

Terrie's notes for Stony Tracks

I don't know too much information about my dad's side of the family. His father was a baker, had also been a policeman, and he'd been in the Army during the Second World War, his father had been a blacksmith but when he died my grandad's brothers and sisters were all split up and taken into orphanages, so we don't have that much information. My dad's mum was a WAF during the war and it was her job to be a night look out over London watching as the planes came over and dropped bombs. My dad was actually born when the last bomb was dropped on London. It landed two streets away from where my Nan was giving birth, and so the first sound my dad ever heard was of a bomb exploding, which caused him to have perforated eardrums.

On my mum's side of the family, my Nan had been sent to live with an aunt and uncle in Glasgow when her father died in the First World War, and my great-grandmother had gone to work in service for a large house. By the time the Second World War came round my Nan was in Bristol working at a rubber factory. Most of the time they were making parts for gas masks and Spitfires, but my Nan was given a very unusual job. The British Army in India were using elephants to move equipment around, a little-known fact is that elephants can get quite horny, and the last thing the British Army wanted was a bunch of pregnant elephants, so it was her job to make condoms for the elephants. My Nan was quite a character with her younger sister Eileen, who now lives in Australia. There are all sorts of stories about them playing leapfrog with American soldiers, let's just say they weren't short of stockings or chocolate. But to go further back in my mum's family history my great great grandparents have quite the story. My great-great-grandfather was an Earl (Powells) his first wife died leaving him with two small children, my great-great-grandmother was in service to the house as the children's nanny. The Earl and the nanny fell in love, but his family forbade the relationship saying that they would disinherit the Earl should he marry her. But the heart wants what the heart wants, and so the Earl gave up his land, title and money and married the nanny. The Earl took on his mother's maiden name (Dowcett) and they went to live their lives. There was a rumour that the nanny was a witch and had enchanted the Earl, and maybe even possibly arranged the first wife's death. Unfortunately the love was not to last, for a few years later the Earl heard news that his wife was giving birth to their daughter, and so he raced home in his buggy and cart, which going at such a speed turned over and killed him. The Earl's family would not relent or acknowledge his children, even to this day. So the nanny went back into service, as did my great-grandmother, in the house which her father grew up in.

But that wasn't the only job of my great-grandmother, she was also the wise woman of the village, the midwife, and the one who attended when somebody died. She knew the herbs to make you well, she knew the old

ways, which one can only suppose she learned from her mother, so maybe there was some truth in the call of witch.

My grandmother also took her turn to work in service, my mum can remember going and helping us scrub floors, but it was as a cook in Petersfield school that I remember her working. My granddad worked for ATS, during the war, and had been out in Egypt but he never spoke about his experience. I remember him as a jolly fellow, he loved cake and fish and chips, he would set up the boot of his estate car with toys pencils and drawing materials and we would set off all over the south coast visiting as many cafes and fish and chip shops as was humanly possible. Every Thursday he would come and pick me up from school and we would bird watch from the kitchen window. Growing up, grandad was my absolute favourite person in the whole wide world. And I remember one Christmas Eve while my mum, Nan and dad were doing chores, me and grandad sat watching telly, and a film came on, Labyrinth with David Bowie as the goblin King, and me and my grandad sat and watched that film. It is still to this day my favourite film, there is one line in it 'you have no power over me'. When times get tough, those words come back to me, almost like it's a message from my grandad. Little was I to know as we sat and we watched that film that less than two months later he would be gone.

My mother worked as a cook, and my father worked as a self-employed lorry driver, so money was always tight growing up. I never had the fashionable toys or clothes, and being an only child who lived on the outskirts of the village I was quite socially awkward which led to me being fairly withdrawn through my school years, and spending hours drawing and making up stories. It also gave me a foundation of being obsessed by sci-fi and fantasy films and TV programmes. When my careers teacher asked me what I wanted to be I said Maid Marian. At the time my favourite TV programme was Robin of Sherwood, and Judy Trott was one of the only curly haired redheads the telly at the time. My careers adviser of course tried to tell me that Maid Marion wasn't a job and in fact was a fictional character, however over the years I've been employed to tell the Robin Hood stories on numerous occasions, and dress as Maid Marion!

I was born on the Tri-County border between Hampshire Surrey and West Sussex in small town called Haslemere. I grew up in Liphook where I attended school at Liphook infants then juniors, then attended Bohunt secondary school which I absolutely hated because I was fat ginger and spotty, and so was bullied by everybody not least the teachers because I had undiagnosed dyslexia, but my teachers just told my parents I was stupid. I had one teacher, actually my form teacher who once told the class that she knew exactly who would go to university who would go to college and who would barely make it out of school, the last comment she said staring straight at me. She was also the same teacher that was teaching PSE class doing some meditation, and tracking our hopes and dreams for the future imagining an elevator that stopped at various ages.

I was quite honest and said that I didn't really see anything beyond 40 because I couldn't imagine what I would be doing. She took that to mean I had a death wish and sent me to see a counsellor for 6 weeks, but as it turned out it wasn't a counsellor but a member of the local church who just repeatedly told me that if I found God I would be a much happier person. This was just a few weeks after I had lost my grandfather to lung cancer, my great-grandmother to old age, and a friend at school to a brain tumour, all in the matter of four weeks. As you can imagine I didn't get on with my form tutor all that well.

After school and South Downs College where first I studied art in general design national BTEC, but after two years of being told that all my interests would never get me a job and that I would only ever end up as an art teacher, I had lost my long interest in art. So when one day I was mucking around the refectory with some of my friends from the drama course, and the head of drama suddenly stop me in my tracks and asked me what course I was doing and how long I had left. I told him I had just a few months of my art BTEC left, he said good, so come and audition for me and do drama BTEC. I'd never auditioned or done drama before so it was a very clumsy audition which the head of drama more or less directed me through, but I got a place and for the next two years I did drama where I was told I would make a very good producer. I wasn't so crash hot on the acting skills, but I kept trying and eventually I left the BTEC with a distinction and also an East Hampshire commendation for drama. During my drama course I had started running drama workshops during the summer holidays as part of the school holiday scheme in Portsmouth and I had also started to teach stage make up to the first years, when I was a second-year, after the make-up teacher fallen and broken her hip. I did attempt to go to university but none of the places I got offered were really what I wanted, so instead I went off to do an intensive course in stage TV and film hair and make-up in London, being taught by BBC make-up artists. It was through this I got a job that led me to live in Hampstead Heath next door to Jeremy Irons whom one day I saw climbing the scaffolding outside of his house because he'd locked himself out. Just around the corner lived Sean Bean who as it turned out was the son-in-law of my make-up teacher. About five doors down lived Ewan McGregor whom most days I would see racing off on his motorbike. The strange thing is when I was a kid my parents had thought about moving to a place called steep near Petersfield in Hampshire and one of the houses the looked at was very close to where Alec Guinness was living. So I came very close to living next door to both Obi-Wan Kenobi's.

Whilst I enjoyed doing hair and make-up it didn't make a lot of money when you're starting out and I couldn't afford to live in London and it became too expensive to travel up and down to live outside of London, especially when a lot of filming requires the make up to be happening at four AM in the morning.

I ended up getting a job as a performing arts lead instructor for international and school holiday clubs, this led to a position with the Kingswood company, so I went to live in Cromer for a while. Then as well as leading performing arts events in the evening, I taught caving, climbing, canoeing, orienteering, IT programming, nature studies, go-karting and quad biking. It was an intense six months where all the workers lived in an abandoned hotel, and on my 22nd birthday we had fancy dress party in the basement and when a certain blur song came on everybody started pogoing and a bunch of people pogo'd right through walls. A few days later I got my first tattoo in great Yarmouth.

I left Kingswood and returned to Hampshire and joined the Yvonne Arnaud theatre in Guildford, I started by working in the box office, but soon I was leading the youth theatre on a Saturday morning, turning up for work on my skateboard, I also worked in the bar, and backstage, as well as being a dresser for shows that came in. The downside of being a dresser is the it was my job to have to wash all the dancers jock straps, on the upside I got to dress Patrick Stewart when he was performing the Master Builder, during the dress rehearsal while I was pulling his trousers down I came face to torso with his six pack and made quite a start sound to which he smiled and said "I know". It was whilst working backstage as a dresser I also met John Barrowman, who one night held up the show for 45 minutes because he hadn't had his pre-show poo. John was quite a character and was getting fed up with not getting a lot of work in Britain and was thinking of going back to North America, I commented that I too was thinking about a career change and that I was going to go to university he said that I would probably hit the big lights before he did. I then went off to Edinburgh to study drama and theatre arts, and during my second year I turned on the telly one Saturday evening to watch my all time favourite TV show Doctor Who, and who should be on it but John Barrowman, needless to say my route through university did not lead me to the lights.

At university I discovered I was severely dyslexic, dyscalculat, and when tired have dyspraxic tendencies - a suspicion I had had for a long time, and I now champion a lot of access to dys'-understanding. I paid my way through university by working as a living history actress at the real Mary King's Close, little did I know it, but this started the ball rolling which led me to become a street teller of the intangible cultural heritage of Edinburgh to various tour companies including Auld Reekie. It was during this time that the Scottish Storytelling Centre opened, and although by this point I was specialising in dramaturgy at university I became obsessed by the power of storytelling, and so my final dissertation after four years was an amalgamation of theatre storytelling and dramaturgical techniques, for which I got a first.

When I left university I was in an unhappy relationship, however I had just met the true love of my life, he was short had brown eyes, a wet nose, four paws, and a very waggy tail, my handsome surrogate child Boris. I

had found out a few years earlier that I wasn't able to have children and so Boris is my boy. Due to the relationship, I found myself living in Hampshire once again finding it very difficult to get work so I set up my own company Red Phoenix Storytelling and Productions and started my career as a storyteller properly. Over the next few years I built up my company working mainly around the south of England, but occasionally still popping back to Scotland for the odd gig or two. It was during this time I met the Surrey Storytellers Guild and a lady called Janet Dowling, she became a mentor and soon I was teaching storytelling workshops for adults throughout Surrey. It was Janet who introduced me to the Winston Churchill Fellowship, to whom I applied to do a project looking at the support and mental schemes for new and young storytellers that are in place in the USA and Canada. I applied and was accepted in 2012, I set off in late June for a six-week exploration where I visited six cities, 15 projects, and met over 500 storytellers, as well as headlining a festival in California hosted by Wavy Gravy, whom some might know for his alternate lifestyle and involvement in the Berkeley protests and setting up Woodstock. He told me that when he dressed as a clown the police didn't bat an eyelid, but when he dressed as a fool they beat him so badly that he is now permanently disabled, his reasoning for this is that although people can be scared of clowns, clowns are safe they are fools and you laugh at them, but the fool is dangerous because they live in the imagination and in reality, they have 1 foot in this world and 1 foot in the other and they are the conduits through which we learn. That idea has fascinated me ever since.

Through the Winston Churchill experience I went back to Canada two more times to headline festivals and events and I started to look into doing my PhD in Toronto, but life leads you on curious paths. So instead of Toronto I ended up in Milton Keynes. By this point I was living in my van, because to make it as a storyteller in the turbulent times after the 2008 crash, I had to follow the work. A could of perhaps given up storytelling and theatre and gone for a safe job, but being dyslexic and not very good in offices or shops, and all my qualifications and experiences have led me to uniquely be able to do theatre and storytelling ,and so I sacrificed my home and my possessions and set off in search of adventure and stories.

In September 2013 that journey led me to Creed Street formerly known as Madcap. I arrived there because Shonaleigh Cumbers had set up British Awards for Storytelling Excellence, or BASE. There was going to be an event on 11 October where storytellers would gather from all over the country to receive awards, so on 11 September we held a press release and an event to introduce it to the local people in the Milton Keynes area. It was on that night I met somebody calling themselves the Bard of Stony Stratford who told me a joke. "What's the difference between Milton Keynes and a pot of yoghurt? Yoghurt has culture! Seemed strange to me here was somebody who was supposed to be advocating the local area

and yet instead was doing it down, and although I'd heard the jokes about concrete cows and roundabouts I'd never been to Milton Keynes before, and here was I in a Victorian building surrounded by artists actors poets storytellers and musicians, hardly cultural desert. It was of course an evening where I met Stephen Hobbs and Dave Quayle the first time too.

I performed at the BASE awards, and suddenly got offered a lot of work in Milton Keynes. In January 2014 I also became a living history actress at Bletchley Park. Before I knew it Milton Keynes had enchanted me, and had offered me more opportunities than I'd ever known before. As a storyteller I learn about a place through stories and found it had such a wealth wonderful stories which a lot of people didn't know, and so I started make it my mission to share them at open mic nights, school visits, and eventually as the education officer at the City Discovery Centre.

A friend knew I had a long-standing wish to do a PhD at Loughborough University, and an old friend of mine Prof Mike Wilson was looking for somebody to do a PhD in storytelling and heritage. I immediately knew I wanted to do my PhD stories of Milton Keynes and how it affects the sense of place of the residents who live here. I sent off my application and my interview took place on 23 June 2016, whilst people were off voting on whether to remain or leave the EU, I was more worried about the decision made on my future.

A slight side note here, I had applied before I knew about the PhD opportunity, go through the adoption process. On the morning of 27 June I received a letter say whilst I have the life experience and enthusiasm they would want from an adoptive parent did not have the financial security to be able to take six months of work, so I was turned down, I was quite heart broken. Yet one wonders closes another door opens for three hours later I received the phone call I was being offered the PhD. And that is what I've been doing the last three years, as well as running my storytelling and Theatre business, and leading to drama groups in Milton Keynes, act out at York house, and stage door Stantonbury theatre.

Whilst being in Stony I've been involved with Scribal Gathering, the Alternative Fringe, Stony Stratford Story Stroll, numerous events at York house, Stony Light Switch On, the Bardic Council of Stony Stratford, Stony Storytellers, the Steam Lab and Order of the Teapot, and the drama groups Act Out and Act Up with a yearly pantomime, as well as leading local history walks the schools in the area.

I am passionate about the arts and how important they are in developing core life skills in young people, and also giving people of all ages the chance to engage creatively. I could talk endlessly on this point and have done so at various conferences seminars and symposiums. Everything from storytelling being important to literacy development, and the neuroscience of storytelling, to storytelling and drama being used to teach English maths science history and geography, build cultural bridges, and

to develop transferable skills. I also get quite involved with dyslexic issues goes far beyond not being very good at reading or writing, having any of the dyslexias can impact heavily on mental well-being and physical health which is only just beginning to be understood now and has been woefully misunderstood for a very long time.

Being happy as always been more important to me and having money, and being happy in my job is most important for I am at my core a storyteller and always have been, I learned the stories and I teach the stories and I understand the world around me through stories. But I would like one day for my work to be recognised and valued even if that just means I can buy cabbage without worrying.

I've met quite a few famous people, I met Bon Jovi by accident when I was trying to find the toilet at one of his Wembley gigs, Lionel Blair tried to help my dad teach me to swim at Weymouth, I used to have to Sellotape David Soul's money back together because every week when he got his cash wage from the theatre he would rip open the envelope and tear his money in half. I had a long-standing crush on Adam Ant and when I finally met him 2006 book signing he said I looked fantastic because I was dressed as a pirate because I just slipped out of work that day as a tour guide on streets of Edinburgh and we were doing pirates that day. In 2015 I went for dinner at Buckingham Palace, only 200 people from the Winston Churchill Fellowship were given the opportunity and I had been chosen because of my duty to storytelling. Outside Buckingham Palace will had to line up to show the guards our passes before we could be let in. A large crowd of tourists as usual were gathered taking pictures, I and the other guests that night all dressed in our utmost finery. I heard from tourists trying to guess who we all were, until one brazen woman came up and asked if there was an event going on at the Palace at night I said yes there was, she then asked if I was someone important, I learned from Ghostbusters always say yes, so she asked who I was, my brain blanked for a moment but then I said I am the Duchess of Stony Stratford, the Palace guard looked up and smiled at me for he knew that that wasn't true but rather than being arrested for treason or impersonating a royal personage he just smiled and the tourist seemed suitably impressed and wandered off to tell friends. A moment later the same guard was checking my passport and smiled again. I take the fact that I said this so close to Buckingham Palace, and within earshot of the palace guards, and that as there was no retribution, I claim the title as my own. Later on that night I was introduced to the Queen and Prince Philip who asked be what I did, of course I said I am a storyteller, he looked quite astonished and said a storyteller, people pay you? Yes I said, he was about to ask another question, when the Queen gave him a very short 'Philip' because we were holding up the queue. Whilst we were having drinks, waiting for the food to arrive, Philip came back to ask me a few more questions one of which was to ask where I was from, I said that I had recently moved from

Hampshire to Milton Keynes to which he replied 'Milton Keynes why would anybody want to live in Milton Keynes'. And so it's because of things like that that I am doing my PhD to prove that there is more to Milton Keynes than meet the eye.

I met my partner in a charity shop. Best bargain ever!

I have travelled across Canada and America, Italy, and Australia on my own having great adventures, learning telling and creating stories. I've run through forests with wolves, gone sea kayaking with dolphins. Shared my bed with the redback spider, a white tailed spider, and trodden on a Brown snake. I went to Australia's red Centre when the rains come and saw it turn green.

I have quite literally sung for my supper in a karaoke bar in Italy when I had no money. On the theatre in education tour we got paid less than 50 euros a week. Most of the time the company put us in host houses, but in Sardiniana we were in a hotel. It had a problem with its kitchen so we didn't get the breakfast of our bed and breakfast, and had hardly any money for food. We went into a small restaurant in Quarta Santa Lena (probably spelt that really badly). We only had enough money for a coffee. The owner tried to get us to eat because it was very quiet (a Monday night) we told him our situation. When he found out we were performers he said he had just got a karaoke machine which no one was using, so if we used it and did a "show" for an hour, dinner was free. We did, and dinner was great. We were there all week so every night we went in, and by the end of the week the locals were coming to watch the strange and tuneless trio screech through 70s and 80s classics. But he even gave us some tips by the time we had to continue with our tour.

I've begged for money at the bottom of the Space Needle in Seattle when I couldn't afford to go up the famous landmark. I've slept in an Iron Age roundhouse, I've dressed as an Iron Age person, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Viking, Victorian, Tudor, and World War II character. I've worked for rock pop bands, Little Angels, b.l.o.w. and Suede (been in one of their videos).

I have had a remarkable life, very little of it was planned.