

Blethers

Issue 16 Spring 2008

Scottish Storytelling Centre and Network Renews its Vision

The Scottish Storytelling Centre and Network starts its new communications strategy this month, and reflects on the organisation's core aims and ethos.

Storytelling is a unique human skill shared between people, and one of our oldest artforms. Storytelling brings words and world to life together, stimulates the imagination and builds a sense of community between tellers and listeners. People of different ages, backgrounds and cultures can grow in understanding through storytelling.

Purpose

Stories are everywhere around us, in newspapers, books, on the radio, TV and the web. But storytelling happens when the story is told person to person, without print or technology.



David Campbell, founder member of the Scottish Storytelling Forum

The Scottish Storytelling Centre and Network aims

- to give every child in Scotland the experience of live storytelling
- to recognise, encourage and enable storytellers in every community

- to sustain the Scottish Storytelling Centre as a national and international resource and source of inspiration
- to enable old traditions and values to flourish in new ways.

People

The work of the Scottish Storytelling Centre and Network is at all times people centred.

Our work includes professional and community storytellers, tradition bearers, those using stories in their own professional contexts, and young storytellers.

Our work affirms the contribution of children and young people, of older community members and of people whose disabilities should not prevent their access to storytelling experiences.

Our work celebrates the stories and experiences of people of all ages and backgrounds and promotes cultural exchange and understanding.

Join Us

The Scottish Storytelling Forum (SCO 20891) is the membership organisation supporting the Scottish Storytelling Centre and Network.

The Scottish Storytelling Centre and Network is a partnership between two charities – the Scottish Storytelling Forum and the Church of Scotland. We are grant aided by the Scottish Arts Council and the City of Edinburgh Council. However, our work depends on charitable giving and the support of our members. Please consider making a donation to the Scottish Storytelling Forum, or leave a legacy to allow the Network and Centre's work to grow.

For more information on the benefits of becoming a Friend of the Forum or a Network member, or to make a donation, please contact the Scottish Storytelling Centre on 0131 556 9579 or reception@scottishstorytellingcentre.com.



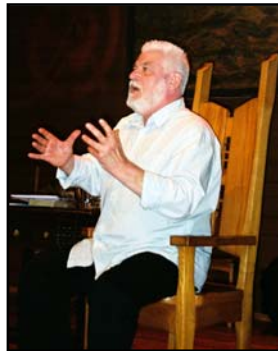
www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk

Scottish Storytelling Centre, 43-45 High Street, Edinburgh EH1 1SR
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SOUTH / NORTH

The 2007 Scottish International Storytelling Festival went North and South in search of Eden. Highland and African storytelling traditions were explored in both their traditional and contemporary guises.

Feedback suggests that people appreciated the more compact programme this year and the weaving of the themes. Welcoming African guests from Uganda, Botswana, Ghana and Zimbabwe made for a very special atmosphere and energy. However, the Highland weekend and the 'Travellers Joy' night were also especially memorable.



Highland storyteller
Bob Pegg

The 2008 Scottish International Storytelling Festival runs from Friday 24th October to Sunday 2nd November. The theme is Northlands and Sagalands. So does that mean we will be going south again next year, or east, or west?

SCOTLAND AND AFRICA

One of many impressive things about the 2007 Scottish International Storytelling Festival was its spotlight on partnerships between our wee northern turf and that gigantic and extraordinary continent.

Ewan McVicar's work with schools and children's refugees in Kampala is continuing, following the visit to Edinburgh by Gailey Turyahebwa who both delighted and challenged Festival audiences.

Building on the Scotland-Uganda Bird Exchange, Ewan's latest production is a Music Exchange with a booklet and CD of songs on being a street kid, AIDS, escaping war and corruption, and struggling for freedom. Copies are available from the Gallus label, 84 High Street, Linlithgow EH49 7AQ (01506 847935) or from the Storytelling Centre. The Music Exchange needs support for equipment and instruments, helping to rescue Kampala's forgotten and abused children.

Meanwhile Gift Amu Logotse, who also featured at the Festival, is fund raising for the Wumenu Community Farm near Ito in Ghana. The aim is to increase the water supply in order to make Wumenu a self sufficient farming community, particularly through producing healthy fresh fruits and juices. This venture is part of Amu's passionate advocacy of global community and citizenship.

You can support the farm by donating to "Friends of the Wumenu Community Farm" c/o 3 Moubray, Crook of Devon, Kinross-shire KY13 0UU

SITA - www.learnbsl.org

Stories in the Air (SITA) is a small but hugely effective charity providing resources for deaf children and the parents and relations of deaf youngsters. It produces Sign Language DVDs which are distributed free, numeracy resources, and plans a range of storytelling materials.

One current project – Signs of Our Lives – allows deaf adults in Glasgow to share their experiences (humorous and tragic) of growing up in a society unaware of its deaf minority.

SITA's resources are in constant demand across the UK but raising the necessary funds is proving increasingly hard. This is not a glamorous cause and some trusts argue that government should provide. In reality the 'mainstreaming' of deaf children into majority educational provision is creating greater needs than ever. If ever there was a case for storytelling breaking down barriers, this is it.

The Scottish Storytelling Forum is a founder member of SITA and a staunch supporter. Could you consider supporting this vital work through donations or fund raising, or by recommending Stories in the air as a good cause at your workplace or that of friends and relations? Many companies and trusts now donate in this way.

If so, please contact Robert Clyde on helpus@learnbsl.org or by telephone on 0131 229 1737 any direct donations can be handed in at the Storytelling Centre, payable to Stories in the Air. Thank you.

BEST STORIES

For St Andrew's Day 2007 the Scottish Government asked Donald Smith to nominate his top five Scottish stories. Here is his attempt at the impossible:

1. ***Bride and Beira*** Scotland's beautiful creation myth, as the goddess of Spring is freed by Angus Og, only to turn gradually into Beira the cailleach or auld mither o winter.
2. ***Bruce and the Spider*** We do not know if it really happened, but it defines the resistance struggle for freedom – 'never say die!'
3. ***John Commonweill*** The common man or woman rises up to defy unjust authority: this tale of political passion is at the core of our greatest play, 'Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis'.
4. ***Rashiecoats*** The Scots version of Cinderella and one of our world ranking wonder tales, told at the hearthside to fire imaginations.
5. ***Jekyll and Hyde*** A defining myth created by the consummate storyteller, R.L. Stevenson, from a nightmare.

Please help us better and extend this.

Send your top ten nominations to jill@scottishstorytellingcentre.com and we will post the results on the web – the printable ones anyway!

CONNECTING WITH STORIES

The 2008-9 Training and Development Programme is now available on the Storytelling Centre website and in hard copy. There are five main strands this year:

- Traditions and Skills
- Whole Person Learning
- Community Learning and Development
- Network Development
- The Newbattle Partnership

National Development Days (Traditions and Skills) offers a full range of options from beginners to the masterclass, as well as a weekend in Skye. Tutors include Stanley Robertson, Jackie Ross, David Campbell, George MacPherson, Marion Kenny, Ruth Kirkpatrick, Claire McNicol and Michael Kerins.



Ruth Kirkpatrick will lead 'Beginning with Folktales' on 25th October

Whole Person Learning continues the Scottish Storytelling Centre's contribution to combating the toxic childhood syndrome, as well as to Curriculum of Excellence and Scottish culture in schools. Why not consider becoming a storytelling school?

Under *Community Learning and Development* Russell McLarty will open a window on the cultural side of community planning. Michael Williams leads on the emotional health and wellbeing of young people. Reminiscence and Biography, the Year of Homecoming, Faith Stories and King Arthur are among other big themes.

A new feature this year is development events for Network members on Stories and Healthcare, Working with Children, and Sources/Resources. The Healthcare day will begin with a presentation on the successful 'Space for Stories' project, while Taffy Thomas and Steve Killick will be on hand at the 'Zest for Life: Working with Children' event to talk about their new book *Telling Tales: Storytelling and Emotional Literacy*.

The purpose of the Network Days is to allow more sharing of ideas and good practice amongst members. The series culminates in a residential weekend at Newbattle Abbey College in Midlothian from 20th to 22nd March 2009, entitled 'The Storyteller's Journey'. This event is part of a new partnership with Newbattle, providing taster weekends and a professional development

qualification in 'Contemporary Storytelling: Theory and Practice'.

For more information on training events at the Scottish Storytelling Centre, or to discuss options for tailor-made training options in your venue, contact Caroline Budge on 0131 652 3272 or caroline@scottishstorytellingcentre.com.

Myths and Legends of the West

Lesley O'Brien and Allison Galbraith had a great time storytelling at the Inverclyde Myths and Legends Festival last November. Based in the atmospheric McLean Museum and Art Gallery in Greenock, Lesley and Allison told local stories and myths to school children, families and the public.

Over the three day festival hundreds of folk turned up to listen. "There was an amazing response from the public" said Lesley, "so many people really connected with the stories, recognising the places and characters involved and contributing their own memories and stories."

Allison says a big "THANK YOU" to Sylvia Troon (puppeteer/storyteller). "After attending Sylvia's puppet making workshop, (part of the Storytelling Centre's, "Zest for Life: Storytelling in the Early Years" training day in October 2007), I made this family of puppets to illustrate the famous Hobyah story for the children with learning disabilities who came along to the festival. I wouldn't have dreamt it possible for me to make puppets until Sylvia inspired and tutored me so brilliantly in her workshop."

The Festival ended on a fantastic note with artist George Wyllie attending the last storytelling; he seemed genuinely impressed saying, "This storytelling is a great thing!" He even accompanied Allison and Lesley to the after festival dinner at the local Tontine Hotel – very entertaining!

Allison Galbraith

DUNCAN WILLIAMSON Ceilidh Man

Duncan's passing in November of last year has let loose a torrent of memories, tributes and celebrations.

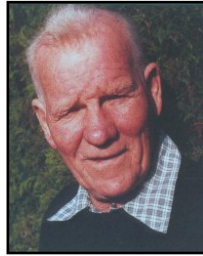
Linda Williamson and David Campbell are working on Duncan's life story which will be called *Ceilidh Man*. This will not be a traditional biography but one based on Duncan's own special genius – the art of a ceilidh. If you have particular memories and thoughts you would like to share, please send them to David Campbell, Flat 2FL, 33 Dundas Street, Edinburgh EH3 6QQ.

Donations for Duncan's specially commissioned storytelling chair should be sent to Donald Smith at the Storytelling Centre payable to the Scottish Storytelling Forum. Also in this issue is Helen East's lovely tribute to Duncan which was spoken at his funeral.

A Tribute to Duncan

Duncan always said, "When our parents died we didn't need tombstones to remember them by. We had their stories." How many of us – all over the world – will be saying that now about him?

Stories were Duncan's legacy from his family. Where other people would have looked for money, or possessions, or property, he had something he prized much more; "the gift", he used to say, "that could not be broken or dropped", the one that even the poorest parent could give, that ephemeral world held on the breath, "a story from your mouth."



Duncan Williamson

And he continued to value them despite all the force of an increasingly commercial modern world. Even as a teenager, off on his own, working hard and often sleeping rough ("graveyards were the best," he said, "the one place you wouldn't be disturbed") Duncan still kept on telling stories and learning new ones too, from anyone he met along the way.

Then, as time went by, things changed. More and more people began to appreciate the songs and stories, the oral lore that they had almost lost, and Duncan (largely thanks to Linda and the publishing of his tales) became known to a wider and wider group of listeners. Now this rich store that Duncan had safeguarded became a treasure trove indeed. Folktales, songs, were being claimed, owned, copyrighted; a golden goose for some. And once again Duncan stood against the tide insisting that the oral tradition be honoured, stories and songs, be freely given and passed on. That even included his books – I remember a train ride to London when a boxful intended for sale at his performances was handed out to new friends he had made along the way!

For, however easily and simply he told them, Duncan always understood the real power of his stories. Not only did he love them because they brought back the spirit and memory of the tellers, and because they held his heritage, the history of Travelling people, but also because he knew they carried an important lesson – a belief in the right way to live. Underneath the humour and magic lies a real understanding of human nature and how that affects your life. "Jack was always the one for us, the one the boys were told," he'd say. And "because I know Jack's character, I know how his story will go."

That lesson holds true for all of us; we all need dreams; we all need good guidance. Whether we are Travellers or rich property holders, Duncan of all people understood that at heart everyone is the same. Throughout the world, he treated everyone equally and, king or beggarman, he connected with

us all. No matter where or when or who had come to him, he freely gave his warmth, his attention, and above all his stories.

So many of us, then, were drawn so close that we became part of his family. Like a father he opened our eyes to his way of life, his values, and invited us to share in his heritage – to take and retell his stories as our own.

No tombstone then, no physical memorial, is really needed to help us remember this extraordinary man, this blast of fresh air from another world.

For he has done his utmost to make sure we have his stories. And whenever we tell them he will be back with us in heart and mind again.

Helen East

2007: A Year of Kindness and Sadness

2007 was a year woven with kindness and sadness. Kindness for, in the space of that one year, I was established officially as an author, poet and songwriter.

The first volume of my epic poem *Brainheart* came out published by the Luath Press (www.luath.co.uk) when we had a launching/performance in Leith and in Stirling. The book is set out to inspire a new generation of Scots to look back, firstly to the heroic age of innovation, invention and discovery, and to carry that forward into the new unknown.

By its format and nature *Brainheart* is performance poetry, with 50 innovators taking 40 lines each (2,000 lines) plus biography, appendixes etc. The Scottish Arts Council has funded me to write a second volume which is now almost finished.

Also in 2007 I became one of the joint winners of the National *Burnsong* song writing competition. This involved writing and entering up to three songs along the themes that Rabbie himself would have written about – love, humanity, hypocrisy, politics etc. One could make up an original, or use an existing tune in any style.



Paraig MacNeil

My winning song was a parody/satire on the cash for honours called *Honours for Fees*. To hear it visit <http://joebennett.vox.com/library/audio/6a00e398c06464000500e398c16ed10003.html>

Another project, still ongoing, is the *Leabhar Beag* (Little Book), a continuation of the *Leabhar Mór* (the Great Book of Gaelic). This book will contain Gaelic poetry, facilitated by Aonghas MacNeacail in Scottish and Irish, with visual art and calligraphy by Colin MacAllister. My part was to provide the schools concerned (in Ayrshire) with Gaelic stories – 30 in all.

The sadness was, of course, the news of Duncan Williamson's death, the man who took me on as his apprentice in the late summer of 1988. Duncan not only made me officially a storyteller, but also brought me into the bosom of his culture and his people. He took the place of my granduncle Tommy, the old *seanchaidh*.

Part of the prize for the 12 winners for the *Burnsong* competition was to attend a songwriting week under the excellent tuition of Joe Bennett of Bath Spa University. We wrote 44 songs during that week, and performed live our winning song and one of the new ones each, live at BBC Pacific Quay on St Andrews Night. This now makes me officially a member of the Scottish songwriting house.

The first song I wrote was in memory of my first meeting with Duncan in 1988 at the Stirling Festival in Dunblane Library. This was to be a collaboration, where I wrote the lyrics and Lisa Paton (fellow winner) wrote the tune. I performed this song with Lisa at the Scottish Storytelling Centre on the Duncan Memorial Yuletide evening last December. The song is an extended riddle about old Highland Dress and storytelling and is called *Spinner o' Yarns and Weavers o' Words*.

Paraig MacNeil

Jess Brings Drover History to Life

Popular storyteller and author Jess Smith has been involved in a thrilling Drovers' Tryst Festival in Strathearn, held every year to celebrate the coming of cattle, driven south from the highlands to Crieff. The town was once the main cattle market. Drovers were trekking the long drove roads since the early seventeenth century.

Jess, who lives at Crieff, took visitors on a forest walk to tell stories of the history of the drovers – and a great time was had by children and adults as they listened to the magical animal tales and heard of the fairies and goblins of the forest on their two-hour trek.

Jess's books on her life as a Traveller have not only been widely praised, but have captured a significant part of Scotland's social history for thousands of readers.

She became involved in the Drovers' Tryst three years ago. "I did a storytelling event in the age-old Drummond Arms Hotel. This was where Prince Charles Edward Stewart stayed overnight when he was heading north to meet his final defeat for the Scottish crown. His generals heard however that an attempt was to be made on his life, so, under cover of darkness, he was smuggled out of the hotel to a home which bordered on the Knock hill called Ferntower House. Its remains are still there today, circled by Crieff golf course."

Jess lives and breathes the history of her area and says that Crieff is the gateway to the highlands with a powerful historical story. "Twenty miles south at Stirling there was once a vast peat bog

which was thirty feet deep and twelve miles wide. When Lord Kames cleared it in the nineteenth century lots of Roman artifacts were unearthed. Twenty miles to the north of the town Pictish forts circled the area. Both Romans and Picts fought around and within this area. They built roads and bridges. Their mark remains, dotted around the landscape.

"Religious leaders from Protestant and Catholic denominations also struggled to keep this small town in their clutches. My people settled here, a mixture of outlawed Highlanders, nomadic tinsmiths and Irish famine victims. The strength of history and its significance to Perthshire must be highlighted.

"As a result any celebration that invites visitors to come and share in these areas' past times is extremely important."

Jess feels strongly that her contribution is to share that historic story with others. "I hope they leave with knowledge about the place. I want their visit to be remembered and, most importantly, I want them to come back."

The forest area has also become familiar to filmgoers across the world over the past year. 'Last in the Line', a short film on the life of Traveller storyteller Sheila Stewart, was filmed in the area where Jess does the walks.



Jess is a regular performer at the Scottish International Storytelling Festival

"For the filming, we erected a small Travellers' campsite with fire, tripod and black pan. It was filmed within a circle of oak and beech," recalls Jess.

Dylan Drummond and Blair Scott directed and produced the film and so far, since its launch at last year's International Storytelling Festival, it has been shown in Canada, Germany, Milan (where Sheila was presenting it) New Zealand and Siberia, with many more dates to come. In Milan it was highly commended.

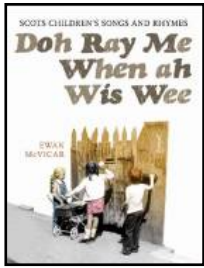
The Drovers' Tryst event will continue around Crieff until October 13th with many other events including horse riding and various rural craft demonstrations.

Drovers' Tales will feature in the Scottish Storytelling Centre's first Festival of Travel from 9th to 11th May 2008, "Through Stranger Eyes: Stories of Travel".

BOOK BLETERS

Once again there is an exceptionally rich crop of new books and resources.

The Classics



Doh, Ray, Me, When Ah Wis Wee: Scots Children's Songs and Rhymes is a treasure trove of lore gathered by Ewan McVicar. It's a bumper book of nonsense, mayhem and sheer linguistic verve, all carefully themed and described with tunes where applicable. It's a

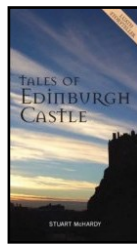
milestone achievement – three cheers for Ewan. Birlinn, ISBN 978-184158-558-1 £14.99

Oral Literature and Performance Culture is Volume 10 in the Scottish Life and Society series. This is a big handsomely produced compendium of scholarly overviews – narrative, poetry, song, dance and drama. Rich and invaluable background information on all aspects. It is one for the libraries, and for dipping in to long term.

John Donald, ISBN 978-085976-679-1 £45.00

Story Sources

Tales of Edinburgh Castle – another of Stuart McHardy's invaluable collections of themed stories, fluently told with a clear sense of the storyteller's voice. This is a very specific collection on one of Stuart's favourite places, yet ranging widely in time and subject matter.



Luath Press, ISBN 978-19-0522295-7 £5.99

The Mabinogion This new translation by Welsh scholar Sioned Davies specifically tries to convey the art of the Welsh material storytelling masters. It reads beautifully and poses an alluring yet enormous challenge to contemporary storytellers. Eat your harp out! Ponder and wonder. OUP, ISBN 978-0-19-293242-9 £12.99

Contemporary Applications

Telling Tales: Storytelling as Emotional Literacy

Storyteller Taffy Thomas and psychologist Steve Killick come together in this fantastically accessible and useful resource book – complete with excellent stories. Everything here comes from the coalface, eschewing techno-babble in favour of empathy, awareness and communication – along with some real fun as we would expect from TT. Highly recommended for all those working with children and young people.

EPSL E-Print Publishing, ISBN 978-19-0563728-7 (enquiries@eprint.co.uk)

Parable Fun: for Little Ones – a fresh attractive resource for Christian education with the under fives. Renita Boyle provides 10 sessions of pick and mix stories and activities, including rhymes and actions. You can also link in with a back-up website on www.parablefun.com. Sunday School never used to be so much fun.

Barnabas, ISBN 9-78141-014913 £11.99

HAVE STORIES, WILL TRAVEL

The Japanese Storytellers' Association celebrated the 30th anniversary of their foundation in 2007. We invited David Campbell, the storyteller from Scotland as one of our activities this year, and held the storytelling concerts 'Blowing in the Scottish Wind' in Sendai and Kyoto. The Japanese storyteller Mio Shapley, who lives in Scotland, visited Japan with him and performed beautiful harp music for his storytelling.

One of the concerts was held at the Hall of Kyoto International Community House on 14th October 2007. The tickets were sold out and the 220 seats were filled with excitement. David beautifully wove a tale called 'The Three Donalds', which explained how Scottish tartans were born and he performed other Scottish stories including the magical Celtic legend of 'Thomas the Rhymer'. His stories were full of wonder, warmth, fun and love.

I believe that people enjoyed sympathising with the traditional oral storytelling world. In storytelling, the storyteller doesn't exist without the listeners. We were all deeply touched with David's presence and that he was always making sure that audiences were with him as he told his stories. Finally, we could understand the joy of sharing in the storytelling world. David's love for people and stories warmly wrapped the audience, the whole space. Mio told a short personal story 'My grandfather' at the end of our concert and it refrained gently in people's hearts.

We thank Mio for her support during David's stay in Japan. Of course, I also enjoyed telling the beauty of the excellent Scottish stories such as 'Seal Skin', 'Scottish Ghost Story' and 'Fairy's Cooking Pot' with all my love. On this day 220 hearts were united as one through the world of words. The Scottish wind blew gently throughout the hall in Kyoto, Japan.

Miki Sakurai
Japanese Storytellers' Association

Sleeping Beauty, Girls and Goddesses, Women and Witches!



With funding from the Scottish Community Foundation, the women of Glasgow Storytellers were able to run and enjoy several events in February and March. Kicking off was a great workshop run by Margaret Smith and Lesley O'Brien at the Women's Library in Parnie Street. With a group of

women they explored the Sleeping Beauty fairytale through storytelling, visualisation and group discussion to reveal their sleeping wishes. Laura Dolan, Lifelong Learning Assistant at the library said that it was a wonderful evening and is keen to work with Margaret and Lesley again to promote and develop storytelling activities for women.

Following this, Jean Edmiston worked with two of the Village's refugee friends, Sabina and Sarita. Over two sessions she discussed with them stories that they might like to tell at our forthcoming Women's Day event. She worked with them on voice effects, body language, pace, introductions, the words they might choose to use, preparing them so that if they felt brave enough, they might tell at the event. Jean loved the experience. She said "Sabina, originally from Cameroun, and Sarita, originally from Afghanistan, have a wealth of traditional stories told to them by relatives, they have those storytellers voices in their heads and hearts. But what an achievement it was for them to then translate and tell in a language not their own – well, it makes me feel sadly monolingual!"

Well – what was this event they told at...? It was a Sunday evening affair in Go Slow Café in Glasgow's southside. Let's hear what Allison Galbraith and Wendy Woolfson have to say: "The Glasgow Women and Witches night was a sold-out, resounding success; bringing out the Girls and Goddesses in all who were there. Packed to the brim, The Go Slow Cafe on Victoria Road provided delicious food and refreshments, while The Glasgow Storytellers spun tales from across the planet and well beyond to inspire and amuse the gathered women folk. Music too, to set feet tapping, hearts soaring and lips sharing in harmony.

"The international flavour was complete when Sabina and Sarita told tales from their homelands of Africa and Asia and for first time storytellers they both kept the audience enthralled with their fabulous stories!

"Not to be labelled as sexist, one honourary, five month old chap was allowed entry and he was so bewitched and delighted by the stories, music and poetry that he refused point blank to fall asleep, even though it was well passed his bedtime! The only disappointment was that some unlucky lasses couldn't join us because the evening had sold

out, so next year a bigger venue and even more feminine frolicking is promised!" (Allison)

And from Wendy: "Go Slow Café was a great venue for celebrating International Women's Day; warm orange walls decorated with colourful artworks from paintings to lampshades. Filled to capacity with a wide range of women from all walks of life, they were welcomed with olives oatcakes and delicious dips.

"Rachel Smillie kicked off proceedings with a welcome and Allison Galbraith was first up for a story. There were, amongst others, tales of goddesses desiring glittering diamond necklaces (sound familiar?), beautiful maidens turning into birds, wise princesses who get what their heart desires and selkies captivating the hearts of mortals. Music was provided by Margaret Smith and Rachel Smillie including a rousing rendition of 'Bread and Roses'. It was clear everyone had a wonderful time and enjoyed the food immensely as the evening ended on another musical note and the ultimate dessert of homemade strawberry cheesecake".

All in all some great developments for Glasgow Storytellers, who have got off to a good start this year. As well as our activities for women we have had the first Family Storytelling session at the Mitchell, our Development Day at The Village Storytelling Centre, and a love filled Valentine's Night at Bolshie, a café in the west end. Along with the monthly Better Crack Clubs, and Soup, Salad, Song and Story nights, there is plenty to keep the Glasgow Storytellers busy!

For more information on the Glasgow Storytellers visit www.thevillageonline.org.uk

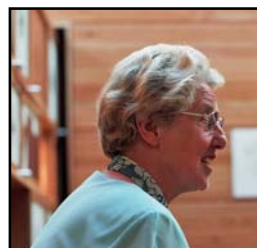
Lesley O'Brien

Storytellers are Full of Surprises

From Italy to Africa and in Scottish schools, colleges, libraries and the workplace, "story rich people" are changing lives. They are influencing the teaching of science, therapies for the mentally ill, community initiatives and even Gaelic publishing.

The ever-widening range of storytelling activities was revealed when the annual meeting of the Scottish Storytelling Forum was held in Edinburgh and some of the members told it like it is. So what are some of them up to?

One plans story-bike tours in Scotland, one is



Millie Gray, West Lothian's Choose Life storytelling champion

involved in a Gaelic poetry publishing event, one has adapted the story of Jekyll and Hyde into Scots and another is giving thanks that the suicide rate among young women has dropped and that the Choose Life campaign has played a part in it. Storytelling for the improvement of mental health is here to stay.

Chair, Russell McLarty not surprisingly describes all this as phenomenal and now leads a campaign to increase Forum membership of 500 still further and to foster its unique set-up which has enabled it to be marked out for support as a key national resource in the future by the Scottish Arts Council.

Opportunities for growth in communities and working with people of all ages are there to be grasped, he says.

Training and development remain priorities and the year's programme is more extensive than ever while donations and bursaries, gifts and legacies are evidence of the high regard in which storytelling is held.

Modest increases in subscriptions for Friends of the SSC from £5/£4 to £6/£5 and for full members from £10/£8 to £12/£10 are to be introduced with enhanced services from the staff who were enthusiastically praised by representatives.

Office bearers unanimously re-elected:

Chair - Russell McLarty

Secretary - Linda Bandelier

Treasurer - Donald Smith

Vice Chairs - George MacPherson, Ewan McVicar

Committee: Grace Banks, Noel Cochrane, Bea Ferguson, Millie Gray, Andy Hunter, Marion Kenny, Kate Leiper, Martin MacIntyre, Colin Mackay, Colin McAllister, Fergus McNicol, Senga Munro, Audrey Parks, Judy Paterson, Bob Pegg, Judy Seymour, Donnie Henderson Shedlarz, Rachel Smillie, James Spence, Heather Yule, Liz Wilson, Ann Davies.

Ann Davies

CatStrand

More good news too from Dumfries and Galloway where the success of storytelling projects operating in and out of the Glenkens Community and Arts Centre has been rewarded with further Scottish Arts Council support.

John Wheeler and Tony Bonning are leading the south-west renaissance, while Tom Pow continues with his pioneering storytelling courses at Glasgow University's Crichton Campus at Dumfries.

Tall Tales Triumphs

As we go to press, the Tall Tales Oscar competition has once again smashed all records. Oscar is a garden leprechaun beautifully adapted by Jack Martin, Scotland's artist in residence and creative Jack-of-all-trades.

Oscar, bless him, is awarded annually on or near St Patrick's Day for the most convincing tale – humorous, fantastic, spooky or chilling – as delivered by the deadly cream of our nation's storytelling talent. The audience votes the winner.

This year's Oscar triumph went to Michael Kerins, the man from the West, a regular and keen contender, who burbled with delight on this, his unvarnished night of triumph. Well done, Michael.



Michael Kerins,
proud winner of the 2008 TTOscar

And well done Jack who, having won last year, was the perfect host.

So, as is the tradition, Michael will be next year's host at this world-beating annual event. Who's like us when it comes to the arts or fibbing fantasy and downright nonsense.

Skye Action

We are delighted to report that George Macpherson is once again fit and well, and hosting the Glendale Gathering from the evening of Friday 23rd May through till Sunday morning 25th. This is a unique opportunity to explore Scottish and Irish traditional stories in their own cultural settings in north western Skye. Full details on the Scottish Storytelling Centre website.



The Scottish Storytelling Centre (SCO 11353) is a partnership between the Scottish Storytelling Forum and the Church of Scotland, and is supported by the Scottish Arts Council, the City of Edinburgh Council and a wide range of charitable donations.

