Setting

The play is set mainly on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne. And also (briefly) in Hull and York.

“September 2022 and 1895. Time and space is fluid, The two worlds coexist, the past and present merging into one emotional truth.”

Background

We first met the four former fish packers in 2005, when they were packing fish in a Hull fish plant – Pearl (then in her 50s), Jan (then in her 40s) and Shelley and Linda (in their 20s). The earlier play – ‘Ladies Day’ – told how these four work colleagues went on an outing to York Races (that year hosting the Royal Ascot race meeting) and how they won the Tote Jackpot.

A sequel play (‘Ladies Down Under’) told how the ladies celebrated their winnings with a once in a lifetime trip to Australia.

This third play is entirely stand alone, revisiting the four friends, now a generation older, some years later.

Story

Pearl, Jan and Linda visit the Island of Lindisfarne for a long-awaited break, but also to celebrate Linda’s impending marriage. They are unable to book in to their pre-arranged accommodation, because of a mix-up over the booking, and have to spend the night outside. Shelley suddenly arrives, having travelled (she says) from Australia and many of the old tensions between the four friends surface and bubble. All still looking for meaning in their lives. They argue and ultimately re-connect.

As this story develops, there are scenes where two ‘Herring Girls’, working in the local herring processing plant in 1895, are introduced – Mabel and Daisy, who are both anxious to leave and make their fortunes elsewhere – Mabel in particular has ambitions to leave and make her living in the city, performing in music halls and we see her singing and dancing. Daisy is reluctant to follow. Then they ‘transform’ into 21st century ladies, wild swimmers, who connect with the other girls.

Characters

Pearl: Now in her sixties, a grandmother. Having been through an affair with a kindly bookie some year ago, she is still married uneasily to her husband, but about to separate. The mother figure of the group.

Jan: Still single, having divorced her no-good husband years ago and living partially through the experiences of her daughter, who she has smothered with attention but who now has moved to the other side of the world with a good job and has little contact. Lonely.

Linda: About to enter into a same sex marriage. Now in her forties. Open and gentle, still learning about life.
**Shelley:** A chaotic force of nature, but at the same time vulnerable and exploited. It emerges that she has actually been working for a minimum wage in Scarborough as a cleaner and sex worker.

**Mabel:** Older than Daisy. Worldly wise. Determined to make it on the music hall. Positive, outgoing. Will also double **Frankie,** a harassed mother of three young children, who got to occupy the holiday accommodation booked by the ‘Ladies’.

**Daisy:** 19 years old. Kind, with a simple upbringing, looking after a sick mother. Coming to the herring processing from her home in Hull, but anxious to escape. Subsequently made pregnant. Will also double **Ali,** a student, on her way to a post-graduate interview at York University.

As the play proceeds all develop depth in their characters and their relationships with the others.