



where  
words  
work

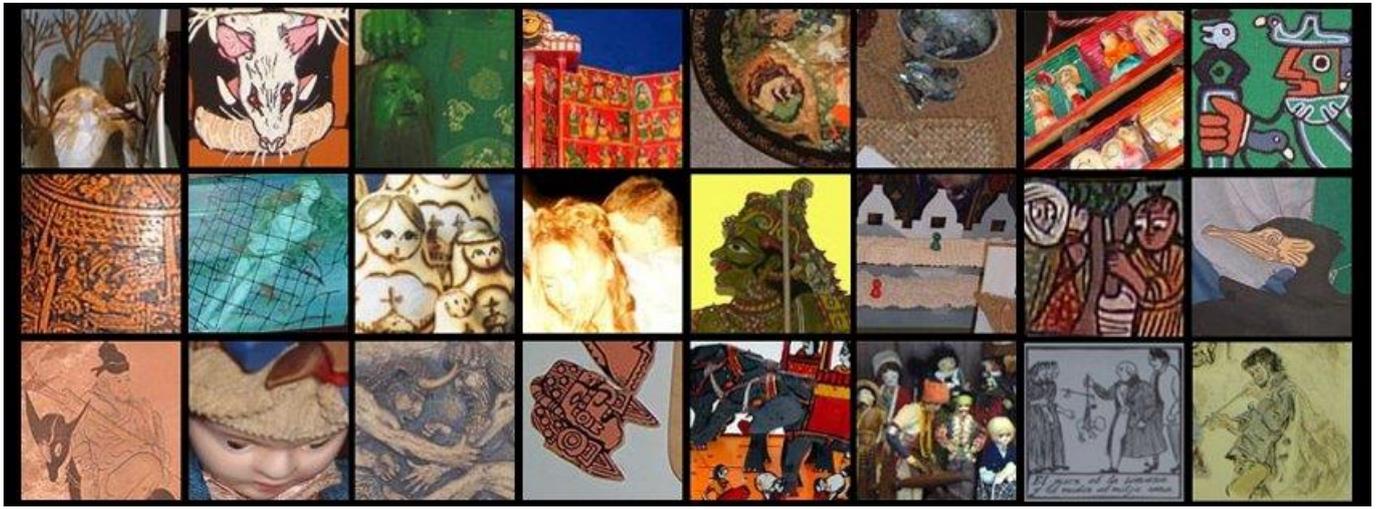
# **Mythstories**

museum of myth and fable

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

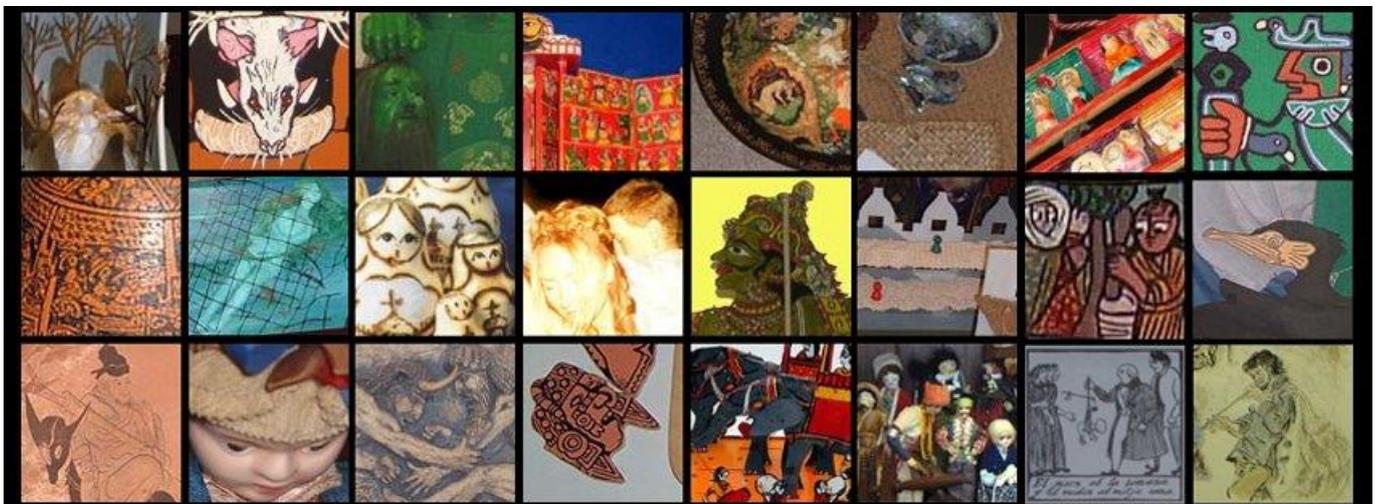
**Charity Reg. No. 1161594**

**Annual Report  
Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017**



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# 1. About Mythstories

**Mythstories** works with the spoken word. It is a museum of the intangible, which has a collection of storytelling artefacts and handling objects. It uses these to introduce visitors to legends and folklore, inspire them to a fuller understanding of the storyteller's craft and encourage them to be storytellers themselves, passing on oral heritage and keeping it alive. The museum's library incorporates the **Society for Storytelling Library** of books of traditional tales and the study area includes a copy of the archive of performance storytelling created by the **London Centre for International Storytelling**. The museum is open free of charge to the public throughout the year. Every visitor experiences a live storytelling. Pre-booked, paying, groups participate in customised programmes of workshops and storytellings.



**www.mythstories.com** is a free cross-curricular resource used throughout the world. It disseminates stories and ideas for their use in formal and informal educational settings, shares project outcomes and gives details about the Charity. The story-site is accessible to children working alone or with their partners in education. It is navigated by pictorial icons and features audio versions of stories for those barred by the written word. The web-site front page is regularly updated and has details of storytelling clubs in the UK and storytelling events in the local area as well as news about the museum.

**Mythstories** has two outreach clubs for older children and teenagers, which it runs at Wellington Library in Telford & Wrekin. The young people who attend become skilled storytellers while developing their communication skills by participating in activities in an informal atmosphere within a culture of mutual respect.

The primary focus of **Mythstories** is educational; using storytelling as a gateway to literacy. It achieves this by devising and delivering a wide range of participatory workshops and funded projects. Throughout the year we have kept in mind the **Charity Commission's** guidance on public benefit when designing and delivering our activities.

We are grateful to our volunteers who help in many ways, including staging displays, publicising events, maintaining computers, cataloguing exhibits and assisting the young people who attend our storytelling clubs.

## 2. Activities 2016 - 17

During April and May 2016 the museum exhibits were reinstalled following the Landlord's refurbishment of the building. This gave staff a chance to implement several of the recommendations of the most recent Collections Policy review: the library was distributed throughout the museum bringing books nearer to related exhibits, story creation games were given greater prominence and a 'telling and listening room' was created in newly-available space to hold both kamishibai and the museum's research resources. Visitors can now tell tales to the rest of their party in comparative privacy or listen to archive material without disturbing others. Mythstories museum was officially reopened to the public with a special event and storytelling evening on the 12<sup>th</sup> May.



In June and July almost the entire installation on the Ramayana was loaned to St. Donat's Arts Centre, South Wales for the Beyond The Border International Storytelling Festival. The installation was not only admired by visitors to the Festival, but also used as a backdrop for performances of extracts from the Ramayana. After the festival the Arts Centre retained the exhibition on public display for a further ten day period. With such a major installation away for a month, staff took the opportunity to continue their improvements to the museum layout and design and reorganised exhibits to modify navigation and contextualise the flow of displays in Room 3.

Thanks to funding from **Arts Council England** Mythstories was able to employ an apprentice throughout this year. Jake Evans was selected to fulfil the role and mentored to achieve his Community Arts Management NVQ at Level III. Jake had first become interested in storytelling when he took part in workshops at Mythstories, aged 15. He soon became Under 18 Young Storyteller of the Year and maintained and deepened his interest in storytelling over the intervening years, being an active participant in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Young Storytellers and the National Organisation of Young Storytellers (both organisations mentored by Mythstories). After winning the Under 25 title of Young Storyteller of the Year Jake decided that he would make the artform his profession. With few, or no, formal training pathways for storytelling, Mythstories worked with training



agency, **Creative Alliance** to use the Community Arts Management module as a framework for Jake to develop the skills he requires as a sole practitioner. He was able to develop his own practise while working alongside Mythstories' staff at community events, school visits to the museum and early years/KS1 outreach in a number of schools. Most importantly he was able to discuss and critique his on-going work with experienced storytellers and arts administrators.

One of his first challenges was to help set up a storytelling club at Wellington Library, for children aged 8 - 13, which would complement the activities of the well-established Away With Words group for teenagers. Inspire sessions were arranged at schools in Wellington for 450 children. From these a group of 10 emerged to become regular members of the new club. Sessions began in May and by July the young members were already telling aided by kamishibai. When the club restarted in September several shared kamishibai stories they had made for themselves over the holiday period. In December and again in February the Junior club gave performances to friends and family, library users and staff.



The Away With Words club members were invited to tell at the Black Country Living History Museum in July. Despite some heavy rain, they performed in different locations telling tales inspired by their surroundings. Thereafter they tackled Norse mythology, selecting key and linking episodes from creation myth to the final epic battles. The Norse cycle was performed to over 50 people in August in a celebration event for young library summer reading scheme volunteers and their families. Members of the group also held a public storywalk in September, their final 'show' before several long-standing members moved on to University. Despite moving away several members have continued their link with their artform and one has established a Storytelling Society at his University. Mythstories was sad to lose a key long-standing volunteer, Joseph Coyle who left to study for an MA.



Happily he is still telling stories and was highly commended in the Young Storyteller of the Year (YSOY) competition 2016.

Due to a lack of capacity, the National Organisation of Young Storytellers devolved the organisation of YSOY 2016 to our apprentice, Jake Evans, under Mythstories' guidance. The competition took place in Shrewsbury in November, with participants coming from North East and North West of England, North and South Wales and the Midlands.

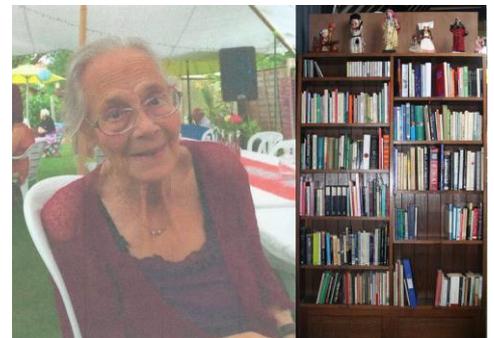


Mythstories' young storytellers competed in all categories with Away With Words member Fiona Boyle becoming the Under-18 champion and a member of the new Junior club, Harry Everson, awarded

Best Newcomer. A video of the day was made by **MediaActive** and has been used to promote the event, building the audience and participation for future years

Following the competition, Jake organised a NOYS professional development workshop / networking meeting for competitors, which was hosted by Mythstories in February.

Following the death of storyteller **Liza Watts**, her family donated her collection of source books and reference materials to Mythstories, to be kept together and displayed as 'A Storyteller's Library'. This has prompted a lot of interest from museum visitors, who come to appreciate the research that lies behind a seemingly simple oral story.



Mythstories' interpretative collection was also boosted by a donation of traditional clothing and artefacts from Asia, North Africa and Eastern Europe, collected over many years by former head-teacher Jude Willerton.

After a move back to the museum the Telling Space monthly storytelling club for adults was well attended until the cold weather returned, the nights darkened and travelling became more hazardous. So the club reverted to its peripatetic pop-up format which brings the club to its members, who come from a wide rural geographic area.



In June 2016 Mythstories identified a property in Wellington, Telford & Wrekin, as a suitable for the museum. The property owners indicated they would be willing to consider exploring 'innovative ways in which Mythstories could relocate its operations'. **Wellington H2A** assessed public support for the move, with a posting on their blog which prompted over 300 emails of support. These together with letters of support from Local Authorities, were sent to the Agents with our proposal. While the Agents are pursuing a cash sale, our proposal is still on the table.

The final addition to the museum during the year was the installation of a Wondertale-maker, on the 31<sup>st</sup> March. During her review of the Mythstories Collection in 2014 curatorial advisor, Fiona Collins, had suggested the story games could be enhanced by an exhibit exploring the structure of Wonder Tales. The creation of such an exhibit was programmed into the Community Arts Management programme of study as a cross-artform collaboration. Apprentice Jake Evans studied the structure of traditional wonder tales and shared his findings with emerging fine artist **Lucy Moxon** who created this interactive 3D exhibit based on the archetype.



### 3. Financial Review

**Mythstories** has limited regular funding. In 2016/17 it received £700 from Shropshire Council. Our commercial sponsor, Tiancom, provides free hosting for our extensive website.

At the beginning of the financial year Mythstories provided administrative services to the Society for Storytelling and acted as their public point of contact. During the year the SfS reorganised and widened the remit of the work into areas beyond Mythstories' aims. The arrangement ended by mutual consent at the end of 2016. The ongoing net annual impact of this will be small - £360 - although there will be a loss in turnover. This does not affect the agreement between the two organisations regarding the SfS library, which Mythstories will continue to house.

School visits have been slow to rebuild following the refurbishment of the building. This is a cause of concern that needs to be addressed. Following the year end, in June 2017, Mythstories was accepted to participate in an educational audit programme run by **West Midlands Museum Development Services** funded by **Arts Council England**. It is hoped that this will indicate where our efforts can successfully be refocused.

Mythstories is gradually increasing its unrestricted reserves to a maximum of 3 months' non-wage running costs plus 10% of its average annual project funding. At March 2017 it held 55% of this total.

Staff expenditure during the year was minimised: skilled volunteers keep the Charity on course. When the Charity undertakes chargeable work, some of these volunteers are sometimes paid. During 2016/17 Dez and Ali Quarréll were jointly paid just under £12,000 for schools work in the museum, outreach and project management. Other employee costs relate to the employed Apprentice, who was paid the statutory age-related rate and to Peer Mentors who supported its work with teenagers.

Since year end Mythstories has created a permanent part-time minimum wage post. This is the first step towards reducing reliance on volunteers and making the organisation more sustainable.

During the year volunteers attended a funding forum set up by West Midlands Museums Development team in June and the Pop-up Education Conference, which focused on literacy programmes in schools.

The apprentice's training offer from Creative Alliance was augmented by participation in training and networking opportunities provided by the West Midlands Museums Development team, by participation in high-quality performance storytelling workshops delivered by leading professional practitioners, by attending performances and by joining teams working at a local festival and an international arts school.

The museum is housed in The Morgan Library, a Grade II listed building belonging to **Shropshire Council**, who charge the Charity a nominal rent of £1 per year on a non-repairing Lease.

## **4. How Mythstories operates**

**Mythstories** is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation governed by a standard 'Foundation' constitution.

**The Trustees are:**

Peter John Roscoe (first term – ends 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017)

David William Reeves (first term – ends 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017)

Geoffrey Arthur Hardy (first term – ends 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018)

Pauline Ann Rigby (first term – ends 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018)

Following year end, the Trustee board remains unchanged. A maximum of 7 Trustees may hold office. Individual Trustees may serve for a maximum of three terms. New Trustees are recruited by the existing Board and serve an initial 3 year term.

**Contact** c/o Mr. Peter J. Roscoe, 19 Victoria Street, Castlefields, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY1 2HS or **info@mythstories.com**

**Mythstories'** trustees are keen that the Charity works in an environmentally-friendly way. Staff, volunteers and visitors are encouraged to use public transport and outside events take account of public transport timetables. The museum is on a 100% renewable energy tariff. Within the museum, staff use environmentally-friendly cleaning products; reduce waste by re-using materials wherever possible and recycle paper, card, metals, plastics and food waste.

**Mythstories** works in partnership with the **Crick Crack Club** (the **London Centre for International Storytelling**) to promote storytelling in the United Kingdom. Two key personnel from Mythstories and one from the Crick Crack Club are Directors of **North of England Storytelling Festivals Ltd**, and lead their commissioning arm, **3monkeys**. Mythstories works with the **National Organisation of Young Storytellers** to promote storytelling as a participatory artform for young people. It actively seeks partnerships with Local Authority departments, schools, other museums and arts organisations to deliver one-off projects with educational, cultural, social or economic objectives. It is a member of the **Telford Cultural Education Partnership**. These partnerships between like-minded organisations with complementary aims and objectives are central to **Mythstories'** policy of making best use of available resources, talent and funding.

**Mythstories** is primarily project funded and has established relationships with several funding providers. It has a reputation for bringing in quality projects on time and within budget while achieving the set targets.

  
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Signed

8-9-17  
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Date