

Sunshine and Stories in Grasmere

In this difficult financial climate there is much depressing news of reduced funding and even projects cancelled so it was very heartening to spend a splendidly sunny Saturday 26 September in Grasmere for a shorter but immensely enjoyable festive day organised by Taffy and Chrissy Thomas. Their guests on this occasion were Jan Blake, Peter Chand, John Pole and, from Australia, Anne E Stewart.

Those of us fortunate enough to arrive on the Friday evening enjoyed food and a variety of stories and songs in Tweedies bar. The atmosphere was thoroughly convivial though there was some talk the next morning as whether it might have been less than wise to have enjoyed oneself quite so much ...

The activities of the day offered choices, in the morning a workshop with Jan Blake or a story walk with Taffy and in the afternoon a workshop with Peter Chand or tales, and a Punch and Judy, courtesy of Jon Pole, in the Storytellers Garden. Since there is only one of me I could not attend everything so I stayed in for the workshops both of which were excellent, informative, inspiring and entertaining. Those returning from the other activities had also clearly had a splendid time.

After tea, in an open forum chaired by Taffy with his guests, we were able to explore a variety of issues about storytelling and, as ever, about whether or not it should be "defined". The general conclusion was that storytelling can exist and be effective in a great variety of applications. The slightly more academic business of the day being over, we were then treated to a lively session of "trading tales" by Jan and Peter and, after an excellent locally produced buffet supper, "twilight tales" featuring all the guest storytellers.

We retired for the night replete with excellent nourishment both for body and soul and with the applause for Taffy and Chrissy and their wonderful team still ringing in our ears.

Martin Manasse.