

The Mixenden Storywalk

"Really enjoyed making those wings, I like doing creative stuff, just don't get time."

Angela

"This has given Mia so much confidence to try new things."

Michelle

"I like making these lanterns and mine's the best fish in the world."

Milli

"I've liked having time with me mum and Paige."

Megan

"Well, I never thought I'd offer to read something in public."

Mia

"I know what I did wrong now, so next time I can do it right."

Ben (on lanterns)

"Really enjoyed that walk, it was great. Thanks."

PJ's Mum

"The children loved it. They came running in every time... they'd be asking 'is it on today?'... we picked up loads of skills."

Mixenden Parent

"The policewoman said she couldn't believe it when he waved at her on the night... He's been interacting with adults, he's been volunteering, he took on lots of responsibility."

Mixenden Worker

The Mixenden Storywalk is an Artworks and Creative Together publication in association with Mixenden Parents' Resource Centre and supported by:



Artworks Creative Communities is a Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in England and Wales No. 4137321 Registered Charity No. 1095583



CREATIVE
TOGETHER

The Mixenden Storywalk

December 2009



Artworks and Creative Together
in association with
Mixenden Parents' Resource Centre



Introduction

The Mixenden Storywalk Project was part of Artworks Creative Communities 'Creative Together' Programme. This is a four year project funded by the Big Lottery under their Family Learning strand which seeks to use the arts and creativity to reengage families with learning.

Artworks has been delivering innovative projects that use creativity as a force for change since 1998. Working with professional artists and in partnership with communities, organisations and businesses across all sectors, we develop and deliver effective projects that use participation in the arts as a tool to engage, connect and inspire.

A Bradford-based registered charity and social enterprise, Artworks has helped hundreds of groups and organisations address their needs through taking part in creative activities.



1. Start of the walk

We began our walk at the Church of the Holy Nativity.

Once upon a time, a long time ago, this place and the valley in which it stands was covered with trees, scrub and grass – the only sounds the rushing waters of the nearby brooks, the squawking and screaming of birds in flight, the whooshing of the wind and the snuffling and scuffling of wild animals searching for food and shelter.

Slowly, over centuries, people came to the valley to look for wood for building and burning and discovered a fertile land fit for tilling, growing crops and farming animals. Many of these people stayed and put down roots and some of their descendants can still be found in Mixenden along with a new wave of migrants who came to look for a new life around the 1900s.

Ancestors of the groups involved in developing the story travelled from Scotland, Ireland, London, the North East and places in-between. Our storywalk tells of their journeys, their fears, their lives and of Mixenden magic.



2. From the Church

From the Church, cross over Mixenden Road, walk down the road and turn left at Hebble Brook Close. Walk to the end of the Close to the grassy area and look closely at the ground and you will see some of the original cobbled road – Slippy Lane – that came through Mixenden.

Slippy Lane – a cobbled road was for many years the major route through Mixenden and will have seen many travellers moving along it. Travellers on foot, on horse and in the early 20th century, in cars.

Imagine the noise of horses clattering over the cobbles, or people in clogs and hobnail boots as they make their way to the mills. See the sparks fly as a horse loses its footing on the slippery surface on its way to the clapper bridge. In the 1960s, the Economy Supermarket vans delivered groceries around the Mixenden area. This was the first mobile grocery service in the country (way before Tesco was even a thought). In the 1960s the snowdrifts were so high, that roads like Slippy Lane completely disappeared (as did some houses) and the drivers of the vans spent hours digging out drifts to make sure people got their deliveries. In weather like that, Slippy Lane deserved its name, becoming more like the brook the walk visits next.



3. Walk up the brook to the narrow Clapper Bridge

From all over Britain people came to Mixenden, travelling great distances across moors, bogs, heaths, forests, rivers and brooks. Travelling through mist and rain, snow and sleet, often in the dark, wet and hungry and fearful of the noises around them. Many brought with them stories from their homes, stories of beings that lived in trees, faeries and little people and things that lived under bridges that came out at night.

Think about our travellers from Scotland, Ireland, London and the North East arriving here together one cold, damp, misty night – and realising that to go further, they need to cross this bridge. Our groups imagined how they might have felt, what they might have experienced and recorded their ideas:



Scot: *Has anyone got a light? I'm no going ower that bridge, I'm staying here the night, but not without a light.*

Irish: *Whisht now, I'm wit you. Dere's tings under a bridge youse wadn't want to be messing wit. We cud be in the middle of it an' of a sudden it wud disappear – I've heard tell.*

North East: *Aye, ah hurd from me nan that there's bogies an boggles in these parts, an ah've no interest in bein' eaten by any of 'em.*

London: *Ere, wat's this all abaht? You scared of crossing a bridge? I fowt you northerners was all hard like. Stories to scare children, that's all they are. Well, I'm not standing ere all night...*

And the London traveller walks onto the bridge and as he does so, a great roar begins under the bridge and a rustling like all the trees losing their leaves at once. The travellers stand, shocked into silence and watch with dread as 'things' come out from under the bridge.

Troll 1: *Who dares to walk over my roof?*

Troll 2: *Who dares to wake me from my sleep.*

The 3 travellers hide behind a tree whilst the London traveller trembles on the bridge.

London: *We was only trying to get to the other side. We need to get...*

Troll 1: *No-one crosses my roof without paying a penalty.*

Troll 2: *No-one wakes me from sleep without forfeiting a fee.*

Troll 1: *My penalty is that you fight with me – if you win, you can cross.*

Troll 2: *My fee is that you give me your firstborn child, I'm hungry.*

The London traveller starts to cry and asks the others what he can do.

Scot: *Well, what we need is some good magic to make the trolls disappear.*

North East: *Nan used to say a rhyme that wud bring the faeries:*

"Woodland faeries hear owa pleas, bring your magic on the breeze."

In a scattering of faerie dust three faeries appeared from the woods and the trolls roar their anger.

The three faeries dance around the trolls chanting a magic spell:

Faeries: *Roses are red, violets are blue, we'll take the trolls away from you!*

Irish: *Just wat we need, tree faeries!*

London: *Please faeries, we wana to cross the bridge but the trolls won't let us.*

And suddenly, the trolls become just a pile of old leaves, rustling in the wind. The travellers turn to say thank you to the faeries, but all that is left is faerie dust blowing in the night wind.

And because the faeries came and helped the travellers, there are no more trolls under the bridges in Mixenden. So all walkers can move on to the next stop on the storywalk.

4. Walk over the Clapper Bridge

Walk over the Clapper Bridge to the other side of Hebble Brook. As you walk along this path, you will come to the remains of a Dam wall on the left.

Lots of the migrants who came to Mixenden from the 18th century onwards came looking for work because there wasn't much where they lived. Across the Calderdale area at the time, there were new industries starting, like mining for coal and quarrying for stone as well as mills for making cloth and weaving. Water was important to these industries and as hygiene got better and more houses were built, then water was needed for the people: this is why the reservoir at the top of Mixenden was built.

Our travellers may have worked on this dam or built the reservoir as many of the 'navvies' were from Scotland and Ireland. Many North Easterners were employed in mining but lots left to seek better conditions elsewhere, so may have come to Mixenden to quarry stone for the dam and new houses. Although there was smoke from mill chimneys, the air up here was much better than the London peasoupers, which is why people migrated from the South. So the old farming communities continued alongside the new industries as new people came to Mixenden and made it their home.

Water is a magical thing with the life it can give. But it also has 'dark' stories as we'll find out at the stop...

5. Continue down the path

Continue down the path and up the steps until you come to a pond.

Our groups thought how scary the ponds could be at night and how our travellers would have to pass by the 'unpredictable pond.' Unpredictable because you could never tell which pond dweller might try to stop you. All travellers knew that strange things dwelled in damp places and that there was magic and monsters here.

The descendents of our travellers described some of the pond dwellers they'd heard about:

Abominable Snowman:

Glows green, red and white, to distract travellers into the pond as they follow a light. Lives under a tree but doesn't eat.

Sideshow Bob:

A purple-headed 'thing' with a Mohican, which sits on the side of the pond eating whatever gets in its way. Likes to hook onto a passing boot and suck the person into the pond.

Scorpobob:

Sideshow's bodyguard, a green slimy thing.

Gone the Ghost:

Haunts the woods and pond making moaning noises to scare people.

Albert 1:

A big yellow bird that helps if he likes you but has big red eyes from eating bats.

Our travellers meet all of these, and even Albert 1 decided not to help them get past. To rescue them, they needed a bright light to make the monsters disappear and chant together: *"May the good light shine and save us from death".*

Whereupon, a light began to weave through the night toward them, and a voice could be heard.

Voice:

*"I am the light that protects all travellers from harm.
Begone monsters of the deep!
When I am shining, all monsters shall perish.
Dread disappears, and life we shall cherish."*

And the travellers found that they could move their legs, their boots were on their feet and they were back on dry land. Turning, they followed the light to the next stop, the Mixenden stone circle.



6. Follow the path around the pond

Follow the path around the pond with the brook to your right. You will pass some activity equipment on the left. Just beyond this there is the stone circle and a big stone.

Many of you will know the story of the Mixenden Treasure, but for those who don't... In the 1540s several Yorkshire men (one a knight) heard about a treasure hidden in a cavern in the Mixenden Hills. They decided to try to find the treasure and used magic, spells and special swords to help them and to get past the spirits that protected the treasure.



They set out early one morning and tramped over hill and vale in the pouring rain and come to a clearing like this one. One of the knights finds the big stone and tries to move it to find the treasure. He huffs and he puffs as he pushes at the stone, whilst the other knight keeps guard. Suddenly, just as the first knight feels the stone move, there's a big clap of thunder and a witch appears.

Witch: *The sword is silver, the rock is grey,
The treasure is hidden in the rock today.*

And the witch begins to circle the knights, making strange sounds and waving her hands in the air.

Knights: *You think that will give us a fright?
Look to my sword, that is my might.*

The two knights make circles with their swords and chant a spell of their own:

Knights: *With these swords we slice through fear and make the
witch disappear!*

And she does, in a puff of cold air! The knights turn back to the stone, only to find that it won't move at all, so they go back home empty-handed. And the treasure has never been found.

Our storywalk then continued from the circle back to the Church for hot chocolate, mince pies and photos!

Acknowledgements

The storywalk is based on ideas and stories from the group and moments in Mixenden history. All of the characters are fictional and the references to the Mixenden Treasure are a dramatic re-imagining.

Thanks to all the families who took part and made the project happen, shared their stories, made costumes and lanterns and acted in the storywalk: it was their inspiration and contributions that shaped the story and made the project such a success. They are:

Angela, Ashton, Ben, Daisy, David, Davina, Jerrie-Simone, Kasey, Megan, Mia, Milli, Molly, Paige, Pat, PJ, Ross, Sophie and Tiffany.

And thanks to all those individuals, partners and organisations who worked on the project:

Artworks Project Co-ordinator:

Suzy Russell

Lead Artist and Storyteller:

Irene Lofthouse

Supporting Visual Artist:

Morwenna Catt

Mixenden Parents' Resource Centre Co-ordinators:

Michelle Morris and Liz Childs

Mixenden Initiative Support:

Paul Birchall and Moira Cash

Church of the Holy Nativity:

David, John and Sue for all their help, without which the project couldn't have been completed.

Police Community Support Officers:

Nicola and Gavin

And Special Thanks To:

Zen the dog

Sources

If you would like to find out more about Mixenden's history and the story of the treasure, look out for:

'The Mixenden Treasure' – John Billingsley

'In and Around Mixenden – Past and Present' – Tony Buckliss

'Mixenden Past and Present' (DVD) – Calderdale TV, Mixenden Initiative, Mixenden History Group and Yorkshire Film Archive



The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Artworks Creative Communities.

Published 2010

Copyright © Artworks Creative Communities

Artworks Creative Communities

Address: 7th Floor City House, 21-27 Cheapside, Bradford, BD1 4HR.

Phone: (01274) 256 919

Website: www.artworksbradford.org.uk