

Blethers

Issue 19 Autumn 2009

Storytelling Festival celebrates 20th birthday!

Now in its 20th year, the Scottish International Storytelling Festival explores the rich and complex idea of **Homeland** as we bring together Scottish storytellers with leading storytellers, poets, researchers and writers from the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the Caribbean for Scotland's Year of Homecoming.

From **Friday 23rd October** until **Sunday 1st November**, Scotland's annual celebration of traditional and contemporary storytelling delves into the histories and stories of belonging, identity, migration and exploration in a packed programme of entertaining and inspiring live storytelling performances, thought-provoking talks, club nights, workshops and discussions, and family activities.

The Scottish Storytelling Centre hosts the core Festival programme but, as usual, key to the Festival's rich pattern and diversity is the host of fabulous events taking place at partner venues across the city, from the enchanting Royal Botanic Garden to the fascinating Gladstone's Land on Edinburgh's ancient Royal Mile.

Building on previous years, the Festival also coordinates a busy schools and communities outreach programme (Tuesday 27th October to Friday 6th November) in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

And this year the Festival is becoming truly Scottish – a new 'Festival on Tour' strand of events will see guest storytellers join with networks in Tayside, Glasgow, Highlands, Dumfries and Galloway and Argyll and Bute, in a series of first-class regional events supported by the Festival.

Visit www.scottishstorytellingcentre.com or call 0131 556 9579 for full programme and box office information.

Teachers Becoming **STORYRICH**

The Scottish Storytelling Centre has launched a new national training programme, **Storyrich**, which focuses on developing the storytelling and storymaking skills of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and early career teachers for use with young learners.



Through the Scottish Arts Council's Learn fund the Scottish Storytelling Forum has been awarded £27,500

to provide training, resources and support which will help new teachers bring to life the Curriculum for Excellence through storytelling with primary and early secondary pupils.

The Centre has also been delivering storytelling taster events in Initial Teacher Education universities to share with student teachers the value of storytelling as a tool for encouraging learning in the classroom – and one which will prove invaluable throughout a teacher's career.

The first wave of training, set up in liaison with Scottish local authorities, will kick off this autumn with events in the Highlands, Western Isles, Dundee, Glasgow and Midlothian. Follow up mentoring support from storytellers will also be made available to help participants and the children they work with to become Storyrich!

Joanna Bremner Smith

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Once Upon a Time in a Land Far Away

Out of the cloud of red dust there emerges the local bus, a rusting, yellow chitty-chitty bang-bang of a vehicle. Hurrah! It seems as if I have been waiting forever, in 40°C heat with nary a breeze, for transportation back to Baise where I have been living for the past three weeks. And this is not your average bus ride back home in Scotland!

In the autumn of 2008, aided by a professional development grant from the Scottish Arts Council, I travelled to Baise, China about 200 kilometres from the northern border of Vietnam. I was there for a two-fold purpose: one, to visit my friend Kath Saltwell who was employed by Amity International to teach English at Baise University; two, to collect as many stories from her students as I could relating to the Moon Festival, for my stay coincided with that joyous celebration. These stories I would bring back home to Scotland to be shared with other storytellers

Signs of our Lives

Stories in the Air, the Scottish charity which promotes the use of signed storytelling within the Deaf community and meets the literacy needs of deaf children, has just launched a new DVD, 'Signs of our Lives'.

'Signs of our Lives' is the result of a two year project funded by the Scottish Arts Council Lottery Fund. It shares the stories, experiences and recollections of older members of Scotland's Deaf community, aged 60 to 95 years. The stories are about ordinary people's lives – their memories from particular times and the emotions that accompanied them – and offer a real insight into the life of the Deaf community from the West of Scotland.

An education pack accompanies the DVD. If you are interested in receiving a copy please visit www.learnbsl.org.

because the theme of the 2010 Scottish Storytelling Festival is focused on the lore of the Far East.

It was my intent to reach as many students at Baise University as possible. In order to facilitate this, I first met with the English Teaching Faculty, introducing the five-week collection project. The response was overwhelming! They made available huge blocks of classroom time in order that I could meet with their students, explain what I was seeking and why; tell them moon stories from my homeland's Native American culture; answer any questions that they might have about life in both the United States and in Scotland.

I was invited to speak at two English Corners gatherings, held outside in the main square at 9pm. The first gathering had over 300 students present; the second had about 150. Students took it upon themselves to go to the Dean of Languages, find an empty classroom – filling it to overflow with student doubling up in class seats, sitting on the window ledges and floor – just to hear stories in English, abetted by my 4th year student translator Ellen. One such evening went on until after 11pm,



Donnie with Baise University colleagues

and that day had started at 7am! Students were so eager to practice their English with me that I would meet them on the marble bench under the trees before their first class, to listen to them read aloud whilst I munched on warm rice balls filled with black bean curd, washed down with warm coconut milk.

Due to the kindness of the University of Baise's English Faculty and the eagerness of all to participate, I was able to collect over eighty stories in five weeks. No small task, but one that would not have been possible without the enthusiasm of all involved! And much to the delight of my half Chinese grandchildren, I finally learned to conquer chopsticks, so that I no longer embarrass them by asking for a fork when we go out for dim sum!

Donnie Henderson Shedlarz

Transforming Tales: How Stories Can Change People

This book is an ambitious and significant attempt to draw together the deep values of oral storytelling and its contemporary contexts. The result is a wise, humane and practical primer which will be of interest to all those touched by the burgeoning renaissance.

There are two big themes in Parkinson's treatment – the role of metaphor and the psychological effects of storytelling. As regards the first, he links metaphor in dreams to natural mental processes that are vital to wellbeing. Storytelling is a way of metaphor making that taps into, and feeds, these processes.

Storytelling itself though generates, in Parkinson's view, a relaxed state of consciousness which is unrelated

to 'trance'. This enables creative shifts in consciousness which occur through new mental space which is the shared experience of story.

Building on these ideas, the author provides a host of practical examples and applications to education, community building and therapy. To a degree the book loses some momentum here as it becomes compendious. However, people will pick and choose what is of relevance to them.

There are also a host of sample stories illustrating themes and contexts. Again, everyone can pick and choose what suits.

Inevitably many of these are cast in a slightly neutral kind of plain English.



Stories: The Politics of the Heart

"Without the story in which everyone unborn, living and dead participates we are no more than bits of paper blown on the cold wind." So says the great Orkney writer George Mackay Brown.

Story is the lifeline of human consciousness, it is the blood stream of our interconnectedness. Stories carry the irrefutable proof that we are one family and the renewed sharing of them is the pathway to empathy and a step towards understanding, generosity and peace.

There is a story told by the luminous Scottish traveller storyteller Duncan Williamson, 'Half a Blanket.'

Half a Blanket, A Cautionary Tale

An old man on sour and unforgiving land in Scotland worked hard all his days and with perseverance. Working sunrise to sunset, he prospered, turning the land into a fine and fertile farm. As age began to come upon him, he gave the farm to his son and he would take his ease with his friends – have a wee dram and a crack in the local pub – and he loved nothing better than to take his wee granddaughter on his knees and tell her stories by the fire, stories of the old times, of fairies and elves and strange creatures. The wee girl loved these stories.

One day his son said to his wife, *"He needs to go. He does nothing but, puff, puff, puff on that pipe, blethering to his pals in the pub and putting daft fairy stories into the bairn's head. He has to go and he goes tonight."*

"But you can't do that to your own father," said his wife.

"No buts," he said, *"he goes tonight, now."*

"You'll need to give him some money surely or something."

"He gets nothing, he goes."

"It's a cold haar frost tonight. Give him a blanket at least to keep him warm."

"Very well, a blanket he gets, and he goes."

At this the wee girl came hugging her mother's knees and said, *"No, mummy, give granddaddy half a blanket."*

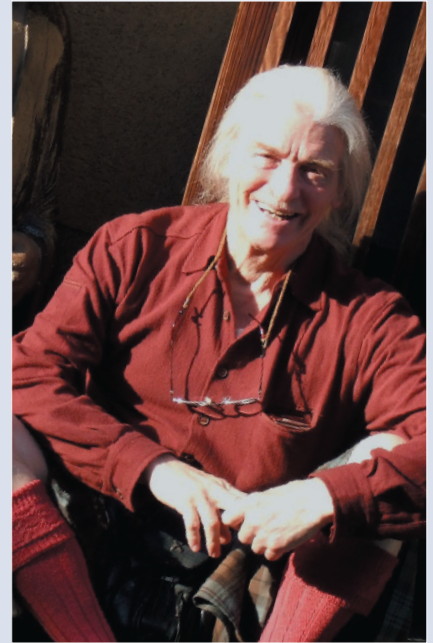
"Half a blanket!" said her mother.

"Yes," said the little girl, *"we'll need the other half when it's daddy's turn to go."*

A story has, by the unique capacity of human imagination, the power of replicating life, vicariously conveying experience so that we feel we have been there. The Scottish Travellers say they will give you the story, 'eye to eye, mind to mind, heart to heart'. It is a direct transfusion given in this way and we, the recipients receive the gift as a child would, whole.

If we return to the words of George Mackay Brown we hear his caution, for the scraps of paper may well in our age be the proliferation of information blown on the cold wind of technology without human contact.

Many believe today that we can let the machines teach our children but the stark truth is that between the machine and the child there is no real contact, no heart contact, no love contact. Yes, the video game can respond and answer questions but the child could be hurt, lonely, sick or die and the images would flicker on relentlessly on the plasma screen.



David during a storytelling visit to Japan

I believe that in our age which consigns children and adults alike to the solitary confinement of the screen, there is a growing hunger, a deep yearning for the human necessity of communication and connectedness. This deep urge accounts in part for the dramatic growth of storytelling not simply in Scotland but internationally.

Our Scottish government, doubtless to the surprise of sceptics, has realised, in the spirit of George Mackay Brown's insight, that stories, our stories, bind past, present and future into one, give identity, carrying our culture and character. The government has put in place a policy to let every school child in Scotland experience a storyteller.

Stories are marvellously the politics of the heart. They break all barriers of colour, clime, class, religion, age. They are emissaries and luminaries in which we find, from fairy tales to epics, from fantasies to fables, snatches of our shared human journey. We cannot disagree with someone's story but we can listen, walk in step and thereby make a little contribution to widening and deepening the understanding between our brother and sister homosapiens.

David Campbell

Rob Parkinson

Parkinson's emphasis, though, is on people adapting and developing these to suit their own situations and styles of telling. So *Transforming Tales* offers theoretical insights and extensive practical resources. It is also grounded in excellent values defying any specialisation of storytelling as either an exclusive art or a technical therapy. Storytelling belongs to our common humanity and it is vitally needed for our humanness to thrive.

Rob Parkinson has done storytelling and storytellers of all kinds a great service in producing this wide-ranging resource.

Donald Smith



First Skelleftea Storytelling Festival

The 23rd to 26th June saw the first ever **Skelleftea International Storytelling Festival** in Western Bothnia in the far north of Sweden. Organised by the Western Bothnia Theatre Storytelling Project, this was the culmination of several years' work, building on co-operation between the theatre and various groups and individuals here in Scotland. Representing Scotland at the festival were myself, Hamish MacDonald from Moniack Writers' Centre, and the Dogstar Theatre group from Inverness.

The format was a combination of storytelling and theatre with an informal cabaret club of story and music most nights. In addition I presented a paper on 'The Story of Story' to a well-informed and enthusiastic audience and there were extensive discussions about the different approaches to story here and in Sweden, with a view to further co-operation. These discussions involved representatives from the two established Swedish festivals, Ljungby and Stockholm's Fabula.

Dogstar put on the award-winning one-man show 'The Tailor of Inverness' by Matthew Zajac and his wife Virginia Radcliffe performed a remarkable one-woman version of 'Mollie Whuppie' which was truly remarkable. The energy was incredible. Amongst others appearing there was Thomas Anderson, probably Sweden's best kennt storyteller who incorporates some damn fine fiddle playing. As ever Thomas was electric even for those of us whose grasp of Swedish is minimal. Other fine storytellers performing were Gunnar Eklund and Marianne Folkedottir, who have both been over here in the past. The presentations in English, including storytelling in a smaller venue in the theatre by Hamish and myself, were extremely well-attended and went down great.

Overall the combination of plays and storytelling brought out remarkable audiences and there can be little doubt that the event was a great success. Plans are afoot to turn it into an annual event.

Stuart McHardy

Stanley Robertson 1940-2009



Stanley telling in the Netherbow Theatre

Friday 7th August was a day for saluting Stanley, and for sharing our sadness about his death. The funeral in Aberdeen was an inspiring occasion with great tributes, real warmth and humour – fit for the man himself.

On the Lumphanan Road, folk sang 'Yellow on the Broom' as Stanley asked, and at the Storytelling Centre people sang too in the garden where Stanley helped open the new building. Even in far away Switzerland, at the time of Stanley's funeral, storytellers from all over Europe raised a glass of whisky.

There is a sense of voices there, voices carrying in the wind, and the memory and the soul, round the earth. Stanley was a master of those voices and we shall be hearing them with his tone and accent for many years, many generations to come.

Stanley would always have spoken first of his own family, and forebears and people. It was their traditions of music, song and story that he carried with him on his passage through life, and to which he was so true. Few have been born into so rich an inheritance and Stanley made the art and culture of the Scottish Travellers an honoured part of Scotland's culture.

But Stanley was also an individual artist of genius. He had his own vision and imagination and craft, which he practised both as an oral artist and through his unique writing.

He both honoured the tradition and added to it in many ways. Who, apart from Stanley, could have turned the fish gutters' tables into a hearthside of story and experiences shared by all? Who could touch the spiritual nerves like him?

The tradition bearer and the great artist seem bound up though, in our memories, with Stanley the person. The warmth, the insight, the loving wisdom, the humour – wicked at times! – the respect and decency and care for all his fellow creatures; and that alongside his realism, a knowledge of all the tough and hard things life can bring. Yet humanity comes out still on top. Jack wins through in the end.

Stanley has won through now and we are sad but in some strange way happy too. We have lost him but we are still listening to his voices. He is in the Land of No Death.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Johnanne and all of Stanley's children and grandchildren.

A Memorial to Stanley

We would like to create a fitting permanent memorial to Stanley Robertson in the Scottish Storytelling Centre. As Stanley already has his seat as Honorary Founder, we propose to commission a painting illustrating 'Auld Cruivie' or 'Jack and the Dancing Trees'.

'Auld Cruivie' seems a defining and inspirational Stanley story, set by his dearly loved Lumphanan Road. We will ask the renowned storytelling artist Kate Leiper to illustrate Stanley's story, so adding to the 'Scotland's Stories' collection.

If you would like to donate towards this memorial please give a cheque (payable to the Scottish Storytelling Forum) or a cash donation to Donald Smith, Honorary Treasurer.

Donald Smith



Scotland-Kolkata Connections

In January this year, I was invited by the British Council to take part in Kolkata Book Fair, a 10-day literary extravaganza that formed part of Scotland-Kolkata Connections, a year-long programme of events aimed at strengthening ties between Scotland and India.

Working with the first group of children was great. They were rather shy when they first arrived but soon warmed up with a song. English seemed to be more like a first language than a second to these children and they listened intently while I told them a traditional Scottish story about a girl who looks after the goats and sheep whose only friend is a little goat.

I didn't realise then how appropriate and accessible my choice of story and subject was. The next day, as I walked on the Maidan (common ground in the centre of Kolkata), I saw great herds of goats being tended by boys and men. It's such a timeless activity, and one so connected to Nature, and yet one we have lost in our march towards 'progress'. I was continually struck by this comparison between our two worlds.

My story also provided another pertinent theme. The girl is not fed properly by her stepmother, so is always hungry. She discovers that by rubbing the goat's ear and saying a rhyme she is magically given a feast of food. We saw many people begging for food during our stay but were also presented with many feasts ourselves. The flavours of India will find their way into my storytelling and will especially colour my Indian tales.

My second event was very special. I heard a traditional Bengali Patuas storyteller, Swarna, tell the story of 'The Fishes Wedding'. She actually sang the story and her style was reminiscent of the Traveller style of ballad singing in Scotland. She held up a canvas which she had hand-painted to illustrate the story. I had sent out a Scottish story to her for



which she had then painted a scroll, and it was exciting to see her images for my story. I told the story of 'The Three Donalds' and sang a Dundee song which was popular at the height of the jute industry there, which has connections in Kolkata. I will use this scroll again in Scotland and show people here Swarna's work.

It was in the Junior section of the amazing English bookshop called Oxford Bookstore that my third event took place. I told the young people aged 10-14 years about Beira, the Celtic goddess of Winter and the coming of Spring. This story explains the very creation of the Scottish landscape, if not the Scottish character also. I asked the children to make up stories of Beira coming to India – what would she have created here? I was delighted by all the responses. It was generally agreed that Beira would not like the South of India as it would be too hot for her taste. One girl told us in a very animated style about Beira dipping her icy fingers into the Ganges and seeing it freeze over. Then she could put on her ice skates and skate across India. So, many thought that Beira would favour the Himalayas and could settle there in the snow.

My husband Roni also told them the story of how mosquitos came to India and the young people joined in enthusiastically offering wonderful ideas of how to rid Kolkata of a murderous beast. Alas they were not successful and so the mosquitos still remain.

Thankfully we were not plagued by them on our trip as we thought we might be!

Ruth Kirkpatrick

Tell-a-Story Day

Friday 30 October 2009



Everyone has a story to tell and the Centre's annual **Tell-a-Story Day** event is a great opportunity for adults, young people and children alike to set up their own DIY storytelling event – big or small – and tell their own stories, anecdotes, memories and experiences, or inspire and enable other people to share theirs.

Traditionally held on the last Friday of October, Tell-a-Story Day is Scotland's national celebration of oral storytelling, and brings together friends, family, colleagues and communities all over Scotland as part of the Storytelling Festival.

We want to inspire people of all ages to celebrate the magic of stories in schools, libraries, community centres, churches, hospitals, homes, gardens – and anywhere else they can think of! – and we're providing all the **support and materials** needed for a stress-free event: online resources, colourful posters and stickers, and of course limitless help and advice.

It's time to talk! If you're interested in taking part in Tell-a-Story Day and running an event in your area on (or around!) 30th October, visit www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk or call Caroline Budge on 0131 652 3272 for more information.



Healing Words: Storytelling as a Pathway to Peace in the Holy Land

Thanks to a Scottish Arts Council Professional Development award and the support of friends and colleagues, I was able to take part in a unique six-week programme at Emerson College entitled 'Healing Words: Storytelling as a Pathway to Peace'.

The first four weeks were spent in the classroom, training in advanced storytelling and peacemaking, and after a month of working intensively as a group we were as ready as could be.

Yet nothing could prepare us for the reality of storytelling in Israel and Palestine. On the first day of our tour, we met with one of the leaders of the Combatants for Peace, a group of ex-soldiers – Palestinian and Israeli – who had decided to lay down their arms and take up the cause of peace. They wanted us to facilitate their first joint meeting of ex-soldiers and invited guests.

More than a hundred people arrived, including local media. We began by listening to ex-soldiers – men and women – tell their stories of war. These were difficult, often painful confessions of brutality; yet these stories were also part of the honesty and transparency which is necessary before healing and reconciliation can begin.

After the warriors had spoken, we divided into three large groups: a mix of Arabs, Jews, Palestinians, Israelis, men and women of all ages. For many, just sitting next to each other was an accomplishment. All eyes looked at my Swedish colleague and I expectantly. We began with some 'firestarters': songs and games to warm us up and ease the tension. A young man offered a Palestinian children's song; soon everyone was clapping, laughing and singing along. The tension was beginning to melt away.

However, it was time to put aside children's songs and get down to the serious storytelling. Following some nervous moments of hesitation, a Palestinian man offered to begin, then another, then



Michael leads a group of Palestinians and Israelis in storytelling

a young Jewish woman, then, in turn, Israelis and Palestinians, Arabs and Jews, men, women and young people shared their stories and hearts. They were filled with conflict, fear, mistrust, oppression, aggression, arrest, beatings, guilt, humiliation, martyrdom and triumphs of survival. Yet despite the darkness, almost every storyteller expressed an overriding desire for the light of peace.

That wish was soon put to the test when suddenly, without warning, the Israeli army arrived. The soldiers' shouts and gesticulating machine guns needed no translation, and several young Palestinian men in my group jumped out of the circle and began making their own threatening gestures.

Quickly, through my translator, I asked the men to return to the circle, explaining that they and the soldiers were enacting an 'old story' of aggression, intimidation and revenge. We all knew too well how that story would unfold. Instead, I challenged them to return to the circle where we were in the process of 'writing a new story'. They stopped and stared at the translator, then back at me. Their eyes were alight with anger. But they listened and after a few moments returned to the circle, while the organisers of the Combatants for Peace negotiated with the soldiers.

At the end of our session, we had shared names, songs, stories, tears, laughter, hugs, gratitude and, at the very least, acknowledgement of the other. Of course, I was under no illusion that ninety minutes of sharing stories under a hot sun in a remote olive grove between two small settlements was going to solve the conflict in the Middle East. The reality is that peace is gained one heart, one mind at a time.

I witnessed hope that day as I watched Jews and Arabs look at each other, speak to each other and listen to each other.

That experience was repeated throughout our two-week tour in various venues and with a variety of audiences, young and old alike. I am proud to have taken part in the 'Healing Words' project; grateful and proud of those who enabled me to participate, proud of my fellow storytellers. But most of all, I'm proud of those courageous men and women, young people and children throughout the Holy Land who chose and continue to choose to set aside racial and religious prejudice, to meet one another, to share their stories, to listen and walk together on the pathway to peace.

Michael Williams

 **Scottish Arts Council**



Stories on Safari

There is always job satisfaction in storytelling, but sometimes one is lucky enough to be involved in a special project. That was my experience when I was asked to be the storyteller on a wonderful and exciting collaborative project called 'Stories on Safari.'

It was instigated and devised by Artlink Central, in conjunction with Blair Drummond Safari Park and also sponsored by Arts and Business Scotland and the EIS. Artlink is an organisation which aims to bring all kinds of art activities to a wide range of marginalised and special needs groups and this one involved primary schools, art, storytelling – and, of course animals!

On a beautiful day just before Easter, we assembled at Blair Drummond Safari Park – ten children with additional support needs from each of six schools in Falkirk and Stirling, teachers and helpers, six artists, the organisers, and one storyteller. Thirty children spent the morning with the Park Education Officer, meeting the animals and learning about their habitats. The other half stayed in the marquee where they listened to animal stories and made a poster

about the Safari Park to take back to school. After lunch, it was all change.

My remit was then to help the children create a story on their chosen animal and record it onto CD. They all had wonderful ideas and loved hearing themselves back through headphones when we recorded. Over the next few weeks, six artists helped the children to make large banners and worked on other craftwork inspired by the animals and stories.

On the day of the launch, the usual mix of invited guests, parents, teachers and children assembled in Falkirk Town Hall. The banners were on display before going on to their permanent home at Blair Drummond. All six stories were to be told and I was warned that the children would find it too stressful to be involved in the telling in front of such a large audience of strangers.

How wrong they were! To the amazement of many of the teachers, the children eagerly joined me at the front to help tell and take ownership of their own stories. 60 very happy children left with their own copy of the CD.



Bea and pupils at the Windsor Park launch day

It was obvious that the children thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience, but feedback has also proved that the learning outcomes were exceeded. The children learned to work in teams, formed friendships, and the improvement in their confidence, concentration, self-esteem and verbal expression was evident, not only during the project itself, but carried over into general classwork and relationships.

It was a huge learning curve for me as well, but very very enjoyable.

Bea Ferguson

Scots Go FEST

Following planning meetings at the Scottish Storytelling Centre and the pathfinder Gathering in Oslo in August 2008, the **Federation for European Storytelling** was formally established at the second Gathering in Lausanne in August 2009. I attended, representing the Scottish Storytelling Forum and Centre.

A key feature of Lausanne was the growth in participating nations. There were 25 represented in person and a further five participating though unable to attend. FEST is now genuinely pan-European.

There was creative excitement and a mood of mutual encouragement about, since no one, including the planning group, had fully realised the extent and diversity of the resurgence across Europe. There was inspiration in that and some hard-headed networking, embracing festivals, national associations and

projects in education, health and wellbeing, heritage, performance and community development.

The Scottish influence in all this was distinctive and recognised – no pushing required. As Director of the Scottish Storytelling Centre I gave the opening address on tradition, artistic diversity and ethos. George MacPherson reported from the 'Healing Network' and John Barrington from one of the two 'Education Networks'. Cultural happenings around the conference core were another Scottish contribution, and George stayed on to feature in the first Lausanne Storytelling Festival.

Most significant perhaps was the agreement to formally establish FEST through an international 'Memorandum of Understanding', containing definitions of purpose and an organisational structure. This, as one might imagine, was the subject

of a lengthy debate which I was asked to chair. Now I know what EU summits are like!

The end result was unanimous and provides a clear platform for development. On the basis of the Memorandum, a Steering Group was elected, while England and Spain were established as the Gathering venues for 2010 and 2011. It was also agreed to offer a wide range of Interest Group Networks, allowing each to find its appropriate support and form, reporting to the next Gathering.

The universal view amidst the 65 participants is that Lausanne was a decisive milestone in the worldwide storytelling renaissance and from that view, despite being Scottish, I cannot dissent. The European Memorandum can be viewed online at www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk

Donald Smith



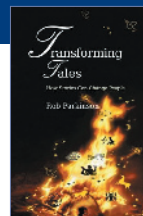
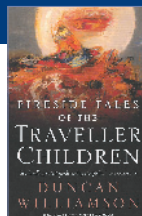
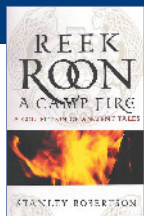
BOOK BLETHERS

In the Spring issue we were looking forward to Stanley Robertson's *Reek Roon A Campfire* and David Campbell's *Out of the Mouth of the Morning*. Both are the classics I predicted. That is because they combine a poetic gift for language with fine repertoires and a true storytelling vocation. It was sad and yet also consoling that Stanley's *Reek Roon A Campfire* so magnificently summed up his art and tradition just a few months before his death.

More recently we have added a reprint of another classic, Duncan Williamson's *Fireside Tales*. This has been expanded by Linda Williamson with fresh material, and it takes us back to the start of Duncan's journey out into the world to share his heritage. There is an emphasis here on stories enjoyed by Scottish Traveller children and there is an evergreen freshness about the whole collection.

There is another milestone event in the offing. After more than a century of, partly enforced, silence Lady Evelyn Stewart Murray's collection of Gaelic folktales is appearing in a superb bilingual edition courtesy of the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society. This is a neglected treasure of tradition from Highland Perthshire and it is down to the dedication of Tony Dilworth and Sylvia Robertson, ably championed by Donald Meek, that we shall be able at last to open Lady Evelyn's hard won kist o' riches.

Fortunately another dedicated servant of Scotland's traditions, Emily Lyle, is not having to wait more than a hundred years for some hard-earned recognition. Two fine books have appeared – *Fairies and Folk: Approaches to the Scottish Ballad Tradition* by Emily herself and *Emily Lyle: The Persistent Scholar* a tribute collection of essays, edited by Frances Fischer and Sigrid Rieuwerts. Anyone interested in the rich and growing research on Scottish balladry cannot be without these fine publications; Emily Lyle



has made an unequalled yet often unheralded contribution to Scottish studies.

The Year of Homecoming has stimulated some fine storytelling around themes of migration and global connection as this year's Storytelling Festival shows. *Cuttings from the Violas* by Annette White-Parkes is the story of one woman's journey to reconnect with her Scots grannies and their roots. This is a moving personal story with bigger implications regarding the hiddenness of many women's lives and yet the persistence of strong underlying connections and values.

Storytellers in Scotland are also continuing to spin off new fresh publications including fresh takes on the classics. Tony Bonning's *Young Shakespeare* puts young learners in touch with Shakespeare the boy, the man and the artist with lots of Bonning zest. Lari Don spins her take on *Tam O'Shanter* and adds a dash of dark spice to the Burns 250th mix.

Donald Smith

Janis Wins Kelpies Prize!

Just as we go to print, news has come in that Janis Mackay's novel *Magnus Fin and the Ocean Quest* has won the 2009 Kelpies Prize. Floris Books made the announcement at a packed award ceremony at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. Congratulations Janis!

Edinburgh-based Floris Books relaunched the Kelpies Prize in 2004. It is awarded annually to encourage and reward new Scottish writing for children. At the same event, the 2010 Kelpies Prize was launched. Manuscripts are invited for submission by 26 February 2010.

For more information about the prize and for the full rules and guidelines for the 2010 award, see www.florisbooks.co.uk/kelpiesprize

Reek Roon A Campfire
Robertson, Stanley (Birlinn)
ISBN 9781841587950

Out of the Mouth of the Morning
Campbell, David (Luath)
ISBN 9781906307936

Fireside Tales of the Traveller Children
Williamson, Duncan (Birlinn)
ISBN 9781841588148

Tales from Highland Perthshire
collected by Lady Evelyn Stewart Murray (Scottish Gaelic Texts Society)
Trans/eds. Robertson, Sylvia & Dilworth, Tony
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