

# Story Giants of Eden

## Evaluation Report



An oral storytelling project with schools in Penrith and the Eden Valley, Cumbria

## **Executive Summary**

*'The project has become a textbook example of the efficacy of storytelling to meet local needs on multiple levels – educational, social and even economic'.*  
The Society for Storytelling 22 June 2011

## **Context**

The Story Giants of Eden project was a joint initiative of Penrith Action for Community Transition and Cumbria County Council, supported by Heritage Lottery Fund. It involved 18 school groups in 17 schools together with their communities in and around the market town of Penrith, Cumbria. The project ran from September 2010 until December 2011.

***The aim of the Story Giants project was to increase local knowledge, pride and understanding about local oral storytelling traditions and to strengthen community networks in and around Penrith.***

The project was devised and managed by Dawn Hurton who was employed by Cumbria County Council, Children's Services, in the role of Extended Services Adviser, Penrith Town until June 2011. The project was delivered by Dawn Hurton in collaboration with lead storyteller, Dominic Kelly and a range of creative practitioners. Administrative support, guidance and practical assistance throughout were provided by Penrith Action for Community Transition.

## **Process**

All feeder schools for the secondary schools in Penrith were given an outline of the project and invited to take part. In order to accept this invitation each school completed a form of commitment which is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. No school was turned down although at times sessions were delivered to combined schools in order to spread the resources further.



To start things off, there was an introductory event which brought schools together, provided an overview of the project and generated enthusiasm for storytelling from the outset. This took place on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2010 at Penrith Leisure Centre. The event was attended by around 500 children and their teachers and there was a performance by lead artist, professional storyteller, Dominic Kelly. This was followed by games and activities where children were invited to tell stories about themselves and their place to each other. (Details of the event including a video and newspaper cuttings can be found at [www.penrithact.org.uk](http://www.penrithact.org.uk) ).



An INSET storytelling session followed this event. The training session was attended by 28 teachers from 18 schools and Dominic Kelly explained some of the tools and techniques that would be used within the oral storytelling workshops and how the schools could support the development of his work with the children.

Dominic Kelly also explained how storytelling can be used to connect children with their landscape and landscape stories were told to illustrate this. He provided a detailed overview of the project and advised the schools about the kind of activities that they could do to develop the work between sessions.



A guidance document was issued to all participating schools with information about how to search for the local stories which are disappearing. This document is attached as Appendix 2 to this report. There was a bibliography to accompany the information and many of the schools carried out their own preliminary research. Teachers visited local studies libraries, some schools invited people from their community to come in to school and tell their stories and many encouraged pupils to investigate local stories by asking family members. Some of the story sources in the bibliography were purchased by the project manager and distributed to schools.

The programme of delivery offered at least 4 storytelling workshops in schools for each participating group. Eighteen school groups took part in these sessions. There were 2 groups in Beaconside Primary School, a recently amalgamated school and 1 group at Brunswick First School which invited participation from North Lakes Junior School, the destination school of most Brunswick pupils.



Creative making sessions were also offered within the delivery programme. Each group was given one character development/costume workshop with fashion designer/artist Jess Mills to “design a giant”. This was the foundation for making a giant puppet and they were also given one props/mask making workshop by artist/illustrator Vanessa Card of Horse+Bamboo Theatre.



Dawn Hurton then created 19 puppets; each was 4m high, from the children’s designs. Jess Mills made the costumes for the puppets. The puppets were delivered to the schools to enable the children to practice their performances before May Day.

Between and following delivery of the artist-led sessions, children, teachers, teaching assistants and parents were involved in a diverse range of additional activities directed by the schools. These included creative writing to extend the oral storytelling activities, visual arts activities such as drawing, puppet making, clay mask making and paper mache sculpture, development of story and performance, visiting the site of stories, learning about the location, costume making and practice performances. Activities were all linked to the National Curriculum, covering history, geography, literacy, visual and performing arts. Several schools took their performances to additional events after the May Day activities.

There was a full dress rehearsal attended by all participating schools in St Andrew's church and churchyard on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April. The project culminated in a large scale storytelling event and parade in Penrith town on May Day 2011. Accompanied by the giant puppets and other props made by the children, the young storytellers performed their tales on the street on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011 re-establishing a lost local May Day tradition of tall story telling. Programming was complicated by an elongated Easter break and the Royal Wedding on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

Following the conclusion of oral storytelling activities Jacqueline Harris was commissioned to illustrate a storybook keepsake of the local tales which was illustrated by Jess Mills. The book completed the storytelling journey from the original written sources and additional sources through oral re-telling, back into the written word. The book is called 'Let the Giants Live' and it was launched in Penrith on 26<sup>th</sup> November accompanied by an exhibition and workshops in the town. Additional activities took place in the adjacent Devonshire Arcade in the town.

## **Monitoring**

Formative assessment drawn from observation and dialogue with participating schools was made by the project manager and the lead artist in order to inform delivery.

## **Outcomes**

As an arts and heritage project, delivered through the vehicle of oral storytelling performance, this became a high profile and extremely enjoyable project for all participants. The impact was overwhelmingly scored by head teachers as high or very high with the odd lesser score being explainable by circumstances and all schools giving extremely positive feedback about the achievements of the project as a whole.

The enormous enthusiasm of the children for the storytelling activities and their responses to participation in what was seen to be an exciting and visual spectacle in the town was also evidenced in the feedback. The May Day event was also valued by the wider community and the organisers of the annual event, Penrith Lions acknowledged that the Story Giants brought in a record crowd in 2011. Chairman Ian Edgar said that they helped to make “the best May Day ever”.

In recognition of their contribution, a plate was presented in the town square to each participating school and also to Dawn Hurton. The enjoyment of the audience, performers and school staff on the day was tangible and can be seen in the photographs and video (see [www.penrithact.org.uk](http://www.penrithact.org.uk) ). Many parents and teachers talked about the variety and richness of local stories saying that they hadn't realised how interesting this heritage is.

The project touched over 6000 people: including whole schools and their communities, a wider audience on May Day and additional people at subsequent individual events arranged by the schools. Since the film was uploaded onto the internet, it has been upheld as good practice in amongst other things, storytelling, puppet making and community transition. There has been an offer of a paid visit to Johannesburg, South Africa to take the puppets to a prestigious international storytelling festival, one school participated alongside international street artists in the Lakes Alive Festival and the District Council and others have invited talks about repeat performances in future years and at other events in Penrith. There are also regular requests to borrow puppets for festival, performances and events. Several are currently being used in other projects.



BlueJam Community Music and Arts set up a samba band to accompany the giants in the parade and this band has continued and is known as “Jamba”.

- Schools involved: 18 with approx. 600 children and 40 staff involved in introductory event, preliminary storytelling and making workshops
- Children directly involved in the performance: approx. 350
- Teachers directly involved 20
- In-school audiences of pupils, parents and supporters approx. 2000
- May Day audience 4000
- Subsequent performances eg school fetes, village events, Lakes Alive etc. 1,500
- Storybook recipients and readers 1000

## **Evaluating the Project**

### **Methodology**

This project, involving 18 school groups, required both formative and summative responses. Data was collected in the following ways during the project:

- Observations at artist-led workshops in schools
- Observations at performances and other events



- Questionnaires to participating teachers
- Semi-structured discussions and regular communication with heads, class teachers and teaching assistants (through the project manager and lead artist)
- Discussions with pupils
- Informal conversations with parents, carers, grandparents, governors and other audiences
- Frequent discussion with core artist team
- Discussion with stakeholder groups/individuals eg Penrith Lions, Eden Online, St Andrew's Parish Church, Penrith Action for Community Transitions membership, Eden District Council
- Photographic evidence
- Media coverage – local radio, local newspapers and community newsletters



- Video documentary of project and responses to this

### **Formative Evaluation**

Formative evaluation enabled reflection between the project manager, lead artist and school staff offering the potential for positive developments during the life of the project eg additional workshops for schools which needed to

build confidence prior to the performance, tailoring workshops to suit specific wishes of schools etc.

## **Summative Evaluation**

This document is the final report, a summative evaluation, informed by data collected throughout the duration of the twelve month project. It includes some quantitative data, including scoring from questionnaires carried out before and after the main delivery of the project.

At the end of the project staff were asked to score the various elements in terms of impact from “very low” to “very high” and pupils were asked to complete a more simplified questionnaire and also to comment on their favourite aspect. The vast majority of scores were higher or very high and there were no scores of low or very low. Where a small minority of schools scored an element as satisfactory there were usually external factors impacting on events. Although the comments are less suited to hard analysis, they offer much more in depth insight into the variety of impacts that were achieved.

## **Recommendations**

However successful a project is, there is always room for improvement. The report includes recommendations, drawn from a range of those involved to inform any similar projects in the future.

## **Context: Penrith and the Eden Valley and local storytelling traditions**

### **About the area**

Penrith is an historic market town and the largest town in the Eden Valley. It has a strong identity and rich cultural traditions. However, like many market towns in England it has become threatened by globalised commerce and culture with loss of purpose and identity. Plans for the town over the past

decade have been dominated by supermarket proposals and redevelopment has been characterised by setback, unpredictable world events and varied public opinion.

This project celebrates Penrith and its agricultural hinterland as a place of distinction, beauty and soul. The town sits just a couple of miles west of the River Eden as it flows by on the way to Carlisle and the Solway estuary. To the south, upstream, are the picturesque villages of Culgaith, Temple Sowerby and Morland. Downstream the river meanders under red sandstone bridges at Lazonby and Armathwaite. These and other and others villages in the Eden Valley were included in the project.

### **Demographics and Impact**



The area has strong traditional communities and is predominantly monocultural but beneath the surface there are a mix of backgrounds and cultures. There is a long history of in-migration, from the Romans whose presence is still evidenced in many parts of the area, through to today's settlers. Recent migration has been connected with the agricultural /tourism, low income economy.

Out in the villages, incomers are attracted by the life style and environment of the district though in-migration of mainly older newly retired people is counteracted by the exit of many young people from the area.

In view of the above, the project impacted on families from a wide geographical and social backgrounds for whom Penrith and the Eden valley is home.

### **Oral storytelling traditions.**

The project focused on unearthing and exploring local stories; stories which may have survived for thousands of years. In learning about the stories, participants learned about the people, customs and traditions of Penrith market town, the surrounding villages and distinctive physical landscape of the area.

Activities inspired participation in past oral traditions where people remembered stories from a communal folk memory of many generations. The lead artist encouraged the school groups to examine the origins of chosen stories and to think about how local myths and legends came about, why they were told and what they teach us.



Old stories evoke days gone by when candles flickered in homes that were not centrally heated and people amused themselves around the fireside talking about witches, devils and ghosts. This project aimed to bring back an age when rational explanations included fairies and spirits and when strange prehistoric beliefs such as the “need fire” were still thought to cure ailments.

Of the eighteen stories told by the children on May Day, the story of Euan Ceasarius whose grave is allegedly found in St Andrew’s churchyard is perhaps

the most famous local story. It was therefore fitting that the performances took place in that churchyard.

### **The development and sources of the stories**

The stories selected were from right across the Penrith and Eden Valley area. Most were very local to participating schools and a list of the stories which were told by each of the schools and information about specific sources is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.

The schools invited parents, community members and local storytellers into the process of finding and telling stories which were then developed by professional storyteller, Dominic Kelly for telling on May Day.

In creating the book, Jacqueline Harris developed the stories further. Taking the source material used by the storyteller, she added detail from site visits and conversations with local people to the knowledge gained from listening to the children's accounts and created the stories in written word.

The book is designed as a legacy to help keep the stories alive and to celebrate the achievements of the project. It aims to remain faithful to the original tales and their locale, whilst incorporating aspects of the children's versions. At the same time, Jacqueline Harris has woven her own creativity into the narrative to create yet another new and fresh retelling. In this way the stories grow and change in the manner of storytelling through the ages.

The lively illustrations were created by Jess Mills who delivered the 'design a giant' workshop in schools. Jess lives in the Eden Valley and loves the landscape, her intimate knowledge of the places where the stories have come from is apparent in the book.

### **Project Planning, development and funding.**

#### **Beginnings**

The project was devised by Dawn Hurton. The aim was to revive local oral traditions, strengthen community networks and in doing so; ensure that the main town celebration celebrates local distinctiveness. Activities were designed to expose contemporary communities to the forgotten myths, legends and rich human heritage of the area.

As an artist, educator and community development practitioner, Dawn is passionate about connecting people with their heritage, place and each other. The concern is that as people rely less on memory in today's high speed electronic world and new means of communication are replacing old, the shared culture of human beings is becoming increasingly threatened. Stories never written down but passed through the generations by word of mouth are in danger of being lost and people no longer expect to make their own entertainment. This project aimed to teach new skills and bring stories out of the undergrowth in a way that motivates and inspires people to do more.

### **Arts Education Context**

Each of the villages and the town of Penrith has strong identities and this project enabled the places to celebrate something of their own locality within the wider context of being connected to the market town.

From an educational perspective the project covered two transition stages and brought feeder schools together while including both secondary schools. The idea was to strengthen the cluster of schools and develop a strong foundation for future collaborative work.

The project set a framework of creative opportunities on a storytelling heritage theme but enabled schools to take these and use them to suit their own curriculum objectives. To this end some schools used the project across the whole curriculum while other used it to feed literacy, humanities, performing and visual arts or to achieve personal/social objectives for individual pupils.

### **Project objectives**

These were the project objectives:

*Increase local knowledge, pride and understanding about traditional customs and stories, local history and how people from Penrith and the surrounding areas used to live*

*Increase motivation, vision and capacity within schools and the wider community to preserve heritage through storytelling and performance skills,*

*creative writing, recording, photographs, visual arts skills, storybooks, collective confidence and curriculum development.*

*Increase appreciation and respect for community and the physical landscape and an understanding of how these can be protected through stories.*

## **Project Management**

The project was managed by Dawn Hurton in partnership with Penrith Action for Community Transition. Unfortunately, Extended Services were wiped out of existence during the delivery of the project and colleagues who would have been involved did not take part after the introductory event. Dawn Hurton finished the project in a voluntary capacity with the consistent and considerable voluntary support of Chris Cant, Treasurer, and other members at PACT.

## **Funding**

A total budget of £49,000 was awarded to the project from Heritage Lottery Fund. An estimated £23,850 of in-kind support was given to the project through officer project management time, attendance at meetings and events with schools, promotion and publicity, monitoring and evaluation, co-ordination and management of the storybook, launch and exhibition. PACT volunteers attended many of the workshops and events and documented the project with photographs and on their website. PACT also managed the finances and administered payment of fees etc.

The project was very popular with schools from the outset and more schools than originally anticipated were involved. To accommodate additional numbers within the budget, Dawn Hurton who has a visual arts background, made the puppets rather than commission external artists. The nineteen puppets provided a backdrop to the event and were used in the parade. They

were designed as freestanding 'moveable sculptures' which could be used in school and were not attached to a person. Cumbria County Council allowed time which was not originally factored in, for Dawn to work on the puppets in addition to many hours of volunteer time by other supporters.

### **Participant and audience numbers**

- Schools involved: 18 with approx. 600 children and 40 staff involved in introductory event, preliminary storytelling and making workshops
- Children directly involved in the performance: approx. 350
- Teachers directly involved 20
- In-school audiences of pupils, parents and supporters approx. 2000
- May Day audience 4000
- Subsequent performances eg school fetes, village events, Lakes Alive etc. 1,500
- Storybook recipients and readers 1000

### **Recruitment: Artists, Schools, Pupils**

#### **Artists**

Dominic Kelly was selected as lead artist not only because of his considerable storytelling skills, but also because he has roots within the County and a passion for connecting people with place through stories. Dominic Kelly also had an excellent track record of working in schools.

Dawn Hurton is an artist educator with a community arts expertise and had a dual role in project management while also creating the giant puppets. Jess Mills, a recent fashion graduate is also local and she designed and created the costumes for the puppets. Jilly Jarman at BlueJam Community Music and Arts, created a Samba Band to support the puppets in the procession and the band (now called 'Jamba') is still alive and supporting events throughout the area. Vanessa Card from Horse+Bamboo is based in Lancaster and she provided prop



and mask making sessions. Jacqueline Harris transformed the oral stories into written word for the book.

The emphasis on using local artists has led to the development of a network of people who remain in the area and understand the process of what was involved. The project provided development opportunities for all involved and the capacity to deliver more work in the future. This was not missed by St Catherine's School which commented on "the excellent use of local artists." in their feedback.

### **Schools**

All feeder schools to the Penrith secondary schools were invited to take part. The project encompassed an age range through from First schools (of which there were 3 involved), Junior/Primary Schools (of which there were 13) and secondary schools (of which both in the town were involved.) There was a high take-up for a cluster based project which covered the areas covered by three Extended Services Advisers. All schools which signed commitment forms at the outset completed the project. This is seen to be an indication of its success, particularly given that May Day is a bank holiday.

The schools taking part were:

Armathwaite First School  
Beaconside CofE Primary School, Penrith KS1  
Beaconside CofE School, Penrith KS2  
Brunswick School, Penrith  
Calthwaite CofE School  
Culgaith CofE School  
High Hesketh CE School  
Kirkby Thore Primary School  
Lazonby CofE School  
Lowther Endowed School  
Milburn Primary School  
Morland CofE School  
Plumpton School  
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith  
St Catherine's RC Primary School, Penrith  
Shap CofE School  
Temple Sowerby CofE School  
Ullswater Community College, Penrith

### **Pupils**

The project was inclusive and many of the schools involved were very small

rural schools which valued the opportunities which the project provided for interaction with others. In some cases, whole schools were involved. Across the range of activities, from storytelling sessions, to making masks and props or performing or supporting on the day there were very high numbers of children engaged. At all times participation was kept as wide as possible.

The age range was from 5 to 12 and it was very good for the town to have both secondary schools involved. Schools also used the project effectively to promote intergenerational learning, build connections between small schools in isolated places and support transition.

One of the first schools decided to offer the sessions on Saturday mornings and to work with North Lakes Junior School to bring the whole school community together. Whilst this worked on a social level the involvement of parents in the workshops hindered the storytelling confidence and development of young participants and eventually the decision was made for the children to perform without adults.

The project was very successful in developing the confidence and language skills of some of the more vulnerable children. There were some noteworthy instances where unexpected children took the limelight and shone.

In the other two first schools there was concern that it was too much of a risk to put such young pupils before a large crowd without scripts. In one school, the staff overcame their concerns by using prompt cards and the other school chose and developed a story which was essentially learned by rote. Nevertheless, both schools fully embraced the practice of oral storytelling in the workshop sessions and felt that the process was very useful indeed.

### **Parents**

At Brunswick School workshops took place on Saturday mornings with parents and the wider community. Parents commented that it was good to do something different with their children and also that it made them feel very proud of their children. Many parents turned out to performances within school and on May Day.

### **Partners**

Penrith Action for Community Transition is a local transition organisation. Transition towns are trying to prepare our society for a post-fossil fuel future.

The Story Giant project linked with PACT's objectives on several levels. The project was designed to motivate and inspire people to make connections with their landscape through oral traditions; if the landscape is valued it will be cared for. In essence the project aimed to interpret heritage in a way which encourages children and their parents to be excited about where they live.

Storytelling is an excellent vehicle for this kind of work and PACT is very pleased with the impact that the project has made. One member of the organisation created the video which can be found at [www.penrithact.org.uk](http://www.penrithact.org.uk) and this demonstrates what a clear understanding there of the achievements within the organisation. The video and commentary were uploaded onto the front page of the national transition town website which is a source of pride for the Penrith group and overall it has helped to increase the profile of the organisation in the community.

St Andrew's Church supported the May Day rehearsals, offering storage for the puppets over the bank holiday and members of the congregation helped moving giants around, ensuring that there was access to the building at unsociable hours etc. A church warden described the project as 'A real hit'.

The Lions Club of Penrith who organise the annual May Day event wrote

*'We really appreciated your involvement with May Day this year. The Giants certainly added some colour and substance to the event and also helped pull in a massive crowd on the day. Do you know what is happening to the Giants? Are any of the schools keeping them? They would certainly add colour another year! Once again many thanks for your contribution to a memorable May Day.'*

## **Project Activities: a summary**

### **Preparation with schools**

Dawn Hurton discussed the project with interested schools and sent out a 'commitment form' to agree what would be required from the schools and what they could expect from the project. The introductory event at Penrith Leisure Centre brought participants together and enabled them to have an overview of what would be happening in each school and how the project would culminate in activities on May Day and beyond. The opportunity to take a baseline assessment of engagement and knowledge of oral storytelling was

also seized. Schools then received more specific guidance about the process of oral storytelling and advice about how they could support their groups of children at an INSET session.

### **Artist-led workshops in schools**

Dominic Kelly, Dawn Hurton and other Extended Services advisers supported schools in the process of finding local stories to develop. Some schools such as Plumpton, Lazonby and Armathwaite invited older local people to come and tell some of their stories, Culgaith brought in a local storyteller from the village and other schools engaged their pupils in finding out stories from members of their family and friends.

Dominic Kelly spent a minimum of 4 sessions with each school and left clear instructions between sessions to explain how the school could develop the work before the next visit.

Dominic Kelly gave workshops on 'Shaping the Story', giving participants a toolkit of storytelling techniques, adapting and enlarging stories and leaving the children with story skeletons, storyboards and story maps to do before the next session. Next was a session on "Getting to Know the Story" which involved activities to ensure that the children got to know the world of the story in all aspects, including visual imagery. Children worked in pairs, describing and questioning and played directorial games etc. Schools were left to go away and create an emotion graph of their story and for staff to start and think about performance possibilities.

Jess Mills then went into schools to talk about the characters in the stories and decide which one they would like to make into a giant puppet. She developed the character with the children into a visual illustration detailing features and costume. This illustration was then used as the basis for making the puppets along with detailed descriptions. Calthwaite School specified that Dame Ragnell 'has holes in her clothes and you can see her white knickers with red hearts on through them... and there are cobwebs in her hair' and from High Heskett School 'he has an earring in his left ear and a bald head' of the Carle of Carlisle. The drawings and descriptions of these characters were also used by Jess Mills as the starting point for her illustrations in the storybook.

The next storytelling session provided a crash course in performance techniques covering facial and bodily expression and movement, use of pace, space and audience warm up and then learning how these are applied to the story. Schools then performed their stories within schools either inviting parents in or performing to other groups within school.

The final storytelling session before the rehearsal was in building the 'Bones Flesh and Life' for the final performance. Each group refined their story with feedback from the storyteller who returned to any schools which had difficulties or weaknesses. Schools were left to embed their work before the long Easter break.

Alongside these sessions Vanessa Card went into each school to make props and masks which along with the giant puppets created a visual back drop to the storytelling on the day and were used in the parade. She also added some movement techniques to the stories. Parents and carers developed costumes from the guidelines which were provided by Dawn Hurton and Jess Mills

The dress rehearsal took place in situ with full costume. After an introduction in St Andrew's Church, children went outside to practice their story and adapt their performance to the open air environment. Nine schools attended in the morning and another nine in the afternoon. On May Day the stories were told by groups of 3 schools together in 3 locations around the churchyard. There was an interval after the first nine stories before the next nine schools performed.

### **May Day performances**

On May Day the weather was perfect and there was a record crowd. The organisers, Penrith Lions acknowledged that the event had drawn a new audience of families across the generations to watch their children perform. With the sun shining in the beautiful historic surroundings it was universally acclaimed to be a wonderful occasion that will be long remembered in the town. After the storytelling the schools made their way to the start of the parade and all schools stayed for the whole event. With head teachers, teachers, school support staff and parents animating giant puppets and children with their props and masks, it was a very relaxed and happy



Little  
Middle  
Lots

Pupils were asked the following questions:

**How much do you know about stories from where you live?**

48 out of 70 pupils said that they knew “little” to “middle” about local stories. 22 claimed to already know “lots”.

**How interested are you in finding out about local stories?**

50 pupils were a “little” to “middle” interested in finding out more about local stories. Views on this were fairly polarised with 41 pupils only a “little” interested and 20 were interested a lot.

**How much do you know about how people used to live in your local area?**

There was a fairly even spread of 35 pupils claiming to know only a “little”, 25 thought that they were in the “middle” and 10 said that they knew a “lots” about people who had lived in their area in the past.

In the baseline assessment teachers were asked to score as below:

Very low  
Low  
Middle range  
High  
Very high

Teachers were asked the following questions:

**How do you rate your local knowledge of and understanding about traditional customs and stories?**

Nine teachers out of 16 rated their understanding as very low to low, while 7 rated their understanding as being in the middle range. No-one thought that they had a high or very high understanding.

**How do you rate your knowledge and understanding of how people from Penrith and the surrounding area used to live?**

Most teachers thought that they had low or very low knowledge of local history understanding relating to people in the place of their school. 3 teachers ranked their understanding as being in the middle. These rankings were perhaps surprisingly low and no-one in the small sample of teachers taken at the event felt that they had a high level of knowledge in this area.

**How do you rate your current motivation to preserve heritage through storytelling?**

Teachers were asked how motivated they felt about preserving oral storytelling traditions. The response to this question was fairly well spaced with 3 teachers indicating that they had either low or very low motivation, 3 teachers felt that they were in the middle and 6 were either highly or very highly motivated by the idea.

**How do you rate your interest in increasing your school's capacity to preserve heritage through performance and visual arts skills?**

Only one teacher had a low motivation for this, 3 were in the middle and 11 were very motivated to increase performance and visual arts skills in school and to preserve heritage through these things. This shows how popular arts activities are as a tool for learning.

**How do you rate your understanding of how our community can be strengthened through stories?**

10 teachers thought that they had only a low understanding of how stories could be used to strengthen community and 2 teachers ranked their understanding as being in the middle with 4 saying that they had a high understanding of how this could work.

This is a very mixed response. The potential of storytelling to bring about community transition was a key issue for Penrith Action for Community Transition and when the Steering Committee agreed to support the project, some didn't see an immediate connection with the community objectives of the organisation. One of those people later became very supportive and



engaged in the process of delivery. He enthused about how well the project had worked in connecting people with their heritage and each other and explained that he couldn't entirely see the relevance when it was first discussed.

The questions were adapted slightly for the end of project feedback to encourage a more detailed response than at the outset. The feedback forms were sent to all participating schools and responses were received from 233 participating children and 17 teachers.

### **Non-returning schools**

Of the three schools that did not respond to the feedback requests, one school had two groups involved in the project and is hoping to continue with storytelling as an activity in school. Governors reported that the project was going very well indeed. The storytelling techniques were captured by staff involved in the sessions and then shared with other classes. Those classes have therefore also been able to practice storytelling and it is having a good impact on literacy skills. The props and mask making techniques were seen to be simple but very effective and were also shared across the school in making sessions and it is expected that they will be very useful. After May Day it was reported on the Beaconside School website –

*'we had many tributes for both our storytelling and for the presence of the wonderful giants in the parade. A big thank you to Dominic and Dawn for inviting us to join them in this inspiring project and to all the staff parents and governors and most especially the children themselves for making this May Day one to remember'.*

Beaconside School also reported in the Herald newspaper that involvement in the project had contributed to its Ofsted success. In another of the non-returning school websites there was a positive account of the project and numerous images of the performances on May Day. It is known that the only other non-returning school did a range of extension activities and was proud of pupil achievements.

Pupils were asked to score as follows:

A little

Quite a bit

A lot

Pupils were asked the following questions:

### **How much do you know about telling stories?**

Of the 233 pupils that responded, 31 pupils said that they knew “a little” about telling stories, 134 admitted to knowing “quite a bit” and 68 claimed that they know “a lot”. This is a significant but realistic shift from the original assessment showing that there is a lot more confidence and knowledge about storytelling abilities. No doubt this will have been counteracted by the fact that children will be much more aware of the complexities of oral storytelling and the risks that must be taken to tell a story without a script.

### **How much do you know about stories from where you live?**

Of the 233 pupils that responded, 106 pupils said that they knew “a little” about stories from their local area, 81 felt that they knew “quite a bit” and 46 said that they know “a lot”. Although there the majority of pupils feel that they still have only a small amount of knowledge this is perhaps understandable because after the first session all of the schools began to focus on the one story that would become their performance and this was necessary to ensure that they were able to develop their chosen story in time for May Day. In spite of this there are a lot more children who think that they know much more about stories from their local area. Children had little opportunity to watch stories being performed by other schools because of the busy schedule and constraints of working with so many schools. However they did get more of a chance to listen to the other 2 schools with which they were performing. The launch and distribution of the storybook enabled more of an opportunity to become acquainted with the range of stories that were included in the project but further assessment of the impact of reading the book is beyond the scope of this evaluation.

### **Would you like to do more storytelling?**

A very high number of 143 pupils out of the 233 that responded indicated that they are very keen to do more oral storytelling with an additional number of 54

being quite keen. 36 pupils were only “a little” interested. Given that the project was not targeted and involved whole class activities this is a very good outcome. Generally, schools involved more children at the start of the project and then honed it down to a smaller number to do the performance. The whole class was brought back together to support with the making and offered the opportunity to take part in the May Day parade. This mixed picture of participation will have had some influence on the numbers but it was not possible to refine feedback to reflect the kind of participation that was involved.

There was a final question asked of the children and this was:

**“What was your favourite thing about the Story Giant project?”**

This question invites a positive response and the feedback was extremely positive. The comments give a flavour of the enthusiasm across the variety of activities involved and show that it was not just the May Day performance and parade but all aspects of the work that were valued. They also show the energy that the project created. The comments build a more detailed picture of how participants have benefited and the range of responses (obvious duplication has not been recorded) has been attached as appendix 4 to this report.

In the final feedback the teachers were asked to score as below:

very low

low

middle

high

very high

The teachers were asked the following questions:

**How well did the project meet your requirements and expectations?**

Of the 17 responses that were received from teachers 8 indicated the project had “very highly” exceeded their expectation and a further 8 indicated that it had “highly” exceeded expectations with 1 teacher indicating that the project was what she had expected. This teacher was very engaged with the project throughout and perhaps the question was not well worded because the

response depends to a large extent on the levels of expectation in the first place. Nevertheless it is a very pleasing response and better by far than teachers stating that the project did not meet expectations.

### **How far has the project increased your knowledge of oral storytelling traditions?**

10 teachers stated that it had very highly increased knowledge of oral storytelling, 6 stated that it had it had highly increased knowledge of oral storytelling and 1 (whose partner is a storyteller/artist indicated that her increase in knowledge about oral storytelling was moderate).

### **How far has the project increased your knowledge of local history?**

7 teachers felt that the project had very highly increased their knowledge of local history, and 6 felt that it had highly increased their knowledge. 1 teacher indicated that there had only been a low increase in her knowledge of local history through the project.

### **How motivated do you feel to preserve oral storytelling traditions in the future?**

The range of responses to this question were that 7 teachers were highly motivated and 5 were highly motivated with 4 saying that they were moderately motivated to continue with oral storytelling activities in the future.

### **How far has the project developed capacity in the school to increase heritage awareness and appreciation through storytelling/performance skills and making skills?**

1 teacher felt that the increased capacity was low, 3 indicated that it was moderate and 13 stated that it was either high or very high. The response in the secondary schools was less positive partly because only a small sample of pupils relative to the numbers in school were involved in the project and that the activities were “add on” rather than integrated into the curriculum.

## How much do you think storytelling can be used to bring pride and unity to communities?

17 teachers responded to this by indicating that the potential was either high or very high. 1 teacher thought that it was moderate. This was a considerable shift from the baseline assessment.

Teachers were invited to make open comments which were have revealed information that didn't come across the the score system questions. They show how the project was used to enhance learning across the whole curriculum, how whole school communities were involved and how the project made a real impact on some of the more vulnerable pupils. The teachers' comments have been inserted into the table below:

Name of School	Armathwaite First School
How did the school use the project to develop work within the curriculum?	Project used to further develop soft learning skills of speaking confidently, active listening, and using gesture to engage the listener. Also in writing - particularly the use of writer's voice to generate and rehearse ideas. Great for increasing children's knowledge about their locality - creates a sense of belonging.
How was the wider school/community involved?	A community volunteer with expertise in educational drama has supported work in school throughout. This has been excellent 2 way communication and sharing of skills The whole project in school has been recorded using slide shows comments and open forum on the schools' virtual learning environment for wider use within the school's community. Parents were involved in the school sessions and on May Day
Any noteworthy achievements for individuals/groups?	The project has boosted the confidence of all children, but especially those who are often unconfident in class. I have noticed a marked difference for those children who are not confident/independent readers, but good oral communications in being able to access this project at a higher level. Our children have gained so much throughout project. All have gained in confidence and the ability to speak at some length in public - which is a lot to ask of 6, 7 & 8 year olds. The project has had an impact on the children's "writer's" voice. Articulating stories using a wide and rich vocabulary have impacted on their

	writing. Great to see some children really flourish and demonstrate skills that sometimes are overlooked.
Other comments	Great! Thank you very much. Has also had spin-offs working with other schools for breaking down barriers/confidence boosting. The whole project has been great fun. The day the giant arrived at school was memorable - the children's faces when they saw the size of "William" was something very special. Dominic has been excellent throughout. Many thanks. Hope we can do something similar again!
<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Brunswick School, Penrith</b>
How did the school use the project to develop work within the curriculum?	We linked our story to practical arts and craft activity. This included clay faces, a giant shoe, mask making and drawing with pastels.
How was the wider school/community involved?	We ran our project on a Saturday and provided crèche facilities for families. We had pupils from North Lakes join us. The families who came were really involved – unfortunately numbers were lower than anticipated.
Any noteworthy achievements for individuals/groups?	One of our children who spoke on May Day has had two years of speech and language therapy, staff were amazed by her contribution.
Other comments	It was great to see dads taking on the storyteller role during our sessions. We have some talented fathers in Penrith, who really know how to tell a great story!
<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Calthwaite CE School</b>
How did the school use the project to develop work within the curriculum?	The music teacher has used the story to develop the children's music making skills. They are working on a project to tell the story using storytelling & music.
How was the wider school/community involved?	Parents took part in the parade and listened to the story. The giant faced out of our big window and attracted a lot of attention in the village.
Any noteworthy achievements for individuals/groups?	The group performing in Penrith grew in confidence as performers.
Other comments	
<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Culgaith CE School</b>
How did the school use the project to develop work within the curriculum?	We used it to develop the oral rehearsal before writing and performance skills. We also used it as part of our community links work - we performed/told our story at the local village café
How was the wider school/community involved?	The story was told to us by a member of the community who worked with us, with 2 friends as a shadow puppet version
Any noteworthy achievements for individuals/groups?	The whole of Class 2 were part of the story telling - it showed performance skills in several children
Other comments	We enjoyed having the input from Dominic and it was great for us to share with Armathwaite School
<b>Name of School</b>	<b>High Heskett CE School</b>
How did the school use the project to develop work within the curriculum?	ICT radio waves. Literacy - oral storytelling sessions Art D.T.
How was the wider school/community involved?	The school is planning a "story telling chair" to be built and placed in the playground to encourage children with oral storytelling.

	Children who took part also performed in assembly. Photos and work will be used in radio waves - a school club which is accessible by internet when finished.
Any noteworthy achievements for individuals/groups?	Children have become much more articulate and animated when speaking. It has also boosted confidence within many individuals: giving them a sense of achievement.
Other comments	
<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Lazonby CE School</b>
How did the school use the project to develop work within the curriculum?	The project was used to enhance the literacy module of Myths and Legends. It has massively enhanced speaking and literacy skills.
How was the wider school/community involved?	The whole school watched the performance. Parents invited to performance through newsletter. School website and local newsletter will have reports in next month.
Any noteworthy achievements for individuals/groups?	Great boost in confidence for all involved. All becoming more adept in expressing themselves in front of others.
Other comments	A fantastic project to be involved in, which gave me as a teacher a great sense of pride. Also the children were so motivated during the whole project.
<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Lowther Endowed School</b>
How did the school use the project to develop work within the curriculum?	All children enjoy listening to stories (especially Dominic Kelly's). As he worked with the children over a number of weeks, many of them displayed increased confidence and were able to use the storytelling techniques - varying tone and pace, gestures, facial expressions to good effect. They have continued to use these techniques in other areas of the curriculum i.e. literacy ; play scripts
How was the wider school/community involved?	A number of parents who were interested in local history, approached school asking where to find the stories to use for their own benefit. Parents of all children directly involved spoke very positively about their children's response to it.
Any noteworthy achievements for individuals/groups?	Improved confidence when speaking to a group/class/whole school/May Day audience... thinking about what they are saying, gauging the audience, response and reacting appropriately. Particularly good performance from a girl who speaks English as an additional language.
Other comments	
<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Milburn Primary School</b>
How did the school use the project to develop work within the curriculum?	We read stories from our local area. It involved much speaking and listening. We used 'hot-seating' to get inside our characters. We used story-mapping to sequence our tale. We wrote imaginative and factual accounts.
How was the wider school/community involved?	I was able to arrange a visit to Crackenthorpe Hall where our character lived and haunts. I invited a 'village elder' who'd been to our school to talk about past events in the village.
Any noteworthy achievements for individuals/groups?	In the group activities with Dominic at Morland School, one of our lads not given to expressing himself, really enjoyed them and actually joined in. Several of our children show great potential to be storytellers and revelled in it.

Other comments	Thoroughly enjoyed the project from beginning to end. Felt I learnt a lot from Dominic and would like the chance to learn more. The children got so much from this project on many different levels.
<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Morland CE School</b>
How did the school use the project to develop work within the curriculum?	The project was the basis of our topic this term. We linked work on knights and castles and local history study. We created animations of our stories, story maps, role-plays and incorporated story-telling around the world, including having a class 'yurt'. Art and design of masks etc. We developed a homework using storytelling as a theme. We looked at tales from other cultures and made a class 'yurt' to tell stories in. The children made felt story mats and weaved mats as well.
How was the wider school/community involved?	We plan to tell our story at the school summer fete. Created links with storytelling with other primary schools. The Whole class was involved... The grandparents of one of the children had also done this tale when they were at school and had the school books to show - the story appeared in the Herald newspaper. Another primary school joined us for the project with Dominic Kelly A neighbour kept Peggy in his barn because she was too big to fit in our small school and when she arrived, it seemed as if the whole village turned up to meet her. Peggy had an 'outing' on the last day of term. It was a gloriously sunny day and we went down to the village hall for our end of term assembly. Amongst other things, the juniors had their first storytelling session in front of a non-school audience and I was very proud of them, they were a success and what's more important, enjoyed themselves! Our Peggy looked a treat, we think she's fantastic.
Any noteworthy achievements for individuals/groups?	Children were confident to speak/tell their story to an audience. Gave children a chance to excel without putting pen to paper and involved high level speaking/listening skills. Children enjoyed embellishing their story. Newspaper coverage for the grandparents of child in class. Some children performed particularly well and are noted as good storytellers by others
Other comments	We enjoyed the project but would have liked more input into creating our giant. The overall effect at the end was superb - well done. Storytelling was an excellent project. Would be nice next time if children were involved in making giants too. Is an excellent way to cover 3D aspect of curriculum.
<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Temple Sowerby CE School</b>
How did the school use the project to develop work within the curriculum?	As part of wider initiative in speaking and listening skills
How was the wider school/community involved?	Parents took part in May Day Parade
Any noteworthy achievements for individuals/groups?	One very quiet pupil was forced to take part in the final performance (due to small numbers) and loved it
Other comments	This was well planned and organised but suffered from a major flaw - the final performance took part on May Day - a public holiday and the expectation was that teachers would give up a day's holiday to supervise pupils. You would not expect anybody else to a) give



	up a day's holiday and b) to work for nothing. In these days of education cuts and increased awareness of what people do to earn the money they are given, this strikes a sour note. Yet again teachers are expected to put up and shut up and do it for "the love of the job" Not anymore.
<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith</b>
How did the school use the project to develop work within the curriculum?	This project gave me a chance to help students develop personally, increasing their confidence levels and their ability to work as part of a team. It also provided opportunities for the students to develop their skills in drama, English and art.
How was the wider school/community involved?	The students performed their story in the year group assembly.
Any noteworthy achievements for individuals/groups?	
Other comments	It was a most gratifying and enjoyable project to be a part of.
<b>Name of School</b>	<b>St Catherine's RC Primary School, Penrith</b>
How did the school use the project to develop work within the curriculum?	Sharing good ideas about local stories and how to tell stories with children, The children have drawn story boards and researched into Lord Musgrave and linking this with town clock and other projects in school.
How was the wider school/community involved?	Performances of the story to other classes and parents in whole school celebration assembly.
Any noteworthy achievements for individuals/groups?	Excellent skills of oral storytelling, lots of ideas for how to use voices and tell interesting stories. This project brought out the confidence of EAL (polish) children - when taking part at St. Andrews. A wonderful project which students loved being involved in, they really developed their confidence and skills
Other comments	Excellent use of local artists. Fantastic for the children involved.
<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Shap CE School</b>
How did the school use the project to develop work within the curriculum?	We have used lots of Dominic's techniques and strategies in other areas of the curriculum E.g. literacy and history.
How was the wider school/community involved?	Kidsty Pike Class shared their Story Giant Journey with the rest of the school. They told their story to every other class. Progress reports were inserted in 'school news' section of Shap Today.
Any noteworthy achievements for individuals/groups?	For one of the storytellers this was a real achievement, it is not something he, nor the rest of us, would have envisaged him doing – particularly to such a large audience.
Other comments	The children, and staff, all gained a lot from the whole experience. The 4 storytellers were a little disappointed that their CD never arrived in school, but we look forward to the book. The story giants were amazing!!
<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Ullswater Community College, Penrith</b>
How did the school use the project to develop work within the curriculum?	Difficult to do in secondary - it would have been good to involve more departments and to have devised a show running alongside
How was the wider school/community involved?	Again difficult to do in a secondary with limited contact time with student in the group

Any noteworthy achievements for individuals/groups?	
Other comments	A wonderful project which the students loved being involved in, they really developed their confidence and skills.

Feedback from lead artist Dominic Kelly:

*“This project is one that will really stay with me - I've loved being part of it; it was such a fantastic vision to be involved with, such a coming together of so much to make something that was greater than the sum of its parts for all concerned I think. Very special and memorable”.*

He added

*“Most projects stay in schools but this one broke the mould by coming out onto the streets in to a festival and it has given me food for thought as to what is achievable. There was a big audience on the day and yet the children understood the space and where they were and rose to the occasion”*

**Recommendations and comments** –In spite of the positive feedback there is always room for improvement. Below is a list of issues which would require specific thought for anyone embarking on a similar project:

- In order to accommodate the large numbers of participating schools some schools shared some of the early sessions and transport was arranged. Dominic Kelly commented that at times it was difficult to juggle more than one school and story and later, additional sessions were required. These could have been agreed at the outset.
- There was some confusion about workshop dates and activities which arose in part because the storytelling and making sessions were programmed separately. A clear calendar of events detailing all of the activities would have been better. However, there is a need to get each set of dates out as soon as they are agreed with workshop providers.
- Although there was an overview of the project given at every opportunity and information about how schools could support their pupils etc at times this wasn't communicated well to the staff on the ground. In future it would be good to get a list of these staff and agreement from schools about how to contact them at the outset.

- At times it was assumed that schools and staff knew more about the process of oral storytelling than they did and. better communication about this would have avoided confusion
- One school, in the feedback requested more input into making the giants. Attempts were made to set this up at the outset eg sessions at the secondary schools etc. However, it was not possible to find workable solutions given the numbers involved and time was running out. With better communication it may have been possible to accommodate a small number of schools with this request
- One school commented that future events should not take place on a bank holiday. This request would have been difficult to accommodate given that the main focus was the May Day parade. The school was aware of this at the outset.

## Appendix 1

# Story Giant Project: Expression of School Commitment

<b>Main contact person</b>	
<b>Job Title</b>	
<b>Telephone contact</b>	
<b>Email contact</b>	
<b>School Name</b>	

<b>Would you like a target group to work on this project? If so, which?</b>	<b>How many children would you anticipate working on this project?</b>
<b>What are the outcomes that you would like to see from this Giants project?</b>	
<b>What is the evidence of this need?</b>	
<b>What community activity does your school community/pupils currently participate?</b>	
<b>How could your school or community provide any added-value through your participation in this project?</b>	
<b>Which school/s would you 'buddy-up' with to share workshop time and venue?</b>	
<b>What kind of skills/experience would you like your school community/pupils to develop through your involvement in this project?</b>	
<b>How do you think you will continue the work of this project?</b>	

Please indicate if you will participate in a steering group, attend the following workshops, carry out rehearsals and perform and participate in the Penrith May Day parade?

<b>Group/Workshop</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Response</b>
Would you like to be part of a small steering group for this project? This is not an expectation.	Dates and venues to be arranged but will meet approximately 4 times throughout the life of the project.	
Introductory Event A half day event for lead school staff and pupils.	After October Half-term 2010	
Twilight INSET for lead school staff.	After October Half-term 2010	

Workshops will be delivered on site at school or at a partner school for lead school staff and pupils.		
<b>Group/Workshop</b>	<b>Timeframe (approximate)</b>	<b>Response</b>
1. Shaping the Story	January 2011	

2. Getting to Know the Story	January/February 2011	
3. Making Giant Puppets, Masks and Props	Delivered in a variety of ways in negotiation with you	
4. Performance Work	February/March 2011	
5. Bones, Flesh and Life	March/April 2011	
Rehearsal	27 <sup>th</sup> , 28 <sup>th</sup> or 29 <sup>th</sup> April 2011	
Performance and May Day parade	2 <sup>nd</sup> May 2011	

Participate	Timeframe (approximate)	Response
Giants of Eden storybook	June/July 2011	
Contribute to the Penrith Museum exhibition	2011	

I hope you agree that the above seems a reasonable summary of the commitment and tasks to be undertaken. If you are in agreement with what has been outlined above I would be grateful if you could sign and return to **Dawn Hurton** - email [dawn.hurton@cumbriacc.gov.uk](mailto:dawn.hurton@cumbriacc.gov.uk) **NO LATER THAN 15<sup>th</sup> October 2010.**

I am looking forward to what I'm sure will be a highly successful and enjoyable project!

Signed on behalf of Giants Project:	Signed by School:
Print name:	Print name
Date:	Date:

## **Appendix 2**      **Story Giant project – storytelling guidance for schools**

I hope this finds the autumn term going well for you all. I'm really looking forward to working with you after Christmas on the Story Giant project. I'm writing to introduce myself and to give you an overview of the storytelling side of the project. I'm a full-time storyteller, based in Lancaster. I work intensively in schools, delivering projects and staff training, and providing one-off day visits and performances. I also give performances in museums, libraries, community events and festivals, and create and tour performance pieces in theatres around the UK. Having grown up in the Lakes it's great to be working on a project involving Cumbrian legends, which I've loved since my own school days.

It'll be a very exciting term after Christmas, and it's nice that the work towards the event on May Day will mostly be concentrated in the one term, enabling the momentum and focus to build. The other side of it is that there'll be much to do in quite a short time!

When I'm working with young people to share with them the storytelling process and help them to tell stories orally, the process often takes a number of day visits. That would be unwieldy and impossible to schedule with so many schools involved in this project, so there'll be four half-days input from myself for each group in this project. This means the sessions will focus on familiarising children and staff with the tools and techniques to take away and apply between my visits, rather than a strong emphasis on myself facilitating all the activities involved in the storytelling journey. So in order for the children to be ready and equipped to perform their stories in a busy outdoor environment at the end of the project, **it will be vital that staff set time aside to follow through all the activities introduced in each session before the next.** I've given a sense of the work that will be needed between each of my sessions with you further down, and we'll also cover this during the INSET session. It may change slightly in practice as groups from different schools cover more or less ground than each other and need slightly different development work between sessions.

On a very practical note, many of my dates for visits are in the potentially snowy part of the year. Though I don't have a 4-wheel drive, I do have snow chains and a well-equipped car, and I'll try and head north pretty much regardless of the weather. So if your school has decided to close because of snow, and I'm due to be in with you that day, PLEASE do remember to let me know – thank you! A text to my mobile would be fine – 07758 704299.

### **The Storytelling Journey**

Oral storytelling is an improvisational artform, involving no memorising of words or recital. It depends on in-depth experience of the stories through exploring the visual imagery of each scene, understanding the characters, mapping of the physical and emotional landscape of the story etc... The knowledge that comes with this enables young people to really be 'in the story' as they tell, giving them the confidence to play with the story and for each of them to tell it in their own individual way. There is far more relationship between the performer and the audience than in many other performance artforms, as the teller instinctively responds

to the audience. It's a wonderful means to self-expression for young people, as their performances have an immediacy and individuality, and so often there are surprises - children who may struggle with the written word sometimes shine when working with narrative orally.

The journey with the stories will need to start before we begin working together, as the research and some initial shaping of the stories you choose will be necessary before the storytelling sessions begin, to give us something to work with! I know that Dawn and her team are happy to help with the research and finding of stories this term. And you can certainly email me or give me a ring – my contact details will be at the bottom of this guidance. You may want to see if older relatives of the children in your schools or members of the local community have stories to share, and local studies sections of the area's libraries are a treasure trove of old tales and fragments of local history. So many old and forgotten collections of traditional stories are also available in facsimile on the internet, whole books scanned in and available for free to read or even download, or available as print-on-demand very cheaply.

The more you are able to dig up forgotten or fragmented stories through your own avenues of research and enquiry, the more exciting and satisfying the process is likely to be for the pupils involved. Even when you come upon a story in a folklore or historical book, they can often be little more than summaries of some fuller account now lost, and the detective work involved in bringing the story back to life is a wonderful journey. To give an example of the process, one story I worked on a year or two back, from the south of Cumbria, I first found as a summarised account in Henderson, 1866 (see Appendix 1 below). I looked through the other likely books of legends and managed to glean a few more snippets. I located the hill and the ruin on its flank from where the story comes, through an article in the local Archaeological Society's journals, from nearly 100 years ago. This also gave me a meticulous map of the layout of the whole hall and farm complex in its heyday, that committed local Edwardian amateurs had painstakingly put together. The article also gave me the names of the families that had lived there over the centuries, and so I could identify the name of the owner at the time the legend originates from. I visited the site at different hours of day and night and worked out the routes taken by the main agents of the story. There was still a good amount of flesh missing from the story's bones, but most traditional stories have similar cousins living all over the country, and some 'tale types' have a lot of folklore surrounding them. This was a boggart tale, and there's no end of folklore about boggarts, boggles and dobbies in Cumbria and beyond. So I could authentically recreate the missing details of the story from this mass of material about similar creatures and their habits. The story by then was quite well shaped, and ready to be worked up for oral telling.

I recognise that it's a very busy time of year for schools, so in case you have trouble unearthing tales, I've attached at the bottom of this guidance information a small bibliography of publications that may be useful.

### **Group involvement.**

There is quite a degree of flexibility in the size and age of groups that can be involved in the project sessions in each school. The nature of storytelling means, though, that the number of children from each school who will be storytelling in the May Day performances themselves is relatively small, so there will need to be some selection nearer to that time. The busy, open-air environment of Penrith town centre will also be challenging for children in the younger primary year groups, and it may be most feasible for the older children to tell in the final performance (though who knows, there may be surprises, and decisions can be made nearer the time).

### **Storytelling sessions**

The process of preparing a story for oral performance involves:

1. first reducing the story down to its most important elements – creating a story skeleton – and in that process making editorial and compositional changes to the story – some shaping and patterning work.
2. putting the flesh on the bones - building it back up again to make it one's own through vivid multi-sensory reimagining of the scenes, exploration of the characters, mapping of the physical and emotional landscapes of the story etc...
3. bringing the story to life – learning and applying performance skills to bring the story alive in the telling.

The four half-day storytelling sessions in your school will cover these stages. The first session will focus on reducing and shaping the story. This involves shaping it for oral telling, rather than building the story - as far as possible this should be done before the first visit. The tasks left for the group to do before session 2 are likely to include creating story skeletons, storyboards and story maps (all these will be introduced to the groups in sessions 1, although storyboarding at least will already be familiar to many pupils already). This will involve several hours work between sessions 1 and 2.

The second session will reinforce and build on the pupils' knowledge of their story so that they can feel confident and solid in it as a springboard for moving into performance work. This session will naturally form a bridge between stages 2 & 3 above: many of the exercises to test and reinforce story knowledge involve telling aspects or parts of the story to each other in different ways, in pairs and small groups. I will leave most pupils with a final piece of work from stage 2 to do before session 3 – an emotion graph, which is a very useful tool for informing the performance work. I'll also leave them with some interactive paired and small group activities to do together.

The third session will be a whistle-stop introduction to a range of performance techniques, helping pupils become aware of the range of possibilities for using vocal, facial and bodily expression to put across the story, as well as control of pace. We'll also cover audience



warm-up and interaction, some warm-ups for the performers, and use of space. In the second half of the session we'll recap this new skillset, and start applying it to the telling of the story. But much experimenting and applying of the techniques will be done through tasks left for the pupils to do before the last session.

By session 4 the selection of pupils to tell the story on May Day will need to have been made, and this session will mostly or entirely need to focus on this group, although the presence of and input from some other children may be very useful. There'll probably need to be some nuts and bolts work on the practicalities of sharing the story out and sharing the space. But mostly it will be a chance for each group to perform and refine their telling with ongoing feedback from me through the session. Before the final rehearsal each group could do to tell their story as much as they can, to several audiences if possible. The final rehearsal will not only allow the groups to perform their stories to each other, it will also be where we iron out who will be telling where in what order, and how the movements of the groups will work.

Although the details of the day are yet to be fixed, the likelihood is that on May Day there will be two performances, each involving up to nine schools at three locations (probably within sight of each other and in the vicinity of St Andrew's Church).

### **Appendix 1: Bibliography**

There will inevitably be plenty of gems and nuggets of story, incident and folklore held in local archives in the Eden area that haven't made their way into more widely distributed literature, and it would be wonderful to have some of these brought to light and worked on in this project – that would be a fantastic contribution to the local culture. However, below I've set out a few sources that may help too. Strangely the dedicated literature for old tales of the area is small with much overlap. There are a few great books though. They're in a rough order of usefulness and relevance (tied first place for the first three!)

- Robertson, Dawn. *Secrets & Legends of Old Westmorland*. 1992. Tremendously atmospheric presentation of some of the old legends of the area with fantastic infra-red photographs of the stories' locations. Lacks a degree of scholarship but it's the most attractive book of the area's stories.
- Rowling, Marjorie. *The Folklore of the Lake District*. 1976. Very useful collection of stories and folklore not only from the Lakes but from a wider area of Cumbria.
- Westwood & Simpson; *Lore of the Land – A guide to England's Legends*. Penguin 2005. A simply fantastic book, impressively scholarly, clear and very readable. It sets out the main legends for each county of England, and has excellent separate chapters for Cumberland and Westmorland, along with maps showing the exact location of each story, an exhaustive bibliography at the back for each county, and cross-referencing to other similar stories in other parts of the country (which is where the rest of the book can be very useful for fleshing out a scant story through filling the gaps with obvious missing detail still to be found in similar stories from elsewhere) Wonderful.

- Henderson, William. Notes on the Folk Lore of the Northern Counties of England & the Borders. 1879. An impressive collation of folklore and legends from across the north of England. There is more material from just over the hills in County Durham and other places, than there is from Cumbria. Nevertheless there are some good snippets buried in the chapters, and also much of the fascinating beliefs and habits preserved in its pages would doubtless have been quite ubiquitous, with local variations, across the north, so it may be useful for 'colouring' and fleshing out story.
- Lofthouse, Jessica. North Country Folklore. 1979. Another volume not dedicated to Cumbria but with a decent number of little tales from the area, including stories of the Robin Hood-style outlaws of Inglewood Forest, giant stories from around Penrith and other snippets. And, as it's loosely arranged in themes, there's the potential for borrowing material or story patterns to fill gaps in stories that have been unearthed elsewhere.
- Murray, John. Handbook for Travellers in Westmoreland and Cumberland. 1866. Now available as print on demand via the internet, like so many useful reference books from the 19<sup>th</sup>C, this is just one of the many accounts of and guides to travelling in Cumberland and Westmorland, in whose pages are found details of local stories, though it takes some reading to find them, inevitably.
- Transactions of the Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society. There are volumes and volumes of these. Though certainly not collections of tales, they do contain descriptions, field notes and surveys etc... on many locations of old tales – castles, halls, ruins, towers, follies, farms. As mentioned earlier, I've found them very useful for identifying places, providing detail of structures now lost (the volumes go back more than 100 years) - and sometimes reading through impressively-garnered histories of the locations. This detail has made much difference to me in piecing back together enough detail of old stories to make them tellable again. There is also the odd article on legend, or historical figures of the area, but generally it's a source to look at once a story has been found elsewhere. And doubtless there are many other sources of this type in your local libraries – journals, local records etc... that will turn up valuable information.

There are many smaller books and booklets of Cumbrian stories, folklore, legend and semi-historical incident, such as Kathleen Preston's Cumbrian Lore & Legend, Edwin S Towill's Strange Tales of Cumbria etc... but these are mostly based on the more well-known collections, add little that's new, and in some cases are of quite poor quality. But there are great stories, ghostly tales, exaggerated incident and so on hidden in almost every book of local history and study of the area, whether it be a volume dedicated to a particular settlement or an aspect of the industrial history, and so on – do have trawl through your local libraries.

Good luck - I look forward to sharing your finds!

### Appendix 3 Schools and their stories

Armathwaite First School - **The Outlaws** -  
Beaconside CofE Primary School, Penrith KS1 - **The Luck of Eden Hall**  
Beaconside CofE School, Penrith KS2 - **The Fiery Hound of Inglewood** –  
Brunswick School, Penrith - **Cedric and Isir**-  
Calthwaite CofE School - **Ewan Caesarius**  
Culgaith CofE School - **Mawty and the Frogs**  
High Hesket CofE School - **The Carle of Carlisle**  
Kirkby Thore Primary School - **The Hand of Glory**  
Lazonby CofE School - **The Croglin Vampire**  
Lowther Endowed School - **Wicked Jimmy**  
Milburn Primary School - **The Ghost of Peg Sleddle**  
Morland CofE School - **Guy and Garlic** -  
Plumpton School - **The Case of Percy Topliss**  
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith - **Ewan Caesarius**  
St Catherine's RC Primary School, Penrith - **The Luck of Burrell Green**  
Shap CofE School - **The Devil, the Sheep and the Nut**  
Temple Sowerby CofE School – **The Lying Competition**  
Ullswater Community College, Penrith - **Wicked Jimmy**

The main written sources which initiated the exploration were:

Dawn Robertson and Peter Koronka, *Secrets and Legends of Old Westmorland* (The Amadeus Press, 1992 for '**Wicked Jimmy**', '**Ewan Caesarius**', '**The Ghost of Peg Sleddle**', '**Guy and Garlic**', '**The Luck of Eden Hall**' and '**The Hand of Glory**').

Westwood and Simpson, *The Lore of the Land: A Guide to England's Legends* (Penguin, 2005) for '**The Croglin Vampire**', '**The Fiery Hound of Inglewood**', '**The Luck of Burrell Green**', '**The Luck of Eden Hall**', '**The Ghost of Peg Sleddle**' and '**Cedric and Isir**' ('Isis Parlis' was the basis from which the children developed their 'Two Giants' story).

George Webbe Dasent, *Popular Tales from the Norse: The Lad and the Deil* (1904) for '**The Devil, the Sheep and the Nut**'.

Other written sources included Marjorie Rowling, *The Folklore of the Lake District* (Batsford 1976).

J. A. Brooks, *Ghosts and Legends of the Lake District* (Jarrold Publishing 1988).

'**Mawty and the Frogs**' is an exception in that the version in the book is almost a word for word retelling of Culgaith Primary School's own performance. There was no written source material and the tale is based on a local legend which was introduced to the school by a local storyteller.

**'The Lying Competition'** is sourced from a local legend, but the actual 'lies' that are told in the competition were developed from the children's at Temple Sowerby Primary School's own creations.

**'The Devil, the Sheep and the Nut'** is the conflation of two stories: a local tale of lost sheep found in the forest and a Norse tale (linking to the Eden Valley's strong Norse connections), 'The Lad and the Deil', told to the children by storyteller, Dominic Kell (strong Norse connections), 'The Lad and the Deil', told by storyteller, Dominic Kelly. The names used were taken from other local sources.

Websites:

<http://www.peterrobins.co.uk> , the ballad by Francis J Child, *Adam Bell, Clim of the Clough and William of Cloudsley* , first published in 1857-58 for **'The Outlaws'**.

<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/carle.htm> *The Carle of Carlisle* Edited by Thomas Hahn. Originally Published in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales* Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Press, 1995 for **'The Carle of Carlisle'**.

The following are a few of the websites consulted for **'The Case of Percy Topliss'**. As is well known Percy Topliss was also the inspiration for the film, 'The Monocled Mutineer' but there is little historical evidence that he was even at Etaples during the war. The children and the writer chose to focus on the rest of his life and to create a new fictional narrative around some of the facts.

<http://www.eden.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/museum-penrith-and-eden/museum-collections/percy-toplis/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Percy\\_Topliss](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Percy_Topliss)

[http://www.scotsman.com/news/myth\\_of\\_the\\_monocled\\_mutineer\\_1\\_71505](http://www.scotsman.com/news/myth_of_the_monocled_mutineer_1_71505)

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#### Appendix 4 - Sample of pupil responses

Seeing Tom the giant in school \* Getting to know people from other schools \* Parade and making friends when practising \* Games we played with Dominic\* Everybody watching and making props \* Telling story and holding Peggy's hand through Penrith \* Meeting Dominic \* Making clay faces and listening to stories \* I can't choose! –everything \* My part telling story on May Day \*I loved it all \* When Dominic came in and told stories, making puppets and painting \* Walking around with our Mawty, we loved him \* Learning about Lord Musgrave \*Acting and storytelling on May Day \* Making masks and practice at Leisure Centre was awesome \* Waving the fairy \* Lifting Lady Ragnall's hand in Parade \* Designing the Bishop \* It was good because lots of action \* Stories by Dominic and listening to other schools \* Playing turn around game \* Making the puppet and goblet \* Painting \* Making masks \* Fun all storytellers had good expression \* Listening to others and playing games \* Because it was a skeleton and fun \* Made lots of new friends with Milburn \* The Parade \* Taking part \* Fun because we all took part\* Being able to hear other local stories \* Getting prepared \* Holding props - even though it was a long time \* Actually doing storytelling but liked it all \* The story telling at Parade \* Well you get to express your voice and spread the story \* Making the props \* Where the deer got shot\* Performing in front of audience and giant \* Making and using the mace \* Telling story it was amazing hearing laughing and cheering \* Seeing all giants and being part of parade \* Everything \* The parade through town \* Everything especially parade \* Being next to a big giant \* Having a storyteller was brilliant \* Having fun \* Getting my pictures taken by Sam \* My picture taken in parade \* William was really good \* Going in the Parade because it was scary when you saw crowd \* Our frog masks \* The parade because it gave you exercise and seeing all the giants was FABULOUS! \* Going to Leisure Centre hearing stories and making new friends \* The drums - it was fun \* Dominic's stories and very scary performance \* Everything we did with Dominic \* Stories and mask making \* Finding out Wicked Jimmy story and Dominic's stories \* Performance and mask making \* Taking part in Parade and seeing friends \* Telling story and Dominic's stories \* Performing because I really enjoyed telling the story \* When we actually started the performance \* Visiting Crackenthorpe Hall where Peggy lived mainly everything though \* Making the props \* Amazing story giants \* All the lessons we did \* Making plan of giant \* Meeting schools at Leisure Centre \* Getting to know a lot of stuff \* **Being a storyteller was the best thing I ever took part in \* We know more now than we did before about storytelling...**