

Oxfordshire

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Legends, fairytales and fables are at the heart of one woman's passion to explain Chinese culture and language to the English-speaking world.

Su Yen Hu, who moved to Oxford from homeland Taiwan 11 years ago, is the brains behind Snowflake Books which publishes children's stories.

The books are written in both Chinese and English, so they can read by someone who has no knowledge of Chinese.

And the 38-year-old has modelled her approach on *Alice in Wonderland*, by trying to make them fun and full of beautiful illustrations.

She said: "We want the books to be highly educational but not boring, so full of information and details to discover, just like *Alice in Wonderland*."

Su Yen Hu, who studied for a Master's in Spatial Planning at Brookes, followed by a second Masters in Historic Conservation, came up with the idea after spotting a gap in the market.

She explained: "The Chinese culture and language is still far too foreign and difficult to approach but demand to know and understand more is increasing rapidly."

"After much thought, we realised we should start from children's books to make the new generation familiar with the culture and help them get interested in the language, which is thought to be one of the most difficult in the world to learn."

Su Yen Hu has teamed up with Lihui Wang, 39, from China, who she met while studying in Oxford and her former Brookes English tutor, Roy Preece.

A production team in Taiwan is led by a retired Chinese tutor, who has been collecting and publishing original legends and stories for many years and writes everything in Chinese.

As the team in Oxford are on a mission to make the stories attractive to English readers, nothing is lost in translation.

She added: "We translate the stories into English as faithfully to the original as we can."

"Roy, who also works as the editor, reads this direct translation and discusses anything he doesn't understand, or thinks would cause misunderstanding."

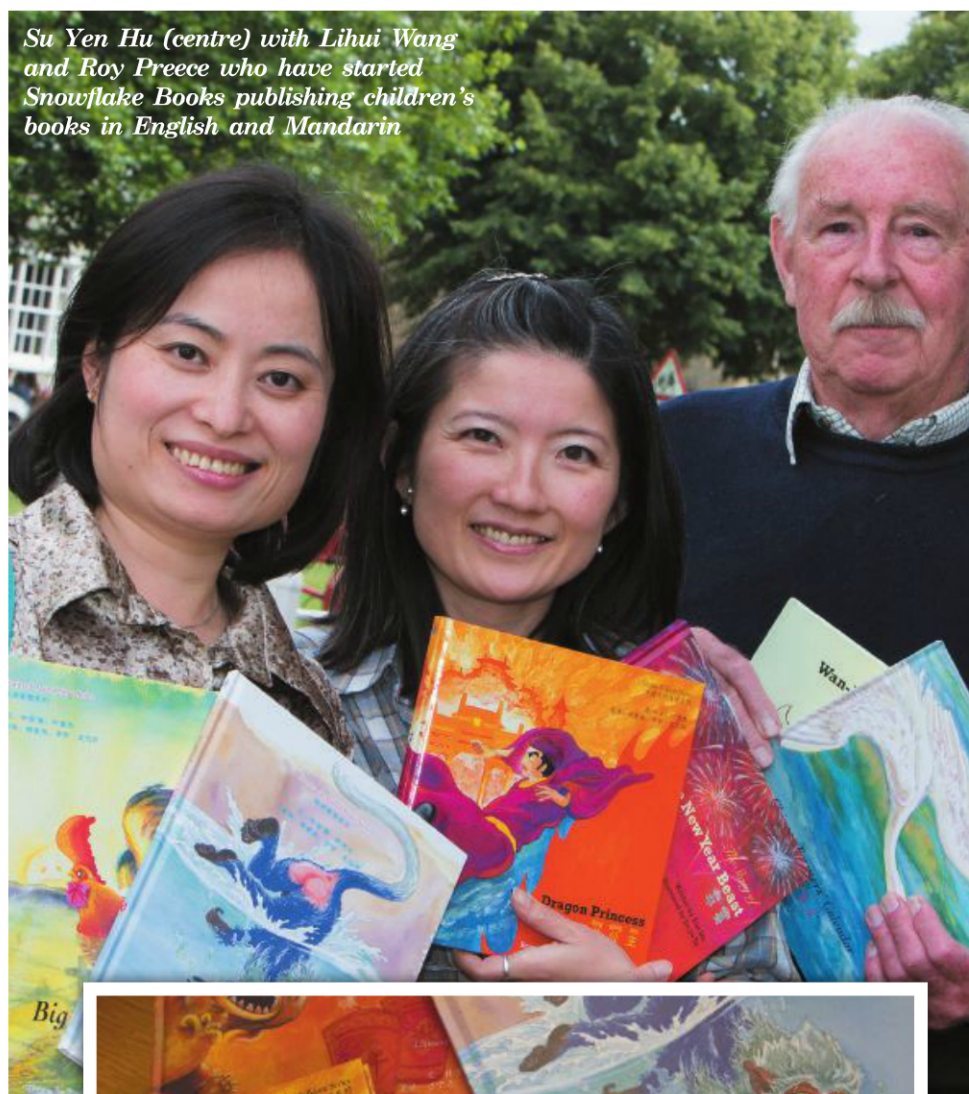
"After he thoroughly understands the stories and background, he rewrites the story into an English-story telling style."

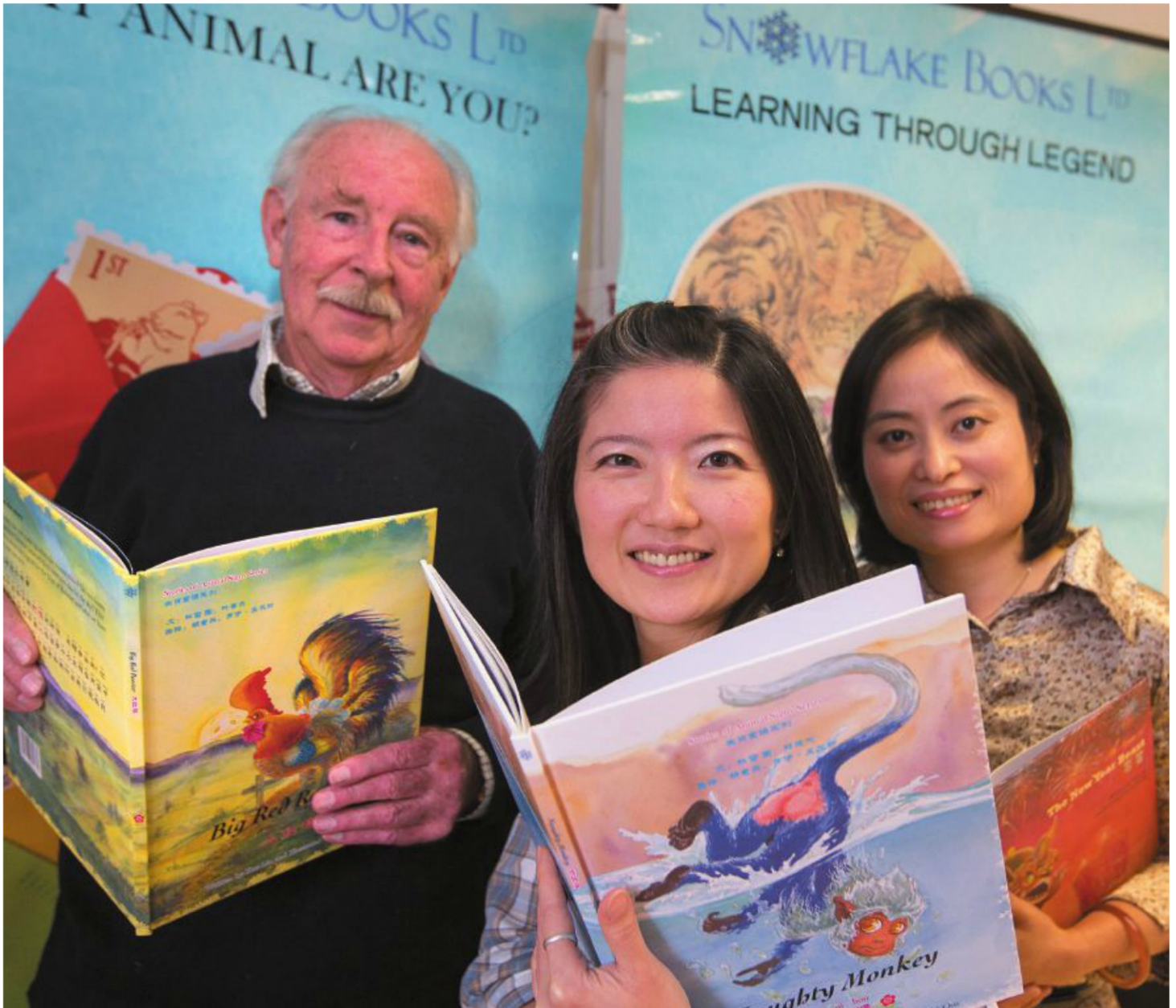
"We then translate back based on his English stories into Chinese and publish the book in a bilingual-format,

Traditional tales of another land

Gill Oliver speaks to Taiwanese entrepreneur Su Yen Hu about her quest to bring Eastern culture, language and stories to the West with some magical bilingual tales

Su Yen Hu (centre) with Lihui Wang and Roy Preece who have started Snowflake Books publishing children's books in English and Mandarin





as requested by most of our English readers.

"The stories can be read just as English children's stories, without knowing the Chinese language or the culture."

The traditional tales centre on wisdom, common sense and insights into human nature, often portrayed through animal characters – themes which Su Yen Hu believes are universal.

Each illustration is hand-painted by an artist and the pictures for one book can take a year to complete.

After travelling to book exhibitions all over the world, supported by the government's export arm UKTI, the team have ideas how to expand their business.

This could become more important, as China's economy continues to grow and more westerners come into contact with the country and its people.

Su Yen Hu explained: "If we can

make the stories acceptable in English, people have the chance to enjoy learning about the new culture even before they start doing business with Chinese people, or travelling to China.

"This will be a great help for people from other countries to fit in to the Chinese culture better if they need to."

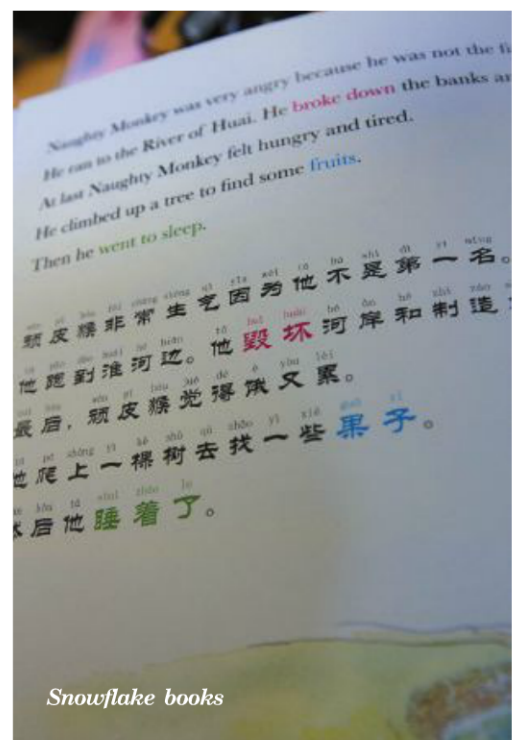
She is also relishing the creative freedom which comes with working in this country.

She added: "In China, many subjects and topics are still being tightly screened and censored.

"Sometimes the traditional Chinese culture can be branded as superstition and banned from being published.

"The creative and free environment right here is the key for our beautiful books to be born.

"If I had not studied and met my friends in the magical city of Oxford, I would not have dreamed for a second of doing what I am doing now."



Snowflake books