

Friday, June 29, 2001

New musical spotlights SW born US naval hero



● The cottage at Arbigland where the founder of the modern US Navy, John Paul Jones, was born.

● Solway drama — an actor plays the part of a US sailor at the weekend.



Ship-shape show

Photo Special by Bryan Armstrong

VISITORS to the Solway Coast could be excused for thinking they had travelled back in time at the weekend. For members of The Freedom Company, who are set to perform a groundbreaking new musical about swash-buckling hero John Paul Jones, were dressed in period costume as they visited some of his early haunts. The life of the seaman, born in a humble cottage near the shore at Arbigland, Carsethorn is being portrayed in words, music and dance in the show which will have its world premier at the Church Hill Theatre, Edinburgh on Monday 9th and will run to Saturday 14th July. The composer, writer and producer Julian Wagstaff and members of the cast toured the area on Saturday and visited Dumfries and the John Paul Jones Museum and birthplace at Arbigland. Julian, who hopes the show can eventually be adapted for the big screen, said: "I was keen to ensure historical accuracy, while creating an entertaining stage production with a strong storyline. "The more I researched John Paul Jones' life the more I felt that here was a perfect musical. "There have been many talented Scots but few have had their nationality widely known. I think a musical like this could eventually lead to Jones and his Scottish links receiving the acclaim they deserve". The production traces the life of the gardener's son, translates the Battle of Flamborough Head into a rousing choral and ballet number and includes Jones' most famous comment: "I have not yet begun to fight ...". Tickets and group bookings for the show can be made direct from company on 0131-228-1155 while leaflets and postal application forms are available at the JPJ museum at Arbigland.



● Remembering one of Scotland's forgotten heroes — writer, composer and producer Julian Wagstaff with the bust of John Paul Jones at his birthplace museum.



● A Dumfries friend of John Paul Jones, Janet Taylor, played by Norma Kinnear, in the grounds of the JPJ birthplace cottage at Arbigland at the weekend. Looking on are other members of the cast, left to right: US sailor, Chris Allan; Martha, Sarah Gilchrist; Dumfries townswoman, Kate Palmer; Benjamin Franklin, John Mills; French aristocrat, Susan Bruce; Lady Selkirk, Jackie Bruce and Senator Howarth, Steve Hutchison.