



where
words
work

Mythstories

museum of myth and fable

**University Centre Shrewsbury
Guildhall
Frankwell Quay
Shrewsbury
SY3 8HQ**

Charity Reg. No. 1161594

**Annual Report
Year ended 31st March 2021**

1. Our Mission

Mythstories works with the spoken word; in a museum, on-line and in outreach projects.

We encourage our users to be storytellers themselves, passing on oral heritage and keeping it alive.

2. Status of the Charity

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

Mythstories began as a website in June 1998, before opening as a museum in February 1999. The original Charity was created by a Deed of Trust in 2001 and merged with the CIO in 2015.

3. Governance and Management

Contact c/o Mr. S. Poole, Fullersmoor Cottage, Smithy Lane, Brown Knowl, Broxton, Cheshire, CH3 9JY info@mythstories.com

During the year 9 Trustees held office:

Peter John Roscoe (resigned 9th February 2021)

Geoffrey Arthur Hardy (resigned 9th February 2021)

Pauline Ann Rigby (resigned 31st March 2021)

Jacob Edward Owen Williams (first term – ends 15th May 2021)

Zara Bannu (appointed 1st September 2020)

Philip Leslie Jefferies (appointed 1st September 2020)

Simon Poole (appointed 1st September 2020)

Jennifer Watson (appointed 10th February 2021)

Joseph White (appointed 10th February 2021)

The maximum number of Trustees that can serve is 7.

The Trustees cover the following skill areas: cultural education, diversity, health psychology and resilience, legal expertise, verbal arts practice. Some have experience as former or practising young storytellers, some have current experience of academic life as students, researchers and lecturers.

Physical meetings have not been possible due to Covid-19 restrictions and during the year Trustees met electronically to conduct business. Key policy documents and governance information are maintained on cloud storage, together with day-to-day and management accounts and are accessible to all Trustees.

During the year the Charity moved to on-line banking. Three Trustees and a key volunteer have access to the bank accounts, with payments due being reviewed and authorised monthly.

Day-to-day management continues to be delegated to two key volunteers.

4. Objectives

The primary focus of **Mythstories** is educational; preserving and disseminating traditional tales. It does this by:

A Maintaining a publicly accessible collection of storytelling artefacts which introduce visitors to traditional tales and folklore and a library which includes volumes of stories as well as books on the theory and application of storytelling. The current collection incorporates the **Society for Storytelling Library** and a copy of the audio archive of performance storytelling created by the **London Centre for International Storytelling**.

B Maintaining a website, free at the point of use, disseminating traditional tales and ideas for their use in formal and informal educational settings.

C Initiating outreach projects in the Shropshire/Mid-Wales borders area, which focus on the region's oral heritage.

D Working with other organisations to promote storytelling in the United Kingdom.

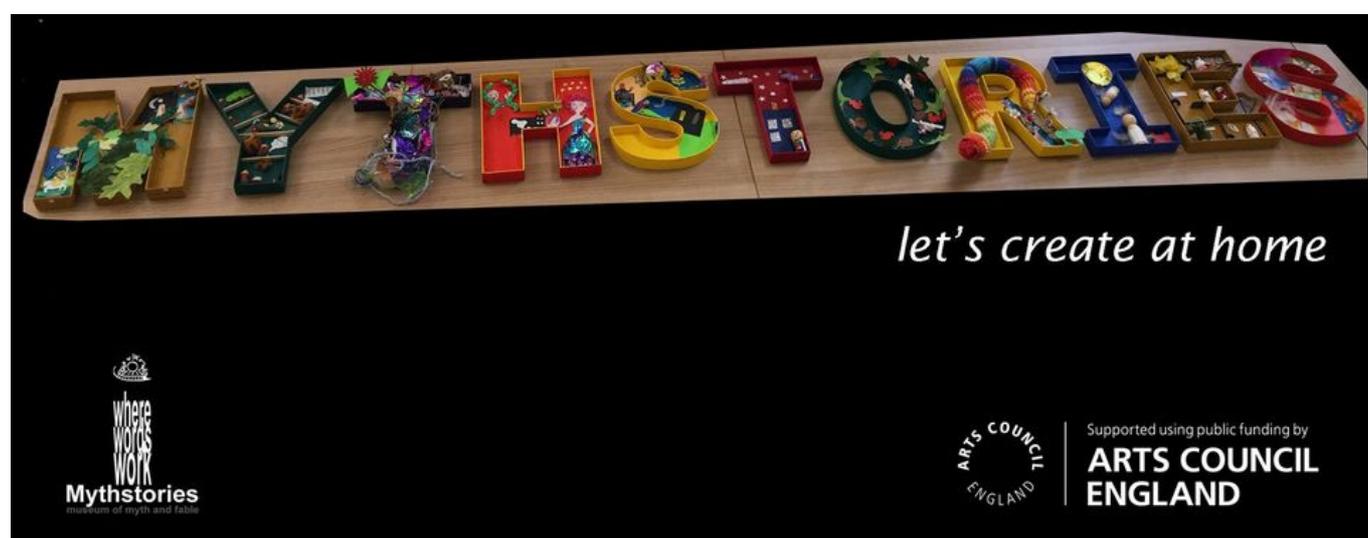
E Exploring the educational uses of storytelling, as a gateway to literacy and to develop 'soft' life-skills.

The Trustees and management keep in mind the **Charity Commission's** guidance on public benefit when designing and delivering activities that flow from these objectives.

5. Achievements and Performance

University Centre Shrewsbury closed to students and the public just before the start of this year, on 14th March 2020, in response to a suspected case of Covid-19 and has since remained closed to the public due to the pandemic.

Consequently, the year started in responsive fashion, all planned events and museum openings were cancelled and Trustees and volunteers concentrated on updating policy documents while assimilating the impact of the new situation. It soon became apparent that during 2020-21 the Charity's public-facing work would need to be exclusively on-line.



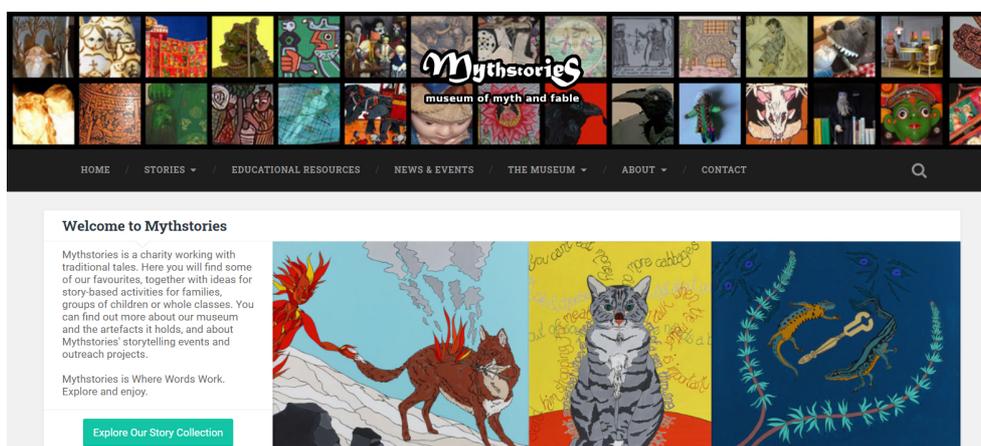
Having established a monthly **Home-Ed group**, we were keen to keep these families engaged with **Mythstories'** work and in regular contact with each other. With the aid of a grant from the **Arts Council England's Covid-19 Response Fund** we organised monthly on-line Facebook Live sessions during May, June and July under the banner '**Let's Create At Home**'. These were complemented with workshop outlines from three previous sessions being added to the website.



These proved popular with the families and in August we received funding from the **Shropshire Emergency Arts Grant** to cover the costs of two more sessions, this time led by two guest Shropshire Storytellers. We created a closed group FB page and membership grew to over 60 families – some of the extra number coming from families home educating as a result of Covid-19. Membership of the on-line group has now increased to 72 families and the page continues to be active. Volunteers continue to set monthly family creativity challenges that can be completed at any time, rather than during a live event.



As a result of receiving the **Arts Council England** grant we were able to access free help and advice from the **Digital Culture Network** and volunteers participated in several webinars. We also had one-to-one mentoring which focused on the architecture of www.mythstories.com, which needed re-designing to bring the educational content forward, and re-platforming to ensure improved access to users on mobile device. Following the advice we drew up a plan and received a grant under the **Heritage Emergency Fund**, administered by **The Lottery Fund for Heritage**, which enabled us to undertake the work to make the plan a reality. <https://mythstories.com> launched in late December.



During this half of the year, we were actively planning how to safely recommence live events, and we submitted a grant application to the **Shropshire Arts Grant** for a project entitled '**Wise Words in Wild Places**'. This would incorporate live storywalks together with on-line storyfilms of site-specific stories. These would be used to signpost families to places unlikely to be overrun by visitors and therefore suitable for those coming out of shielding. Our grant application was successful and **Wise Words in Wild Places** grew to a larger project with additional funding from **Arts Council England** and **Energize, Shropshire Telford & Wrekin**. Work on the project began in December 2020 and is on-going.

Also during this period, we joined with fellow-members of **FEST** (the Federation of European Storytelling organisations) and their newly-appointed England Ambassador to explore opportunities for advocacy in the education sector demonstrating the benefit of more storytellers and storytelling in schools.

Finally, in response to a request from a former member of our **Away With Words young storytellers club**, we successfully applied to the **Community Fund** for equipment and a Zoom subscription which enabled us to restart the club on-line. **Zoom Away With Words** held its first meeting in May 2021, after year end.

6. Staff and Volunteers

One key employee was furloughed during April and was able to resume work on specific funded projects in May. The other key employee retired in April, but continued with the Charity's day-to-day administration as part of a new voluntary post.

The three original Trustees all retired during the year and we welcomed five new Trustees, bringing the total Board to six. Three trustee-designates, who had been shadowing the Board's work the previous year, took up post in September 2020 with two others joining in February 2021. The new Trustees have brought with them a fresh perspective that will be invaluable as **Mythstories** continues.

The 'silver lining' of the Covid-19 pandemic has been that many funders and arts organisations are providing free training with workshops and seminars on-line. With a shorter time commitment and no travel expenses volunteers were able to take advantage of many of these:

West Midlands Museums Development:

- Exceeding visitor expectations
- Engaging your audiences during lockdown
- Business Planning in challenging times

Shropshire Cultural Consortium

- Virtual Schools and looked-after children

Federation of European Storytelling Organisations

- Storytelling competencies
- Storytelling, sexuality and gender identity

Culture Live

- Moving arts and culture online
- Audiences now and in the future
- Evolving business models and new revenue streams

Beyond The Border

- Podcasting

Arts Connect

- Arts Award on-line moderation

Arts Connect/Birmingham Education Partnership

- Storytelling as a teaching tool

Shropshire Council

- Arts fundraising and philanthropy

And, as a result of our successful application to the **Heritage Emergency Fund**, we were able to take up an offer of free one-to-one sessions with a Financial Consultant, a Fundraising webinar and a one-to-one session with a charity fundraiser.

All this learning is gradually being factored into the way we work and plan our future projects.

And notably it has already resulted in **Mythstories** setting up Fundraising pages with **CAF donate** and **Amazon Smile**, and appearing in the **Arts UK** on-line shop where supporters can buy prints of paintings from the collection.

Finally, A **University of Chester** student was interviewed and accepted a six-week volunteer work-based learning placement that commenced after year-end.

7. Financial Review

Expenditure

Mythstories has minimal overheads; in general building costs are covered by **University Centre Shrewsbury**, artists and staff are employed on a project-by-project basis. Our major annual overheads remain Insurances and Telephones. This 'sustainable' model gave **Mythstories** the financial resilience needed to weather the Covid-19 pandemic during the year and to continue into the foreseeable future.

Skilled volunteers keep the Charity on course. Employee costs for 2020/21 amounted to approx. £7,000 and related predominantly to work on funded projects. There were no Trustee expenses paid.

Income

Mythstories has no guaranteed regular funding and is primarily project funded. Earned income is normally generated through chargeable curator-led public tours and school and group visits. These were not possible during the year due to the closure of the building to the public as part of the University's Covid-19 response.

Our low turnover while relocating in 2019/20 made us ineligible for payments from the Covid Recovery Fund, however we were awarded £1,000 from **Shropshire Council** under their **Emergency Arts Grants**. We also benefited from £458 from the Government's Furlough Fund.

We were able to continue our core work on-line with the help of two specific grants; £2,295 from the **Arts Council England Covid-19 Response Fund** and £6,400 from the **Heritage Emergency Fund** administered by the **Lottery Fund for Heritage**. We were also awarded £1,000 from the **Community Fund for Staffordshire**, who were administering the Shropshire Community Fund, to meet general running costs and to fund the set up of **Zoom Away With Words**, our on-line storytelling club for young people.

And we began work on **Wise Words in Wild Places**, an on-going year-long project with financial support from: **Sport England** via **energize Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin** (£500), **Shropshire Council Arts Grant** (£5,000) and an **Arts Council England Lottery Funded Project Grant** (£14,900).

Reserves

Mythstories aims to hold unrestricted reserves to a maximum of 3 months' running costs plus 10% of its average annual project funding. Most of these reserves were expended on relocation and will need to be rebuilt once the museum is fully operational.

8. Covid-19 and Beyond

In April 2021 we heard informally that **the University of Chester**, the lead partner in **University Centre Shrewsbury**, no longer wished to continue housing our collection in the Guildhall when the building reopens. This was formally confirmed in September 2021, and discussions as to how this can be implemented have started. We are investigating the possibility of moving to a more culturally democratic model of operation by relocating the artefacts in the collection into public spaces throughout Shropshire and possibly beyond, while keeping the collection together digitally. We have been accepted on to an Arts Council funded mentoring programme run by **The Space** which will help us identify appropriate digital solutions.

Our application for Accredited Museum status expires in December 2021 and without a legally secure and publicly accessible location for the Collection, the application will lapse.

Mythstories priorities for 2021 and beyond are to resolve the museum's location, develop our audience, maximise our earned income opportunities and raise the profile of **Mythstories** and its work.

Approved by the Board30 SEPTEMBER 2021..... (date)



Signed:
(trustee)

PHILIP JEFFERIES.



Signed:
(trustee)

JOE WHITE