

Walls within Walls by Bridie Jackson

First movement

[Music suggesting wild landscape, distance, walking, peace, reflection]

[Gill speaking]

It's the most spectacular landscape with the Whin Sill and Walltown and Cawfields... Just after we moved here, we were walking with some friends up to Walltown and we paused on top of the crags and I was amazed 'cos we could look down and we could see this tiny white speck that was our house. And I felt *[gets emotional]* – I'm doing it now – it's one of those things where you think, 'Wow'. But it does have a massive emotional impact to think that you are part of a historic landscape.

[Dave speaking]

A lot of other historical places are almost exclusive in terms of excluding people from access. But, you know, it's just...it's there and you can walk up to it, you can touch it...

[Jude speaking]

I'm very, very selfish about it really. When I'm out in the landscape, I'm enjoying it most if there's nobody there and, if I see somebody on the next two hills along, it's already spoiling my day until they've gone past.

[Lyn's words spoken]

The morning my mum died, I came straight up here and I just parked the car and I went up on the Wall and I just sat there. The sun and the views and the perfect peace and quiet. It was...it was just cathartic, you know. Well, I dunno – it just clears your soul somehow, you know. It was the only place I wanted to be.

[Music ends]

Second movement

[Bridie singing]

Let the earth speak
Let it speak
Let the past speak
Let it speak
Of giants in retreat
And force, veiled as peace
Truth is buried underneath
Let it speak
Let it speak
Let it speak.
Ooooo...

[Andrew speaking]

One of the ways to look at the monument is this absolute failure of military occupation to pacify the landscape. Because, in the end, Hadrian's Wall had to be garrisoned for the entire length of Roman Britain, you know, for over 300 years. The Roman army and its administration poured money into our landscape – our place – because they couldn't succeed in completely converting the local population into being completely pro-Roman. So Hadrian's Wall is this incredible monument in so many different ways; you can read it and learn lessons from it.

[Gary speaking]

Gates is always, you know, a tricky one. With people just, like, leaving gates open and people sort of littering and things like that. There's been a little bit more wild camping going on because we've kind of had a lockdown but you couldn't B&B it, so people are kind of doing things on the sly.

[Jude speaking]

Quite recently, we were driving past Birdoswald, and people were walking on top of the Wall. Like a long row of them, walking along the top of the Wall, and I was really shocked.

[Ian speaking]

Some people...farmers often say they're the custodians of the countryside, and some are. But there are some that are not, and if people in cities dropped litter like some farmers do in the countryside, the cities would probably be ten foot deep in litter, because farmers dump loads of stuff...

[Andrew speaking]

Climate change is affecting everything that's above the ground and also having quite an impact below as well, in terms of water levels, acidity in soils...all sorts of stuff going on there, which we're only really getting to grips with now. The long and short of it is that, if it's buried underground, it does still continue to change. So, things that you might've found 30 or 40 years ago at some sites will be completely gone now, will be lost. So the clock is ticking.

[Singing ends]

Third movement

[Music suggesting hope, joy, renewal, walking, the outdoors, wistfulness]

[Dan speaking]

Hadrian's Wall's immovable, and it's still there and it's been there...it's been through far worse than I'll ever imagine, but it's still there. And there's still beautiful things happening and next year there'll be people laughing and meeting on the Wall. And a year later, or twenty or thirty years after I'm gone, there'll still be people holding hands looking at the exact same thing as I did and the exact same things somebody did a hundred years before me, five hundred years before me, a thousand years, fifteen-hundred, two thousand years. So, it's got a pretty good, solid history for me to be able to say, 'I've walked the Wall, it hasn't moved, things get bad, things get better...'

[Bridie singing]

One day soon
I will take your hand
And we'll walk the Wall
And try to understand.
Looking back,
So we can move on
Knowing better days
Will come.

[End]