

The Berry Theatre is delighted to announce it has received a £25,000 grant from the Agincourt 600 memorial fund that will be used to educate primary school children about the legendary figure of Southampton, Sir Bevis.

As part of commemorations to mark the 600th anniversary of the famous Battle of Agincourt, over the coming months, the Hedge End theatre will work with Southampton writer Matt Beames and two local primary schools to produce a new play that will be performed by Key Stage 1 pupils.

It will form part of Road To Agincourt, a two-year programme that charts Hampshire's pivotal role in King Henry V's journey to war.

Matt Beames' (pictured below) *The Legends of Sir Bevis* will centre on a young Henry V gaining inspiration for leading the famous victory at Agincourt from the heroic tales of Bevis and Ascupart while being held as a prisoner by King Richard II to prevent Henry's exiled father reclaiming the throne.



The ancient stories of Sir Bevis and Ascupart, his 30-foot giant squire, date back to the 13th century and were a firm favourite of Henry V, who owned many tapestries depicting Sir Bevis' battles with fearsome dragons and giant wild boar and the turbulent romance with his wife, Josian.

The tales have since inspired the names of locations in Southampton such as Bevois Valley, Bevois Mount and Ascupart Street.

Classes from Freegrounds Primary School in Hedge End and Norwood Primary School from Eastleigh will work with the writer and The Berry Theatre's Drama Development Team to produce 10 minutes of the play per class. The play will be the culmination of a series of lessons and workshops across History, Literacy and Drama that aim to use the region's myths and legends as an education tool to spark children's interest in history.

The final performance, set to be staged on March 10th, 2016, at The Berry Theatre, will piece together all four classes' contributions with short films and a song in the style of the era.

Accompanying *The Legends of Sir Bevis* play will be a comic book, devised by Marcus Pullen of Blue Donut Studios, a multimedia production company based at Eastleigh's Tec Hub in Wessex House.

Dr Cheryl Butler, Head of Culture at Eastleigh Borough Council, which runs The Berry Theatre, and who heads the Road To Agincourt project, said:

"A lot of people applied for this fund and were not successful, so the fact that our project was chosen gives us a great deal of encouragement that the quality that we have put in has been recognised."

"The extra funding will allow us to make the project more creative and imaginative, and also gives us a chance to experiment with combining digital and traditional performances, which is still quite new."

"We've received hugely positive feedback from everyone involved across the whole of our Agincourt project, from our audiences to our participants, and that's what makes being part of it so worthwhile."

Paula Kitching, project manager for the Agincourt 600 memorial fund, said:

"Eastleigh has put together a solid, well-managed project with a very high community engagement that will provide a legacy for future generations."

"They have understood our vision of enabling communities to take part in a roots-up, rather than a top-down approach that gives a real opportunity to educate everyone on how important Agincourt is to our collective history."

"It is one of the key battles that defines our country's military history, and represents a hugely impressive tactical victory over a much larger French force."

Theatre receives funding to create new children's story about
legendary Southampton figure | 3

For more details on Agincourt600, visit www.agincourt600.co.uk

[In Conversation With... Matt Beames](#) from [Road to Agincourt](#) on [Vimeo](#).