AN ISLAND ODYSSEY
Storytelling Festival Takes to the Waves

The 2011 Scottish International Storytelling Festival is the most ambitious so far, and full of new treats.

The islands theme teams up fourteen Scottish islands with seven Mediterranean ones, and the results can be enjoyed both in Edinburgh and on islands ranging from the Cumbraes in the southwest to the Shetlands in the north east. This is our storytelling contribution to Scotland’s Year of Islands, and it weaves in music, song and dance as well.

In addition to these Island Night entertainments there is a Greek theme, reminding us in advance of next year’s Olympics, where it all began. That includes following the story of the Odyssey through the week and a ‘Team Olympus’ programme of family events about gods, champions and heroes.

For those who are not island-hopping, the Edinburgh programme has also grown and the last weekend will see the Complete Odyssey, All-saints and Hallowe’en events at The Hub, home of the Edinburgh International Festival. The re-furbished National Museum in Chambers Street, the Botanic Gardens and other partners in the city also have their own distinctive take on the Festival themes.

With workshops, networking, talks, Meet the Storyteller and other side delicacies the overall 2011 offer is a banquet of storytelling delights. For the full programme see www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk/festival/

Last but not least, Tell-a-Story Day is Friday 28th October with expanded events, resources and storyteller visits across Scotland. See www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk/festival/tasd.asp

Tell-a-Story Day
What’s Your Story?

Trad Arts Come Together

The Storytelling Centre has been hosting an increasing number of music and dance events, along with happenings that combine storytelling with the other traditional arts. This is drawing excellent attendances and great feedback from the public.

Behind the scenes also the Trad Arts Networks are working more closely together, and looking to a future when all of our traditions can be reunited in contemporary culture, in the way they often were in the past.

The Scottish Storytelling Forum is delighted to be part of a group, Chaired by Dr Gary West, which includes the Traditional Music Forum and the re-forming Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust, along with representatives from Scots and Gaelic language organisations.

The group is hoping to have a wider meeting in the autumn to consult with their member organisations about ideas for stronger co-operation and greater promotion of Scotland’s oldest artforms.
Sibylle Alexander
All those involved with the Storytelling Centre and particularly the Guid Crack Club, will be saddened to hear of Sibylle Alexander’s death. Her distinctive experience of growing up under the Nazis shaped her strong character and deep moral and spiritual conviction. All of this was reflected in her storytelling and story collections. It was always interesting to reflect that Sibylle’s Fairy Tales and Saints Legends were an ancient tradition renewed in the ruins of post-war Germany.
Sibylle will also be remembered for her championing of nursery education and her advocacy of delaying formal schooling until aged six. Nature Kindergartens were a lively passion which also fed into her storytelling. Sibylle brought something special to Scotland’s storytelling rainbow, and our thoughts are with the Alexander family as they remember her long and rich life.

Jesse Paul
(Inverness)
Jesse is a performance storyteller and writer with a background in theatrical arts. Armed with a ukulele and a repertoire of stories from around the world, she uses rhythm, live music and a good helping of audience participation. She loves telling absurd stories and ludicrous moral yarns, but also tells more contemplative stories, often using song and original ballads. Jesse also creates spontaneous tales, improvising stories using fresh ideas from the audience to create deliciously funny yarns.

Alastair McIver
(Glasgow)
Alastair McIver has a wide repertoire of stories from around the world but also likes to tell his own imaginative stories, as well as personal reminiscence and stories made up on the spot. His storytelling style is quirky, laid-back and inclusive, and he has an ability to form a strong rapport with his audience, especially children.
Alastair has been telling stories as long as he can talk, with clear memories of telling dinosaur tales into a cheap tape recorder when he was six. He grew up in Dumfries hearing stories of Charlie and Dobbin, a boy and his talking horse, invented by his father. As an adult, Alastair has introduced the Charlie and Dobbin stories to a new generation of young listeners. As well as being a storyteller, he is also an author, and his debut novel, Glasgow Fairytale, is available from Black and White Books.

Colin Williamson
(Livingston)
Colin is the grandson of a great teller, so he has been listening to stories all his life and lot of his learning came from this most ancient tradition. Colin is a historian and ethnologist and is passionate about Scotland’s history, folklore and customs. Tales of Wallace, Bruce and Jacobite Tales are among Colin’s favourites and he also likes to adapt traditional tales to suit the world our children live in and he has even developed some stories of his own. Colin has a vast working experience as an interactive tour guide in Central Scotland, with excellent historical knowledge and tales. Colin works with Dyslexia Scotland and uses storytelling to enhance the lives of those who are Dyslexic or have learning differences. In his spare time he volunteers with Radio Grapevine at St John’s Hospital Livingston where he produces the Friday Night Show and presents Stories on Air.

Kati Waitzmann
(Glasgow)
Kati Waitzmann comes from Germany and has now lived in Scotland for nine years. Her repertoire centres around Grimm’s tales, Glasgow’s old stories and myths and legends of Skye learned from the renowned Skye storyteller George Macpherson. Kati believes passionately in the power of stories to change our attitudes and our awareness of our surroundings, and her enthusiasm for storytelling is fuelled by positive feedback from a wide range of audiences. Kati is a storyteller because, although stories are everywhere, in memory, in archives, libraries, tapes, books, it is only through telling them to a live audience that stories do come to life and live on, engaging the listener in the most unexpected or expected ways. Kati is currently taking storytelling into Glasgow’s secondary schools as part of a storytelling fellowship programme at Glasgow Mediums.

Find us on Facebook
Follow us on Twitter
A Working Group for Storytelling with Older People

In March the Scottish Storytelling Forum agreed to set up a working group of storyteller practitioners to look at the future support and development of storytelling with older people across Scotland. This August the group met for the first time to agree a work plan for the coming months.

The background
The Forum’s Life Stories group has been delivering an annual storytelling project in a different area of Edinburgh for the last five years, funded by City of Edinburgh Council local community grants. These projects often reach groups of older people who just could not normally afford a storyteller fee. Unfortunately though, this type of funding means that the project is time-limited, and the following year the group must move to another area. Storytellers elsewhere in the country also regularly work in older people’s settings, such as care homes and day centres, and have also independently run community intergenerational projects in conjunction with libraries and schools. However many storytellers report a lack of available funding, meaning they often need to work on a voluntary basis with local groups. Others have highlighted gaps in training and support for storytellers who want to work with older people in this way.

Meanwhile, the Scottish Storytelling Centre have partnered the Scottish Poetry Library through the Scottish Arts Council’s Resilience fund, to employ consultants Blake Stevenson to carry out a research study into how storytelling, poetry and song sessions could be funded and delivered to care homes across the country. A pilot project in three areas of Scotland is planned for 2012. This work, coupled with Creative Scotland’s exciting plans for a festival of Arts and Older People in October 2012 means that the Working Group are riding a wave of interest around the potential and future of storytelling in older people’s settings.

Plans for the future
The group will be looking at new models of storyteller mentoring and development, and will be drawing together collective knowledge and experience of models of best practice, guidelines and resources for storytellers. The group have begun the process by gathering an evidence-based case for the huge benefits and value of storytelling with older people, in order to eventually search for funds for a 3-year plan to support storytellers across the country in sustainable storytelling activity with the older people who would benefit most.

If you have a project report or evaluation from a storytelling project you’ve run with older people, or you’d like to pass on your experiences or knowledge to the group, please do email esther@scottishstorytellingcentre.com

There are now over 125 storytellers working in different ways and in different settings all over Scotland.

Visit the Directory at www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk

Reminiscence and Life Story Work
Faith Gibson
(Jessica Kingsley Publishers)
ISBN 978 1 84905 IS 4 £18.99

Liz Wilson, storyteller and member of the Life Stories group, reviews a new handbook for storytelling with older people.

Although aimed mainly at those who deal on a daily basis with people with dementia there is much in this book of interest to those, like me, who deal on an occasional basis with people with this illness through my work with the Scottish Storytelling Centre’s Life Stories Group.

The chapters cover all aspects of reminiscence work such as how to plan a Reminiscence Project, dealing with people not only with dementia but suffering from depression, or who have sensory, speech and learning disabilities. Also covered are Intergenerational Reminiscence, Reminiscence with Groups and with Individuals and Reminiscence with Ethnic Minority Groups. Something there for all of us who visit the various groups within this country’s elderly population.

At the end of each chapter you can check on your understanding of what is covered by tackling the exercises and also note the key points covered.

The book is full of ideas for topics which can us used for work with groups and how these topics can trigger memories e.g. childhood (brothers and sisters, street rhymes, books and comics), schooldays (journey to school, what I kept in my pencil case, school dinners), and work (my first job, how much was in my first pay packet).

This is a good handbook to have when taking part in a Life Stories group project but can also be a good tool when planning further reminiscence work with lots of ideas to help us come up with some very interesting projects.
Connecting and Re-Connect ing with Stories

In the last edition of Blethers we described our brand new workshops and short courses programme structure, which is designed to provide in-depth opportunities for storytellers and people using storytelling at all levels to develop new skills, consider the challenges and opportunities of working in specific contexts and to explore the tales and traditions themselves.

We’re delighted to report that the summer programme has been a huge success, with participants and event facilitators telling us they’ve gained a great deal from days that look at storytelling and stories in the widest sense.

Highlights have included a workshop on ‘Storytelling for Conscious Reading’, where we partnered the Scottish Poetry Library in a day for storytellers and librarians which explored how a storytelling community environment and approach can help a group to feel comfortable and confident in expressing individual opinions, especially when responding to texts in book and poetry-reading groups. The ‘Story Museums’ day brought together professionals using storytelling and storytellers themselves, and has laid the foundation for a full day this coming January delving into the use of story in museums, galleries and archives.

The next six month programme is now available, and continues to develop and test our new training structure. There’s a focus on looking more deeply at story themes and archetypes this season, with a short course on fairytale and two workshops which open up women’s issues through story. New beginner-level sessions respond to requests from participants about specific approaches to working with children, and our CPD strand for storytellers is also strong, with practical sessions to help you develop your storytelling skills, pitch projects and think about new ways of working with others.

Once again, we hope to provide something for everyone – whether storytelling is your profession, your passion, or for now, simply a source of potential.

‘I came looking for inspiration – I think I found it!’
‘Great combination of practical advice and inspiring examples of good practice’.
‘I’ve taken away new ideas and renewed confidence.’

2011 workshop participant feedback

The Connecting with Stories: Workshops and short courses programme November 2011 – April 2012 is available to download from www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk/training

Storytelling in education today

Schools are hard up because of cuts. So we need to think of new ways to get live storytelling into schools, and ensure that the hearts, imaginations, and spirits of all our kids are fed and nurtured. Caroline Budge, who left the Storytelling Centre in 2010 to pursue a career as an occupational therapist is back to help us out with a quickfire study of what the barriers and opportunities are. If you have any ideas, or if you would like to make a donation to support this vital frontline work, contact Esther Blackburn, National Storytelling Coordinator on esther@scottishstorytellingcentre.com or 0131 652 3272.

What is the shape of storytelling in education? And how can the Scottish Storytelling Centre and Forum support storytellers across Scotland to continue their valuable work in education settings?

Over the next couple of months I will be striving to answer these questions (and it’s a great chance for me to catch up with old friends and meet new faces!). Between now and September I will be interviewing around 30 storytellers living and working in various parts of Scotland – picking their brains about the Curriculum, CPD, and E-learning, amongst other things; identifying the keys themes and issues, and hearing about creative and professional approaches which are proving effective in education.

I’m also speaking to a number of education professionals who are active and influential across primary, secondary, and adult and community education, in a bid to find out what they are looking for from storytellers. And whilst looking at what is possible, I’ll also be looking at the challenges thrown up by the current political and financial climate, and how these might be overcome – identifying ways to bridge any gaps between available resources and current demands.

The outcome of all this probing will be a written report with recommendations for future planning around SSC education work. I hope this will provide a useful source of information as plans come together for next year’s Network Development plan. And it’s great to be back (however briefly!).

Watch this space!
The Petal Garden of King Shubash
Davide Panzeri interviews Peter Chand and Shonaleigh

Last March the Scottish Storytelling Centre had the privilege of hosting The Petal Garden of King Shubash by Peter Chand and Shonaleigh, a show combining Indian and Jewish tales and cultures.

You’d be surprised to discover how much the two traditions have in common. There is a huge Jewish population in Mumbai, and a great wealth of Indo-Judaic tales. “There is that tale of a Jewish Princess who marries an Indian king after being his concubine…” Peter begins.

In both traditions storytelling is much more community-based than performance-based. “If someone from the audience doesn’t understand a point, they would stand up and ask about it. And if you are sharing the floor with another teller, they might interrupt you to say ‘that story reminds me of…’ and they would go with their story, so the show becomes a sort of organic scene”.

This is what Peter and Shonaleigh have tried to recreate on stage.

At the Storytelling Centre, it took the audience about 10-15 minutes to work it out, to realise that it was alright to react and interact. But once they got into it, it was great. Shonaleigh laughs. “At one point we threw it out to the audience, which is a very Indian and Jewish thing to do, and this woman said ‘I would have done it this way’ and we both said ‘that’s a very good idea!'”

In the Petal Garden of King Shubash the link between stories and society is unbroken. It isn’t an anthropological exercise or a bleached ‘stage’ version of their heritage.

More than anything else, Peter and Shonaleigh have fun telling the stories. They have a framework to work with in their show, but within that framework there is flexibility. “You also need to have trust in each other” says Peter. “There is a part in the show when Shonaleigh doesn’t know what story I’m going to tell. She has to react to the theme in that story, and sometimes it is a story that she has never even heard!”

Peter and Shonaleigh’s partnership started four years ago almost by accident. They were both working on a project in Yorkshire. Peter had been going to the Punjab for the previous two years recording stories and then translating them and Shonaleigh was doing exactly the same thing, translating her Nana’s diaries from Yiddish. So they decided to do a show together with these stories which had never been told in Britain or in the Western world, and called it Lost in Translation.

Shonaleigh is a Dry’syla (Yiddish oral storyteller), a tradition passed down from mother to daughter, that in her family has lasted for 300 years. Dry’sylas don’t exist anymore, there are only 3 left in the whole of Europe. The role of a Dry’syla is to tell folk tales but also to ‘record and remember’.

Peter, among other things, works with asylum seekers and refugee groups. Storytelling helps them to integrate and to learn the language. The combined use of English and Punjabi words lets them know that it is okay to retain their language, that they don’t have to discard their own culture in order to live in Britain today.

“The real work is on the ground floor, in the community” he says. “I love being on a stage, who doesn’t? But real storytelling is day in and day out, when there is a child who has never had stories told to them, and they might be 6-7 years old. And that’s the real work, and it’s great when you tell a story and you see the light coming on in their eyes”.

www.chandstory.com
www.shonaleigh.com

www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk
Scotland’s a Blether!

Here’s a snapshot of some of the storytelling groups and clubs across the country. Make sure you’re on the Centre’s mailing list to get monthly updates on storytelling clubs and groups in your area.

1. Highlands and Islands – Claic and Clype Storytelling Circle
   The Circle is resting at the moment as the venue has changed hands, for more information contact Greg greg@tellesparie.co.uk

2. Tayside and North Fife – Blether Taygither
   Our group is gradually expanding now that we have settled into a more permanent home, the Speedwell Bar (locally known as Mennies), 165-167 Perth Road, Dundee DD21 1AS. We still meet the last Tuesday of the month with an agreed theme. The professional storytellers in the group are becoming more involved in outreach work at local events such as Celebration In the Park (Dundee), Dundee Flower and Food Festival, The Kaleidoscope Sustainability Festival (Fife), Tayroots Genealogy Fair (Dundee) and the Bruce festival in Dunfermline, where we were joined by other groups. In October we will be holding a special event on HMS Unicorn in partnership with other groups. In the last Tuesday of the month with an agreed theme. The professional storytellers in the group are becoming more involved in outreach work at local events such as Celebration In the Park (Dundee), Dundee Flower and Food Festival, The Kaleidoscope Sustainability Festival (Fife), Tayroots Genealogy Fair (Dundee) and the Bruce festival in Dunfermline, where we were joined by other groups. In October we will be holding a special event on HMS Unicorn in partnership with other groups.

3. Borders – Borders Bards and Music, Verse and Stories
   At the last AGM the Borders Guid Crack Club decided to change its name to ‘Borders Bards’, as our successful storytelling session is called. The old identity has served us well since the group’s inception eleven years ago but it was felt that a fresh persona was needed, and Borders Bards – punchy and alliterative, describes exactly who we are.
   Our yearly event, the Wooplaw Story Gathering at Wooplaw Community Woods went wonderfully this year. We ran an improved programme of events with more interaction for children, great musicians, outdoor Celtic games and a very successful closing story and music session. Our monthly storytelling session is also going well; new and experienced folk have grown up together in the group. We went together to this year’s Traquair Fair and ran six sessions in the Children’s Book Tent with Lari Don and other writers. Our sessions are based on mutual support and sharing the inspiration of storytelling. Full or half-formed stories of any kind are always welcome. We meet on the second Tuesday, monthly, 7.30pm at the County Inn, Peebles – suggested donation £3.
   Music, Verse and Stories is about to return to the Traquair Arms Hotel after our summer break. We have had some great events with superb guest artists at this year’s sessions including Celtic storyteller Alasdair Taylor, local band Spoonkfritt, The Fisher Lassies and finally The Tweed Valley Male Choir.
   The incomparable poet and playwright Howard Purdie still compères monthly in our friendly and welcoming venue, which boasts an open fire and a good bar. We are always looking for performers to come and do a spot – storytellers, bands, singers or poets – just look for us on Facebook or email me. We meet the first Sunday monthly at 8pm, at the Traquair Arms Hotel, Innerleithen. Suggested donation £3, includes a free light supper and a raffle. Contact Daru McAleece david@mcaleece.com 0785 384 5019.

4. Perthshire – Silver Branch
   Silver Branch Storytelling Group meets once every month in Highland Perthshire. Being a small group we can gather informally round people’s kitchens which suits us just fine. The group aims primarily to support one another’s storytelling and share our love of story. One of our members is a yoga teacher and is beginning to weave storytelling into her sessions, another tells stories out on the Crannog to the public. We also organise joint events with other groups, as we did in Loch Leven with Fife’s Kingdom Krack. We will be organising a workshop in March 2012 combining storytelling with bushcraft and bone carving. This workshop will be led by Willow Loth with stories from Claire Hewitt. We meet the 2nd Wednesday of every month. Contact Claire Hewitt www.clairenewitt.co.uk or 01887 820339 or 07765 168334.

5. Fife – Kingdom Krack
   What a busy summer we had! In June and July we held storytelling sessions for children in various Fife libraries. The theme was ‘The Circus’ so we all dressed up in a variety of circus costumes and shared many wonderful stories and songs, which were enjoyed by the children (and some adults) who came along. This was a truly wonderful experience and goes to show what can be achieved when you throw yourself fully into an event.
   Our next objective was The Bruce Festival in Dunfermline at the end of August, celebrating the local hero and Scottish legend, Robert the Bruce. To really help us get in the mood, Rachael and Kate had arranged a storytelling session in Abbott House garden while we all dressed up in our medieval clothing and told stories and sang songs in the open air on a lovely sunny Sunday afternoon. The Bruce Festival itself was magical, a fantastic weekend of glorious weather with many visitors, both children and adults, stopping by the storytelling tent. There was even an appearance of King Robert the Bruce himself!
   Our regular monthly meetings, sometimes enriched by visits of members of the BagaTelle group, are on the 3rd Monday of each month at 6.30pm with the venue to be confirmed. Contact Andrew Elston pelston@btinternet.com

6. Glasgow – Better Crack Club and Even Better Crack Club
   The adult Better Crack Club normally meets on the third Friday of the month in Tchai Ovna Tea House, 4 Otago Lane, Glasgow G12 8PB, except in October when we meet on Friday 28th (Tell-a-Day Story) and November, when we don’t meet. Join us for a relaxed, friendly evening of stories, songs and music; everyone is welcome! Meetings start at 7.30 and we can guarantee a spot to anyone who wants to trial a tale, just let us know at the beginning of the evening you are keen to tell.
   The Even Better Crack Club is a storytelling club for the whole family and meets in the Fairfield Room, The Mitchell Library, Granville Street, Charing Cross, Glasgow. Meetings are usually on the second Saturday of the month from 10:30am to 12 noon. Get in touch for more information and upcoming dates.
   Contact Frances Logan loganfrances@gmail.com
7. Grampian – Friday Fling

Grampian Association of Storytellers (GAS) meets for our Friday Fling every second Friday of the month, usually at Queen’s Cross Church, Aberdeen, in the lounge for telling and listening to stories at 7.15 for 7.30pm start. We have a great line up of guest storytellers this half year and some very funny and intriguing themes for our DIY sessions. All (over 12 years old) are welcome. Contact Seán Gordon www.grampianstorytellers.org.uk

8. Edinburgh – Edinburgh’s Guid

Crack club

A few months ago we had many visitors joining us just to listen, and not so many storytellers. Recently we have had a welcome influx of newer tellers and there isn’t always time to hear them all! Look forward, then, to our October and December nights when we will have no guest teller and more time for stories ‘from the floor’. The October night (part of the Scottish International Storytelling Festival) will be in the nature of ‘follow-that’, each teller telling a story inspired by the previous one. The guest storyteller for September is Claire Druett, with Stories of the Season and of the Sea, while in November we will welcome Senga Munro and her tales of the Moon. Contact Andy Hunter andy@storybikes.co.uk

9. Lothian – BagaTelle

Up until a few months ago BagaTelle was nomadic due to the changeability of our meeting place, but the Scottish Mining Museum has come to our rescue. Now we have a great venue, plenty room for storytellers near and far, complete with cafe and drinks license. Since my last report the group has expanded, we have made tentative links with Black Diamond Radio Station and Tyne and Esk Writers Group and are now planning a joint event with the latter. July heralded an improvisational storytelling project around the theme of Dr Who and the Mining Museum, ten youngsters aged 8 and upwards revelled in creating their own “world first” story – now posted on the Museum’s website. In October, for Tell a Story Day, BagaTelle will be working with the Mining Museum to hold a family storytelling event. Not bad for a once nomadic storytelling group!

Anyone interested in joining our monthly meeting will be warmly welcome – we will also be looking for guest tellers for our events. Contact Lea Taylor on 07748 62406

CONNECT WITH US THROUGH YOUR REGIONAL CORRESPONDENT

Regional Correspondents are a direct route to sharing issues, challenges, ideas and successes with the Forum Committee and to making your voice heard. It is important for us to have a feedback on the situation in your specific area so that we can act appropriately, tackling any issues and making the most of the opportunities.

A correspondent is a named person who:
- is an active storyteller and/or storytelling champion in their area.
- has an understanding of storytelling activity in their area, and the challenges and opportunities for storytellers locally.
- is prepared to act as a communicator between the Scottish Storytelling Forum & Centre and storytellers in their area.
- can work with the Scottish Storytelling Centre to help generate and coordinate regional events (Scottish International Storytelling Festival on tour, regional training days and other network development opportunities).

Area

Aberdeenshire
Argyle & Bute
Ayrshire
Dumfries & Galloway
Dumfries & Galloway
Fife
Glasgow
Inverness-shire/Moray
Lanarkshire
Midlothian
North (Highlands)
Orkney
Perthshire
Scottish Borders
Shetland
Skye & Islands
Tayside

Regional correspondent for Forum 2011

Aberdeenshire
Ann Fancett
Argyle & Bute
Jan Slitch Pickard
Ayrshire
Rosie Mcleod
Dumfries & Galloway
Tony Bonning
Dumfries & Galloway
John Wheeler
Fife
Judy Patterson
Glasgow
Wendy Woodson
Inverness-shire/Moray
Andrew Macintosh
Lanarkshire
Allison Galbraith
Midlothian
Lea Taylor
North (Highlands)
Bob Pegg
Orkney
Tom Muir
Perthshire
Claire Hewitt
Scottish Borders
Dor Mckeace
Shetland
Lawrence Tulloch
Skye & Islands
George McPherson
Tayside
Sheila Khirnir

Email

gas_story@hotmail.com
janitschickard@gmail.com
rosec@rscollection.co.uk
tony.bonning@btinternet.net
jaysjovteller@qogmail.com
judy4stories@yahoo.co.uk
wendywoodson@hotmail.com
keyla.story@hotmail.co.uk
andymac@linkedle.clara.co.uk
al.story@hotmail.co.uk
lea-andy@iscot.co.uk
sthe@hndo.co.uk
tommuri34@hotmail.com
claireach@btinternet.com
clairemac@btinternet.com
intralo@btinternet.com
georgefaces@hotmail.com
salon49@yahoo.co.uk

7

Storytelling Inspiration Weekend 1st & 2nd Oct

This October the Storytelling Centre and Network is joining forces with Glasgow Storytellers and Stories for Health, for a weekend of pure inspiration.

During the first weekend in October we’ll be taking up residence at the beautiful and historic St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art – within the Glasgow Cathedral grounds and across the road from the oldest house in Glasgow, Provand’s Lordship.

With its Zen garden and Herb Garden, and a wealth of inspiring galleries, views and intimate spaces, the Museum is the perfect place to host two days of talks, discussions workshops and masterclasses. The aim is to bring together storytelling Network members and Directory storytellers in a re-invigorating and refreshing space for learning and reflection, as well as to spread the word about the excitement and importance of storytelling today.

Open to storytellers and storytelling champions, as well as anyone interested in finding out more about what storytelling can do, the weekend will look at stories that shape our communities, cultures and identities, and contribute to our health and wellbeing. A mixture of skills workshops, shared stories and discussion will form the backbone of the event, with story walks and performances also open to the public.

Glasgow Life’s ‘Curious’ project, which is about sharing stories and ideas of identity and community to break down barriers, will also be taking part in the weekend, with volunteers on hand to share the stories behind their latest exhibition.

A SESH storytelling ceilidh on Saturday evening will maximise the time available for fun and story-swapping!

To be part of this weekend, book through the Scottish Storytelling Centre on 0131 556 9579. A weekend ticket is £45, to cover lunch and refreshments on Saturday and Sunday. Sunday’s workshops, programmed by Stories for Health, are by donation. Advance booking is essential, as places are unfortunately limited.

The Centre hopes to be part of a similar regional event annually. If your storytelling group is interested in being a host or partner for an event in your region in 2012, please contact the National Storytelling Coordinator on esther@scottishstorytellingcentre.com
Stories for wellness
Wendy Woolfson describes the ethos behind the Stories for Health organisation

When I first came to storytelling, one of the concepts that struck me was this proverb from the Scottish travellers: 'Stories are told eye to eye, mind to mind and heart to heart.'

This says it all for me; when we tell a story we are bringing our minds together in harmony with another soul, connecting and sharing on a deeper level; with our eyes we simultaneously shine and reflect into each other, connecting once more and with our hearts we are joined as our breath slows and we breathe the story together.

With story there can be no harm in the world, no problem unsolved and no fear, because story is profound communication, connection and sharing. Stories hold the wisdom of the ages and carry the legacy of human experience as they speak in gentle, nurturing ways, painting pictures in the mind and reminding us that we are not alone.

The organisation Stories for Health came about after I attended a symposium on Storytelling as a Healing Art in Denmark in 2009. This was a week of in-depth workshops organised by ALBA, the Scandinavian storytelling collective who were inspired by the School of Storytelling at Emerson College.

This gathering with like-minded people inspired me to thinking it would be wonderful to have a similar gathering in Scotland; specifically, to hold it in my home city of Glasgow. Glasgow is reputed to be one of the most violent cities in Britain and Europe, a city still divided by sectarianism whose people are learning to work with a range of social problems.

I knew that Scotland was so full of this kind of work already and my vision was that it would be a magnificent experience to bring that work, those people, and their skills and creativity together in one place to share and create healing energy. In my mind’s eye I could see Scotland gathered up in warm and loving arms; embraced by its people’s stories. I decided it was to be an exceptional week with stories, singing, dancing, poetry, performance, gatherings, sharing, healing and walks – just the same as in Denmark. And so it was, along with, unbelievably, sunshine – the hottest week of the year, I might add.

Every day began with a song and a circle dance initiating a positive and healing energy into the day from the start. The day progressed with keynote speeches and workshops on a variety of topics, and therapeutic practitioners were on hand in the afternoons offering yoga and natural healing sessions.

I heard from people throughout the week of their personal experiences; how they had no idea what to expect but were feeling so nourished by the stories, warmth and gentle support of other participants:

This gathering was a bringing together of minds on the ideas and practicalities of therapeutic storytelling and the workshops allowed participants time to experience and practise what that meant.

I attended the sessions entitled: Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Exile held by Sef Townsend and Tony Haddad. As well as sharing stories on this theme and exploring different approaches and ways of working, we played a ‘game’ designed by the UN to enable people to encounter the experiences and emotions someone in such a position may be subjected to. It was a moving experience and changed my perceptions entirely; it opened up my eyes and ears to stories I may not have been able to hear before. As a group we were moved by our responses on a personal level.

This was something that could only have happened in a workshop that was a week long, as this was. It allowed time for us to work through the emotions and be led to a safe place of understanding, helping us to acknowledge skills we had and highlighting skills we needed to develop. In the right hands stories told and heard can be a wonderful experience. Sef is a professional storyteller, as is Tony who is also a psychodynamic therapist. Together, with a wealth of experience and a powerful depth of knowledge, they are able to work skillfully in supported sensitive environments.

"During storytelling, listeners let go of defences and relax into the known, safe environment of story. A shift in consciousness takes place. Those who listen, actually live the story adventures in their imagination." 

Allison Cox
Creative Health Educator and Storyteller

I know many of the participants of the week are still processing the event and that their work is continually growing, and it will continue to develop in Scotland with the added support of Stories for Health.
Initially I formed the organisation only to achieve the dream of creating the symposium and I was so sure that that was all there was to it. However, when the week was over I kept hearing the response 'When's the next one?'. I got to thinking… It took about six months to think, as I processed the personal journey of the previous years’ experience and then, when I had finished thinking, it just seemed a selfish waste to throw all that work away on the whim of one event.

Now, two years since I first had the thought, this is where we’re at: our aim as an organisation is to: ‘Support storytellers in their practice and promote Storytelling as a Healing Art in a range of fields as well as place storytelling at the heart of learning.’

Since the symposium, Stories for Health has held other events and workshops, providing opportunities for artists and practitioners to work with storytellers and for storytellers to develop their own practice. And so, Stories for Health continues to grow and we plan to hold regular events and workshops in Glasgow, the latest one being the Inspiration Weekend supported by the Scottish Storytelling Centre. This will take place on 2 October 2011 at St Mungo’s Museum. A great deal of thanks goes to our funders Creative Scotland and the Scottish Storytelling Centre, and to the other organisations, individuals, storytellers and musicians including Rachel Jury of Confab and Nancy Mellon who sparked the first hopes; my heartfelt gratitude and support to my great mentor and friend who gave me enormous support and encouragement with the project, storyteller, Stanley Robertson, a dedicated to the memory of master storyteller, Stanley Robertson, a

---

### Voices in Scotland

**Storyteller Marion Kenny** shares her journey into Scotland’s voices

Over the past few years I have had the pleasure, and honour, to have been supported by Creative Scotland in producing a double CD of Folktales, Music, and Ballads, called Voices in Scotland.

Scotland is rightfully proud of its traditional arts, and the many people who have moved from all corners of the planet to live here, have brought with them their stories, music and dances, making our communities all the richer for multicultural diversity shared through creativity.

Voices in Scotland is a selection of folktales which have been dramatised by original soundtracks. The words and music together evoke vivid images and emotions. The albums explore and celebrate the musicality of the human voice, and also include two ballads. The storytellers and musicians come from all corners of the globe, but all the performers practice their art in Scotland.

Initially, the storytellers were invited to contribute a story of their choice to the project. I then chose combinations of instruments which would enhance each storyteller’s voice and suit the atmosphere of their tale.

After arranging musical movements of each story, musicians were invited to respond to each section of the tale through improvisation. The final stage of the creative process was carried out in the recording studio, were I worked alongside sound engineer Richard Werner to weave the music and words together.

Storytellers Stanley Robertson, Mara Menzies, Michael Williams, Mio Shapley, Claire McNicol, Lawrence Tulloch, Chuck Warren and myself, were joined by some of Scotland’s mightiest musicians, including Mairi Campbell, Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers, Mary Macmaster, Donald Hay, Leo McCann, Kim Ho Ip, Jean David Calloet, Pete Vilk, Jamie Kenny, Joel Sanderson, Andy Cooke, Stuart Dinwoode, Dougie Hudson, Sarah McFadyen, Sandy Wright and composer Eddie McGuire.

Artists collaborating on the albums hail from China, Japan, America, Canada, America’s First Nations, Belgium, England, Ireland, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and many regions of Scotland, including Shetland, Orkney, and Aberdeen to name but a few.

From the very outset of the project, it was always my hope and intention that all the collaborators were all working towards a live performance. Absolutely no sound effects were used in the recording process, precisely so that the entire album could easily be recreated in a live situation.

I am delighted to announce that the project has also been awarded a traditional arts touring grant, and it is anticipated that a selection of material from the albums will be showcased in two performances at Celtic Connections Festival in January 2012.

Voices in Scotland is respectfully dedicated to the memory of master storyteller, Stanley Robertson, a great mentor and friend who gave me enormous support and encouragement with the project, and died shortly after recording on these albums.

Voices in Scotland has been signed by Sandy Brechin to his record label BAR (Brechin All Records) and is now due for release. Anyone wanting to purchase CDs, which are available at the cost of £11.99, should contact [www.brechin-all-records.com/shop.htm](http://www.brechin-all-records.com/shop.htm) or info@brechin-all-records.com
Signed Stories

Don’t miss some fabulous opportunities to experience stories told in the air over the next few months! Nancy and Hamish Turner bursary-holder and Deaf storyteller Mark MacQueen brings a series of workshops and performances to the Scottish Storytelling Centre this autumn.

Since he was awarded the bursary in February, Mark has been working with Storytelling Centre staff to create performance events and training opportunities that explore the richness and creativity of British Sign Language – a language infused with story and metaphor. Mark uses stories told in BSL to entertain, demonstrate the creative potential of the language, and to break down barriers between deaf and hearing audiences. An outreach session at HMP Greenock in August was a hit with inmates and staff, who said the morning was both inspiring and educational. Mark has since been invited back for a full-day’s follow up. In late September, Mark visits Carlogie Primary School in Angus, where he’ll be telling stories to pupils from their deaf support unit and mainstream classes together, and encouraging them all to make signed stories of their own.

Back at the Centre, Mark is performing a signed visual theatre piece with his theatre group as part of the Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival, is running story workshops for BSL learners and advanced users as part of the Centre’s autumn workshops and short courses programme, and can be seen in solo performance at the Scottish Storytelling Centre’s theatre in November. The Centre is also delighted to be hosting BSL UPTAKE’s knowledge exchange drop-in event on Saturday 5th November – when Mark will be running free signed story taster sessions. Make sure you see and take part in some of this exciting activity!

Objects of Meaning

A Community Storytelling Project in Glasgow

Storyteller Allison Galbraith reports

This project took place between September 2010 and April 2011. It was part of an initiative organised by Faith in Communities Scotland, and run by the Transformation Team, based at Anderston Kelvingrove Church, Glasgow.

They asked me to run the storytelling aspect of the project, which would bring the work of five community groups in Glasgow together for a celebration of their stories, writing and photography at The Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery, in April 2011.

We each brought an object to our individual groups and talk and write about the significance of the object. This could be an object of great personal meaning, or one with religious or cultural meaning. In two sessions each group told the stories of the object they had chosen, and then in the third session we photographed them. These photos were then digitally produced with a little piece of carefully chosen text from everyone’s individual tales, and then finally printed as beautiful postcards. The culmination of our work went on display at The Kelvingrove Museum on 9th April, where it can be viewed until the end of the summer.

Five very diverse groups took part, including: The South East Carers group, (storyteller – Lesley O’Brien); the Jenniburn Centre, ESOL group, (storyteller – Jean Edmiston); the Toryglen Integrating Youth Group, (storyteller – Mags Smith); and The Kiran Women’s Support Group, & Crossroads Youth and Community Association’s Govanhill Free Church Drop-In Group, (storyteller, me, Allison Galbraith). We all worked in our own different ways with the groups, but the results all shared the same quality of heartfelt passion and attention to detail.

From my write-up to Faith in Communities Scotland I reported that:

Group workers were delighted with the turn out, and response from their community members. They felt that through sharing very personal memories and stories with each other, that the members of the group had communicated with each other on many new levels. A church member and group leader commented that by the third session, there was a heightened dynamic of movement between group members, i.e., people were getting up from their chairs and tables, moving around the room and talking to many other members of the group. All of the group leaders expressed the view that the project had brought a new level of energy and enjoyment to the drop-in group; ‘a great buzz of excitement and chat cross the room’.

The workers have expressed a hope for more projects like ‘Objects of Meaning’, to continue, and expand this heightened level of inter-group enthusiasm and communication.

The group members all appeared to enjoy the project, and are excited about seeing their work exhibited in the Kelvingrove Museum, where they can take family and friends to share their creative experience.

Each storyteller reported similar results, but with perhaps one criticism: that a longer period of time to develop the work would have been desirable.

The exhibition is lovely, with a selection of the objects, (which range from a paper-lantern star to an alarm clock, or from a model ship to a teddy bear), the photographs, the text, and a short video showing group members talking about their work. If you are in Glasgow you are welcome to go and take a look at the lives and work of these inspirational community storytellers.

al.story@hotmail.co.uk
Scotland’s Pilgrim Ways is a national project to rediscover old pilgrim routes with their associated traditions and stories. One major route is to wend from Iona to St Andrews. But what way would an ancient pilgrim have gone? Andy Hunter and Donald Smith decided to find out – the hard way.

Being top bracket pilgrims they tried to trace how Adomnan the famous Abbot of Iona would have done the trip. He was St Columba’s biographer, possibly the Abbot who commissioned the Book of Kells, and the man who first proposed the protection and exclusion of non-combatants from warfare. So they were following in pretty good footsteps.

It was probably by boat round Mull and then up Glen Etive, maximising the sea miles. From the head of the glen there are then drove roads up and over into Strath Orchy by way of Inveroran where there is still an old drovers inn, now much frequented by walkers, and thirsty pilgrims.

Strath Orchy is on the West Highland way, but the modern main road from Tyndrum, over Rannoch and into Glencoe, obscures the historic crossroads south of the present Bridge of Orchy. Here the routes northwest into Glen Etive and southwest to Dalmally meet and, crossing the main road, continue east round the shoulder of Ben Doran, coming down eventually into Glenlyon.

How do we know Adomnan came this way? Because there are many placenames and traditions associated with Adomnan in Glenlyon, reaching all the way down to Fortingall where the Celtic missionaries took over an ancient druidic site, with its sacred yew trees. It is quite possible that when the relics of Columba were taken from Iona to Dunkeld to escape Viking raiders, they followed this route.

The path east to Glenlyon, though regarded as a traditional route, has fallen into disuse and is no longer registered as an official heritage path. So Andy and Donald decided to survey it and get it re-registered. Arriving at Bridge of Orchy the rain was torrential and conditions in the bunkhouse also seemed a little tempestuous. Nonetheless after a slightly restless night our pioneers had some excellent porridge and started out. Coinciding for the first three miles with the West Highland Way southwards, their route then branched east and met the first of a series of fords.

These were without exception in torrents so our intrepid pilgrims took turns to jump, wade or throw each other over the rapids in a hopeless endeavour to keep their feet dry. A reward awaited though at the watershed where some impressive engineering channels the rushing head waters into Glen Lyon with its double dam. Water Board tracks were excellent all the way so progress was brisk, and we decided to detour into Glen Cailleach, on the banks of Loch Lyon, to pay our respects to the Cailleach herself and the Bodach, pagan deities who still reside in the glen moving outside in summer and back into shelter each winter. All in the spirit of ecumenism.

At this point Donald made the fatal error of suggesting a ‘shortcut’ climbing over the hill into Glen Cailleach and Andy equally fatally agreed. That tussocky moorland, even on steep gradients, was sodden, moss layered and treacherous. It is saturated with wonderful plant life but lousy foot tread. Descending eventually, Andy still in reasonable shape, they were on the wrong side of the fiercest river yet. Deep wading followed with a near suicidal attempt by Donald to sail his boots downriver without his feet in them.

However the Bodach and family were grateful for this steadying visit, since the earlier gales had toppled them onto the turf. After suitable refreshment with their hosts Andy and Donald did the last leg into Glenlyon in excellent spirits ready to rendezvous with lifts and substantial dinners. But mobile phones do not obtain a signal up Glenlyon.

A little daunted our weary pilgrims did another seven miles while the prospects of dinner and even the last train home receded. A night in the open, living on Andy’s fruit bars, seemed a likely outcome, when a local rescue team arrived. Clearly Glenlyon still has more than its share of Saints.

The journey down (or up) Glenlyon is truly beautiful, tranquil and rich in ancient traces. It is easy to imagine this busy agricultural glen supporting thriving communities which attracted the attentions of Adomnan on his missionary journeys.

Nowadays this route is for the hardy walker but well worthy of its place as a Heritage path and (masochists) option on the overall journey between Iona and St Andrews.

Where are we going next, Andy? Andy? Andy!
Donald’s round-up of exciting storytelling titles out now

Lots of useful resources are appearing for those using storytelling in an interactive and participative way with children and young people.

Rob Parkinson’s Storytelling and Imagination explores storytelling and storymaking with 8-14’s. His theme is pushing beyond literacy to sparking motivation and creativity. It is written with the English curriculum in view but has lots of adaptable ideas and approaches.

Our own Renita Boyle has produced another excellent resource for church groups, entitled Parachute Fun for Everyone. The parachute remains grounded but the fun flies with a host of sparky story and activity ideas for faith groups.

IMAGINE….Drama across the Curriculum, is published by Scottish Borders Council, with Nicky Toneri a moving spirit. The aim is creative learning through drama for 3-13’s with stories being the common currency throughout. There is a host of useful materials and activities on CD and USB. It has a great quote from Donald Winnicott on the cover: ‘A sign of health in the mind is the ability of one individual to enter imaginatively and accurately into the thoughts and feelings and hopes and fears of another person.’

Ewan McVicar’s ABC My Grannie Caught a Flea pulls the gems from his extensive researches into an endlessly entertaining collection of Scots children’s songs and rhymes. If I start quoting I won’t be able to stop because its compulsively entertaining and intriguing. Alright. Just one:

My Grannie went doon toe the cellar
A Leak in the gas for to see
She lit a match so she’d see better
O bring back my Grannie to me.

Birlinn, the publishers, have correctly given it the physical feel of a classic book – because it’s a classic selection.

Linda Williamson continues to re-edit and to enlarge the previously published collections of Duncan Williamson’s incomparable stories. The latest addition is Jack and the Devil’s Purse which is beautifully produced by Birlinn. A finer collection of Jack tales it would be hard to find worldwide. Duncan’s huge inspiration continues to grow.

Ian Edwards’ fine collection of tree stories, Tales from the Forest has been published in a beautiful edition by the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh. It’s a great starting place for this theme, and will form the basis of two training events we’re running with the Gardens in November – and the illustrations by Eri Griffin are a delight. The collection is dedicated to Stanley Robertson whose keynote story ‘Auld Croovie’ is included.

Those attending Fringe performances at the Storytelling Centre will have enjoyed A Concert of Stories with Abbi Patrix and Linda Edsjo. The book of the show is available in a bilingual edition in French and English, as shaped in collaboration with Erica Wagner. It is a wonderful demonstration of how to tell a tale with an economy of words and a maximum of effect.

As this year’s Storytelling Festival approaches, you might sample a host of island publications. Angus Peter Campbell’s Invisible Islands is an evocation of the island theme across culture – a feast of lyrical fables, while his Archie and the North Wind gets into close contact with the Gaelic storytelling traditions of the Western Isles. The Centre bookshop will have many such goodies to tempt festival visitors, alongside the incomparable magic of living voices.