

1) As part of our contribution to the City of Culture we thought it would be a valuable contribution for us to re-create some key moments of both the history and contemporary culture of our city of Hull. We hope you'll find it informative, cultural, interesting, educational,

2) *coughs and points at watch*

1) Oh, and quick, yes, really quick. This is our...

2) oh

3) so

4) speedy

5) tour

6) of Hull

1) it's people

2) history

3) and culture

4) in

5) less

6) than

All) 5 minutes!!!

Everyone takes a large breath

1) And go!!!

2) *(Mortar Board and blackboard?)*

The Humber Estuary links the rivers of Yorkshire and the East Midlands with the North Sea
(As *blue cloths laid out on either side*)

3) In the Middle Ages (*sfx – lute music*) Hull developed as a port,

4) Exporting wool to Europe (*sheep passed/thrown & baas*)

5) And importing timber (*“timber!” - inflatable tree, felled and caught*)

6) And sea-going ships (*sfx – fog horn*) anchored in the mouth of the Hull to transfer cargo to and from smaller ships that could sail up the rivers to

2) Beverley

4) Nottingham

3) Knottingley

5) Selby

6) and York (**blue ribbons thrown out?**)

1) In 1293 the port was bought by King Edward the First (**sfx : fanfare & crown & money thrown out**) to use as a supply basis for his military campaign to Scotland (“**och, noooo**”)

4) And in 1299 he named the city,

All) (sfx fanfare & scroll??) Kingston upon Hull!!!

5) Fast forward through the 14th century

2) the 15th century

3) the 16th century

6) And the ups and downs of trading, where riches were made and lost

1) To the Civil War

4) Terribly sorry to do battle with you

5) It's quite all right. Fully understand old chap

1) The Civil War, the Roundheads and Cavaliers

6) During which King Charles the First wanted to take Hull

(Charles arrives on hobby horse sfx knock knock-knock)

2) Lord Hotham let me in, let me in

6) And all its weapons, stored within the city walls

2) Let me in, let me in

6) But Lord Hotham said

3) Not by the hairs of my chinny, chin, chin

2) Erm, sorry what?

3) Not by the..... ok no! No! You're not coming in... er, your Majesty

2) Cut off their...

3 &4 Eek (*hold their heads*)

2) No, cut off their...

3 & 4 Eek (*cover their bits*)

2) No! Supplies! Cut off their supplies! Lay them siege!

3) Oh that's ok then!

6) And so the Cavaliers, the Royalists besieged the town for 5 whole weeks in 1643

1) But Kingston upon Hull stood strong!

(*round of applause*)

2) And was represented in Parliament by leading English Republican Sir Henry Vane

(*round of applause*)

1) And shortly after this, and around the Restoration of the Monarchy, Hull was represented by the local born poet Andrew Marvell

(*round of applause interrupted by horn honking*)

5) Pit stop! Did you know....

(*Groans*)

5) Did you know that Andrew Marvell, the 17th century leading metaphysical poet, is still studied on curriculums today?

3) Had we but world enough and time,

This coyness, lady, were no crime.

We would sit down, and think which way

To walk, and pass our long love's day.

4) Ooh, what a *marvel* !

(*groans*)

5) But is one of many poets associated with Hull, like our most famous librarian, Philip Larkin

3) Why should I let the toad work

Squat on my life?

Can't I use my wit as a pitchfork

And drive the brute off?

4) I bet he liked

5) Don't

4) *larkin* around

5) Stevie Smith was born here

3) I was much further out than you thought
And not waving but drowning.

4) A true
5) don't

4) word *smith*

5) The poet laureate Andrew Motion lectured here

3) Is that you leaving now? Very well. As for me I have not done

4) Actualpoetry in *motion*

5) And Roger McGough studied here

3) i wanted one life
you wanted another
we couldn't have our cake
so we ate eachother.

4) Ooh I bet that Mr McGough likes a good ...

All) DON'T!!!

5) And all these and others lead Australian author Peter Porter to describe Hull as “the most poetic city in England”

(round of applause, horn honks)

6) In the 18th century, Hull's development as a port accelerated due to increasing trade through agriculture (*moo! - Someone sails past and hands over a cow*), and industry (*sails past and hands over ???!*)

1) And in 1778 the first dock was opened (*cut a ribbon, applause*)

4) And the population grew bigger (**eats**)

2) In number (*paper figure chain*)

3) As new spacious middle-class suburbs developed outside of the Old Town (*2 people chatting over a fence*)

5) And in the 19th century, industry grew around processing the raw materials coming in through the

port, lie corn milling (*machine of people*)

6) (Honks horn) Did you know (*all groan*) did you know that some famous inventions and big companies have come out of Hull?

4) like pattie and chips!

6) No, like crystals used in LCD (*sfx Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds,*) no LCD -liquid crystal display

All) oh!

6) Used in television screens, (*a hoop is held up, and then turned into...*) digital watches, calculators and computers, it's now a billion dollar industry,

All) Ooh!

6) Also, ultrasound to detect osteoporosis (*2nd hoop used*) and 12,000 machines have been sold worldwide

All) Wow!

6) Also, John Venn created one of the most famous diagrams used in probability, logic, statistics and computer science

(2 has got bored and started hula hooping – the others realise and get the hoop and put it with the others to form)

All) The Venn Diagram!!

(During this 6 has put a boiled sweet in his mouth, so the next line he completely mumbles)

6) (something to the effect of...) And Frederick Needler from Skirlaugh manufactured the first boiled sweets in Hull

All) Pardon?

6) repeats the mumble

All) What??

3) Hang on!

3 holds hand out and 6 spits sweet into it

6) And Frederick Needler from Skirlaugh manufactured the first boiled sweets in Hull

All) Oh!!

3) sweet. (*throws sweet into the audience*)

Horn honks to continue

1) But not all trade was to be celebrated.

4) The transportation of slaves and the trading of people as commodities had become widely accepted

3) Until

2 and 5 come out sparring

1) In the red corner we have pretty much the entire British parliament, nobility and merchant force of the 18th century

4) And in the blue corner, we have Mr William Wilberforce, citizen of Hull, member of Parliament, committed Christian and one of leaders of the campaign to abolish slavery

1) The red corner has come out fighting, causing the Abolitionists blow after blow, vote after vote

4) The Abolitionists are still standing but can they keep up their fight in the face of such opposition

1) Twenty years of defeats, but they kept on fighting

4) Until in 1807 they finally won the vote in spectacular style, and the Slave Trade was halted

1) Wilberforce continued to fight for freedom of all those in slavery for another 20 years until his health failed him

4) He finally saw the passing of the act to abolish all slavery a mere 3 days before he died in 1833

1) And Hull remains proud of this son of the city, and his fight for freedom, even today.

(Sfx -ding, ding)

5) The other major trade in the late 18th century was whaling

(All the others start to wail)

5) And in the 1840s the fishing trade was hugely boosted by the discovery of the “silver pits” - a very fish-rich part of the North Sea *(lots of little paper fish thrown out, and nets used to try and catch them)*

(1 honks the horn)

1) Did you know *(all groan)* did you know that Hull's sea industry has had key parts to play in history and literature?

All) Ooh!

1) The Bounty, skippered by the infamous Captain Bligh was built and launched in Hull. 2 years later Captain Bligh was cast adrift by his own mutinous crew.

(hat and telescope)

And Daniel Defoe's castaway Robinson Crusoe set sail from Queen's Dock in Hull, as written, “The ship was no sooner out of the Humber than the wind began to blow and the sea to rise in a most frightful manner, and as I had never been to sea before, I was most inexpressibly sick in body and terrified in mind.”

(Sou'wester hats, movement of sea, miming being sick into a bucket, bucket (of confetti) gets thrown into the audience)

Horn honks

3) In the late 19th century, the new steam powered trawlers took the fishermen further out, and the railways brought people and freight in

2) And Hull prospered

4) Live long and prosper

6) And in 1897 Hull was granted the status of City

(cheers)

5) In 1903, Amy Johnson was born

4) And in 1930, just 2 years after starting flying lessons, she became the first female pilot to fly alone from Britain to Australia, an 11,000 mile journey in a single engine plane.

1) The 1920s and 1930s saw industrial decline, but also improvements in housing and the construction of estates on the outskirts of the City ***(plans unrolled)***

2) And the University was founded in 1927 ***(plans rolled back up and handed over as though a degree ceremony)***

5) Life was good

1) And then

2 then 3 then 4 then 5 then 6) And then

(They freeze. Sfx – air raid siren and bombs – slow motion movement so the whole thing slows down for a moment)

6) During the Second World War, in March and May 1941 Hull's strategic importance saw it devastated by air raids. The City was the heaviest bombed outside London but for security reasons, journalists were only allowed to refer to bombing in a 'north east costal town' so the rest of the country remained unaware that ninety-five percent of Hull's homes were destroyed or damaged by bombs

(Horn honks)

3) Did you know ***(groans)*** did you know these other lesser known facts about Hull...

Hull claims to have the smallest window in England

Hull has or has had trails featuring fish, toads and elephants

Hull Truck and John Godber has produced one of the most frequently performed plays in the English language.

4, 1 and 2 all put on sun glasses

1) On average, Bouncers is performed at least 8 times a year by smaller repertory companies

4) And is toured at least twice a year

2) Any questions?

3) And in 1937 Hull-born J Arthur Rank founded the Rank Organisation which founded or owned many famous brands in the entertainment industry, including 5 leading film studios

(A gong is hit)

Including Pinewood which over 5 decades produced the Carry On films

(quote – e.g. ooh Matron)

And the director of the Carry On films was also born in Hull!

(quote)

Gerald Thomas directed all 31 of the Carry On films

(quote)

(horn honks)

3) Carry on!

6) After the war, the profile of trade in Hull changed with the smaller, older docks closing

5) And in 1969 Queen Elizabeth Dock opened to handle container traffic.

4) In the 1970s, the fishing industry collapsed for Hull, following the Cod Wars with Iceland

(hitting with fish)

2) But many of the old industries survived

1) And after 700 years, the port is still a major importer of timber from Northern Europe

(as before, “timber!”)

4) In 1981, the Humber Bridge was opened to traffic

3) It is a 2,220-metre, single-span suspension bridge, and at the time was the longest of its kind in the world

(Horn honks)

2) Did you know (*groans*) did you know that Hull has a vibrant music scene, with classical music being represented by the Hull Philharmonic, the Hull Choral Union, the Hull Bach Choir, the Hull Male Voice Choir and many others. There are also 2 Gilbert and Sullivan Societies and 2 champion brass bands

(sfx – during this – sound of an orchestra tuning up, choral voices, quick burst of Gilbert & Sullivan and then a trombone slide – all mimed during)

We have loads of fantastic music venues across the city which have played host to famous bands, and Hull has produced gifted musicians of its own including Mick Ronson,

- 6) Red Guitars,
- 5) Everything but the Girl
- 4) The Beautiful South
- 3) Roland Gift
- 2) And the Housemartins

(sfx -Happy Hour – this plays to the end of the piece now, quietly, to give some sense of urgency, especially the repetition bit “happy hour again and again and again!”)

(As it starts everyone begins to dance, then

sfx : 30 seconds left, 30 seconds left)

Music comes back on, everyone begins to panic, I honks the horn

the last bit is sped through

1) Did you know? (*groans*) Did you know there's loads of other stuff to enjoy in Hull too, like,

6) great pubs and restaurants

5) fantastic museums

4) theatres and performance spaces

3) Ferens and other art galleries

2) loads of different festivals

1) and the world's first and only submarium!

(sfx 20 seconds, 20 seconds)

3 flies through this last bit with the others acting it out around them)

3) And so to the 21st century! In the last 15 years Hull has experienced:

The opening of St Stephen's and the moving of Hull Truck Theatre

The rebuilding and of the Fruit Market

The arrival of the Tall Ships

Massive floods across the city

The opening of the moving Scale Lane footbridge, the first of its type in the UK

The winning of the Siemens contract

The appointment of only the second female bishop in the country

Hull City's first ever experience of Premiership football in its 104 year life

The staging of the 2013 Rugby League World Cup

The start of the Freedom Festival

and Olympic Gold for Luke Campbell

sfx – 5 seconds, 5 seconds – plus a clock ticking down

2) And in 18 months time,

1) 120 years after gaining its status as a city,

4) Kingston upon Hull will take up its position as

5) City of Culture 2017.

All) Thank you!

And collapse!