

Eco-Stories at the Mansion for - Fake Plastic Tree 24th and 25th July 2023

DAY ONE



Bin bag

Tin for broken glass and tough glove/ trowel

Tarpaulins and ground sheets

Water carrier

(Litter sweep prior to participants arriving filled one and a half biscuit tins with fragments of broken glass and cleared dog poo from the area.)

SESSION ONE

Woodland safety quiz (Picture: ground level hazards, mid-layer and canopy)

We all gathered under the cedar of Lebanon to share a 4000-year-old myth (written on stone tablets in museums round the world):

Excerpt from **The Epic of Gilgamesh** – Gilgamesh and Enkidu journey to the forest of the Cedars, the glorious realm of the Gods, slay the Forest guardian Humbaba- described as an evil demon, and cut down many cedars before returning home to Uruk along the river Euphrates to be celebrated as heroes.

Participants listened to this story beneath the Cedar of Lebanon, and I explained the sessions were running for a partnership project between the Scottish Storytelling Forum and Ahla Fawda an ecological organisation in Lebanon where the cedars grew and that we'd be sharing a lot of stories over

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the two days and creating new stories for a story swap with young people in Lebanon.

Discussion about the story: How have our ideas changed? Dwindling wilderness/forest is a habitat for living things.

Questions arising from the first story.

Robert – How could Humbaba be evil if he was the guardian of the forest?

Arran – Enkidu protected the wild animals by tearing up the traps, but people needed to eat too.

(Human needs balanced with the needs of other creatures)

Caitlin – nowadays we think it's bad when people cut down a lot of trees, but maybe 4000 years ago people thought it was a good thing because they needed to build stuff.

(Fewer wild spaces means we value the trees and wild places we have left, but human consumption threatens these wild spaces even though we value them.)

Fin and Freddy – How did people find out what was written on the ancient stones, when we looked at them it just seemed like a lot of squiggles.

(Discussion how archaeologists and linguistic scholars spent ages deciphering the language, like cracking a code, also that even modern day Arabic is written in a very different way to the Roman alphabet we use.)

Story stick making (a story map to remember the story's journey)

Participants spent time exploring the mansion grounds to find a stick and collected interesting finds to decorate their story sticks.

Wool

Safety scissors

Crafting story sticks. At this point, fifteen-year-old Charlie, chose not to participate further.

Decorating the sticks also included a mini-biodiversity survey. We discovered ragwort, rosebay willowherb/fireweed, buddleia, a walnut tree, with lots of green walnuts, a Douglas William's Pine, pigeon feathers, a crow feather, buttercups and sycamore seeds.

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Picnic lunch and comfort break

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SESSION TWO

Clay Man story (consuming too much)

Green Men & Forest Guardians – discussed the green man carved on the mansion wall.

Clay, wildflower seeds & trowel & zip lock bags

Story of the Clay Man in which a river goes missing and Tam the hero makes a man with clay from the river bed as a gift for his wife because he can't fetch any water to do the dishes, and he really wants to eat the stew she's making, but the Clay Man comes to life and starts eating everything in his path...

The afternoon focussed on making things with natural clay. Seed bomb making - used by guerilla gardeners as a way of enhancing biodiversity in brown spaces and areas where not much grows. Clay man making and making faces for the trees to be forest guardians.

Time for free craft, discussion, more exploring and bonding at the end.

Seed Bomb making (Guerilla gardening to enhance biodiversity and help bees and butterflies)

Sculpting clay men

Green man tree faces (making guardians of the trees)



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DAY TWO

SESSION THREE

How stories explain things: Before science we had stories, now we have both.

Why the trees whisper – How people use/ misuse trees. If the trees could talk with their clay faces, what would they say?

How the Robin's breast became red (version where mother nature uses a sprinkle of the Balmwell's water to heal the robin's skin)

Izzy reminisced about being in New York when there was severe flooding and one person lost their life, also she was in Vermont when there were the worst floods for 11 years and her Uncle Kim rescued someone's blue Kayak that was floating by his house..

Visit to the Balmwell- Legend and History. Precious water.

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Legend: Margaret Canmore (later St Margaret because of her religious devotion, compassion and efforts to feed and educate people in poverty) commissioned a trusted messenger to bring her a vial of holy oil from the resting place of the martyred St Catherine of Alexandria on Mt Sinai. The messenger managed to get all the way to Edinburgh without incident before stumbling at the site of the Balmwell and spilling a few drops of the precious oil. When they knelt and prayed for forgiveness, the healing well bubbled up, its waters covered in an oily film.

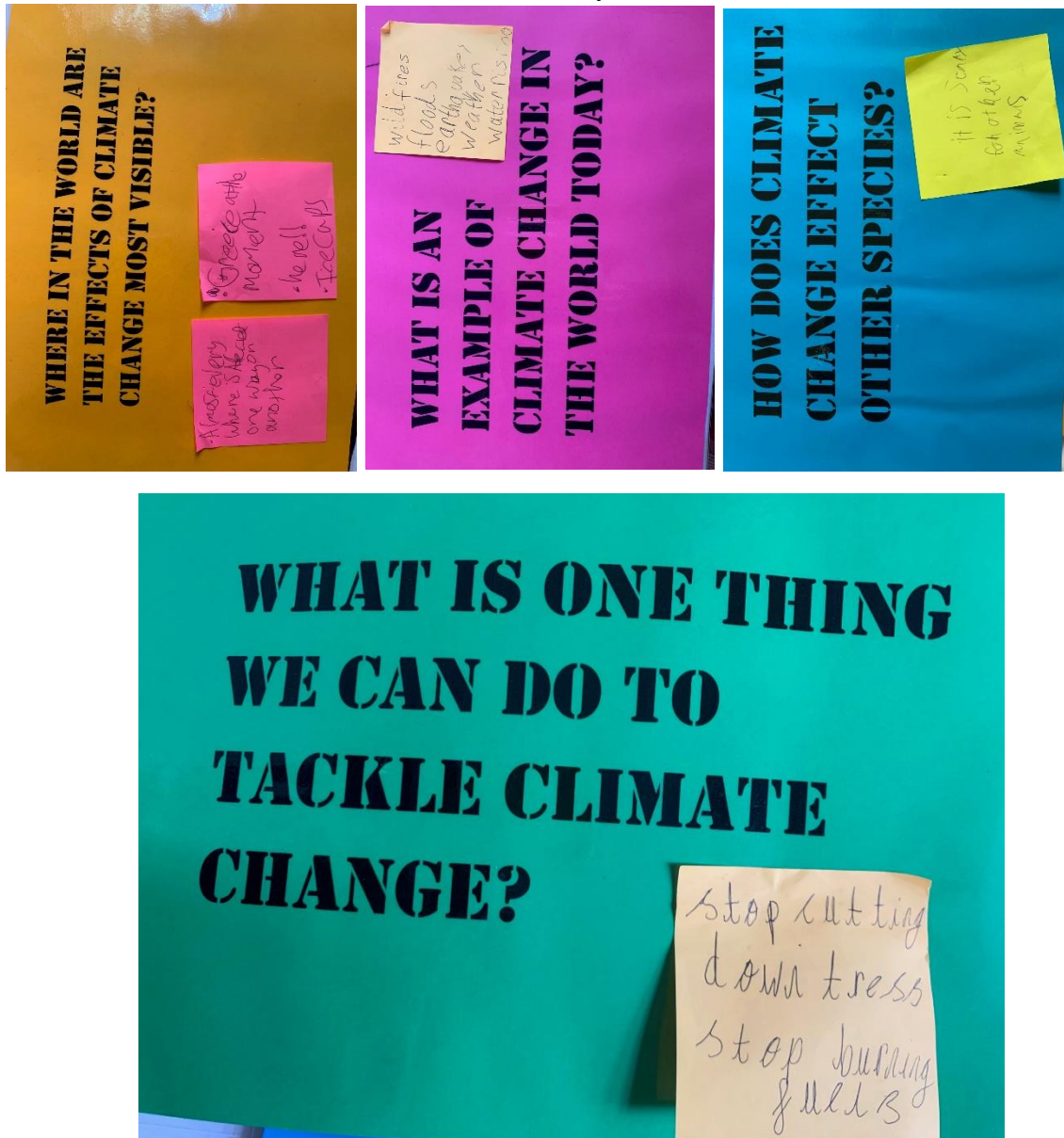
History: James VI and I's visit to the well and his instructions for steps to be built so pilgrims could bathe more easily. Oliver Cromwell's destruction of the well house and it's later rebuilding. Pineapple features were photographed in the 1970's!

There was rubbish in the well and we discussed how sad it was that some people disrespected this historic landmark which had been significant as a healing well (for skin conditions) for hundreds of years. I opened the well and filled vials with water for the young people to take home, at which point Fin noticed tadpoles swimming in the water, he was concerned the frogs wouldn't be able to get out, but I pointed out that the frog must have got through the grating to lay the frogspawn so it was likely the young frogs would be able to get out.

We returned to the mansion for lunch and I handed out climate change questions to consider while we were having our picnic along with post its to scribble ideas.

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Big corkboard – for sticking/ pinning. Colourful post-its- to write ideas

Sharpies/ pens 10

Picnic lunch and comfort break

SESSION FOUR

Discussed two stories from XR book- This Is Not A Drill (wildfires in California a fireman's tale and discussed current wildfires in Rhodes, and the scientist's story of billionaires with bunkers who paid him a lot of money to advise them on how manage their staff in an apocalyptic world where money is meaningless...)

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A few thoughts from Project Drawdown (a comprehensive compilation of climate change statistics and solutions) We discussed green energy, peatland management/ muirburn, and preventing food waste.

Story Stone Soup (the power of collaboration and how soup is a great for using up leftover veg to prevent food waste)

Fire making and marshmallow roasting.

(Fin asked to make a fire stick for witch burning and we touched upon the hysteria surrounding the witch trials the role of James VI & I who had bathed in the Balmwell and his treatise of demonology which resulted in the execution of thousands of innocent people, mostly women...bad times and decided against making a fire stick for burning people.)



Story Making

If you could tell one story to save the world, what would it be?

Who is in it? Hero/ Villain **When** does the story happen? **Where** are the characters? **What** happens? **Why**?

The children had fun with this exercise.

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Story Sharing (transcribed below)

Izzy and Fin discussed the idea of stealing the moon and wanted to create an arch supervillain, they spent time carefully drawing their main character.



Dr Don Quavius Dinglebottom has an IQ of 200 also an IQ of 10, he is very dumb and very smart. He is Grue's wife (Grue from Pixar-Minions movie). He plans to blow up Hawaii because he doesn't like it.

When he was a child, he dreamt of being Grue's wife, (Grue with the long nose) so when he grows up, they get married and Grue and him make a really, really, really, powerful bomb and they send the bomb to Hawaii, but uh oh it was too powerful. They blew up half the planet and died.



Jenny and Caitlin created an elaborate hero story.

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100 years ago, no, 100,000 years ago a girl Jinny Kancune jnr...her dad was called Jimmy Kancune and her Mum was called Jinny Kancune snr.

One day Jinny Kancune said I'm going to go to the forest and get a seed to plant in our garden and she went into the forest and saw a big man cutting down a tree and she said "Oi, you can't cut down that tree"

and he said "Yeah I can!" and she went home in tears. Jinny's Mum said if somebody's cutting down a tree maybe it's Mahungi the forest monster, we should help the tree and plant a seed in our town and be a nature superhero, so Jinny went on a quest to go and get a seed from the great pearl bead tree with her donkeys Davie McDoo and Arran Mc Barran. They went on a quest up many hills and they got to this zip line and it was a scary zip line like at the circus, luckily she had brought a coat hanger and she used it to go along the zip line, but she could only bring one of her donkeys so she decided to bring Davie McDoo,

(Izzy asks why not Arran McBarran?)

Because Arran McBarran was a bit...he had zero IQ. When she got to the other side mother Nature said

"we cannot leave this fellow soul behind" and she blew him over. She went "Phooooof" and Arran McBarran went soaring across, and they arrived at the great pearl bead tree and she said "I must get one seed and I'll plant it in my town" this seed will give our town good fortune for many years, from behind the tree crept out Evil Lin the big bad baddie of the story and Tom Ba and Ma Hogany and they said "Raaar!" and Jinny said I cannot fight three big monsters, I am just one person with two donkeys and then she had an idea, she thought *I can use my donkeys as a weapon!* So she picked up Arran McBarran by the legs and swung him round like a helicopter and all the monsters were wiped out. Arran McBarran's legs were really sore so

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he had to go home with Jinny Kancune, but she couldn't take Davie McDoo across the zip line too, he said "Don't worry about me I'll be fine as long as a little old lady finds me" and lay underneath the tree and sure enough a short while later an old lady came along and said "Hello dear, come with me" and took the donkey home and he lived a happy life.

Jinny returned home and planted the seed in a part of the forest where all the villains were wiped out, some monsters came and had a big fight. One of them bleeds and the blood gives the tree it's first shoots and it grew and every day Jinny Kancune jnr came and watered it and it got big. Bigger than this (points at the cedar)

One day Jinny's mum fell ill and Jinny said to the tree "please, please, let my mum get better" and a drop of water fell down from a leaf into Jinny's mum's mouth and she survived.

Jinny went home and said "this tree will be protected for my life and for many generations to come. Hazzah! Hazzah!"



Robert and Arran were so busy laughing at Jenny and Caitlin's story their story was brief.

Elements in Greece.

In Greece there are lots of wildfires.

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The sun comes out one day and burns all the trees lighting them on fire and then a big water superhero comes to help and goes round all the trees and puts out all the flames.



Ivy and Alice created a mystery story

A long time ago in 1947 a girl named Lila and her friends Olivia and Joe went out not knowing that a black cat in a top hat was following them, a short while later they made it to the woods and Lila felt a chill run down her spine she turned round and saw the cat with the top hat and was going to ignore it, but what cat wears a top hat? She told her friends and they decided to follow it. Five minutes later the cat disappeared into a hole, and they followed the cat inside...

Years later they are still famous for finding the black cat with the top hat murderer and he is in jail to this day, but watch out for black cats in top hats.

At this point parents began to arrive, and we finished with thankyou's and a reminder about the story swap celebration.

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Eco-Stories & Activities at the Mansion

For **12 -17** year olds

Storyteller and woodland leader Jane Mather
& Friends of Gracemount Mansion.

FREE sessions for a story exchange between the
Scottish Storytelling Forum & Ahla Fawda a Lebanese
cultural & eco-organisation

24 & 25th July 2023
11am to 3pm

- Toast marshmallows
- Hear a 4000 year old story
about heroes & monsters
beneath the Cedar of Lebanon
tree
- Visit an ancient well where
kings once bathed & find out
why...
- Listen to Scottish legends
- Make new stories together
- Bring a picnic lunch
- Make seed bombs
- Explore what lives and grows in the
mansion garden
- Make story sticks
- Sculpt with clay
- Recycle plastic to make art

Enquire or book a place email Jane:
magicalnaturestories@gmail.com

Scottish
STORYTELLING
Forum

Event advertising. Feedback from one parent who thought their teen would be keen was they preferred screen time "Unfortunately, my teen prefers to stay home on his phone. It's a shame, this looks really interesting" but high school 1st and 2nd years chose to sign up.

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The Epic of Gilgamesh

(An ancient Babylonian Myth written on stone tablets which are housed in museums all over the world.)

Tablet One

Four thousand years ago there was a king called **Gilgamesh** who was half god and half man. He ruled over a city in ancient Mesopotamia called **Uruk**. and was very powerful, but very cruel and treated his people badly.

They people prayed to be free from his tyranny and the Gods helped them by creating a man equal to Gilgamesh. Someone who'd stand up to him and stop his wicked ways, a primitive man, **En-kid-u**, who was covered in hair and lived in the wilderness protecting wild animals. **En-kid-u** met a trapper whose livelihood was suffering because he kept uprooting his traps. The trapper told the sun-god **Sham-ash** about the wild man, and he arranged for **Enkidu** to be taught the ways of civilization, in a shepherd's camp.

While the shepherds were teaching En-kid-u about how to live amongst other people, Gilgamesh who often had vivid dreams, dreamt about the arrival of a beloved new companion.

Tablet Two

While he was learning about how to be civilised Enkidu heard how Gilgamesh harmed his people and he vowed to stop him. Enkidu was so angry with King Gilgamesh that he set off immediately for the city of Uruk to confront him. When Enkidu arrived at the royal palace, the two argued and fought fiercely till they could fight no more at which point Enkidu admitted that Gilgamesh was stronger than him and that he'd won the fight, Gilgamesh was so pleased the two became friends and Gilgamesh suggested that they go on a quest together that would bring them great fame and fortune.

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He wanted to travel to the **Cedar Forest** the glorious realm of the gods and slay the forest guardian a monstrous demon called **Humbaba**.

Tablet Three

The City elders gave Gilgamesh advice to help him on his journey and before setting off he visited his mother, the goddess of wild cows, **Ninsun**.

She asked the all-seeing sun god **Shamash** to protect her son and Enkidu on their adventure.

Tablet Four

Gilgamesh and Enkidu began the perilous journey to the **Cedar Forest**, every night they made a camp in the mountains and every night Gilgamesh dreamed, and his dreams frightened him because he thought they meant great danger. In one a mountain crashed down, in another there were terrible thunderstorms, the next night he dreamt of wild bulls stampeding and the next a fire-breathing thunderbird appeared.

Enkidu interpreted the dreams as good omens, he didn't believe that the frightening images represented the power of the forest guardian. He thought they meant Gilgamesh would be successful in battle.

As they came nearer to the cedar mountain, they heard the forest guardian **Humbaba** bellowing and had to encourage each other to be brave.

Tablet Five

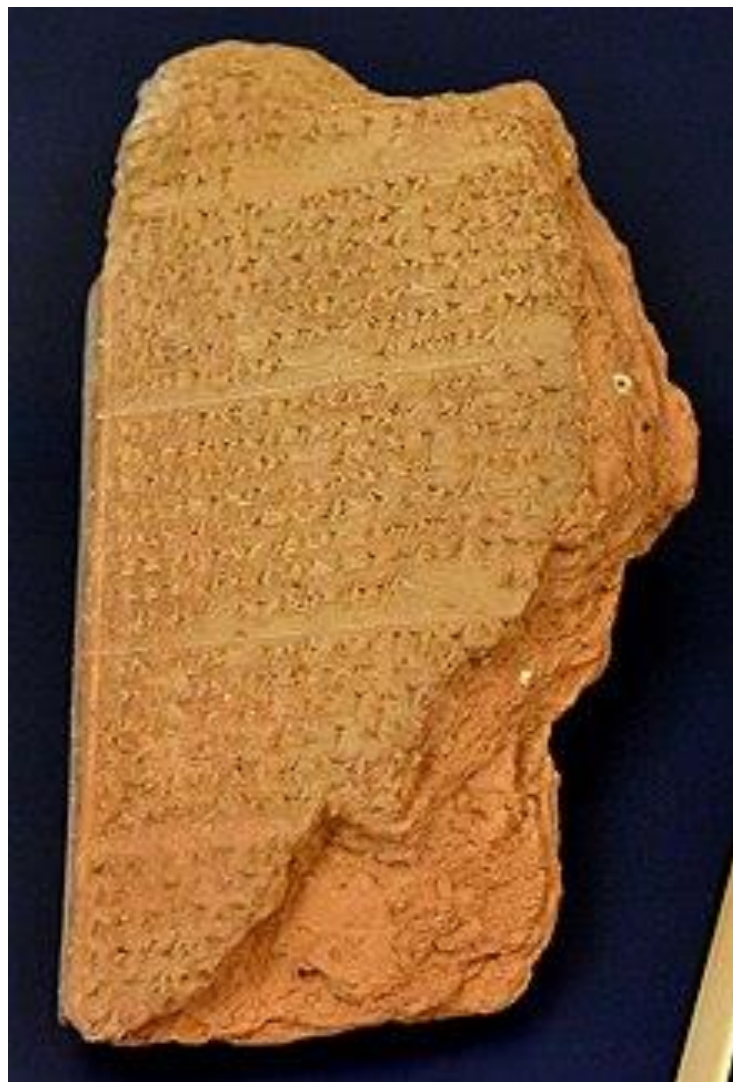
When they entered the cedar forest. **Humbaba**, warned them off, accusing **Enkidu** of betraying the wild world and vowed to kill **Gilgamesh** and feed his flesh to the vultures. **Gilgamesh** and **Enkidu** were afraid but fought the forest guardian, until the mountains quaked and the sky turned black.

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The sun god **Shamash** seeing the danger they were in, honoured his promise to Gilgamesh's mother and protected him sending thirteen winds to bind **Humbaba**.

Once captured **Humbaba** begged to be spared. He offered to make Gilgamesh king of the forest and even fell trees for him, **Gilgamesh** considered mercy, but **Enkidu** said **Gilgamesh** must kill **Humbaba** to gain the reputation of demon slayer so **Gilgamesh** executed **Humbaba** and **Enkidu** and **Gilgamesh** cut down many large cedars to make a raft and returned home victorious along the river Euphrates to be celebrated as heroes.



Gilgamesh tablet from [Hattusa](#), Turkey. 13th century BC. [Neues Museum](#), Germany

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Tablet V of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* dates back to the old Babylonian period, 2003–1595 BC, and is currently housed in the [Sulaymaniyah Museum](https://www.sulaymaniyahmuseum.gov.iq/), Iraq