

RIVER SEVERN-RIVER SI

WELSH BRIDGE- BRIDGE ST.-BARKER ST.-BELLSTONE- MARDOL QUAY-SMITHFIELD ROAD-SMITHFIELD ROAD-SMIT

WELSH BRIDGE- BRIDGE ST.-BARKER ST.-BELLSTONE

Carnarvon Lane
HILLS LANE- HI
CLAREMONT ST.

THE MARDOL-
King's Head
Phoenix Place
-ROUSHILL-

Shut Stories

-ST. JOHN'S HILL-SHOPLATCH-MARDOL HEAD-PRIDE HILL-PRIDE HILL-CASTLE

MARKET ST.-THE SQUARE-PRINCESS ST.
THE SQUARE-
THE OLD MARKET HALL
THE SQUARE-
Peacock Passage-Peacock Pass.
Golden Cross Passage-Golden C

Gullet Passage

HIGH STREET-HIGH STREET-HIGH ST.-
Grove Lane
Bank Passage
Saint Alkmund's Pas sage

BUTCHER'S ROW-TS HSHIF-TS HSHIF
Church St
ALKMUND'S SQ.
DOGPOLE-DOGPOLE-ST MARY'S ST.-

-BELMONT--MILK STREET-MILK STREET-FISH STREET-WYLE COP-W

“Shut Stories” is a Mythstories project for The Year Of The Artist Storyteller Amy Douglas worked with groups of Shrewsbury people creating new stories for the alleys and passageways of the historic town



about Shut Stories

Mythstories museum began life situated along one of the Shuts of Shrewsbury. These narrow passageways, many dating from mediaeval times, are a distinctive feature of the town centre. They provide a web of alleys that for centuries has been used by pedestrians to move quickly through the town.



The Shuts have names to fire the imagination, "Phoenix Place" or "Grove Lane" for example. But where are the stories that lay behind the names? Mythstories museum set storyteller Amy Douglas the task of recreating them.

Amy was aided in her quest by local people. We wanted their memories and their knowledge of the history of the Shuts to form the basis of the stories. After all, there's more than a grain of truth in all folklore.



Some groups, like the Civic Society and the Visual Arts Network, brought their own expertise to the project. Others, like the After School Club, brought the unique perspective of their generation. All brought an enthusiasm and a willingness to let Amy focus their imagination on "their" Shut.

And all shared the joy of creating. In workshop sessions each group discovered just how a storyteller weaves a tale from a few facts, a few feelings and an insight into human nature. And 5,000 listeners experienced their own workshop live on BBC Radio Shropshire.



The culmination of the project was a series of storywalks through the Shuts and a static performance of all the stories at Shrewsbury Music Hall. Our thanks go to the Year of the Artist and to Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council for help funding the project, to Shrewsbury's residents for their ideas, and to Amy the storyteller for sharing her art.

all about Amy

Amy Douglas has been telling stories to audiences since she was fourteen and within a year won the Young Storyteller of the Year at Sidmouth International Folklore Festival, and co-founded Tales at the Edge Storytelling Club.



At the forefront of the young generation of storytellers, she served a year long apprenticeship with the cream of British tellers including Duncan Williamson, Hugh Lupton and Liz Weir, acquiring the wealth of experience she now has at the tip of her tongue.

Amy is adaptable and versatile, able to perform on a one-to-one basis or in front of a 2,000 strong audience. She snares her audience in a web of enchantment without the need for books or props, just the compelling use of her voice, mannerisms, body language and love of the story.



Amy Douglas tells traditional and contemporary stories from the British Isles with simple clarity, humour and grace. She enjoys working in conjunction with other storytellers, visual artists, musicians and singers but is equally at home working alone.

Amy has told at various venues throughout Britain and beyond including; pubs, clubs, libraries, schools, arts centres, museums, youth centres and festivals such as Festival at the Edge and the Dublin, Ulster and Vancouver Storytelling festivals, Whitby Folk Festival and Sheffield Literature Festival.



Amy will work with any age group from toddlers to grandparents.

She has appeared on national and local radio and television both in the UK and abroad as well as being featured in regional and national press.



Her undoubted talents lie in her warm personality, subtle wit and her ability to make a story come alive in her audience's inner landscape. A professional performer of great charm and vitality, Amy expands the imagination bringing a twist of magic into the workaday world.

No.1 - Carnarvon Lane

History of the Shut

Carnarvon Lane was one of the few Shuts to retain its original name. Ludovick Carnarvon lived her in 1460.

But who was he?

And where did he get his name?

Who helped Amy create the story

Shrewsbury Town Centre Residents Association was founded in November 1991 to promote the interests of people living within the loop of the River Severn ("between the bridges"). Its main aims are to promote the social and physical amenities of the town centre and to represent the interests of residents to the various authorities and organisations concerned with planning and development, policing, river use and other issues relevant to the continued well-being of the town centre and the quality of life for residents, visitors and businesses. It actively encourages more residents in the river loop and tries to be a social focus, with three main parties annually and various meetings and events, on anything from flooding to gardening.



The Association has recently taken up the need for more public and performance art in Shrewsbury and was therefore very pleased to be invited to take part in the Mythstories' Shut Stories venture.

The Story Of Carnarvon Lane

Ellie made her way outside, the money her father had given her clasped tight in her hand. She made her way down through the town, along the Mardol and at last turned left by a water conduit (she'd always thought they were strange looking things - a bit like a dustbin with a handle) and into Carnarvon Lane, stopping to hungrily peer in at the cakes in the cake shop and smell the bread baking. She passed the 2 up 2 down cottages and paused to look at the old woman sat on her step plucking a chicken for sixpence, then she turned the corner and made her way into the cigarette factory. Her dad had sent her down for a half ounce of tobacco. She handed over her money and received a black snake wrapped up in blue paper in return.

As she made her way outside, she could hear laughter coming from around the corner. She slipped out of the passage and peered around the corner. The laughter was coming from the Mr Bailey's, the florists. She looked in through the window to see three or four ladies hanging on his every word.

She strained her ears, but could only just make out a few tantalizing snippets. The young ladies at last came out in a group, giggling and laughing and she pushed herself against the wall out of their way.

"You can come in now girl if you want to. Eavesdropping is a nasty habit! I'd much rather talk to your face!" Ellie whirled around and found herself looking up into Mr. Bailey's face.

"Were you telling them a story?"

"I was that. The thing about stories is that they're addictive - people always want more - they can't live without them. And so they come back and they buy more flowers."

"I don't have any money for flowers."

"No - I can see that. But it looks as though you might not be a bad floor sweeper - how's that for a deal?" Ellie nodded and followed him wide-eyed into the shop.

"Now the thing about stories is that they are everywhere- all you have to do is look and more importantly listen. You have to learn to listen with your whole body - to what people say and what they don't say, listen to the hairs raising on the back of your neck when you walk down a dark street, take notice of what you see in the shadows and out of the corner of your eye and most importantly listen to names. Everyone and everything has a name and if you know something's true name, there is a lot of power in that and somewhere there is always a reason for a name and that usually involves a story."

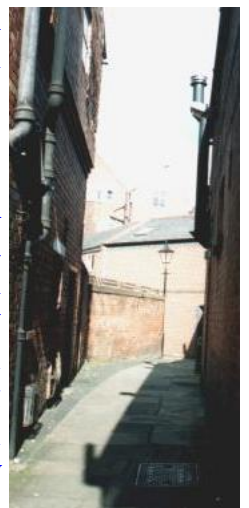
"Tell me the story of your name" asked Ellie.

"Oh no, I think we'll leave that one for now, now where did you come from. Down Carnarvon Lane. Ah yes, one of the shuts - strange places, everyone always dashes through them, but there's a lot of strange names and stories there. For some reason, narrow alleys always seem to hold stories, they seem to get stuck to the nooks and crannies. So, Carnarvon Lane.

Well you see Carnarvon's interesting - the lane itself was named after a person named after a person named after a place - funny how things work.

Long ago, way back in the 1400s a man called Ludovick Carnarvon lived at the end of the passage. He was a wool merchant dealing with wool brought in on pack horses over the Welsh Bridge. It was all the trade he did with the Welsh that earned him the name Carnarvon. He had come from abroad originally, the continent maybe, and no one could pronounce the name that he came with.

Ludovick courted and married a local girl, much to the annoyance of the local lads, she was one of the prettiest girls in town. In time the two of them had a daughter, but it was a hard birth. The baby made it, but her mother didn't. And so Ludovick was left to bring her up on his own. He was sure that the baby would grow up to be as beautiful and graceful as her mother and so he called her Sabrina. Sabrina grew to suit her name: Beautiful, full of flowing grace, but there were currents beneath her smooth exterior that her father rarely guessed at, though he knew she could be as strong-willed as the river. As she grew older the young men also discovered that her beauty could be as dangerous.



Sabrina was rapidly becoming her father's most valuable asset, a perfect blend of her mother's rose-like beauty and her father's dark flashing eyes, she was a prize that any man would desire. Ludovick began to look around for the family that would be most advantageous to marry into. Sabrina however had different ideas. There was one young man who came down from the hills with the wool. A common shepherd, he had no money, but he had a tanned face with blue eyes that seemed to have soaked in the light of all the sunrises and sunsets that he had seen on the mountains. He was tall, strong and fit from striding the hills and the first time that Sabrina looked into those sun filled eyes she was lost. He too was lost for love, although he probably would have suffered in silence, knowing her to be far above his station, if she had not made it obvious how she felt. The two of them plotted and planned and Sabrina was ready to tell her father of her decision and to try and talk him around into the idea of the marriage. After all, Ludovick had no sons, he needed someone to train up to take over the business and Sabrina felt sure her sweetheart was the ideal man.

But that evening she was presented to a merchant - a man as old her father. What was left of his hair was grey, his paunch bulged out beneath his robe and when he smiled at her his tongue flicked between his lips like a snake. This was to be her husband. The dowry had been agreed and the date was set. Sabrina smiled sweetly, but her eyes flashed and she knew that her father would never consent to the marriage that she was planning on. Well, then, she would just have to do it without him.

She left the men to discuss their business. She ran to her room, gathered what she could into a bundle and flung her cloak about her shoulders and then went to find her sweetheart. As she explained her plan, he slowly shook his head.

"No, Sabrina" he said, "My life is not like yours. There are no towns where I live. No bright markets full of chatter. I will be out on the hills while my wife stays at home. The woman who comes to live with me will have a hard life, a life full of work, no new clothes, no presents, but hard work and making do. You could never live like that. All too soon the love in your eyes would turn to hate and I could never bear to see you look at me like that."

Sabrina wailed, Sabrina cried, Sabrina pleaded, but he would not change his mind.

At last she hit him with all her might and stumbled out into the night and the rain. She found her feet making their way down to the river. Now no one knows whether she slipped, or whether she threw herself into the water in despair, but there was no sign of her the next morning. A few days later her body was found, washed up further down the river. But Sabrina was strong-willed and defiant. She refused to give up her hold on Shrewsbury and she still appears though every now and then, a beautiful lady caught in the current, calling for help, luring young men into the water to save her. But once they are in the water, their arms outstretched to pull her to shore, that raven black hair turns to river weed, winding its way about the neck of her would-be saviour. Her arms meld with the current, pulling the young man deeper and deeper down. Unfortunately it's a fact that even today the river claims a few souls every year and more often than not, they're young men, their eyes bulging when they're found, a look of horror on their faces as Sabrina wreaks her revenge.

No.2 - Gullet Passage

History of the Shut

Here is an old rhyme that features Gullet Passage:

Don't you know the muffin man?
 Don't you know his name?
 Don't you know the muffin man,
 That lives down our lane?
 All round the Butter Cross
 Up and down St.Giles'
 Up and down the Gullet Shut
 And call at Molly Miles'.
 (Molly Miles was the landlady of the Gullet Inn)

Who helped Amy create the story

This story was created by an open session at Mythstories. All comers were welcome to participate.



The Story Of Gullet Passage

The dragon slowly felt his mind coming back into focus. He lifted the heavy lids of his eyes and began to open his mouth to yawn and began to stretch. But there was something in the way and he couldn't manage to break free.

He forced his eyes open, looked around and saw walls. Stone walls, hard, cold, wet, dull, grey stones, walls, buildings, doors. This wasn't here when he went to sleep! What had happened to his swamp? He had liked his swamp, but now his bog and his stream was all tied up in stones. He was walled in and stuck fast. He couldn't seem to move anything at all!

Then a trickle of water came between two stones and tickled his nose. He sniffed, he sniffed again and a wisp of smoke escaped from his nostrils. He breathed out and his hot breath shrank the wet ground and dried it up. A crack appeared and the slabs began to move. He wiggled his head and he opened his eyes. He sniffed again and there was a smell, a wonderful smell.

He was used to damp, dark smells, but this was the most beautiful smell he had ever imagined. He realised he hadn't eaten for centuries and to echo that thought his stomach began rumbling and the rumble stretched from his middle and extended right the way down his tail and his tail quivered. It touched the gold he had been wrapped around for such a long time and sent piles of it flying into the gaps beneath the pavement.



He stretched again and yawned and this time the pavement lifted. The dragon's glittering eyes became fixed on one human coming towards him because he was carrying something and he was sure that was where the smell was emanating from. His tongue slipped out between his teeth and licked his lips. It was the muffin man.

He'd been making his rounds of the town and was approaching his last stop, Molly Miles' Inn. As it was the last stop, and the last inn, and the ground was slippery with the rain, he was a little unsteady on his feet. But the next step he took, the ground was not only wet, but it moved, wriggled beneath his feet! He leaned against a wall to steady himself. He took another step and he fell flat on his face. His tray went spinning up into the air. The muffin man watched as the ground rose up caught his tray and swallowed it. With wide eyes, he backed into the pub and said,

"Molly, Molly, come quick, the ground's eating my muffins!" They both crept outside into the alleyway and sure enough, the paving slabs were rising up and down in time to a crunch, crunch, crunch. They got very close and peered in, and sure enough they saw huge pearly teeth, crunching on a tray of toasty brown muffins.

Then they heard a voice - talking to them, "That's the first meal I've had for a 1000, years and it's the best thing I've ever tasted! Have you got any more?"

"More? Well, not really" said the muffin man, "that was the last batch of the day."

"Oh please, and then my stomach might stop rumbling. I'd get out and find my own food, but I can't seem to get out. Someone's covered me in stones."



"That'll be the bank. Those bankers, they trap you all ways. I sympathise with you, I really do. But you can't stay here, you're going to frighten all my customers away!"

It soon became obvious that the dragon couldn't do anything else but stay where he was. As the muffin man and Molly were rather anxious the dragon didn't turn nasty, they thought they better get some more muffins before he got the idea of eating Molly's customers.

The muffin man made an enormous batch of muffins for the dragon. Molly came with him to see what happened - and also, she thought, if the dragon's hungry..., he's probably thirsty as well and she'd brought a couple of flagons of ale.

As time went on and the dragon seemed quite content with muffins and ale and showed no sign of eating anyone, he became quite good for trade. Rather than frightening customers away he became a tourist attraction and people got used to the dragon in the shut.

This went on for weeks. No one stopped to consider what effect all those muffins and all that beer would have on the dragon, especially as he was trapped and couldn't use up his energy in flying. Day by day, his girth slowly increased until one day the dragon stretched and yawned after his usual tray of muffins and gallon of beer and something happened. The paving slabs above and around him rippled. The walls began to bow and he manage to wriggle free - it was wonderful!

Molly Miles and the muffin man were not quite so convinced that this was a wonderful turn of events. After all, now he was free, he might not be quite so tame as he had been before. They needn't have worried though. Dragons are very loyal and this particular dragon was very loyal to those who had kept him fed and watered when they could have just let him waste away. And so every day the dragon circled the town and came to rest outside the pub where yet again it was fed and watered by Molly and the muffin man. The thing was, when he broke free of the passage way and out of the paving slabs, the sweep of his tail as he slid out from beneath the market square had broken some of the bank vault walls and worse, some of Molly's cellar walls. Molly wasn't too happy about the hole in the wall of her pub, but her face started to brighten, when gold coins began to roll and trickle and stream into her cellars from the bank vaults.

The bank wasn't too happy about this, but the money had never really belonged to the bank in the first place, it was the dragon's hoard. And when they looked up at the dragon with a small flame licking from the corner of his mouth and his set of sharp teeth, they decided not to make an issue over it.

Molly and the muffin man were delighted with the loot and it certainly helped pay off the debts they had gathered from feeding the dragon. They even had enough money to afford to get married, to sell Gullet inn, which with the huge hole in the wall soon became named after that rather than the Gullet of the Dragon, buy a house in Wales and there they retired, taking the dragon with them. After all, the Welsh didn't seem quite as perturbed by a dragon wandering around as did the people of Shrewsbury.

But the memory of the Dragon remains. Gullet passage is still named after the long hungry gullet lying along the passage and if you raise your eyes and look at the walls of Shrewsbury there are still a few dragons to be found, carvings and pictures of the dragon as it circled the town.

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No.3 - Grope Lane

History of the Shut

So dark at night you had to grope your way along!

But what did you feel beneath your groping hands?

And who... or what... might you meet in the dark?

Who helped Amy create the story

The ideas literally flooded from class 5 of Wilfred Owen Primary School in Shrewsbury.

After being let loose in the shut Amy sifted and assembled their storylines into the tale below.

The class followed up their workshop by creating a cd of their own stories.



The Story Of Grope Lane

One evening, a young lad, about 9 or 10 years old was making his way home through Shrewsbury. It was an autumn evening. The mist had come down and the air was thick and heavy with drops of moisture. The gas lights on the High Street glowed in the mist and he left their hazy light behind and cut up off the High Street into the dark of Grope Lane and started to climb the bank as the walls began to narrow inwards.

The bricks were cold and clammy to the touch and he could see his breath drifting in lazy tendrils. But he had hardly turned the corner and started up the hill when he felt the hairs starting to rise on the back of his neck.

He could feel someone watching, the heavy weight of someone's, or **something's**, gaze following him. He picked up his pace, but the feeling was still there.

He could hear heavy breathing behind him, the muffled rustling of damp leaves. His heart started to beat faster and he could barely stop himself from running.

Suddenly the wall erupted into whirring and he stepped backwards as a disturbed pigeon flew out in front of him, fanning cold air into his face.

He breathed a sigh of relief and carried on. But then, there was no mistaking it, he could hear footsteps behind him. He turned and saw a black shadow creeping along the wall.



His nerve broke and he ran. The footsteps galloped after, closer and closer. A huge weight bore down on his body and he felt the cold wet touch of death and then a wet, warm dampness like fresh blood. He screamed out and tried to struggle free. A hand grabbed him and pulled him to his feet. He tried to break free, squirming and flailing, but it was all in vain.

Suddenly the weight disappeared, and a voice penetrated over his yelling, deep and gruff,

"Are you alright lad? Are you hurt?"

The boy cautiously stopped struggling and opened his eyes to find himself looking into the concerned face of an old man.

"I'm afraid he's not much more than a puppy and he slipped his lead."

The boy looked down to see a black Labrador pawing at him, his tongue lolling out the side of his mouth.

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No.4 - Bear's Steps

History of the Shut

In one of the oldest parts of the town the steps lie under a timber-framed arch.

But where is the bear?

Who helped Amy create the story

"Write Up Your Street" was a weekly free afterschools club that met in Mythstories and was funded by the New Opportunities Fund.

It provided a combination of poetry, creative writing and storytelling for 8 to 14 year olds from two local schools, Coleham Primary and Wakeman Secondary.

It began in April 2000 and Mythstories connection ceased when the museum relocated to Wem in late 2001.



The Story Of Bear's Steps

It was Michaelmas and time for the Michaelmas fair in Shrewsbury. St. Alkmund's Square was full of stalls, selling all kinds of harvest fare. The smell of roast chestnuts was in the air. Young men and women were gathered for the hiring, each wearing a symbol for their work, farmers and housekeepers looking for staff. But there was entertainment as well - acrobats, mummers and most exciting of all - the dancing bear.

Everyone watched, laughed, cheered and clapped as they watched the bear dance in the Square. The noise even made its way along the road, down the steps and into a certain cellar and into the ears of the alchemist who worked there.

The alchemist was a small man with big ambitions. He was determined that one day he would learn the secret of turning lead into gold. The furthest he'd got so far was turning green beans into brown. But one day he was sure that he would be able to manage it - and when he did he would make so much gold that he would be able to buy all the property and land in Shrewsbury and declare himself ruler of Shrewsbury and everyone would have to do what he said. He rubbed his hands at the prospect. However, the research didn't seem to be going to well today and that infernal racket from the Square wasn't helping and so he decided to go and get some fresh air and work out what was going on.



He emerged blinking into the daylight and made his way to the Square and of course, the first thing he saw was the dancing bear, up on his hind legs, lurching through the crowd. As he looked at the bear, an evil grin spread over his face as a plan began to form.

He rushed off home and spent the rest of the day making a potion. At last he poured three drops of thick liquid onto a tray. They cooled and solidified as they touched the cool metal. The alchemist knew they would do what he wanted them to, but they smelt disgusting and unless he could make them taste better, his plan would never work.

He remembered the brown beans he had transformed - they smelt sweet. He crushed them up, added some milk until he made a thick brown paste and he coated the lozenges with it. By the time they had dried and set, it was dark and all outside was quiet.

He silently slipped out into the night and made his way up towards the Square.

At last he found what he was looking for - the cage that held the bear. He softly called out to the bear and pushed the three lozenges through the bars towards the bear.

The bear sleepily opened his eyes. He sniffed at the lozenges and a pink tongue emerged between the sharp teeth and licked up first one, then another, then all three of the lozenges.

The alchemist crept away sniggering and the bear went back to sleep.

The next morning the bear woke up with a raging headache. The people in Shrewsbury were to learn the truth of the expression "like a bear with a sore head". He lifted his head and gave a tremendous howl. With one swipe of his paw he smashed the bars of his cage and lumbered out into the Square.

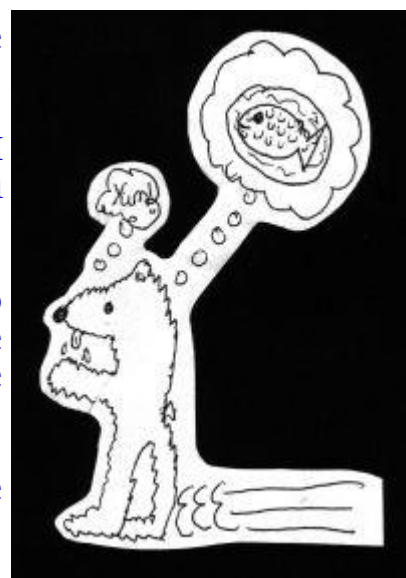
With blinding spots of pain before his eyes, he staggered backwards and forwards, sending stalls flying, apples rolling and people screaming in all directions. Panic reigned until the mayor was sent for and the leaders of the guilds. They discussed and wondered what they were going to do.

In the meantime, the alchemist made his grand entrance into the Square. He found a box to stand on.

"I alone know what ails the bear and I alone can cure him. This I will do for the good people of Shrewsbury on one condition - you must make me the ruler of Shrewsbury!"

The people looked at the alchemist in disbelief and then began to laugh - there was no way they would ever let the alchemist rule Shrewsbury - they would just have to find a way of dealing with the bear themselves.

By this time the bear was making his way across the Square towards Fish Street. The fishmongers had gathered together, debating what they could do to save their shops.



They decided that they would have to build a barrier across the steps that led down to their street. All they had to hand was fish and so it was fish that they used. They formed a chain, passing buckets of fish one way and empty buckets to be refilled in the other and bit by bit they blocked off the steps with an enormous mound of fish.

The bear was getting closer and closer and eventually collided with the mountain of fish. He began to tunnel through the fish, sending them flying with his paws, biting and tearing his way through. Then he stopped. He sat leaning with his back to the fish and happily munching his way through a prize salmon. The one antidote to the concoction of the alchemist's was fish!

Armed with a bucket of fish, the bear tamer led the bear away to a nearby stable. The rest of the people began to slowly converge on the alchemist, still standing on his box.

The alchemist turned and looked to run, but he was surrounded. They pulled him down from his box and imprisoned him in the bear's cage, mending the broken bars. And there they left him for the rest of the fair and the children were given all the rotten vegetables and fruit to throw at him.

Eventually at the end of the fair they let the alchemist go free on one condition - that he would use those brown beans to make a batch of sweet-tasting bears each week to give to the town and to remind him to keep to his place.

No one knows where that alchemist is now, but he must still be around somewhere, because to this day, there is always somewhere in Shrewsbury that sells chocolate bears. Keep your eyes open and you might just be able to buy some for yourself.

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No.5 - St. Alkmund's Passage

History of the Shut

Alkmund literally means temple protector.

Alkmund was an 8th Century prince, murdered and made a martyr. His bones were laid in Derby until his great-grandaughter, Ethelfleda the Lady of the Mercians, founded St.Alkmund's Church and brought his bones to Shrewsbury.

For over 1,000 years there has been a St.Alkmund's Church - but where are his bones now, and does his spirit guard them?

Who helped Amy create the story

Members of Shrewsbury Civic Society aided Amy in creating this story.

Amongst their many good works towards preserving and valuing Shrewsbury's architectural landscape the Civic Society were responsible for the restoration of the Bear's Steps.

Their offices are housed above the steps, and their tasteful re-creation of a mediaeval hall is an art gallery.



The Story Of St.Alkmund's Passage

There was once a young man who hated going to church. It seemed such a waste of a perfectly good day off. Still, those were the days when everybody had to go to church and each week his mother dragged him along.

As he sat on the hard pew, his mind would wander from the sermon towards the collection plate, the silver goblets and the other valuables. He came to the conclusion that the church didn't appreciate what it had and that he could use it much better.

One night, he crept through the churchyard and into the church itself. He began to fill his bag with silver. Gradually he felt the hairs on the back of his neck rise up and became convinced that someone was watching him.

He turned to see the figure of a man rising from the ground. The man was glowing with a silver light and growing larger and larger until his head reached the roof of the church. It was St. Alkmund, the temple protector and the protector of this church in particular.

"HOW DARE YOU STEAL FROM GOD?!" thundered the figure.

The robber turned and started to run. He dived out of the side door of the church and the figure followed, standing on the step.



"ARISE" shouted the silver man, lifting his left arm. There was the grating sound of stone on stone as all the gravestones on the left side of the graveyard slowly slid over one another, leaving dark holes open in the moonlight.

"ARISE" shouted the silver man, lifting his right arm. Now the rest of the graves began to open, turf rippling away from the graves, stones falling.

From out of the ground bodies began to rise from the soil, clumps of earth falling from their yellowed shrouds. All the dead of the church yard began to slowly stagger their unused limbs towards the robber, from eyeless skeletons to the newly dead with their cold grey clammy skin, all carrying the smell of mould and mildew and the faint sweet smell of decaying flesh.

The young man grew pale and began to run. Still they followed. He made his way out of the churchyard and down St. Alkmund's passage towards his home on Wyle Cop. Still they followed.

He began throwing his takings at them. Cup followed chalice, chalice followed candlestick. Still they followed, nearly all the way to the passage until only the collection plate was left and that too he threw over his shoulder.

As they caught the plate the figures melted away leaving only that faint, sweet, rotten stench behind.

From that day on the young man always made his way to church on Sunday with never a word of complaint and he slowly gained the reputation of the most honest man Shrewsbury had ever known.

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No.6 - Bank Passage

History of the Shut

This Shut was originally called "Twenty Steps Shut", but lost its name and some of its steps.

How did it lose the steps?

Why name it after a bank?

Who helped Amy create the story

Amy and Dez (from Mythstories) went out into the Shut to question the users of the passageway.

What did they think about the alley, and why did they use it?

Where did those extra steps disappear to?

The vox pops collected grew into the story that follows.

The Story Of Bank Passage

Jack was a great fiddler and a man for the ballads and shanties. In the summer he worked on the boats on the rivers. But his daughter lived in Shrewsbury and these days, now he was a bit older, in the winter he preferred to stay indoors and would come and spend the cold months with his daughter, getting by with the little bit he'd managed to keep from the summer work.

In the day he would play with his grandchildren, while most evenings he could usually be found in one pub or another playing his fiddle and singing songs to entertain the drinkers and enjoying the odd pint and plate of food that came his way in return.

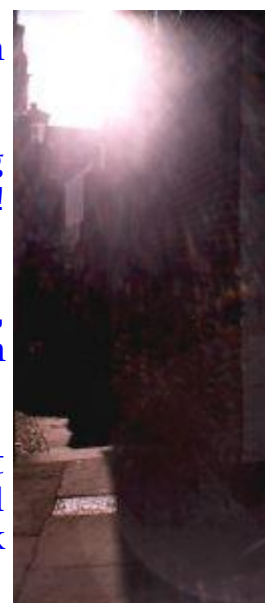
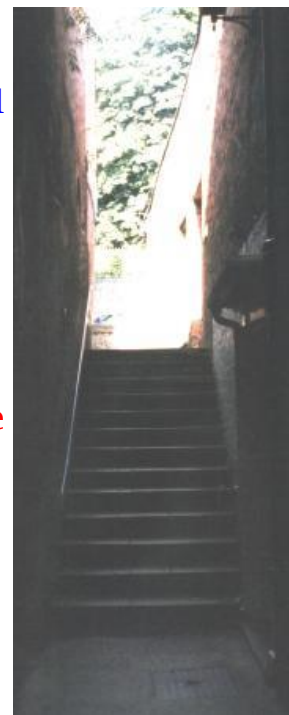
One evening he was on his way home with his fiddle under his arm when he realized that someone was walking along beside him and that someone started to pull at his elbow.

He looked down and saw a short man, bright-eyed, smartly dressed, but all in green.

"Jack, finally, just the man I've been looking for all evening! We've a wedding and a party and dancers, but what we need is a fiddler just like yourself! There's a feast as well and as much to eat and drink as you can manage."

Jack never liked to turn down a free meal and he didn't have much chance, the little man was already dragging him off past the Square and the High Street and into Twenty Steps Shut.

Well Jack was trying to work out where the wedding could be and thinking it was rather late in the evening to start a celebration, when the man stopped near the top of the shut. The moonlight glinted down on the steps and Jack was sure he could hear the distant sound of merry making.



The little man made a wide sweeping gesture with his arm and a group of steps shimmered and began to sink, so that instead of leading up the shut they led down into a deep tunnel. The little man took hold of Jack's elbow and began to drag him inside.

Jack wasn't daft and he had a fair idea of what was happening. He reached into his pocket and his fingers folded around an old horseshoe nail that he kept there for luck. He always liked to keep a little cold iron about him for luck - while harmless to us mortals, it is poison to the fair folk and sometimes a little bit of protection from them doesn't come amiss.

As they walked through the gap, he bent down, pretending to tie his shoelace and stuck the nail between the cobbles at the edge of the gap. He stood up and followed the little man into the tunnel. The further they walked, the louder the sound of laughter and singing ahead. It wasn't long before the two of them emerged out of the tunnel into an enormous cavern filled with decorations, lights, and hundreds of people, all smaller than he was, but all beautiful.

Then Jack's jaw dropped open - all around the edges of the hall were huge chests, full to the brim with gold coins - there must have been enough there to make every person in Shrewsbury rich for the rest of their lives! Then he was spotted and they crowded around him, hoisted him up into the air shouting,

"Jack, Jack - play us a tune!"

He was put up onto a stage and asked to play. He put his fiddle to his chin and struck up a tune. All the people began to dance, whirling around and around in a blur of colour. He played and played and played, until at last, his arm began to tire, his mouth grew dry and his stomach began to grumble and he put down his bow.

There was a groan and a shout for him to play on, but he explained about his blistered fingers, his thirst and hunger and the little man who had first brought him there clapped his hands.

"Let the feast begin!"

Immediately the hall was filled with long trestle tables, groaning with the weight of food beneath them. The little man took Jack's elbow and led him to sit at the table. As he sat him down he said,

"Jack, feel free to eat and drink as much as you like, but whatever you do, you must not touch the money in those chests, you will get your reward later."

Jack pushed the food around on his plate and pretended to drink from his glass, but nagging at his brain were the old stories about fairy food, once you had tasted it, you would be under the fairies' power and would never be allowed to leave.

The thought of that gold was more tempting however. At last, Jack snuck away from the feast and made his way over to the edge of the hall. He stood staring at the money in one of the chests. At last he could bear it no longer. There was so much gold that surely they wouldn't miss just a handful. He reached inside and grasped a handful of coins.

At once the hall was plunged into darkness. Jack turned slowly around to find hundreds of unblinking green eyes glaring in his direction. Jack started to run towards the tunnel, hotly pursued by thousands of pattering feet. Trying to buy himself time, he threw the coins away one by one over his shoulder towards the fair folk.

At last he came to the top of the tunnel and clambered out of the hole that was still there and back into Twenty Steps Shut, just as the host of angry fairies reached him. But they stopped at the entrance, unable to go any further and glared at Jack and the nail that was preventing them from chasing after him.

Just then Jack realised that he had been underground all night and it was beginning to get light. From someone's garden he heard a cock crow. The shouts of anger turned to fear - Jack reached down and pulled the nail from the hole and the hole immediately shut.

Jack thoughtfully began to make his way home, but then he changed his mind and went round and woke up some of his friends to tell them the story.

At first they were convinced that Jack had had one too many in the pub, but then Jack felt something cold and hard in his pocket. He drew it out and there was one glittering golden coin.

The group of them set off towards the passage, intending to raid the fairy hoard during the safe hours of daylight. However the steps which had opened had disappeared! A smooth bank led upwards to the next set of steps and they knew that if the fairies had done that there was no way that they would be allowed to enter and that the fairies had prepared against their return. But Jack kept that coin all his life and to tell the truth, that story and that one coin probably kept food in his belly for many more years than the fairy store ever would have done!

However, sometimes, if you're walking up that passage on your own at night and the moon is at just the right angle to fall down between the walls of the passage, just occasionally you can see the lost steps glimmering in the moonlight and the strains of music coming from below.

(But why's it called "Bank Passage"? Well they couldn't call it Twenty Steps Passage any more could they. Besides it's a funny thing, but places, common bits of land and buildings seem to develop personalities just like people. You can tell happy houses, and you can tell houses where something bad has happened. There are some places that feel special, that are sacred no matter which religion you come from and I guess that there are places that want to be banks. For maybe 100s of years that piece of ground had been home to a bank of the little people and then when humans decided to build a bank here, they were naturally drawn to that bit of land and there it stood until 1910.)

No.7 - Golden Cross Passage

History of the Shut

Once a trading place for Germans and a meeting place for Royalists.

The home of the oldest inn in the town and the sacristy of Old St.Chad's.

Did a golden cross escape from the sacristy into the Shut?

Who helped Amy create the story

This story was born on a live radio show; the Jon King afternoon show on BBC Radio Shropshire.

The shut was described to listeners visually, and then the folklore and facts already known were broadcast.

Listeners were invited to phone-in with extra information and ideas for the story.

Before the show ended Amy took the patches of information and threads of ideas and wove them into the story which follows.



The Story Of Golden Cross Passage

It was Christmas 1794. All the valuables, the gold plates and goblets that were only used for special services had been brought into the church over the walkway from the sacristy and the pride and joy of St Chad's, the golden cross was mounted on the altar and all was ready for Midnight service.

As midnight struck one by one all the dignitaries, churchmen, officials and guildsmen filed into their places.

After the service they made their way out of the church. Torches and lanterns had been lit, shining their light over old St Chad's grand Christmas procession. Slowly, swaying stately, the bishops, guildmasters and bailiffs began to process across the walkway. Their feet echoed in time and it almost seemed as though the walkway echoed moved with their slow march.

As the dignitaries left, some of the priests followed after, carrying the valuables back to the sacristy. The tramp, tramp of their feet began to shake the walkway. The building began to shake and rumble, small warning landslides of dust appeared here and there. The priests broke rank and ran towards the sacristy, but the sacrister himself was at the end of the procession carrying the church's pride and joy, the golden cross.



He struggled on after the others, but the Cross was too heavy. It bore down on his shoulders and slowed him down, but he would not leave it.

There was a terrible groan and the walkway collapsed into rubble and broken stakes. The sacrister and the cross disappeared and as the dust cleared there was still no sign of them.

The processional robes were forgotten, the dignitaries turned around and came speeding back. The men worked together to move the fallen walkway and retrieve the monk and the cross. However, search as they might, they couldn't find them.

With no body it was difficult to give the sacrister a proper funeral. The ground between the church and the shut was blessed and as there was no where to put a grave stone the passage itself was renamed the Golden Cross as a memorial for the sacrister who had died trying to save the Cross.

The two of them must still be buried there somewhere, as in the Golden Cross Hotel, in a particular room, there have been many reports of a ghostly monk gliding through the room. But you know and I know that it is not a monk, but the sacrister, still guarding the Golden Cross and keeping it safe.

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No.8 - Peacock Passage

History of the Shut

The passage was named after the inn which stood at the High Street end from 1780 until 1820.

Here stood the pub, here stands the passage, but where struts the peacock?

Who helped Amy create the story

Amy went on her travel to the north of Shrewsbury to perform the workshop which gave birth to this story. She visited Harlescott Women's Club on their home ground during one of their regular meetings.

Harlescott Women's Club originally descended from the suffragette movement and it has now been going for over 50 years.

The group consists of about 30 women of all ages. They are concerned with women's issues and supporting various charities.



The Story Of Peacock Passage

(So you want to know about Peacock Passage? Interesting bird the peacock. Did you know that in India its name means eternal light? There is a story that when George III had partly recovered from one of his bouts of insanity his ministers got him to read the King's Speech and he ended every sentence with the word peacock. The minister who drilled him said that peacock was an excellent word for ending a sentence, only King's should not let their subjects hear it, but should whisper it softly. The resulting pause at the end of each sentence had an excellent effect.)

One of the rich families in town used to keep peacocks, it may have been the Earl of Powys, he owned a lot of property in Shrewsbury at that time. The peacocks were kept safe in a garden, it wouldn't do for us commoners to see them.

Anyway, you might be able to hide a peacock from sight, but you can't keep them quiet. From March to August they issue their mating cry, a harsh screeching banshee of a sound and it used to echo down the passage.

At the end of the passage on the High Street was the Peacock Inn. No one is entirely sure which came first, the peacocks or the inn - the landlord was a bit like a peacock himself, always trying out the new fashions, strutting up and down the bar - the vainest man in the whole of the town. The peacocks might have been put there just as a joke and a bit of mickey taking.



The inn was one of the more up-market in town and was where the young gentlemen of the town used to meet and gather, and watch the women walking past.

It became a bit of a game. The young men would hang around the inn, strutting up and down, displaying their outfits, not unlike the peacocks themselves. As they saw a young woman walking past, particularly after an ale or two they'd give a great whooping call, imitating the sound of a peacock and give chase after her. Of course depending who was chasing, some young women would run faster than others!

Now Mary was in service at the grand house. She was 13 and as one of the youngest maids, tended to get all the jobs that no one else wanted to do and one of those chores was to look after the peacocks and the peahens, to feed and water them and to try and stop them devouring the flowers on their hunts for insects. Mary didn't think of it as a chore, though, it was one of her favourite jobs. She'd given each a name and loved to stand and watch them parade around the grounds. Unfortunately, she had plenty of other jobs to do and she was usually kept busy, running here and there all day and the young men sat in the inn were always appreciative as she hurried past on this errand or that.

One evening, Mary had been sent out on an errand and had been delayed so that she had to walk home in the dark. She was hurrying back towards the house, the kitchen and her supper. It was early in the year, not quite spring and there was a cold edge to the wind, now that the sun had gone down.

She made her way past the inn and into the passage, but as she passed the door, it swung open, letting the noise and light spill out onto the street. She heard the sound of drunken laughter behind her and then a sound that made her blood run cold, a raucous whooping, a little like the sound of the peacock and then footsteps.

She picked up her skirts and she began to run, as fast as she could, her heart thumping against her ribs. She could see a light before her and ran towards it, looking for an ally.

Suddenly the light grew brighter, almost blinding. Mary stopped dead in her tracks. Filling the end of the passage was a peacock, its tail held aloft, each eye in its tail radiating light. Mary heard the men stumble to a halt behind her.

The peacock slowly turned its head and its glittering black eyes held the men rigid. Suddenly it opened its beak and let forth a loud, harsh grating screech.

All at once the moon and the stars disappeared. There was a whirring sound and suddenly the air was full of fluttering feathers, sharp beaks, and clawing talons. Mary stared in disbelief as pigeons, sparrows, robins, starlings, blackbirds, owls and ravens, all the birds in town, descended into the passage attacking her pursuers, driving them back until they turned on their heels and fled back to the inn.

A whirr and a flutter and once again the sky was clear and the passage empty except for a young girl and an escaped peacock.

No.9 - Phoenix Place

History of the Shut

Phoenix Place leads into the heart of Victorian Shrewsbury's red light area, Roushill, from its entrance on the Mardol.

At the Mardol end was the site of Mr. Phoenix's bakery.

But who put the icing on his cakes?

Where did he send his crumpets?

And how will the Shut rise again?

Who helped Amy create the story

Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council sent representatives from their West End Regeneration Group a council partnership with businesses to bring life and prosperity back to the run down West End of Shrewsbury's town centre.

The team consisting of officers from Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts could not have picked a more aptly named shut.

The tale they created with Amy will certainly focus interest upon this Shut and the area alike.



The Story Of Phoenix Place

Mr Phoenix was a baker. He lived over his bakery which was in Mardol, at the end of one of the shuts.

Mr Phoenix was the sort of baker that everyone wanted to know. He was round and smiling, his breads and cakes always tasted wonderful and his bakery was warm and full of smells of baking and he was always willing to share it with the men who had come in early from the boats and were looking for somewhere warm to sit and talk. Yet for all that there was something about him - something that was not quite like other people.

Mr Phoenix had become something of a celebrity in Shrewsbury. He had invented a new type of hot half bread / half cake. He had learnt the secret of mixing yeast with batter in such a way that you ended up with a product that tasted a little like a pancake, but was thicker and riddled with holes.

When you spread butter over the top, it melted down into those holes and when you bit in, it was a whole new taste sensation. Mr Phoenix had invented the crumpet!

However, he wasn't about to let anyone else get hold of the secret. Every morning he would come downstairs and make his crumpets first. He would stoke up his ovens, mix the batter with just the right kind and amount of yeast then pour the mixture into the iron rings on a hot tray and put them into the oven. They didn't take long to do and soon Mr Phoenix would pull them out of the oven and leave them to cool.

But when he pulled the crumpets from the oven, there was always one that was slightly plumper, slightly more risen, slight more golden than all the others and that one he would put to the back of the pile and make sure that he knew where it was.

There was also always one that hardly rose at all and was a little charred and blackened around the edges and this one Mr Phoenix would put carefully to one side to be destroyed safely later on.

Once all that was done, he would open his doors and anyone would be welcome to come in, keep warm and keep him company.

The crumpets were a great success, everybody loved them. Soon though, people began to realize that there was something odd about them. Every now and then, when people were down on their luck, when they really needed a boost, they'd be walking down the Mardol and someone would offer them a job, or someone would have found the money that they had lost, or the lost child would suddenly return safe and sound. **Whatever** it was that they most needed.

And then they would realize that they were still holding a half eaten crumpet. And so slowly the crumpets joined the ranks of rabbit's feet and four leafed clovers. Though of course Mr Phoenix said that it was a load of nonsense and poppycock.

Down the passage lived a woman called Bella. Bella ran a guest house and her food was some of the best in the whole of the town mainly because, of course all her breads and cakes came from the Phoenix bakery. However, although Bella ate a couple of crumpets every day, it never seemed to make any difference to her life. They never brought her the famous luck that everyone was talking about.

She brooded more and more and determined that somehow she would have to get the secret. She began rising early, trying to spy out the secret. But Mr Phoenix never unlocked the door before the crumpets were done and though she knocked and asked to borrow, a cup of sugar or flour, Mr Phoenix would open the door, but only a crack and pass out what she wanted. She would smell the tantalizing aroma of the crumpets cooking, but she could never see in enough to pick up any secrets.

Slowly Bella festered with jealousy until she bribed a young rogue to show her how to pick locks. She waited until dark and waited for Mr Phoenix to leave the shop and go to bed. She stole into the shop and she began to root around. She looked under the fairy cakes and bread rolls, in the ovens until she found one lone crumpet sitting in a box.



It looked a little stale and flat and a bit charred around the edges. Bella picked it up and turned it over and over in her hands trying to work out if it might be the one lucky crumpet of the batch.

She tore off a tiny bit and nibbled it. After that little bit she wanted to eat a bit more and a bit more until she'd eaten the whole crumpet. Then she started feeling very strange indeed. She could feel her fingertips and toes tingling. Her confidence grew and she knew that she could accomplish anything she wanted to. So confident was she that she decided to make a batch of crumpets, she was convinced she could make the magic crumpets.

So she got together the sort of ingredients she thought would go into crumpets. She stoked the fire and put the batch in the oven. She took the tray and she took the pole and pushed them into the oven and then she sat and waited.

She thought that they would probably take about 30 minutes. But it was late, it was dark out, the last revellers had ceased their noise. Her head grew heavy and her eyelids heavier still. Her breathing grew slower and she fell asleep.

Meanwhile outside, it had been such a period of heavy rain that the river was rising further and further. The other residents of Phoenix Place had taken to the upper stories and there was no one around in the passage at all, because the water was creeping up the passage and the river end was blocked.

Bella suddenly came to from her deep sleep, to find the room full of black smoke. At first she couldn't remember where she was, but soon she realized that not only had she burnt the crumpets to a cinder, but that the fire had caught and was spreading through the bakery.

She leapt up and went to the bakery door, but couldn't open it because something was stopping her and when she peered out she could see water all around. That was her hope and salvation. She pushed and pulled and at last managed to force the door open and the water came rushing in.

She picked up a mixing bowl and began splashing the water here, there and everywhere over the flames and at last she had managed to put all of the flames out.

Having one last look around she hoisted up her skirts and made her way out, wading through the water, hoping that Mr Phoenix would never realize that it had been her.

Upstairs Mr. Phoenix had also been asleep, but the black smoke snaked its way up the stairs and into his lungs and he woke up coughing and wheezing.

He stumbled downstairs and saw his bakery in ruins, blackened walls, water lapping at his ovens. He stared around in disbelief and made for the door, to try and shut it against the water coming in, to stack sacks of flour against the doorway to keep the water out, but his foot caught on something beneath the water and he slipped, hit his head and was still.

Still the water rose and lifted the portly figure of the baker. The swirl of water carried him down through the passage, out onto the streets and down to the river. But it wasn't only Mr Phoenix that was carried away by the water.

All around bobbed his life's work - wooden spoons, loaves of bread, Shrewsbury biscuits, escorting him on his way, following him down the river like a mother duck followed by her chicks.

Back in Shrewsbury, the bakery was ruined. And no one was able to eat crumpets, lucky or otherwise for a very long time as the recipe for the crumpets was only known in Mr. Phoenix' head.

But somewhere he must have come to land. And somewhere he must have picked up his wooden spoon and mixing bowl because we've all eaten crumpets today - though perhaps we've never found that golden one, just a little plumper than the others.

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No.10 - King's Head Passage

History of the Shut

This passage shares its name with the King's Head Inn.

But did the name originate from the many coins the landlord hoped would pour over the bar, the death of Charles I, or was a head the only part of a king that visited the inn?

Who helped Amy create the story

Amy was ably assisted by members of Shrewsbury's Visual Arts Network in coming up with the plot for this story.

The Visual Arts Network (VAN) are responsible for Shrewsbury Visual Arts Festival which takes place during the first two weeks of August.

Works go on display in public premises throughout the town, together with artists opening their studios and other eye opening events.



The Story Of King's Head Passage

Jerusalem, the holy city, was won and for many the crusades were over. Men, women and children flocked to Jerusalem on Pilgrimage. However, the Moslems still controlled Palestine, the highways were unprotected and the unarmed pilgrims made easy pickings.

A small band of the crusaders saw what was happening and bonded themselves together to form an order of warrior monks who would protect the pilgrims. They were given buildings on Mount Moriah, thought to be the stables of the Temple of Solomon and so they called themselves the Knights Templar.

The order grew, becoming more and more successful outside the building. Inside however, they were also growing, digging down beneath the Holy Temple, searching the catacombs below.

For many years there had been rumours of sacred relics which had been buried beneath the temple. And indeed they found six holy treasures including the head of King Solomon, so holy that it was perfectly preserved, the skin still soft and the hair silky.

But Jerusalem was still not safe. There was a meeting of the Knights Templar and they decided to disperse the relics throughout Christian lands to ensure their safety.

But where could they hide such treasures? They thought and debated, but no one had the answer. At last it grew late and they decided they would resolve the matter the next day.

That night one of the Knights had a dream. He dreamed that he woke to find his room bathed in light, a silver figure standing beside his bed.

"Bring them to me", the figure cried, and the knight woke up.

He told the others about his dream the next day.

"Of course" crowed one, "St. Alkmund, the temple protector! He has six churches back in England. We will take a relic to each of his churches and he will guard them for us."

Six of the most proven knights set off the next day and journeyed over land and sea until they finally arrived on the shores of England.

They made their way inland into the heart of England. One by one the knights peeled away from the main party until the knight carrying King Solomon's head was left alone heading towards Shrewsbury.

All went well until he arrived in Shrewsbury. The knight made his way over the Welsh Bridge a couple of hours after dark. After his long journey he needed sleep, food and not least a bath, so instead of heading straight for the church, he found an inn, intending to make his way to St. Alkmund's first thing in the morning.

However, as he ate his meal, he listened to the conversation going on around him and all the strange things happening in the town. He called the landlord over to confirm and explain.

"I'm afraid it's all true. Strange things are happening, a black bull raging through the town, bowling over those who are trying to go to church, bricks falling from buildings almost landing on people's heads, strange inhuman laughter after dark. It's as if the Devil himself were walking the streets."

What was the knight to do? Shrewsbury was sounding less and less the type of place suitable for consecrating with such a holy relic, but if he didn't take the head to the church here, then where would he take it?

After much tossing and turning he finally fell asleep, but not for long.

In the middle of the night he woke to find his room bathed with a soft silver glow. It appeared to be coming from the bag that held King Solomon's Head. Cautiously the knight climbed out of bed and over to the bag. He pulled out the head and the eyes snapped open and looked at the knight.

The knight almost dropped the head. His eyes widened and he gulped a deep breath. Then the mouth of the head opened and began to speak.

"This is where I am destined to be. What better place could I be than to protect a town from the Devil. For I believe the Devil himself is loose in Shrewsbury, but he is not difficult to beat. He's as vain as a peacock, as greedy as an alchemist and stupid enough to believe that he's clever. You must challenge him to a competition tomorrow - a riddle competition."

"B..b..but I'm no good at riddles" stuttered the knight.

"Ah, but I am", said the head.

And so they made their plans. The knight spent the next day wandering up and down the streets of Shrewsbury, dreading the coming of night. Eventually the sun began to sink in the west. The knight plucked up his courage and found a quiet dark alleyway. He took a deep breath and addressed the night.

"Lord Lucifer, I challenge you to a battle of wits!"

"Oh really?" The knight turned around to find himself face to face with a slim, elegant man, twirling his moustache and looking him over with coal-black, soul-less eyes.

"Er..yes. I challenge you to a riddle dual. If I win, you will have to leave Shrewsbury forever, but if you win, you can have m..m..my soul."

The Devil's eyes gleamed at the mention of the knight's soul. The Devil never could resist a gamble.

"Very well, I will go first", said the Devil and his eyes glittered.

"What man loves more than life,
Fears more than death or mortal strife.
The poor possess, the rich require.
A contented man desires
The miser spends, the spendthrift saves
And all men carry to their graves."

The knight fell to the ground, his head in his hands and the Devil smiled. But the knight pulled the bag containing King Solomon's head close to him and whispered into it.

"Tell me the answer."

"Don't you know it?"

"No, tell me the answer."

"But it's easy."

"TELL ME THE ANSWER!"

The head relented. The knight stood up, faced the Devil and said,

"The answer is nothing."

"Very well, it looks as though we have a competition on our hands!"



It was the knight's turn to ask a riddle:

"He'll speak to you from beyond the grave
Innocent souls of Shrewsbury to save
Saintly and wise, but not canonised
He will guard the river gate
Drawing the Devil into stalemate"

The Devil thought about it. He thought a bit longer. His complexion slowly grew even redder than usual. Steam began to escape in wisps from his ears and his eyes began to bulge until he at last turned to the knight.

"There Is No Such Person!"

"Oh, but there is", smiled the knight as he brought King Solomon's head out of the bag.

Solomon's eyes snapped open and bored into those of the Devil's.

The Devil began to howl as a wind sprang into life, swirling around the Devil, matching his howls and bearing him up, up into the air until at last his howls disappeared into the distance.

The knight and King Solomon watched as the Devil was borne over the river, into Wales and at last faded out of view between the Welsh mountains - and that's where some say that he remained.

The knight dug down into the ground near the river, facing towards the Welsh Bridge. He gently lifted the head into the hole, facing towards the river and Wales and packed the soil over the top.

Since that time the passage overhead has been called the King's Head Passage and the Inn followed in suit.

The road that led into town from the Welsh bridge was named Mardol, the Devil's Limit, for as long as Solomon's head rests in Shrewsbury, keeping his watch and guarding the gate, the Devil will never again be able to cross the bridge or enter into Shrewsbury.

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