

## Newsletter 9

Winter 2009

# THE BEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT EVER!

## The Story Museum has a real home at last

Christmas has come early for the Story Museum! On 4th November we were handed the keys – all 183 of them – to our future home. Rochester House, just up the road from Christ Church in central Oxford, dates from the 19th century and will need a liberal sprinkling of magic dust to transform it into the wonder that we have in mind.

A generous gift of £2.5m from an anonymous fairy godmother enabled us to buy the lease on the property. But this is only the first chapter: we shall need to raise a further £11m to open the Museum by 2014 when Oxford aims to be UNESCO World Book Capital City. We'll send you more instalments as this exciting story unfolds.



*Our new home in Pembroke Street - much work needs to be done before we can move in.*

## Storybird project takes wing

A novel way of helping parents to learn – and help their children to learn - through storytelling is being pioneered in two Oxford primary schools.

Storyteller Chris Smith is leading ten weekly sessions with parents at Orchard Meadow and Pegasus schools in Blackbird Leys. The adults will learn to tell short stories – and will take home a selection of ideas, including seasonal tales to tell over the Christmas holiday.

From early 2010, videos and audios of stories will start appearing on the Story Museum website with accompanying texts and storyboards. If successful, the pilot – which is funded by the Department for Business Innovation & Skills – will be developed as a model for wider use throughout the UK. Our local radio partner is Jack FM.



## Five books...

...to read before you see the film

- **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** by Stieg Larsson, 12 March 2010
- **The Lovely Bones** by Alice Sebold, 29 Jan 2010
- **The Road** by Cormac McCarthy, 4 Jan 2010
- **Where the Wild Things are** by Maurice Sendak, 11 Dec 2009
- **Dear John** by Nicholas Sparks, 2010 (UK release date to be confirmed)
- **The Lightning Thief** (Percy Jackson & the Olympians) by Rick Riordan, 2010 (UK release date to be confirmed)

*Dates correct at time of going to press*

## Our vision

The Story Museum will be a world centre for story. We believe that stories are essential for children's intellectual and emotional development. Our vision is to create a society in which children enjoy sharing and learning through stories and storytelling in many forms.



## Oh my ears and whiskers! Alice's Day is getting bigger

More than 7000 people and 30 organisations made our second Alice's Day a huge success. This year's new highlights included a special Borders book-signing by author Helen Oxenbury, two promenade theatre performances in the Botanic Gardens by Shiplake College students and a clutch of 32 young street rabbits, courtesy of Oxford Playhouse Young Company (see above), who delighted children along a free trail through the city. Alice's Day is now set to be a popular annual fixture.

"Many thanks to all the organisers of such an event that introduces the story, the culture and the beauty of Oxford and the UK" Ghada and Nassen, from Palestine.

## Weaving a new website

Arts Council England South East has funded us to redevelop our website as a resource for anyone working to engage children and young people with literature and storytelling. Visitors to the site, from teachers to arts professionals, will be able to access information on a wide variety of creative approaches.



The database of projects and organisations is designed to support the Arts Council's vision of helping children and young people experience and take part

in high quality cultural activities. Our new website will also have news about the Story Museum and its programmes. We hope to go live early next year.



## Five New Year resolutions

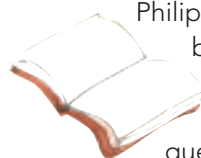
- Raise half a million, starting...NOW
- Patch roof and make office in our new building
- Choose fabulous architect and create fabulous plans together
- Take deep breath, raise two more million to start main building programme
- Keep story projects growing in schools and communities

## Stories are in the air...

It seems as if this is our moment: stories and story telling are much in the news.

On BBC Radio 2, Jeremy Vine set out to find the nation's favourite bedtime story. The winner, announced on November 6, was *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by CS Lewis reached the shortlist.

In October, The Guardian published a series of Great Fairytales: 25 traditional tales retold by leading writers including Angela Carter, Alison Lurie, Naomi Lewis and Philip Pullman. Each of the 7 illustrated



booklets contains an afterword exploring big, recurring themes such as wisdom and folly, rags to riches, quests and riddles. You can order a set


from [www.guardian.co.uk/readersoffers/fairytales](http://www.guardian.co.uk/readersoffers/fairytales) or call 0330 333 6839.

And the first ever Storytelling Laureate was announced in November. Taffy Thomas MBE is king of a fine storytelling tradition in Cumbria and has a collection of 300 tales to tell. He first started telling stories as a form of speech therapy to cure a stroke at the age of 36.



## Good news for Big Book Group members

We won't be coming after you to renew your subscription! From January 2010 we will offer free reading suggestions to everyone on our mailing list, making it an Even Bigger Big Group.

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- **MORE FAIRY GODPARENTS NEEDED.** If you would like to help The Story Museum come true please contact Sally Yeomans on 07920 063759 or [sally@storymuseum.org.uk](mailto:sally@storymuseum.org.uk). We welcome all donations large or small.