



**The Morgan Library
Aston Street
Wem
Shropshire
SY4 5AU**

Charity Reg. No. 1086122

**Annual Report
Year ended 31st March 2011**

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1. About Mythstories

Mythstories works with communities of place and interest; and is actively involved in education, and in economic and cultural initiatives.

Mythstories works with Local Education Authorities, Library Services and individual schools on projects using storytelling as a gateway to literacy. It works within communities and with other museums keeping oral heritage alive. It works with professional storytellers and storytelling organisations to promote storytelling as an art that can be enjoyed by all.

Mythstories is where words work.

2. Highlights of the year April 2010 – March 2011

Throughout the year we have kept in mind the Charity Commissions guidance on public benefit when designing and delivering our activities. Approximately 1,000 people participated in workshops at the museum or as part of Mythstories' outreach programme or watched events involving Mythstories. The website attracted over 640,000 hits from users from more than 100 different countries.

April set the scene for the year to follow, with staff delivering training workshops for professionals from other disciplines and for teenage storytellers. These, alongside school visits to the museum, proved to be the main focus of activity throughout the year.

May began with an extremely popular workshop on Fairy Lore, the last in the Spring **100% Extra** series funded by **Arts Council England**. This workshop gave participants the chance to discuss and discover many aspects of this area of folklore both in the museum and out in the 'otherworldly' environment of Whixall Moss. Staff also started work on '**Life In A Box – the remix**' – an extension of a project begun last year – with a research visit to the **Media Archive of Central England** to select tv coverage of traveller evictions that took place in the 1960s and 1970s.

June was a break in the trend, with staff working with infant and pre-school children in the museum and outreach, including hosting a visit from participants in Shropshire's 'Big Squeeze' day. We also followed up a CPD day for teachers, delivered earlier in the year, with two half-day sessions for teaching assistants.



In July young people joined us for a very diverse fortnight's Work Experience. They accompanied staff to a secondary school for an arts project and to a recording studio to lay down some traveller rap to complete the Life In A Box project mentioned above.



We organised three Inspire Days, which were co-delivered by three Young Storytellers, and involved a group of twenty 12 -15 year olds at our local secondary school. The three Young Storytellers went on to lead their own storytelling workshop and give an evening performance at Wem Town Hall later in the month, raising money for charity.

In August we held four **Storycraft** sessions, funded by **Shropshire Council**. Staff were joined by trainees undertaking their Arts Award, who helped in workshops on the Japanese artforms of Kamishibai and Origami. We were also joined by professional storytellers for a storytelling picnic on the nearby Millennium Green and a unique session in the museum mixing stories with belly dancing. These events were well attended by family audiences.



September saw the start of the Autumn Series of 100% Extra workshops for adults. These continued into October with workshops on Body Language, Witch Lore, Tackling Longer Stories and Storytelling with Objects. And the new school year brought a new project with Holmer Lake School in which the pupils created their own story and explored telling this with the aid of victorian-style miniature theatres.



October closed with a visit from the Japanese troupe **Spice Arthur 702** who delivered a stellar performance of new wave Kamishibai to a packed museum.

The famous Trinidadian storyteller, Grace Hallworth, donated her collection of dolls to the museum in November. She also gave many of her books to the Society for Storytelling library, which is housed at Mythstories.



In December staff began work with four trainee teachers from **Birmingham City University** on a project funded by **Museums, Libraries and Archives**. The students were challenged to design a learning resource for Key Stage 3 based on the museum's collections and trial this as part of their work practice in school.

The New Year brought the worst weather in living memory, a spate of cancellations and a burst water pipe. However potential disaster was averted by a quick-thinking neighbour and a volunteer with plumbing expertise.



As the weather improved so did the storytelling skills of the young people from Thomas Adams school, who took part in a number of STWYteller workshops in the museum. And to their great credit seven members represented the group at the **Young Storyteller of the Year** Competition in Birmingham in March, with two taking the overall team award and one becoming the Under 18 Young Storyteller of the Year 2011.



Telling Space, the storytelling club for adults, continued to meet throughout the year; with many a meeting enlivened by stories contributed by Young People from STWYtellers.

3. How Mythstories operates

Mythstories is administered under a Trust Deed dated 2nd March 2001.

Trustees:

Peter John Roscoe (fifth term – March 2014)
Harold David Arthur (fourth term – March 2013)
Geoffrey Arthur Hardy (fourth term – March 2013)
David William Reeves (fourth term – March 2012)
Jon Rigby (first term – November 2013)
Pauline Ann Rigby (fourth term – March 2012)

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The Trustee team was strengthened in the year when it was joined by Jon Rigby, a management consultant with extensive experience in senior management across the voluntary and statutory sectors. Jon is also a committed adventure enthusiast.

Mythstories day-to-day activities are run by volunteer management (currently five members). When the Charity undertakes chargeable work, some of these volunteers are sometimes paid. During 2010/11 a total of £11,280 was paid for their professional services: Dez and Ali Quarréll were paid for storytelling and project management and Dawn Powell for storytelling. Other, casual, volunteers assist throughout the year.

During the year management team members attended training courses on emergency response planning, digital photography, podcasting and video-making. The Charity also received a grant of £1,000 from the **Grass Roots Fund**, which enabled it to update computer equipment.

The museum is also grateful to two professional volunteers with REACH, who have offered advice in Social Networking and in accountancy during the year.

Mythstories museum is housed in the former library building of the North Shropshire market town of Wem. The building is owned by **Shropshire Council** who charge the Charity a peppercorn rent. During the year the condition of the building continued to deteriorate. Unfortunately the nature of Mythstories' tenancy means the Charity cannot raise funds for remedial work, although long-standing negotiations continue with Shropshire Council.

The museum houses displays of legends and folklore, the **Society for Storytelling** library of books of traditional tales and a copy of the archive of performance storytelling created by the **London Centre for International Storytelling**. The museum is open to the general public and to pre-booked groups. Every visitor experiences a live storytelling. Group visits are tailor-made for their needs. In line with other Shropshire Museums, public visitor numbers decreased in the year, however this trend seems now to have stabilised.

The website, **www.mythstories.com**, is a cross-curricular resource for all, free at the point of use. It contains stories and related activities aimed at Key Stage 2 pupils; a section for early and pre-readers based on Shropshire myths, a French language section, details of recent Mythstories projects and other information about the Charity.

Mythstories Facebook fansite continues to acquire new members and is proving a useful tool to keep in touch with many of the friends of the museum. Mythstories continues to issue regular e-newsletters to its friends and a further e-newsletter to schools in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Local Authority areas.

And the museum has recently acquired both Twitter and LinkedIn accounts and is eager to explore these new areas.

The Morgan Library is the registered office of three other not-for-profit storytelling organisations: **North of England Storytelling Festivals Ltd.**, which promotes performance storytelling, the **Society for Storytelling** which leads on National Storytelling Week and **Festival at the Edge**, which organises an annual international storytelling festival in Shropshire. **Festival at the Edge** also has its administrative base at The Morgan Library.

During the year Mythstories was approached by the **Society for Storytelling** and has taken on the temporary role as administrator and main public point of contact for that Charity.

These partnerships between like-minded organisations with complementary aims and objectives are central to Mythstories' policy of making best use of available resources, especially talent and funding.