

## Workshop Review: QUIMBY

### Question 1. What was the most useful aspect of the workshops?

QUIMBY:

I think it was the fact that it was quite concentrated in terms of the intensity of it. I did enjoy that.

There is a sense of immediacy about it which helped keep things ticking over. It was fresh and moving on rather than sitting and considering it, leaving it flat on a piece of paper. I think there were times when we did get into quite a lively discussion, I mean if you doing storytelling that seems to be the whole point of it. It would be nice if there been more people we would have perhaps had different or a wider range of views, perhaps if we'd had a few more people that were new to it that would have been great. But in the end you have what you have. In a sense the people there had clear reviews about what they wanted from it then just turning up and having a good time, so that was good. I enjoyed them. It always seemed to be 'Oh my god is that week already' it zoomed round, the immediacy I did like. And people were doing stuff it was stuff I wasn't aware of.

I think it's getting the feedback straight away, rather than leaving it for an audience and not being quite sure, being able to read an audience, where it is you've got somebody who's there half listening to you half watching your performance. That's also really useful because that can give you different aspects that you don't want to recognise in yourself. Provided that the environment is conducive to that, which it was. That's very welcomed. You can be a little looser then and perhaps a little bit more undefined in what you're saying. Then you're actually approaching it, then when I've got this rough idea of what to do you think. Whereas with strangers you feel you need to make a clean statement that is backed up and caveat it and referenced all the rest, whereas if it's a loose discussion specially if its mostly people you know that's nicer you can end up in places that you wouldn't normally go and then you don't mind going out on a limb because you're not quite sure, it's more about people expressing uncertainty which if you're storyteller that's better isn't it because sometimes you're not sure.

We're all quite uncertain about things because nothing is written down, 'O you've got it wrong', actually no I haven't got it wrong, this is the whole point of all of this. I don't think perhaps I was aware before of how alive story is. You understand now how stories survived the way that they have somebody say this is a bit boring we better have something a bit exciting coming in here, so will put this in. Someone else is a purist hey you can't leave that out! Hang on a minute somebody started to jazz up the boring bits, somebody else can take it out. We had a long discussion about this at the last feast of fools, [a storyteller] was trying something out new. It was quite a long traditional piece and they are long, you didn't have the attention deficit disorder that modern audiences have. So what he had done, he'd edited down, as always incredibly complicated people are dressing up as this, as that, I thought hang on a minute it's too much. from a there's 1 million ideas in there perhaps three ideas would have been better for a modern audience. We haven't got that tradition have we of carrying all that stuff in our head and all yes oh yes I remember you said three days ago and now it's there. That's the magic numbers. There's a fearfulness sometimes when somebody said traditions, we can't alter it but it's always been altered until somebody actually wrote it down it was in the air it survived more when people feel they can amend them it doesn't mean you're disrespectful to them or to stealing some culture you're just trying to make it better for a modern audience.

**Question 2. Do you see any far-reaching effects from being involved in this workshop?**

QUIMBY:

I've always thought of storytelling as stuff which I can take bits from I hadn't really that there was stories here, I was going to ancient Greece, where as now I think 'Hang on a minute I don't need to go to ancient Greece they are here'. And [participant 181] coming back with the extraordinary stories about Bletchley Park, they are here [referring to stories]. When I walk past Temperance Terrace I can't walk past there without thinking of [participant 183's story] and choosing that theme. If you can build that up it makes it such a rich experience. Every time I go somewhere now where you've told the story I think of that, you've got these way markers around the town and there are other parts are towns

which haven't got those that doesn't mean there haven't been stories there, if you have a look and see at the old books they show you an old photograph of a corner house on Horsefair Green [in Stony Stratford] which said this is where Old Ma, can't remember her name let's say, Old ma Higgins used to have her lace making shop. And you think what an extraordinary story it's bricked up now there is no evidence it was ever there but it was somebody's life and somebody's story, we think of lacemaking as as Hanslope and Olney, but it was just as vibrant in Stony Stratford. When you look at these old photographs, they didn't know what they were taking photographs of they didn't realise that now we're very interested, we're interested in that picture of a horse standing still where as then they were more interested in the gas lamp. Of course with the computer now we can zero in, in a way you could not have before, look at those rabbits head you don't see rabbits head hanging up in shops now, you don't see game or if there is they've cut their heads off and there's a bag. All of that modern stuff when you walk around to give people a history is good.

I'm beginning to sense it now in Stony because I know Stony quite well but there is still bits I have never been to you think will am I allowed to go down here and then you think well of course I am. I mean near the Richard the third house there is an alleyway I've never been down that alleyway and I thought hang on a minute why can't I go down there, there's something about me that says this seems to be somebody's house rather than just an alleyway. I went past the new development the other day, the old fire building [there was a fire in Stony Stratford on 1st May 2016 which destroyed an old high street shop and homes above and either side.] And I thought there's something wrong with it and it took me ages to work out what was wrong with it the roof is straight, where as before there are no straight roofs, and [an architect friend] explained to me how they could not make them not straight any more. And I thought all right it's not 'not-straight'. If you go around town, this might be something for the future, you need to collect an audience and go round with two people one storyteller and one an architect who will give you the architecture and whose view is quite different. He will stop and look at things you think why are you looking at that and he'll point out something that you haven't even seen it this extraordinary feature and I'm starting to see Stony through his eyes. And you think 'wow this is an amazing place' so if you had the stories to that it's those imprints, that glimpse that you

can see what has gone on before. I saw something the other day and I still haven't made up my mind about it, I walked round, I was looking at it, you know when you've gone somewhere and you think something's changed but you don't quite understand it. Its at Cofferridge Close there's a big framed picture of Fabio [A well known big issue seller who was renown throughout the area and who sadly passed away in 2018], it's huge. Somebody has put a picture there of him standing there with the dog and they framed it, and some one has gone to some expense, but it's massive its bigger than a mirror, I was looking for something subtle. Somebody's drawn him brilliantly, and nobody walking past would not know it's not Fabio, but I thought , I'm not sure he would have liked it, something this big. But it is storytelling isn't it.

### **Question 3. What was most difficult element of the workshop?**

QUIMBY:

Is always improvisation for me, even when I try to do comedy, I always found that was difficult because I was so used to wanting something to be good, I've seen so much improv that is bad and unless you're really good and capable of editing out that fast improv quickly degenerates into swearing in my experience, not in storytelling but in comedy, because people feel there's a silence that you have to fill up very quickly, you just got to get into it. It takes huge amount of time, but just because somebody can talk doesn't mean [they're good improv]. It's like 'just a minute' I can either find it brilliant or boring, it's brilliant if somebody says something that is the point, if they're doing it to just pull out all the tricks and avoid all the pitfalls and just keep talking to gibberish I'm not interested, but Merton he's always interesting because he's a comedian because it editing out on his head fast is trying not to be dull he's not just going to the point he is trying to entertain you as well, so I'm trying to run at that rather than walk first I've been doing a lot of 'rhubarbing' recently and I can understand why you do it and I can see. Is that ability to think like greased lightning isn't it, you not really making it up there and then you must be thinking ahead. Its just that your felt processes are 10

ns ahead of mine. What I have been able to take from that is something I never thought I'd be able to do. It met everything that I was expecting from them [the workshops]

**Question 4. What you think could be improved about the workshops?**

QUIMBY:

The only criticism I have if everybody comes at it with the right attitude and does the work it's good, but if people don't it can annoy other people, it doesn't annoy the person who is not trying, everybody else is thinking 'if you done this we could have been moving on', when someone is a genius we give them too much space. If you just put the grafting how much better they'd be, that sometimes annoying to the rest of the class, it affects the rest of the class as well. I can't think of anything else it was a nice getting a year compressed down into six weeks. I don't think it's like taking another year storytelling sessions, it shows you how you can condense things down and give it to people so they can go 'this is achievable' rather than thinking do I have to wait a year before I can try out. People are very anxious to get stuff and be able to try out. It's good that people can go and do stuff straightaway rather than sitting and listening and writing notes and scribbling away. I was discussing this with Participant 181 who spends a lot of time going to these courses sitting down and scribbling down notes. You think to yourself what's the point get out and do it. What point do you say I've learnt it, you only learn it by doing it, copying somebody else is not the way you've got find your own voice.

**Question 5. Has the workshops increased your interest in: a) storytelling, b) Milton Keynes, c) intangible cultural heritage?**

QUIMBY:

I shall have to refer you to my journal. Yes it has really. I walk around with a different view now. You were saying about the story shouting at you hey, hey we're here, and there might only be a couple lines but you're right but there's still a story. I like the way you took the bits which either were just bits

and you made them into a tapestry of an hour. I believe that's the core, that's clever, and I saw it and thought there was nothing in that and you stitch bits together and that's the way to do it. And some bits normally don't fit together but you can come at it from a different way. I loved all of that but it was great. I can see things differently now. be nice to go to Wolverton and see it in a different way I don't know enough about Wolverton. I don't think you can actually sit down and read I think you actually have to be there and walk around a bit and take shortcuts. It was like last year or the year before I was doing that poem going into all of those gardens, and you think to yourself now what's the other side of this wall. It is wonderful and you go around good heavens and the stories of the people are quite amazing. You have decided about certain types of people but they're not certain types people at all, you can walk past these people on the street you don't realise what's going on up here. And they don't show off about it and you meet in the street and he is just a normal bloke.

**Question 6. What you think other people will get out of hearing stories about Milton Keynes?**

QUIMBY:

I'd like to think that they are in the stories somewhere that they can see their part in it. You've not picked these up traditionally in any way so you can listen to people. Like I came upon that story out of politeness really I didn't think I would do anything with it and afterwards you think this is a live person I can ask about it what sort of bicycles, where did they meet, how old? Without all these things that you normally can't say you have to invent it, when you got a live person you can ask it. But then you've also got a live person who can turn around and doesn't want you to do this, its not about me and my husband it's about Jim and Mabel, and to concentrate on them. In every house out there is a Jim and Mabel isn't there? Every house has an extraordinary story and it's taking that bit and doing something about it. I wasn't aware about that before, those little bits can be picked up and stitched together into a story. And they can for all of us, I spent so much time looking round for a book, I want a book called the folktales of Milton Keynes or Bucks I know eventually there will be one but I want one now, and I know the other counties have one we were just unfortunate because there was nobody

who collected them here. But when you look you see all there is a general one or that's boring but hang on there's a bit here or a bit there. I been having a long discussion with Kevin about that suddenly, the reality is that somebody is giving him £1000 to get what he calls his queer stories down and suddenly realised that he's never had them as written stories they've always been up in his head and he is doing what you're doing he's trying to tell them when he writes them but he finds it so boring, why would I listen to my own stories like this, what's different? What's different is the literary bit the creative writing, you haven't got the gleam in his eye, the movement of the shoulder and all that space, how do you create that on the page? What was a brilliant story [oral story] won't necessarily be the same written down. You've got to add more description where as before you just add another voice or tone of voice or put your hands on your hips and that's enough wearers you've got to describe that in written word.

#### **Question 7a. Comments on Digital Story**

QUIMBY:

**[On the first Digital Story]** It's good when I go pass, it's crazy. You see people looking up at it you almost want to go over and say do know who she is, she's Eleanor.

I love the story I didn't know much about her until I was 'Miriam-ed' she said you know who Eleanor was, as she had everything. And I thought hang on a minute there has to be an in between here. I think it stands all right it doesn't try to nail it down too much. she should be there the people to add stuff of their own opinions to it otherwise the town would have left a wall there ugly to look at it, its something to make you think it's something about the fabric of living in Stony. Somebody behind there is trying to have these extra little things that extra little punctuations. A friend of mine asked if that was Boadicea had no clue about it, he does now. I was talking to the guy who painted it I asked 'you going to have something there to tell people about it?' and he said no I think it should be left to people to make up their own slant on it be a talking point. He's done them all over the world apparently, hew was saying that the difference between Northern Ireland where they [murals] are very

political he wasn't into that he was all for making more art and to get people talking about it that he was quite happy for people to make up any story they wanted if it could be explained by what was there. And I thought that was quite different, well he is a true artist isn't he, and I don't think he sees it as a moneymaking, I don't know how you got paid, but he was up there a huge number of hours it couldn't pay very much. I'm a bit annoyed now that they stuck wires on her and a giant snowflake but that is street furniture for you, a year from now there be bits flaking off. There is one in Bletchley isn't there, is not a mural as such, it's no painting next to the public toilets. It's Leavers wonder soap, and every 10 years or so they repaint it. So somebody has got the money to do it otherwise they have let it go years ago. And I think that's nice it's been there a long time, is just about marking the town out as being something different it shows that somebody cares about the place rather than just nobody cares we won't bother about it will just leave it. I quite like, whatever it cost, it's a proper way of doing it. There is so much public art around Milton Keynes that I don't like. I look and I think yurk. It's like the whisper outside the library we met the guy who did it any spent a long time coming into the library and you looked at it and thought all the bottoms are too big everything about it, what are they whispering about, is there an LGBT issue here? And then I looked on the back and it said one of three and I thought always not even an original piece old there's another piece somewhere as it was just about moneymaking really and that's bought it for me. It wasn't original enough to be one they hadn't done a good enough job of selling this thing.

**[On the second Digital Story]** Its different to the other one I'm pleased with that. I don't know about the images, perhaps I could have a Bill Billings one in there. He was the guy that did all the dinosaurs as well a huge number of stuff. He'd turn up in the library to do all sorts of events with the kids, art events and we thought he'd turn up with paint but he didn't he turned up with glue and cassette and the kids would undo the cassettes right were gonna do something with all this this this and this. It was an absolute genius this guy was, the kids would come up and they have taken a cassette apart and there be miles of it. And they'd make stuff with it was unbelievable. Interesting guy.

It is tempting to add lots of different images, perhaps I didn't explore the fact that you can zoom in and out of the same image, perhaps do more of that next time and keep to fewer images than zero in on them. Yes I wouldn't have thought I could do something like that actually is not a bad story about the concrete cows is it. It explains, I think sometimes when you're doing modern stories if you can somehow connect it to you, not in an arrogant way, I saw this then and this means something to me - people will perhaps listen in a different sort of way, they don't think that's nothing to do with me and think hang on a minute I've walked past there a few times I've probably thought that. Again is an extraordinary what you can do with three minutes.

**Question 7b. How did you find the process of doing the digital story?**

QUIMBY:

I was all at sea about the IT. If you can conquer the IT, it can be for you. I was very sceptical originally as I thought there are no people here you can't see, you can't see people reacting to it. But now I see it as an adjunct, if you could have that as people are walking around and maybe click into something. Its no substitute for the story but it's an additional I quite like the idea of it. And having seen some of the examples in the range of what people have done I think it's a great idea. Especially the one we saw where the camera was following the woman around that was quite disturbing. And the one about the knitting in the run I thought it was beautiful. So, it can be an epiphany can't it, you can't tell an epiphany that you can in this sort of way with just the images. But it's hard editing it down. I hadn't realised just how long three minutes was actually, you can easily bore people twice over in three minutes. It's something else for our arm really isn't it. I would rather see that than a blog any time because it seems to me more like something you can make up your own mind about it where's the blog is much more (focused on one view point/ranty) but that's a storyteller's approach, but it takes the storyteller out of it really. I enjoyed doing it and the second one as well. The second one I haven't seen as many times I'm not sure what I think about the second one.

### **Question 7c. Comments on Recorded Oral Story**

QUIMBY:

Not a bad story. It's a nice story I think Angela will be pleased with that one. That is the first time I'd done it to an audience, obviously had done it 10 times at home rehearsing it I think I was hurrying along a little bit, like the times I was introducing Jim and Mabel I should have slowed up a bit and made a bit more of that I think I was a little bit too talkative in some bits. Think less words.

I still get excited about it, it's good story and is different enough. It's nice to set it aside the other grand stories and its part of what we're looking at, ordinariness doesn't mean boring it can still be quite extraordinary. The original story is all right but then when I asked about it she kept coming back with more details, like the Vimto and the Apple, and then I was aware I was putting other things in, sort of storytelling things and then I thought hang on a minute I don't need to do this. It was interesting talking to participant 181 about this she's constrained by what she can invent about Bletchley Park, but Bletchley Park is so extraordinary in itself why'd you need to invent just make more of what it is, and how extraordinary that person's story was.

So a lot of things I invented to make the story more interesting I looked afterwards, like giving the aunt a name and she'd been to India to kill tigers and I thought no, no, no this is too obvious and it was Angela who said focus on them not on me. And I thought she's right their story is enough, there is enough wondering without inventing tigers and great aunts. The simple things like the arm make it. Angela said it was all right to have him knocked down by a tram in Stony, but I thought no actually it didn't happen that way but I can cheat and use it to go back to the prosaics, makes the prosaic more extraordinary. The extraordinary thing about it is that he didn't not come down for two months he still came down, 2 1/2 hours cycling with a broken arm, I didn't want to take away the extraordinary.

So I was aware keep it to what it is, and I think Angela could listen to it now I don't think there's anything... I invented the cucumber sandwich with the crust cut off but that happens at every funeral. I didn't invent the cheese sandwich or the Apple or the Vimto she gave me all of that, the Claud Butler I had no idea and the more I started researching I thought these were extraordinary. It was like seeing a

Ferrari on the street. It would look so different. They were city people they would have had access to these other things you wouldn't have seen it.

And it's like Pat was in there as turnip, Pat told me that when he was living here when he went to secondary school we had to go down to Bletchley because there was no secondary school at Radcliffe and everybody called him turnip because he came from Stony Stratford because he was a turnip muncher. That story, about three men, was in the book it's a true story about Stony 'oh he was born the other side of the road'.

It comes back down to how the stories are there, waving at you I'm here. But we're too busy looking for something else we can't hear it. It's like when Angela came up to me and I was polite in hearing her story but then I did nothing about it, but then actually thought about it, being able to go back and fill it out, stories can be very ordinary they don't have to have dragons. It was Angela who came up with the story that Mabel wore trousers I did n't come up with that, and people would have thought who was this fast-young woman wearing trousers. It was a detail I wouldn't have got and suddenly you think cannot yes the 20s this would have been a bit out of the ordinary. O you scarlet woman. So I didn't need to be fanciful and invent all these great things, the ordinary things were enough the ordinary local things were enough. And the fact that the house did that, I didn't invent that, what I have created the artificial think is saying the town of rendezvous rather than Stony Stratford, I didn't know if he had any maps but he was a keen cyclist so he would have had a map. So that's probably forgivable. But there was something extraordinary about them, I can see that becoming part of my repertoire, I'd certainly do it at the life thing.

You're right when you refocus us because we are all away with the fairies and then we say O yes local, you can do stuff with it, and we assume because you've told us story of the apprentices that we can't do it in any other way, so I went a different way, they were up to no good they had horrible things planned for the rest of the evening and they deserved what happened to them. They were fleeced because the local landlords were giving them poor wine, taking their money given the weak beer and when they had real beer it went straight to their heads. And that was a pure invention. But I can deal with that. Nobody is going to say well actually there is a definitive story, because there isn't.

It was what happened in the public house it was the only place you could meet strangers, people coming through town, everybody talking and exaggerating everything.

**Question 8. Has taking part in these workshops altered your perspective about Milton Keynes in any way?**

QUIMBY:

Yes it's made it more alive to me. I don't think I would have see myself creating local stories other than to fit in with the project but now I see it as important. I saw storyteller the other night he had all of these wonderful, extraordinary stories but right in the middle he had a local one but he'd changed it to bus driver and a cloak, it was a ghost story, and I thought how clever because all the old people there started saying oh I've been on the bus. He got their attention that's the way to do it. Get some sort of local hook and bring in otherwise people don't, don't think it so extraordinary. And then you start to think the sun is going down the trees are very tall that ghost story could easily happen here.

And that's probably how it did happen originally.

**Question 9. How did taking part in these workshops impacted your sense of place, if at all, in regards to: a) local connection, b) your impression of local identity, c) and your local knowledge?**

QUIMBY:

Its kind of enhanced it, I was always thinking of repertoire being other things but now I realise they're [stories] out there, now you can do stuff right on your doorstep you don't have to invent dragons and all that stuff you probably don't have to go hunting for these other stories because they're probably around if you talk to enough people you get bits and then stitch them together a fragment from here and fragment from there. I don't think I was aware of that before.

I think my impression of local identity comes from being in a place for a long time. Where as before I never really got that bothered now I go hang on a minute why are they building that or cutting down a tree. That comes with being in a place and realising you are not just passing through this is it this is home for you. I think stories are about home maybe half in home and belonging, rather than just walking down a street it's not just a street. Sometimes stories can help by giving a name to it you wonder sometimes what is the story of that street why is it called that? Because Milton Keynes is a classic example with things like Jimi Hendrix Street and all the rest really. Was the point of all this, but there wasn't enough local-ness for them to pick up on the you end up with weird name to streets which have no connection to anything local. Is there a Turing Street I don't know?

Yes. I knew a bit before but I think I'm much more attentive, not necessarily to the written sources because that's where I've always assumed the stories were, I hadn't thought they might actually be out on the streets and on the walls. I'm much more attentive now to what is there on the street seeing things, that's why picked up on that Fabio thing I think what's the story there, people are gonna go past and think who is Fabio and what's his story? So how will I create that, there are a few hints. Just as Queen Eleanor has some iconography, there is some iconography on Fabio, there's the whippet for example an him with his locks there, there is a Big Issue, I can't remember seeing a Big Issue which was his whole point. So perhaps that should have been there. Mind you this was on Saturday when the streets are heaving and I meant to take a picture. I wasn't sure about it, you know you see something and think how should I feel about it. What do I actually feel about this. The stories are there, not necessarily labelled as a story, they are there in a photo, you think what's that. It's like Market Square and you look at the old photographs and they're full of rabbits hanging up, and everybody looking very poor and thin. Nothing picturesque about it is a little light hard times, Dickensian. My god it was here. And the look and feel the cars and electric refuelling stations, and the Crown, and it was quite different not to generations ago.

There is one story, I really must do something with it, it is awful it's about the magistrates court about this poor woman, they prosecuted her for trying to kill herself. Somebody's whitened it a little bit to

make it acceptable to be told to say this actually happened. I must get the details the first time I read it  
I thought oh dear me, that poor woman.

**Question 10. What, if any, qualities make Milton Keynes unique?**

QUIMBY:

I get very defensive about it when people slag it off. I do stand up and defend the I don't just let it go because I think the things that are good about it are very good. I compare it to other places I've been to in Lancashire like Skelmersdale which is just awful. Whereas Milton Keynes, there are bad bits but, people are trying to do the right things to it, and people are trying to keep that alive. I do identify with it perhaps in a way that I didn't before, but it takes time doesn't it, you put down roots and you think. People are always on their way to something else that the 95% of the population are not aware this is it, this is the home, and you make the best of what you've got. So perhaps as a storyteller its our job is to say actually you haven't ended up here this is quite an extraordinary place.

I was impressed with the hour that you did I would never have thought to find an hour of material about Milton Keynes and each place you did was significantly different in the material, I thought this was extraordinary. Broughton particularly when you think just across the roundabout is that bloody awful new development, they've just abandoned any cohesive community planning really. It's just like downtown Chicago it awful. They just said build as many houses as you want and then you get the other side of the road and then you see what the Milton Keynes ethos was created and turn it round and have shops and green spaces where kids can run around dogs can do what dogs do where you go to the new bits and there's none of that. And there's gabions everywhere just a bunch of old boulders, why did anybody think the gabions would be a nice thing to have outside your house? Other than to stop people parking there. This is where utility gets in the way. Is not aesthetic the sum of them.

**Question 11. In your opinion, what element of Milton Keynes is: The best. The most exciting. The hardest. Lacking. The most culturally significant. The richest in heritage?**

QUIMBY:

Best - Trees and the planting is the best.

Exciting - Spaces still get a sense of space everywhere.

Hardest - I think the compromises that they're making now, the spaces they're filling in, the buildings that they're adding other floors to. The feeling that something can be knocked down and replaced without any thought. And then they're surprise that people are objecting to it. It's like the Point [first multi-screen cinema in England], when the Point went up there was nothing special about it you looked at it and you thought it's a cheap building, I think it's special to people who have been there. Been to the cinema there or into the nightclub there or into the youth club there. They have an affinity to it that I don't have to me it's just something on a postcard. I don't think of it as being iconic in any way although was. When it came out people said the point is iconic. But it doesn't have that, it's not like a cathedral where you have that wow. That wow factor the me. I think the reality of population densities catching up with us and some of it with finding what used to be a space is no longer space. But people have got to live somewhere it's the compromises.

Lacking - I think the centre originally was meant to be much, much more, the money that was put in to developing a theatre and what they said the theatre was going to be was community theatre. And then at the first opportunity they were obliged to sell it and the now is just become an ambassadors Theatre which is just like any other in the country. There's nothing adventurous there, it's exactly the same, it's all about let's get hundred percent people here. It's all about Lloyd Webber. It's all about money. There's nothing community or different. You wait 10 years for Shakespeare and then you get Hamlet and King Lear in one year. They didn't bring Midsummer night's dream here but they brought it to Aylesbury, because they were looking at it globally, thinking that we'll put it in Aylesbury and people can come and therefore they're not gonna put in Milton Keynes as well. But then when you look at the programs and the differences between the Royal and Derngate and here, you look at the

Derngate and you think wow it's full of stuff you want to see because it's got that scruffy bit downstairs, I think why couldn't we have that scruffy bit here? The new bit in the gallery, a huge amount of money and there is talk there you look at in think but it's not gonna be a scruffy bit there is gonna be very stylish, very elitist. Perhaps I'm gonna be wrong. But at first you get in the centre open and they brought it the beach and I thought it was a brilliant idea and now every year it gets progressively smaller and smaller and then a coffee bar concept and then the fair people and now it's all about money now where as before it was about the kids who can't go to a beach but there was the sheer joy of watching little kids, my kids were doing the same making things in the sand all the things you do the beach I thought it was wonderful it was genius. Now it shrunk down now is about getting money out of parents. It's that commercialism, so then it doesn't become special.

Cultural significance - You got me there haven't even thought about it. 10 years ago it is that theatre in the theatre district and all around there it was really exciting. But what has emerged around the theatre district is all about food and the theatre is there, the gallery is almost quite happy to make a distance, we're not really to do with Milton Keynes. It's never really worked out. I think the culture has not been well served. But we've had a difficult time we've had 10 years of austerity, all the grand plans all depend on money, originally the development Corporation had money to throw anything. You came up with a good idea you could get it done it was exciting. I think of the things we did in the library it was amazing now, now it's hard enough just to keep the libraries open.

Heritage - It's got to be the constitutional bits of the town, it's got to be Bletchley Park, and it's ironic that it took forever for the local authorities to put any money into it, and it was only because somebody stole a machine [an enigma machine] and sent it back that it even got any attention several years they couldn't even get lottery money. It was only because of some stunt like that, and now it is, it is probably the one bit of Milton Keynes that has some global significance. Originally it was the shopping mall the first in Europe but now it's not even the best in the country all are much more new and exciting. But what we have got is the older bits the Bletchley Park, and when you think there was a risk of it all being steamrollered and housing put in on it. So it's those bit and perhaps Stony is the same and Newport, it's difficult for Bletchley and Wolverton but it has its industrial heritage there.

And in people who've moved in want to dig around a bit find out what was there before. We can be more proud of the railways and Bletchley Park and mediaeval buildings around here. Its how we promote that and we have the responsibility for that because nobody else is going to do.

**Question 12. Has Milton Keynes played a part in helping you gain any achievements which you might not have been successful in if you lived elsewhere? Has it aided any failures?**

QUIMBY:

Milton Keynes is about uprooting sticks and going somewhere. There aren't any rules there's a chance to be different. I wasn't the first in the rush, I wasn't a pioneer. I was here in 83 but even then I was very conscious what Milton Keynes was doing, that Milton Keynes library was different from every other library in Buckinghamshire it was completely different it's whole attitude and the way promoted itself was to go out, our vision Milton Keynes library wasn't just a focus on the library but to go out and to get people to come in to go out. We used to go out all over the place and talk and get people into give talks, we never just thought of it as a static place where people just came a borrowed. That is just sad that that's how our libraries will end up as. I came down here because I couldn't get promotion anywhere else, because whenever anyone retired or left the post they closed the post, so I'd gone and got qualified on a diploma course and then it became a graduate course so I went and got BA and then a MA and then I thought Hang on a minute everything is just closing down. And then there was is Milton Keynes thing that was so different from everything else they wanted people to come and try different things it was exciting. The I don't think I would have if I'd remained where I was I would have done half the things. In Milton Keynes the New town you are aware that there is nobody tutting at you, you can do what you like. I do think Milton Keynes fostered that, certainly in the library service they did. The attitude was always how can we do the best we possibly can, don't worry about the money that's somebody else's problem, how wonderful is that. Yes of course we can get David Bellamy, will sort out the cost will talk to somebody we know somebody, so you get David Bellamy in. God knows how many kids he inspired, I was just did next to him and was thinking wow this is

David Bellamy. He is here after shaking his hand I've just talk to him of got him a cup of coffee David Bellamy. Chris Packham is well, these are extraordinary people. He turned up in the library with the sack, when we asked him what it was he said I've got a snake in that and we said yeah sure you have, and it was a snake he had a snake. I had no idea about his background he was just this guy who just loved all the stuff. To be honest I was more interested in Michaela Strachan. But he was just great he loved the subject. Milton Keynes had that, the resources to do all of that and bring it in. And when the resources go that's the problem. Your left to your own resources how do you go about it and fire people up. Since I've been here been involved with the open mics, , the storytelling and poetry, and bard of Stony Stratford. You haven't got to go far to see the problem, I've never performed in Bletchley because there are no open mics in Bletchley. The pubs there don't see it, but people here don't see it as unusual if you play a flute [in the pub] it's expected. Shakespeare, are you some sort of idiot? No of course not, we do Shakespeare here. But if you're going to Bletchley as a different attitude there it's much harder. I think life is tough at there. There was never any opportunities there. There it's hard to find a venue and find an audience, you can't just do something in a pub. But here it's very, very different it's expected.

**Question 13. If you were in charge of advertising Milton Keynes what tag line would you give it?**

QUIMBY:

It's still a very friendly town I think that never ceases to amaze me. I like that. I think it the fact that being in the army, well my dad, we were always moving around everywhere, and when I met other army kids I was fine, but I did have a problem when I went back to a school where the kids had known each other all their lives, and I was the outsider. Though all the things I took for granted, like at school you did Shakespeare, there was nothing weird about it. Whereas in these other schools there was 'oh we don't like that'. Milton Keynes still got that newness about it and that's where the friendliness comes from because we are all new and from somewhere else. I think there is a little more

tolerant that people can be different in Milton Keynes they I don't think you get well established towns.

**Question 14. If Milton Keynes was a person could you describe them and the type of 50th party they might have?**

QUIMBY:

Yes I would go and I would give them a trumpet. To make some noise because Milton Keynes is good at making noise. It's easy to knock it but it bounces back and still surprises you. You still go to things and you think this is going to be cynical and boring and then you think wow well goodness me how did this happen? It's like going to that Wulfhere's cemetery talk, I thought I'm going to it out of duty but there was an expert was there and he knew everything about it you could ask him anything and he knew. And you listened and you thought wow this is why we have this and this is why we have that. And for him it was live. And he was really generous with this time as well, is that generosity the you love something so much you want to tell somebody all about it and there is an a meter ticking somewhere. There's a lot of it about in Milton Keynes of all the people that came here, and that still around here, people like Roger kitchen, to me he's just God. He would come into the library and all the girls would drool over him, but when you talk to him he just knew everything and he just went out of his way to do things which were hard. Because everybody say you can't do that but he would say well I'm doing it, so we've got this bloke is telling the stories, with got 20 hours of him and incredible stuff is coming out. Living heritage. It was just extraordinary.

**Question 15. What you think the role of storytelling is within communities, especially new communities?**

QUIMBY:

It's finding those unconnected bits isn't it? Otherwise people do feel it's boring there's nothing here is just parking and a shopping centre. Where as now when the centre was started, it was originally

started as our high Street when it was owned by the council, this is our high Street. And then when they sold it the people had to think hang on actually we want to exclude people and the doors were put in, and all the things that made it extraordinary like the baobab trees which are there, but certainly the small banana trees that used to be big coconut trees they've gone. You get the feeling that somebody would be quite happy to dispense them and get a few more barrows in. Everything is meagre and miserly and the plants are easier to look after say the contract for looking after the plants is easier than it was before they were quite rare you when in there and thought wow look at those coconut trees look at those banana trees there is bananas on them. Ah this is like a garden centre now. I think you need all of that other stuff as well to make it different. So storytellers are needed because you walk past these places but storytellers haven't, they say hang on a minute look at that what is that Dragon doing on the wall, what's that doing on the wall, what's that there? It doesn't have to be a special place like that it could be anywhere. It's like when you're doing your walks and say this is where the hiring fair was and pretending all the people on the tour are workers being hired, I always remember that. I thought it was wonderful hang on a minute somebody is trying to pick me for a job and here's a shilling and a ribbon.

**Question 16. Will you continue to share the stories you created in the workshops and who will you share them with?**

QUIMBY:

You bet! Yes. When I think about that big chart thing that we did about what you want to do over the next year to me it was building a repertoire. You've got to have a lot of stuff so you can look at the audience of think arh actually this isn't going to work, they don't want to hear this but they will want to know about this or they might be interested in this, so you're never really flummoxed. I like the idea you got a massive stuff here [indicates head]. It is like when Kevin says he looks at the audience and goes 'they are hating this, they might like this arh but now love this' any make some love it. And you think how does he do that where did he get that from, and you do it to. To see him do it that night

could see that spark, that mischief in his eyes, every one can try that, and I thought I've heard this before the audience aren't gonna like this, but they did. He just seduce them it was extraordinary.

**Question 17. Do think you will look for other local stories?**

QUIMBY:

Well they're calling out to me now. When you said that I thought yeah that's just a story but now I realise no they are there aren't they you could do something with anything. The now walking down the street I see a pulley thing over what was a public house ah I think arh that was a pub. That's where the horse went up there. I like that nobody has got rid of that they've kept it there, they've spent some money they don't keep there forever, somebody said I actually want that on the front of my house thank you. Keep it there. It's too easy to think is new and patched up weather bordered and texture painted let some of the other stuff be around.

**Question 18. Any other comments?**

QUIMBY:

I've enjoyed it it's been wonderful I was apprehensive in thinking what were we going to be talking about. The conversations gone hither and thither which is what they should and different people brought different things into conversation which I wouldn't have necessarily brought up. Sometimes we think all Bletchley Park is to close it's not distant enough to have stories about it. And I'd never heard of Mimi before, and the tree 183 can't be the first person to think how did that get there. I really enjoyed it think you, it's been like three years in one. You zoomed it all down and you've given us all the stuff. I think when its monthly you leave it and it's easy to forget about it and then rush it, but when its weekly it's always there and see you keep on with it. Just doing it and doing it, so you didn't slip away and then think must do something tomorrow its there all the time and that's better because by the time you come to perform it you've told it to yourself a dozen times you're sort of happy with it

you want to get a real reaction from the audience because then afterwards you think okay I was a little too chatty then I should have slowed that down I should have stood up then I could have done that better. It's live isn't it that's the thing about storytelling. I hadn't realised just how much each time you tell it the next time you don't go 'oo I've nailed it', you go actually I can take away this bit, why didn't I see this before because you have the confidence in you build up and they've got that you think I don't need to say all of this I can just do this.

It is like when you start anything you are just glad that you are facing in the right direction and then you think my two arms are right and my two legs are right but my little finger is wrong it's that intensity. If I'm bored I failed. Storytelling shouldn't be about I'm dying to see what happens at the end, it should be about the journey you take to get to the end and all the exciting things that happen with 1 million delights if you think I've got to get from there to there quickly then you failed. Not too literal. Enchant people they're surprised and think oh we are at the end already.