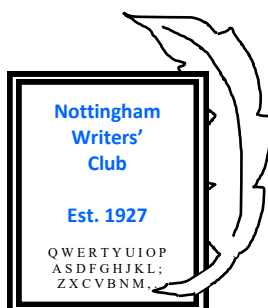


Scribe



The Magazine of the
Nottingham Writers' Club



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Summer 2022



**Elizabeth Ready
to Cut the Cake**



**Keith was hoping for a strippergram
for his special birthday.
'But all I got was this lousy balloon.'**



**Peter's Party Food
(see Page 42)**



**Happy Birthday to Us
(Page 14)**

Three of our New Members



Scribe

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Contents

Page 4	Hi Everyone
	Mechanics Update
Page 5	President's Letter
Page 8	National Flash Fiction Final Results
Page 14	Fourth Fridays at The Mechanics
Page 17	And Now it's Your Turn!
Page 18	Second Saturdays at The Playwright
Page 20	A Writers' Work
Page 21	What Do Non-Writers Think About All Day?
Page 22	Back in Contact With My Editor
	Writers' Block?
Page 23	Two Very Different Sea Faring Tales
Page 25	One Very Different Birthday Party
Page 30	Welcome to Katharine
Page 31	Letter from Brixham
Page 32	Successes. Kate Twitchin and Cath Snape
Page 33	I Love Birthdays!
Page 34	Welcome to Carole
	Workshops
Page 35	Out On My Bike
Page 36	Keppel's Column
	Quote of the Quarter
Page 37	Colin Seager Stories
Page 40	Happy Birthday, Marcel
	Rosa and Family Success
Page 41	Name Dropping
Page 42	Peter Hilton's Royal Jubilee
Page 43	A Whirlwind Month
Page 44	Welcome to Geoff Anderson
Page 45	Our Writing Friends
	Beeston U3A, The Nottingham Story Weavers
Page 48	Important Changes to Competitions
	The Prolems of Writing Poems in Hot Weather
Page 49	Poetry Results (This Year I Will)
Page 51	Prose Results (This Year I Will)
Page 55	Forthcoming Competitions
Page 56	NEW Competition Rules and Guidelines
Page 57	Committee

We meet at The Nottingham Mechanics
3 North Sherwood Street, Nottingham, NG1 4EZ on the fourth Friday of the month
The Playwright pub on the second Saturday of each month

Hi Everyone

Summer is here! We're half-way through the year and looking forward to future developments at the Club- you'll be hearing about those in emails and editions of Scribe.

Welcome to our new members; we hope to also read about you editions of this magazine.

Our 95th anniversary celebration took place during the May meeting at the Mechanics. There was writing, chat, and yummy cake courtesy of Elizabeth, and Mars- thank you both. We're now on the countdown to our centenary in 2027...

Our second Saturday meetings, over the road at The Playwright, are popular with members, especially for those who cannot attend our Friday meetings. If you haven't tried this session yet, then pop along - it's free.



Carol Bevitt

Mechanics Update

Things are slowly getting back to normal although they're still unable to open in the evenings or at weekends. Robert (their retired manager) still runs his popular trips and recently Viv went to Northumberland.

"After being postponed twice in the past two years because of the pandemic, Mechanics' members at last experienced an exciting 5-day coach trip to Northumbria in May, which included the Angel of the North, and the remains of Hadrian's Wall."



Viv Apple



The Angel of the North



Hadrian's Wall

(Photos by Dennis Apple)

President's Letter **A Platinum Occasion**

As I write this BBC Radio 4 is describing a fly-past of the Red Arrows to commemorate the Queen's 70 years on the throne. It's been a brilliant day in Hull; warm sunshine, good enough for us to spend the afternoon in the garden beneath a parasol drinking and chatting. Although I am no monarchist, I don't mind Her Majesty; I think she's a pleasant old lady, our own Walt Disney who keeps the technicolor Disneyland of Royalty at the top of any tourist's schedule.



This Jubilee takes me back to 1953 and the Coronation. I was ten years old, and my dear Mother had no time for royalty at all, which was in stark contrast to my ultra-royalist Dad, an ex-Sergeant Major in the East Yorks Regiment who had served in the ranks for 25 years. He'd spent many of those years in India, where he'd been a regular visitor to the Rawalpindi tattoo parlour. His patriotism was written all over his upper torso; the flags of the Empire, roaring lions, unicorns, anchors, you name it – if it meant Britain, it was there in ink.

What fascinated me in June 1953 wasn't so much the actual coronation. It was the fact that many people were buying devices I and my schoolmates regarded as science fiction – TV sets. These purchases were made simply to allow the ordinary public chance to see Elizabeth crowned, live, in real time.

However, there was no television expected at our house. We simply couldn't afford it. We were still lumbered with 'the wireless' and the utter dullness of Henry Hall, Billy Cotton and Victor Sylvester.

My friend Gilbert Atkinson then revealed that his parents had taken delivery of a 12 inch Bush TV set. I asked if I could come round to his house and watch the coronation. His parents said no – their front room was tiny and they already had nine of their neighbours booked in.



However, they made an offer; I could watch the show from outside through their front window.

It seemed like a pauper's choice, but on the day, I buttoned up my severely cut-down ex-navy duffel coat and made my way to the Atkinson's palace of technology. Two unanticipated aspects of this expedition made the day totally memorable. One was my unsuitable footwear. In the lower strata of working class life where we resided, kids got a ration of two items of footwear per year. For the winter we'd get a pair of wellingtons, which would be cut down to turn into rubber shoes in Spring. For summer, we had a pair of plimsolls, or, as they were known in Hull, 'sand shoes'.

On coronation day I made the mistake of wearing my smart new five bob sandshoes. The other disaster was the weather. Boy, *did it rain!* In my viewing position outside their front window, as the tropical downpour bucketed over head and shoulders, the bed of begonias I was forced to stand in slowly turned into an Amazonian, mud-squelching riverbed.



I looked down and realized my infantile feet had sunk ankle deep into the mire. I strained to see through the rain-slashed window. Beyond the bobbing packed heads of ten very dry adults I could just make out a flickering screen which seemed a mile away. I vaguely recognized the outline of a bishop, a fuzzy Queen and a crown.

After 45 minutes of aquatic torture, my cheery little mate Gilbert dashed out to meet me, presented me with a sausage roll, then retreated into the amiable warmth of his home.

That, then, is my memory of the coronation. I hoped that my drenched Dickensian beggar's appearance at the wet window might get me invited in. It didn't. When I got home, I received a thrashing for 'ruining' the sand shoes, which were expected to last until September.

So on this 2022 Platinum Jubilee, I'm wearing my £8.99 pair of Primark plimsolls, indoors, with some cold beer, and just for old time's sake, a sausage roll.

The Writing. What's on the Slipway?

I'll be 80 on my next birthday and after spending over half of those 8 decades writing, I'm almost at the stage where I feel like packing it all in.

I've been keen to continue my study of Flamenco guitar. I've also got a fine 5 string banjo and two ukuleles – my George Formby repertoire increases weekly. But of course, a day without writing is an insult to one's gift of creativity.

All the books I wanted to write, non-fiction, history, music etc., have been written.

I've had some memorable experiences as a feature writer for magazines and newspapers.

I've written for radio, and wrote 42 x 30 minutes scripts for Sky Life TV's holiday show, *Britain's Best Breaks*.

I've had deals (and some decent reviews) with four bona fide publishers as well as self-publishing numerous volumes myself, including 7 volumes of poetry.

My unrequited desire for a TV drama-documentary based on my book *Honoured by Strangers*, the biography of Captain Francis Cromie, CB DSO RN



(1882-1918) remains a thorn in my side, especially considering some of the dross being pumped out on Netflix and Amazon Prime. But after coming close and dealing with no less than 18 TV production companies, it looks like the good Captain won't have his exhilarating life on screen during my lifetime.

But I have written two hefty novels which, one way or another, I hope to get into print before I reach my sell-by date.

One is *The Man Who Feeds the Swans*. This is the story of a German wine-making family on the Moselle from 1929 to 1989. It's taken ten years of research and writing, but I feel it could succeed.

The other work is entitled *Deadbeat*. It's the comical chronicle of a man named Luke Dyer, who from his teens onwards dreams of being a rock'n'roll star. Much of it is based on personal experience.

I learned guitar during my years in the Merchant Navy and once I came ashore, I played in various groups.

I also worked in the music industry as manager first of a record shop, then a music store, and I spent a couple of years as a travelling salesman for the German record giant Deutsche Grammophon/Polydor. My main job was to promote the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Herbert von Karajan.

During all those years I also played in various bands, but I was never good enough to make it big, although one band, Group Therapy, did get a record deal; we were even on BBC Radio One's John Peel Show. So, all this experience has been included in *Deadbeat*. Both these works are receiving all the attention I can give them in the next few months.

As the age of 80 rapidly approaches, I'm conscious that life is now a race against time and failing health. Limbs ache, sleep does not come easy, physical energy declines daily.

But a writer has no other choice – he must marshal his ideas, never drop the pen, and aim to empty his ideas onto the page rather than carry them around like expired bus tickets.

Success? What is it?

Talent counts, but it is being at the right crossroads when the correct bus arrives. I see with just two books out, TV's Richard Osman has shifted 2 million copies of *The Thursday Murder Club*. This means he's now a millionaire and can even afford to give up being a TV quizmaster. Well, at least he's better than Dan Brown.

But fame and fortune are simply bonuses. The real reward for a scribe is the daily thrill of writing. So, if a young lad wants to stand in the rain and watch me through the window, he's welcome.

I'll even supply the sausage rolls.

Roy Bainton



National Flash Fiction Final Results

This was the first National competition the Club has run since 2018 and we're happy to report it was a success. We had 191 entries, 3 existing members entered, 2 made it to the final 12 and a number of writers joined the Club. The winning stories are on our website but we decided to include them here too.

We hope you enjoy reading them and get valuable information on writing flash fiction from Allison's feedback. We thank her for taking so much care over this and giving so much help to our writers.

Overall Comments by Allison

I was impressed by the quality of these excellent stories. The title choices were interesting and all have good publication potential. Common topics on the theme did arise but a judge expects that. What a judge hopes for is a powerful take on those topics by the writers so something new is brought to each story *despite* the familiarity of the topic, which happened here, so well done everyone.



There are minor formatting issues in some stories but these can be easily corrected. I have added comments in as to what I would amend if these pieces were mine where appropriate. I hope you find these useful.

My top tip here is to take ten days off any official competition deadline and make that your own deadline. I use that date as the day when I go through my story for the *final* time to ensure *all* is as perfect as I can make it. I often spot the odd typo at this point or where I've put in an errant line gap etc but that is the point.

Time away from the story makes it easier to spot things like that before you send anything off. I write my story, rest it, draft another story, come back to my first story and edit it to ensure the story itself is fine, and then do the check for typos etc edit as the final thing I do. I then submit it on or just after that deadline I've set for myself, still in good time for the real deadline.

I've found doing this has paid dividends because I have picked up on errors at almost the last minute and have had time to correct them before submitting the work. I then come back to my second story and work on that. It means I always have work on the go as well so I consider this to be a win-win scenario!

I loved reading and judging the stories. A huge thank you for inviting me to do this – it has been a pleasurable task!

Now for the placings. Many congratulations and well done to the top three.

As mentioned, the quality of the stories was very good and it was hard to pick just three. I hope that will be encouraging to those not listed. I found that obtaining near misses led on to those stories being accepted by someone else so I would recommend polishing up your tales and getting them out there again. Getting near misses is a positive sign you are on the right track so keep going!

As for the three placings here, may I say another well done. Being able to add something to your writing CV is (a) fabulous and (b) another sign you are on the right path.

Many congratulations to you all. I love writing and reading flash fiction and its impact. I do hope at least some of these flash pieces make it into print. Good luck!

First Place

Another Time, Another Place by Stella Truby

Bells ringing out! Our daughter, looking radiant in her lace gown, wears colourful orchids in her elegantly styled hair. Her brother takes photographs, joking. Playfulness amongst friends. Excited laughter.

Turning, I see you minutes after your birth, my husband cradling me. Sharing our grief, our shock. Lifeless. Your entrance far too early. No grave for us to tend flowers.

Looking up through misted eyes, I walk towards my husband who is beckoning me over, the proud father of the bride.

We stand together as a family group, one present only in memory. Rose petals fall lightly. An image to cherish.



Comments

This is poignant and beautifully written. It is an excellent portrayal of understated grief. The “no grave” line has a very powerful impact on the reader and proves you do not need a lot of words to make that impact. This is one of the joys of flash fiction for me.

I would be looking at specific competitions dealing with grief or family relationships for this one. A very quick *Google* search came up with this - <https://hunterwriterscentre.org/grieve-2022/> - so these competitions are out there. With any fiction you want your story to be the square peg that fits in the square hole so finding the right market is not always easy.

I would love to see this story in print. Very well done and congratulations on being the winner.

Second Place

A Rare and Beautiful Creature by Sarah Masters

It was a gown, once: pink, with ostrich feathers. 'You'll look like a film star,' the shop had told her.
He held out his hand. 'Shall we?'
They were playing Glenn Miller, so she said yes. And loomed over him.
'A rare and beautiful creature,' he said.
She pulled away.
'The ostrich.'
She smiled. The music dipped and he spun her. 'Little known fact,' he said. 'An ostrich can kill a lion with one well-aimed kick.'
'You calling yourself a lion?' she said.
'We'll see, shall we?'
Fifty years on he kisses the gown, folds it into the charity bag.

Comments

This is a beautiful story and a sad one too without being maudlin, which is not easy to get right. Wonderfully done.

Look out for competitions and publications who love stories told from an older generation's viewpoint (*Saga*, possibly *Reader's Digest*. The latter have brought back their 100 word competition so it is worth watching out for things like that). Congratulations on coming second in this competition. All of the stories were excellent to be placed so highly is a wonderful achievement.

Well done.

Third Place

Idle Hands by Carole Footit

Run the jar under the hot tap, advised Google, but that hadn't worked either.

Brushing away angry tears I ate my tea and toast. I needed my strong capable husband.

But when I visited him, his big gnarled hands that had carved out a living for us, had lovingly cradled our children and grandchildren, were lying useless in his lap. I had to place my hands gently over his to still the trembling

He was safe and cared for, but how I wish he was here with me today, to open that dratted jar of marmalade.



Comments

A beautiful, gentle, and sad story. Some humour in it too with the use of the word “dratted”. I can guess at her age from that one word alone. How many people of a younger generation would even think to use a word like that? Nicely chosen.

I have so much sympathy with your character. I nearly always need to ask MY husband to open jars! I can feel the anguish of your character. A good story, of any length, must make its readers feel something. The readers must care. So very well done on achieving that here and congratulations on your third prize placing.

I think you'd be looking at markets catering for the older end of the market with this kind of story. Think *Saga*, *Reader's Digest* etc. I'd also look for competitions dealing with grief and care issues. If you can, get a copy of *Writing Magazine* when it has its competition guide. There is a wealth of information in here and often organisations such as *Cancer Research* etc do run their own competitions so it is worth watching out for those. I always recommend reading writing magazines regularly. You do pick up competition news here. And many congratulations on a lovely piece of work.

In the Final Twelve

Visiting Hour by Colin Seager

As I walk the corridor to Mother's room, I feel myself change. By the time I with with her the process is complete. I have become a transparent, formless self.

I say, 'Hello, Mum, it's Geoffrey'.

She stares intensely. Sometimes she whispers a faint, ho. I hold her hand, the same hand that penned many books that live long in the memory of countless children and their parents.

I cannot help myself say that I wish you could read a story to your new great grandchild. She responds with a half smile that may mean there is a flicker of understanding.



Comments

Beautiful, emotional, and as someone with direct experience of dementia, I know this one doesn't pull its punches yet it is sympathetically done. Well done! The story needs a little tidying up work but there is good potential here.

Market: do look out for competitions run by people like the *Alzheimer's Society*, *Age UK* etc. Societies like this often run writing competitions because they want to raise awareness.

I would consider the older end of the magazine market, especially *Saga*, maybe *The People's Friend*. I would also look out for anthology submissions on a theme – in this case this could be carers/caring, older people etc. Good luck!

Postcard from Ibiza by Kate Twitchin

“WISH YOU WERE HERE! Hotel, see 'X', is awesome! Resort, bars, clubs, DJs, awesome! SUNSHINE! Spare bed waiting for YOU! Get over here as soon as you can! Like, NOW!!! xx”

Reading your postcard makes me want to grab my passport and bikini.

The hotel looks lovely and the views from the balconies must be stunning. Awesome, even.

Could I drop everything and go and lie on that golden sand under that cloudless blue sky?

No, of course I couldn't. I can't. I have responsibilities: my job, the cat, the greenhouse.

And besides, your card is addressed to my daughter.



Comments

Argh! Please don't use capitals like this. As with social media, it comes across as shouting. If you need to emphasise, just use italics. Though I think your having this as a separate paragraph from the rest of the story works very well and it could be left as that. Also since this is almost like someone speaking to the reader you could italicise all of this as you would for thoughts as it is acting like one.

Need to indent all paragraphs except the first one in a story or the first one after a scene break. (It pays to check house style for anywhere you submit to but the majority of the ones I come across do ask for the first paragraph to be to the left margin and others indented).



***Everyone receives feedback on their stories.
These are some of the comments we were given.***

This is the first time I have received constructive criticism for my writing and I greatly appreciate it.

I found the comments very useful and would like to thank the judges for their time and feedback. I will be sure to learn from their insights and hope to write better next time.

Too often have I entered competitions where either no acknowledgement of the story has been received or the feedback has been to simply say my submission has not been successful in reaching the next round, so for the Judges at NWC to provide such detailed and constructive feedback is genuinely appreciated.

Thank you so much for all of these comments, they are all either seriously helpful or really nice, or both.

It's so nice to get feedback, feels like a win.

This is the first time I have received constructive criticism for my writing and I greatly appreciate it.

Thank you for the judges' comments. Encouraging and helpful. I'll take all suggestions on board and see if I can make something of it.

Thank you for this, the feedback is greatly appreciated - and understandable! This was my first real attempt at flash fiction, so I will take it on board for the future.

Thank you to you and the judges for the feedback, I will certainly see how I can adapt the piece.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story and supply such detailed feedback. This will be very useful in my future writing endeavours.

Thank you for your email. It is good to have such perceptive and constructive feedback from the judges.

So pleased to read your comments and I will think of them in the future, they are a great help. I appreciate your reading my first little entry, and you have given me encouragement to write again.

Please pass on my thanks to your judges. I will take their comments on board and revisit the stories.

Thank you so much for all the useful comments you sent me. I haven't been involved in this writing game for ages so am quite out of touch, but it's really useful to get other people's perspective on things. ... will keep on trying - it's the only way.



Fourth Fridays Our 95th Birthday in May

We don't know exactly when the Club was formed but we celebrated our 90th at the Nottingham Council House in May 2017 so we thought this was as good a month as any to have a party, especially as Her Majesty was kind enough to give us a bank holiday.

As promised, we had cake. Elizabeth (the one waving) brought along a delicious cream topped creation which didn't last long, although we did allow her to take a small piece home for her boyfriend.

We started the session with a reading, not of a current's member's work but an historical piece written for the Club's fortieth birthday. It was printed in Scribe that year.



Some of the members who came along and responded to my request for a funny photo.

An Early History of Nottingham Writers' Club written for our 40th Anniversary in 1967 by a founder member

In 1927, Leslie Bicknell and I, representing virtually all that was left of the Nottingham Writers' Circle, met despondently in a cafe on Long Row to decide whether the Circle should give up or carry on. We decided it should carry on.

Small ads. in the *'Evening Post'* and *'Guardian'* drew several new members to our next two or three meetings. Soon, we were able to elect officers (I became Hon. Sec.) together with a small committee. Before long, the future of the re-named Nottingham Writers' Club was assured.

From then until 1939 we went from strength to strength, and a succession of famous writers - Phyllis Bentley, Godfrey Winn, Pamela Frankau, Leslie Charteris, Sir Hugh Walpole, Cecil Roberts, Andrew Soutar and others - addressed our monthly meetings at the Black Boy Hotel and helped us with their advice and assistance.

Even more helpful were those local literary friends Walter Briscoe, (then City Librarian), Lewis Richmond, editor of the *'Nottingham Journal'*, and William Kiddier, brushmaker and artist. We remember them all with gratitude and affection.

Meanwhile, an ever-growing band of enthusiasts worked unstintingly to ensure our progress. Lack of space prevents mentioning them all. Hard work, but we enjoyed it.

In those early days we used a folder known as Pass-It-On in which members' MSS were circulated for criticism. But wouldn't it be wonderful (we said) if we could publish our own monthly magazine, filled with members' work? Result - No. 1 of Vol. 1 of *'The Scribe'* appeared in November, 1933.

It contained 16 pages, with an editorial, report of the previous meeting, written by our tame diarist Peeps, (no relation to Samuel), several articles, book reviews and domestic news. When so many periodicals are folding up it is surely a triumph that 'The Scribe', like Charley's Aunt, is still running!

It was not surprising that the Club's influence spread beyond the bounds of Nottingham. As a result, we formed a close and happy association with sister clubs or circles in Leicester and Derby, and had frequent exchange visits of speakers as well as collaboration in monthly competitions.

From 1939 to 1945, when there were more important matters to attend to, the Club just 'ticked over'. We met then at the Friends' Meeting House in Friar Lane and I recall those last-minute dashes across the Old Market Square in the dimness of the black-out, to catch the last bus home.

Our history since 1945 is, I am sure, too well-known to many present-day members to need re-telling here. Let it suffice to say that the Nottingham Writers' Club is now one of the oldest and best of its kind in the country. And we can point with pride to the successes our members have achieved, and are continuing to achieve, in every field of writing.

Success obviously doesn't just 'happen'. It is the result of continued hard work by successive Officers and Committees. Yet I feel sure that those original informal gatherings at members' houses, where we talked 'shop' until late into the night, provided that friendly co-operation among writers which has always been the first objective of the Club.

May it long continue to be the secret of our success!

Even though it wasn't Christmas, we had a limerick competition with appropriate first lines. The one most people preferred was used by Jill, and her creation was chosen because it got the biggest laugh.

Can you believe it, our Club's 95
There's no need to restore or revive
The rumours are wrong
We're still plodding along
Like Frankenstein's creature, IT'S ALIVE!

Keith read out his take on a speaker's night back in the 1930's.

A Famous Visitor

In the early years of Nottingham Writers' Club, one of its most famous guest speakers was **Leslie Charteris**, creator of the series of novels featuring **Simon Templar - The Saint**. I grew up watching the series on TV in the sixties so I thought I would re-imagine his visit for our anniversary party. This is how it could have played out - but probably didn't.



Apart from the protagonist all characters and events depicted in this story are entirely fictitious. Any similarity to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Ding, ding, ding, ding!

"Attention please, everybody! I'd like to welcome Mr Leslie Charteris to Nottingham Writers' Club. He has kindly agreed to come along to talk about his third novel which is a current work in progress."

"Thank you, Carol. It's great to be in Nottingham."

The great man outlined the plot of his new novel, **Meet The Tiger**, which was an action story featuring a new character – a young adventurer who targets corrupt politicians, warmongers and other vicious felons. The audience listened intently until the novelist wound up his presentation and opened the floor for questions and comments.

"This is nothing new," said one member. "Your hero seems a lot like John Buchan's Richard Hannay from *The 39 Steps*."

"And a guy called Ian Fleming has just come out with something similar," said another.

"But my character is different," argued the author. "He's not a soldier or a secret agent."

"But he drives a flash car and gets involved with lots of young women just like Fleming's guy," said a third.

"He needs a cool name," said a fellow from the back of the room.

Up to now Carol had been quietly counting the membership and visitors fees. Now she had something to say.

"I think his vehicle should be a white sports car. In westerns the good guy always wears a white hat."

"Good point," agreed the author.

"And it seems to me that he's a sort of Robin Hood figure."

"That's right, Carol. I like to think of him as a knight in shining armour."

"Well, if he's a knight, maybe his name should be something like Lancelot or Templar."

"Templar sounds like a good name. Thanks, Carol. You're a saint."



Keith Havers

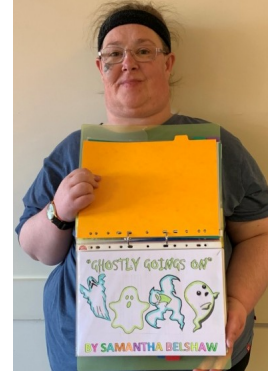
Break was the best time to eat cake (lots of cake including lemon drizzle from Mars), Jill and Carol brought along some nibbles and this editor treated Keith to a glass of wine because of his special birthday. You can see his commemorative photo on Page 2.

Samantha showed us a folder which contained a project she'd worked on at college. She'd forgotten about it but now she's found it again, wants to work on it some more.



An example page of the folder showing storyboard that are used when making dramas for TV and film.

You can see from the pictures how much work was put into the project.



Towards the end of the party, Elizabeth asked if we could all help her with how to write romance. It's something she's been interested in for a while but wasn't sure how to go about using conflict in that genre.

Several members write romance and were happy to help—and I know we keep saying this—but Q and A sessions round a table is one of the best things about being in a writing group.

It's always a bit sad when a party comes to an end and it'll be a year before the next one, but reaching our 95th birthday means we're one year closer to reaching our Centenary in 2027.

And Now It's Your Turn!

Over the last three months, we've had a varied selection of writing challenges so if you're having problems with wondering what to write, try some of these.

Using a passage from a novel written in the first person, re write it from the point of view of one of the characters but in the third person. We used a page from a Stephanie Plum novel by Janet Evanovitch who is brilliant at writing in the first person.

Take a small section from a Georgette Heyer Georgian romance novel and rewrite scenes using modern dialogue in an up to date setting.

A previously used Easter Egg challenge. You choose a blue egg (with a male name inside) then a pink egg (with a female name inside) then a green egg (with a situation inside). Write a story using those elements. These seemed an innocuous idea but Jill decided to take exception to colour stereotyping and wrote a story about a stropky teenage girl objecting to gender based confectionary. (As you do, said Jill.)

Write about a hen night from three different points of view.

Write about a stag night in a different time from our modern one.

Second Saturdays Club at the Pub

Our pub meetings are a combination of eating, drinking and talking, plus a writing challenge.

In April, it was all of the above plus Rae read out the next version of the beginning of her new novel which she'd read out in March. She'd taken all the advice on board and it was a lot better.

In May we again did all of the above—great habit to get into—and then we were set a challenge about the effective use of dialogue for different age groups and types of people. As we age, we change, whether we want to or not, and tend to view the world in different ways. We also use different dialogue and this helps to allow the reader to get to know that character.

This is a useful quote from Michael Eldridge.

'One of dialogue's primary functions is to reveal character. How characters speak, what they choose to talk about, how they relate to the world verally. These things speak volumes about people—their background, personality, sensitivity to certain situations.'

The situation we were given was:

A young man in a hoodie was running out of a supermarket clutching packets of sandwiches and a bottle of water. The security guard tackled him at the door and wrestled him to the ground.

The challenge was to choose one of the following characters and write their version of the event as they wrote it, the time limit was ten minutes and they could choose the character they wanted to write for.

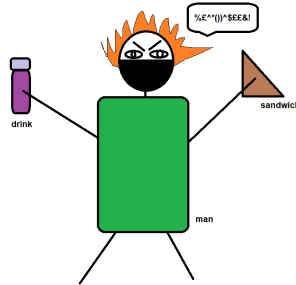
Characters	A child
	A senior citizen
	A twenty something
	A reporter wanting to sell the story

These are what some of our writers came up with and you should be able to tell which character said what from the dialogue they used.

There was this man. He was very smelly and his face was all covered over. He came in the shop after us and pushed past Mum. Mum called him the bad word but he kept going. We picked up some grown-up things; Mum let me have a Kinder egg...she never lets us have Kinder eggs! It had Paw Patrol Toby in it. Matt at school doesn't have that one. He will be jealous. If you're reading this Matt, HI!



There was a big shout at the door. The man was there being pushed by the big guard. He smells of strawberry due to always having strawberry sweets. Usually, I would have one but he was too busy. I guess because he shoved Mum the guard was shoving him? We get in trouble for that at school. People were filming it. We also get in trouble for that.



The man dropped a sandwich and drink. I felt sad as the guard took away these things. I don't like it when people take my food. I played with my Toby until the man was sent away. My Mum covered my eyes outside to the bus and I could hear more bad words being shouted. Mum told me to never repeat them. I bet you don't know them, Matt.

I wonder what was so special about the sandwich and drink? (*Liz*)

So I was In Freshcos this morning when there was this terrible kerfuffle at the checkout. I'd just come down the special offers aisle and was trying to decide whether to get the four tins of baked beans for 80p or the three tins of spaghetti and sausages for £1 when I heard all this shouting. I remember thinking why do people have to shout when they're on the phone? Why can't they just talk normally? And why can't they just write a list before they come out instead of phoning their wife every two minutes to ask if they're short of toilet paper or bananas?

Anyway, where was I? Oh yes. It turns out they weren't on the phone. They were arguing with the security guard. I dropped the tin of beans I was holding on the floor. I hate it when you get a tin home and find it's dented, don't you?

Anyway, what was I saying? Oh yes. The security guard. Simon I think his name is. Always says good morning to me when I go in. He had a hold on this young man who was struggling to get away. He couldn't have been out of his teens. Scruffy lad with long hair. Reminded me of our Kevin but without the tattoos or the piercings or the bad teeth.

Where was I? Oh yes. He was struggling... (*Keith*)

If this isn't a sad indictment of Britain in 2022 I don't know what is. The man was clearly homeless, he didn't look like he'd had a decent meal in days, maybe weeks. It wasn't even as if he'd taken something valuable to sell, it was a sandwich and a bottle of water, the very basics of survival.

And yet the security guard chased him down and tackled him to the ground and knelt on his back with him in an arm lock until the police arrived.

But I suppose that's the way in Britain today. The police are out arresting climate protesters, and homeless people, and people who had one friend come round to visit at the height of lockdown, while politicians can lose twenty million in fraudulent contracts for their fat cat party donors, and blatantly break their own lockdown laws, and no one holds them to account. (*Jill*)

Jill's version of events inspired us for the next challenge. Write a rant!
We asked for suggestions and these are what they chose for next time.

Car drivers
Lost internet
Potholes
Politicians
Brexit
Travel regulations
Ryanair
Cold Callers
Scammers

As an opposite advice to the usual, please do try this at home. Send us your takes on the above and we'll print them in the next Scribe and, if you're at the next pub meeting you can also read them out.

A Writer's Work ...

It's been a busy three months, between real-life issues, the novel, flash fiction, and the garden.

I'm working my way through the editing of my partial for submitting to this year's RNA New Writers' Scheme- with a 31st July deadline. A minimum of 10,000 words and a synopsis are required. I may have to write another chapter to fulfil that word-count, but won't know for sure until I edit the existing first-draft chapters. As I haven't worked out the rest of the plot yet, the synopsis may be short on detail.

Earlier in May, I received the news that the One Word Anthology, which includes four of my flash fiction pieces, is being withdrawn from sale at the end of June. Once the publisher completes all the paperwork and pays out the last royalties, the rights will revert to me and I'll be able to reuse or expand the stories. I have plans...

And I wrote my second ever limerick (that made sense) at the NWC 95th anniversary celebrations.

Fruit, vegetables, flowers, and herbs are growing in the garden, and the harvest so far has been tasty, with the rest going into the freezer for later in the year.



A single day's harvest



Carol Beivitt

What Do Non-Writers Think About All Day?

I know it's a slightly random question but what *do* non-writers think about all day?

It was a question that came up while I was talking with Mars and Carol one day, and we were all slightly baffled.

To put this in context, we were discussing various plots and stories that we had been thinking about recently. Carol seems to have about three things on the go and characters popping into her head at inconvenient moments (usually when she has wet hands and can't write it down), telling her all about their back stories and what they want to get up to next. Mars is busy plotting a downtrodden housewife's revenge.

I've spent the last few weeks telling myself a completely self-indulgent fanfic in my head about one of my favourite characters in the TV show *Casualty* (yes, I'm a *Casualty* fan, don't judge me). I have absolutely no intention of ever writing it or doing anything with it, it's purely going on in my head for my own entertainment.

But the thing is, I'm thinking about it pretty much at any time when I'm not actively concentrating on something else. So when I'm washing up, or walking to work, or on the bus, or in those times when you're lying in bed but haven't managed to go to sleep yet. Any spare few minutes, and I advance the story a little further in my head.

The point here is that, unless they are actively doing something that requires their full attention (and sometimes even when they *should* be giving something else their full attention) writers are pretty much always thinking about writing. Whether it's plot, characters, back story, imagining a scene or an important conversation between characters, or just an internal narrative for their own entertainment.

Which bring me back to my original question.

What do non-writers think about in those moments, or hours, of mental downtime? Bills? Housework? Planning tomorrow's dinner? Car tax? Destination for next year's holiday? What on earth do they fill all that time with?

I sometimes wonder if this is where the stereotype of the scatterbrained writer who is always off in their own little fantasy world comes from. Maybe while we're pondering fictional characters, the non-writers are sorting out all those practical real life things and keeping the world ticking along.

But I have to say, that sounds kind of boring. Occasionally necessary, but boring. So if you'll excuse me, a couple of hours ago I think I left a rather cute young doctor in an unfortunate predicament, and he is almost certainly in need of a handsome paramedic to come to his rescue.



Jill Walmsley

Back in Contact with My Editor

Based in Dundee, staff at The People's Friend magazine were subject to some of the more stringent restrictions in the U.K. during the pandemic.

As a result they were prevented from working at the D.C. Thomson offices for two years and didn't return until April 26th 2022.

During this time I received very little feedback from them and submitted nineteen stories without reply. I understood that working from home could be difficult so I didn't bother my editor about them until the beginning of May. The disappointing advice Tracey gave me was to resubmit them at the rate of one a month.

So did they disappear into an internet black hole? Are they floating somewhere in cyberspace? Did the ones I sent by post fall down the back of a filing cabinet? I'll probably never know but at least things seem to be getting back to normal.

Keith Havers



Writers' Block?

I remember writing once that if anyone ever found a cure for Writers Block they would make a fortune. I am still of that opinion.

I did have a work in progress 'Spirit of Evil' but didn't get very far with it, lost my way, ran out of ideas.

I am still one of Gypsy Shadows Authors but for how long, I am not sure. I thought my editors were having problems as they had stopped sending quarterly emails of book sales. Royalties were almost a thing of the past, going from when I had to keep the Taxman, both here and in the States, informed of earnings from book sales, to wondering if any of my stories had sold.

I now find that Gypsy Shadow are not about to shut down as I thought, they are expanding, and had just taken on another author And, I have even received some Royalties. Not much but an improvement on what I had been getting.

So what do I do, get back to finishing the work I had in progress and staying with Gypsy Shadow Publishing or start looking elsewhere ?



At the moment I am having iPad problems, can't format any work except in PDF so, until I get that sorted, I won't be looking at magazines as an outlet for my short stories.

Children, Romance, Ghost stories. Detective? Do I stick with the story I have started, only 2,000 words at the moment, or scrap it and start afresh?.

However, after another read through of 'Spirit of Evil', I have come to the conclusion it would be a shame not to continue working on this story. The opening lines and first few paragraphs I wouldn't change, they have promise, I like them.

I think it is just a case of me running out of steam, writers block, as I said at the beginning. So, 'Spirit of Evil' is no longer on the back burner, but once again it is my Latest Work in Progress.

Wish me luck.

Leatta Antcliff

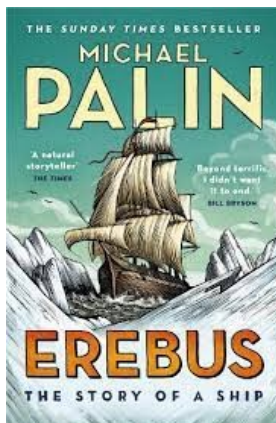
Two Very Different Sea Faring Tales

I've recently finished a really good book entitled 'Erebus - the story of a ship,' by Michael Palin, (yes, *that* Michael Palin). The book is a wonderfully written account of the true adventures of the aforementioned ship HMS Erebus on several polar explorations in the mid 19th century.

The fate of HMS Erebus is well documented by maritime historians so it isn't really a spoiler to reveal that she and her accompanying vessel HMS Terror, disappeared whilst searching for the 'North West Passage,' (a route from Europe to the far East through the Arctic waters and pack ice north of Canada). All the crew members sadly perished.

The fateful voyage began amidst a fanfare of publicity and public clamour, the British Empire at this time was all powerful and there was a feeling in the country that it was the destiny of our brave explorers to always succeed in this type of endeavour.

With the benefit of hindsight, it seems obvious that the last voyage of Erebus was always doomed. The Arctic environment was hostile and unforgiving, and by modern standards the equipment on board was primitive.



Any chance of the vessels transiting the Passage was extremely slim, and would rely heavily on good weather and good fortune - unfortunately neither of these were forthcoming.

If you enjoy true tales of derring-do then I definitely recommend this.

Whilst I was reading this account of HMS Erebus it reminded of a 'flash fiction' story I once wrote in the style of a newspaper report, which tells, of another voyage. Although not on the scale of the Erebus expedition, the 18 foot fishing boat 'Wing an' Prayer's, intended circumnavigation of Britain, was just as doomed to failure.

My story is light-hearted fiction, and by reproducing it here, I in no way mean to trivialise the efforts of the brave crew members of Erebus and Terror. If you read Palin's book you won't fail to be saddened by the outcome of the final voyage, or be impressed by the courage of those involved. As you read my story, hopefully you'll be amused and laugh at the behaviour of Cap'n Seamus O'Gooley.

Daily News **(Report by Ivor Scoop)**

The popular Irish Youtube celebrity Seamus O'Gooley has set off from John O'Groats harbour on his Round-Britain boating Challenge.

O'Gooley (47), put to sea in his modest fishing boat - 'The Wing an' Prayer' yesterday, after promising his legion of fans that his next stop would be Cornwall. O'Gooley's ambitious plan is to navigate his 18 foot wooden boat around the coastline of Britain, re-fuelling his 2 horse power outboard motor at sea. He intends to stop just once - at Land's End - and hopes to complete the whole voyage within two months.

The maverick mariner has faced heavy criticism for his planned trip, the Rescue services have been particularly harsh. Commodore Gullet of the Royal Scottish Life Boat Association has described the eccentric Irishman's plan as "beyond foolhardy", and added that he doubted if O'Gooley would get beyond the nearest headland. Gullet went on to warn possible copy-cat adventurers of the folly of such "madcap" activities.

A Channel 5 TV crew who are following O'Gooley on a support vessel will be filming the adventure for an upcoming episode of the hit prime-time television show: "Ya Couldn't Make It Up!"

O'Gooley's partner Deborah Wilson (23), watched anxiously from the quayside as the the seemingly overloaded craft appeared to be taking on water as it slowly advanced into the grey waters of the Pentland Sound. "I'm sure he'll be ok", she told the assembled media, "He's been practicing for months on the boating lake near our house".



(cont.)

Update...

BBC RADIO SCOTLAND 9 O'clock NEWS Headlines:

Rescue services, including 2 lifeboats and a helicopter, were involved in a dramatic sea rescue this afternoon off Dunnet Head on the Caithness coast. A solo boater, believed to be Irish personality Seamus O'Gooley, was pulled from the sea as his small boat sank in the heavy swell.

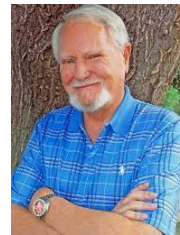
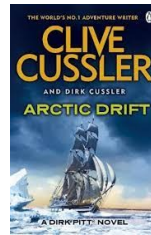
A spokesman for the Lifeboat authorities who rescued Mr O'Gooley was critical of the Irishman's behaviour: "It's sheer madness to be boating in these waters when so ill- equipped!"

A spokesman for the TV company whose film crew were on a boat apparently accompanying Mr O'Gooley said, "You couldn't make it up!"

Dave Ridsley

Editors' Note

The famous novelist, Clive Cussler, used the mystery of the Erebus and The Terror in a novel called 'Arctic Drift'.



One Very Different Birthday Party

This came first in a Club competition in 2016 and now seemed a good time to share it with you again.

The Birthday Party

Jane hated driving on her own at night, especially in winter.

'And I hate this weather,' she said. 'It's cold, it's wet and it's probably going to snow.'

She was talking out-loud because the radio was broken and the silence was getting on her nerves.

'Bloody meeting,' she went on. 'If it had finished when it was supposed to I'd be at home by now, sitting in front of the TV enjoying my dinner, but instead of that, where am I? Stuck in this car talking to myself. And what's wrong with this heater!'

She slapped at the knobs and one fell off.

'Well, isn't that just perfect.'

She glanced at the clock.

'Eight thirty. So much for going shopping when I get home. I hope the takeaway's still open.'

The lane on her right began to creep forward. Jane was tempted to change over, but she knew from experience the moment she did that, the outside lane would stop and the inside one would move.

She shivered and folded her arms across her chest. Nothing for it but to play the number plate game. This was something she always did when driving got boring, and she was good at it. She'd look at the letters and make a word, sometimes she'd even make sentences.

'WJK,' she read out as cars slowly rolled by. 'I'd have to be Polish to get that one. ZWK. Or Russian. FNH. That's easy. Finish. WRK. Work. Yep, I'm definitely finished with work. I wish it was forever.'

The cars kept moving and she kept reading.

'BOR. Yes, I'm bored. WMN. Yes, I'm a woman. I'm a Bored Woman.

SRY. Sorry. JNE. Jane. Sorry Jane. Sorry, Jane!'

A chill ran down her spine.

'That's spooky.'

She kept reading.

NOT. SPK.

'Crazy then.'

NOT. CRZ.

Jane gripped the wheel tighter.

'Of course I'm crazy. Number plates don't talk to me.'

TKG. NOW.

'How can you be!'

WNT. HLP. YOU.

'You can't help me. You're just a random set of letters!'

NOT. RDM. FOD. DNK. NXT. TRN. LFT.

'There is no next turn left. There are no junctions on this road for miles.'

NXT. TRN. LFT.

'But there aren't any ...'

PLS.

Jane shook her head to clear it.

'I'm hallucinating. It must be the stress.'

At that moment, her lane of cars started moving but, just as Jane was getting her hopes up, they stopped again - right beside a sign that read, 'Little Siddington.'

Jane stared at it.

'I've never heard of Little Siddington.'

She looked at the number plate on the next two cars as they crawled by.

NCE. PLC.

'Nice place.' She took a deep breath. 'Okay, it might be spooky and I might be crazy, but can it really be any worse than sitting in this traffic for hours?'

As the cars continued to edge forward, she looked for the turning. It was so small she almost missed it but, as her headlights shone on the sign, she could clearly read, 'Siddington Lane'.

Ignoring her misgivings, she turned into it. It was very narrow with high hedges on both sides and there were no street lamps.

'It's like driving down a tunnel,' she muttered as she leaned forward to see where she was going. 'I hope I don't meet anyone coming the other way.'

She flicked her lights onto main beam and kept peering ahead.

'So where's this Little Siddington?'

She rounded a bend and saw a house, then more houses. Lovely houses too but all of them were in darkness. The only light came from a few street lamps.

'They must go to bed early in these parts,' she said. 'So where's this place I can get food and drink?'

She rounded another bend and there it was. A tall cream-painted building with big, bright windows and a sign above the main door. She stopped and read, 'The Welcome Traveller B and B. Fine ales and home cooking.'

'Fantastic,' she sighed. 'You're a life-saver.'

She saw a car park sign and turned in. As she crunched over the gravel, she could just make out the number plates of the cars standing there.

PRK. NXT. RGT.

'Will do,' she said without thinking and pulled in. She got out of the car, picked up her bag and locked the door, too cold and hungry to worry about creepy, spooky and crazy.

As she hurried to the pub's front door, she tried to see in through the frosted windows but all she could make out were shadows moving around in the yellow and red glow.

She pushed open the door and heat blasted her face.

'Fantastic,' she sighed and pushed her way between small groups of people to get to the bar. Between the bodies, she could see the flickering of a fire.

A middle-aged woman stood behind the counter opening a bottle. She had blonde hair piled up in a style Jane recognised from her mother's wedding photos, and a lot of black eyeliner.

'Hello,' she smiled. 'What can I get you?'

'Do you have any cider?'

'I've got something better than that. Here.'

She handed Jane a glass of champagne. 'On the house,' she smiled. 'It's my birthday.'

'Thank you.'

'What's your name?'

'Jane.'

'Welcome, Jane. I'm Margot.'

She waved the bottle at the people clustered around.

'These are all my friends. I invited everyone in the village to help me celebrate.'

Happy Birthday,' said Jane and all around her people shouted, 'Happy Birthday!'

'Can I get some food?' asked Jane as she gulped the champagne. 'I haven't eaten for hours.'

'Coming right up.'

Margot put a large plate in front of her and, as Jane looked down at the toasted cheese sandwiches, her mouth watered. She picked one up and bit into it, and the heat burned her tongue.

'These are the best ever,' she said as she chewed and swallowed.

'Plenty more where they came from,' said Margot and went off with a bottle in each hand.

Jane took off her jacket and put it and her bag on the floor. She was half way through the sandwiches when Margot came back and held the bottle over her empty glass.

'I'd better not have any more,' Jane said. 'I've got to drive home.'

'Why don't you stay?' said Margot. 'We've got plenty of room and then you won't have to miss the party.'

'I suppose I could do. My husband's gone off on a stag week so he won't be worried about me.'

Margot smiled broadly. 'Then that's settled. You're staying.'

Jane sat with her glass in her hand and looked around. The fire was burning hotter now which accounted for all the red, sweating faces, but everyone was laughing, talking, drinking and eating. Every time Margot went round with the champagne bottles, there were shouts of 'Happy Birthday!'

Jane pushed her now damp hair back from her face as she felt sweat trickle down between her shoulder blades. She took another drink then put down the glass.

'I've got to get some fresh air,' she muttered as she made her way to the front door. It was locked. She pushed back through the crowds to the door at the rear. That was locked too.

'Margot always locks up at this time of night,' said a man sitting nearby. 'So gatecrashers can't get in.'

'Oh, right,' said Jane. 'Do you think she'd mind if I open a window. It's very hot in here.'

'You can try, but I think they're all painted shut.'

Jane tried a couple then gave up and went to find Margot. The room was getting way too stuffy and she was feeling dizzy.

Margot was still doing the rounds so Jane sat back down and continued eating and drinking.

Gradually she stopped noticing the heat, forgot about Sam, forgot about her problems. Instead, she leaned back and relaxed, watching Margot go round and round and listening to the shouts of 'Happy Birthday!'

'Happy Birthday!' Jane joined in, and the party went on and on.

Jack and his son, Philip, sat in their tow truck at the edge of the pub car park, the weak winter sunshine making them squint. In front of them sat Jane's

blue Honda Civic, now dusty and abandoned with dry leaves piled around its wheels. Beside it were three others.

'So it's happened again,' said Philip.

'Looks like it,' said Jack. 'If anyone gets reported missing near Little Siddington, this is the first place the police come looking. Then they send for us.'

'But they never find anyone? Not even the bodies?'

'No, just the cars.'

There was a long silence then Philip said, 'Do you think the story's true?'

'Seems to be. I was only a kid when my Dad first told me about it. Back then I called him a silly old sod, but after all these years ...' He shook his head. 'Well, it makes you think, doesn't it?'

Father and son sat in silence again and stared at the abandoned cars.

'How do you reckon she does it?' said Philip. 'You know. Gets people to go in.'

'Who knows,' said Jack. 'It's not like she can phone them, and who in their right mind would want to go in there?'

They both leaned forward and looked out of the windscreen at the blackened shell of what had once been The Welcome Traveller. It was now a sad sight with its broken windows and a tree growing through the roof.

'Story goes,' Jack went on. 'That the fire she always had burning got out of control, and no one could escape 'cos she'd locked the doors.'

'Why did she lock the doors?'

'To stop people getting in after closing time. It was a common practice back then.'

'Must have been terrible,' said Philip.

'Yeah, terrible and because everyone was at the party, there was no one on the outside to raise the alarm. My Dad said relatives tried to sell the houses but whenever anyone new moved in they moved straight out again. Reckoned the whole village was haunted.'

Jack shivered.

'It's said that on every anniversary of the party, there'd be lights in the pub windows and the sound of people screaming.'

'Spooky,' said Philip.

'Creepy,' agreed Jack. 'Ah well, we'd better get to it.'



They opened the truck's doors and jumped to the ground.

'The sooner we get these cars sorted the sooner we can go home.'

'Till next year,' said Philip.

Jack nodded. 'Till next year.'

Mars Hill

Welcome to Katharine

I'm in the process of moving back to Nottingham after nearly a couple of decades away. It's long been my favourite city and I'm surprised it's taken me so long to come back. I'm delighted to discover the Nottingham Writer's Club.



I've written in one way or another for as long as I can remember, from poetry (mostly as a teenager) to journal articles (while working in academic libraries). I currently mostly write short stories.

I write a lot of dark and twisty things that make my Mum wonder who brought me up, and prompts my boyfriend to ask "How many people die in this one?"

Once I've actually moved over here I'll probably pick up the draft of my novel and see if I can manage to finish it. I haven't looked at it in over a year, and that's quite deliberate. It was getting to the point where I just couldn't "see" it anymore for all the editing I'd done.

Speaking of editing, I have found a small group of people online to swap feedback with and suggest line edits to. I find reading and critiquing other people's work is a great way to learn, as well as helping out others.

My style is still developing, and I try new things fairly frequently. If you are interested in taking a look at my short stories, a selection of them are online at:

<https://blog.reedsy.com/creative-writing-prompts/author/katharine-widdows/page/>

My personal favourites are "Between the Black and White" which is not so dark, but very, very, sad (you have been warned), and "The King's Last Smile" which is a nod to the Grimm fairytales.

If you like to talk horror and twists I'd love to chat at one of the Saturday meetings, though I'm very open to discussion of any aspect of writing.

I'm always looking to learn!



Katharine Widdows

Letter from Brixham

Quite a lot has been happening in Brixham since my last letter. Firstly, the bad news.

Shows by Queen, Phil Collins and Bee Gees tribute acts had to be cancelled because of low ticket sales. People are still nervous about being in enclosed spaces in close proximity to others.

On the upside, the stage production of the adaptation of *Ben Hur* was surprisingly good and well received. The Pink Floyd charity concert in aid of Ukraine refugees in Moldova raised over three thousand six hundred pounds to be sent out to the rotary club there.

There was also another benefit show performed by three local groups of musicians, this time in aid of the theatre. One of the groups was Missin' Tackle Shanty Crew who sing wonderful, sometimes bawdy songs of the sea and sailors. This raised over sixteen hundred pounds.



A real highlight of the season was the Brixham Pirates Festival, now in its twelfth year. It is one of the biggest and best pirate gatherings in the world and attracts people from all four corners of the globe. The festival was held for four days over the bank holiday weekend from April 30th. Some thirty-five

thousand people visited the town providing a much-needed boost to the local economy.

Most folk made the effort to enter into the spirit of things by dressing up as pirates or pirates' wenches. Three-cornered hats, cutlasses and low-necked blouses abounded.

In all two dozen events or activities took place during the weekend but there were perhaps two items that stood out from the crowd. They were the artillery displays by the Trafalgar Gun Company and the arrival of the tall ship, *Atyla*, in the harbour.

The Trafalgar Gun Company, sporting authentic uniforms, used reproduction gun-decks, guns on carriages and artillery to give audiences a taste of what it would have been like to be in a nineteenth-century naval battle.

The beautiful tall ship, *Atyla*, came all the way from her native port of Bilbao. She is a training ship offering the experience of learning how to do all the tasks required to sail her and live on board with others.

On June 2 and 3, Brixham Theatre enjoyed its summer pantomime season (Oh, yes it did!) with a riotous performance of *Alice in Wonderland* by Hot Rock Productions.



Kids and adults alike had a great deal of fun shouting 'it's behind you' and so forth. The costumes were amazing, especially the dragon. I'm not sure if there should be a dragon in *Alice in Wonderland* as it is so long since I read the book.

Forthcoming shows include the Dave Hankin Big band, the Southwest's premier jazz orchestra, a Dire Straits tribute act and *Shadowing Hank*, another tribute.

On a more personal note, I have been doing all my usual stuff, yoga, writing for the local paper and playing music. In addition to our regular three-hour jamming sessions on Thursday afternoons I have been taking part in a two-hour, djembe drumming class on Monday afternoons.



On May 19, the Music at the Edge group was invited to play in Brixham Library thus breaking the usual sound of silence protocol. We performed six songs including one of my original creations, *Fret Me Up Baby*. It was most enjoyable and they want us to go back. We plan a programme of Beatles' numbers for the next gig there.

Well, I think that's about all for now. The old patio on the middle level of my garden was completely dug up yesterday and is now doing a very good impression of a building site.

Hope you all keep well and keep writing.
All the best.

Senga Roche

Successes for Kate Twitchin

The People's Friend - 2 poems accepted for publication (pen name: Kathryn Sennen)

Cranked Anvil - Prompt Competition, Long listed.

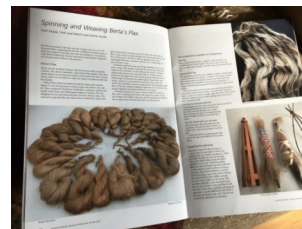
CaféLit - 1 story published online.

Secret Attic - Weekly Write 300-word Flashes, 2 wins and 6 selected.
(Sadly, Secret Attic has had to close indefinitely)



and Cath Snape

My article "Spinning and weaving with Berta's flax" has been published in The Journal of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers Summer 2022 A niche market but one I am passionate about.'



I Love Birthdays!

Happy 95th Birthday to NWC - what a great achievement.

Birthdays are great, especially when you have an amazing husband like mine who just loves to organise, in secret, birthday trips for me. And the 'big' birthdays are his specialty...

For my 50th we went to Egypt and cruised along the Nile in the SS Sudan (yep, Death on the Nile) because of my admiration of Agatha Christie.

It was so secret that when we went to get our jabs he went in first and asked the nurse not to tell me what she'd be giving me and which country we'd be visiting. That nurse was so excited, jumping up and down and giggling on my behalf, that I was afraid she'd stick the syringe in my eye instead of my arm. I had no idea where we were going until we got to the check-in desk for Cairo. Obviously, he had packed my bag for me and, yes, he did it perfectly!

Needless to say the holiday was absolutely awesome.

Fast (too fast!) forward to my 60th and this time he had to tell me where we were going a week beforehand so that I could go and buy thermal knickers because we went to Tromsø, in Norway, 200 miles north of the Arctic Circle, to see the Northern Lights.

They were incredible. It was something I'd always wanted to see and I



was not disappointed. Yes, it was cold, but I had my new thermal lingerie and he had hired the full Arctic kit, including fabulously warm boots, for the four days we were there.

It was a palaver getting dressed up ready to step outside the hotel door each day but so, so worth it.

Now, I'm not one to wish my life away, but I wonder where I might be on my 70th!



Kate Twitchin

Welcome to Carole

Hello Everyone

I have always been a 'scribbler', mostly writing poetry, from about the age of nine, and also an avid reader. Being the second eldest of family of eight, there was no money to spare for books but, after discovering the local library, I devoured them and was always accused of 'having my head in a book'.

A kind neighbour whose children I used to mind, gave me a little notebook and pen, and encouraged me to write down my poetry, some of which I have to this day.

I'm also a 'crafty' lady, loving painting, knitting and ribbon embroidery, but my enduring passion is my garden. Being out there tending the plants helped me and my husband to keep our sanity during the three months we were locked in because of vulnerability at the start of the pandemic.

I have had minor successes with my writing, having had a story published in Prima Magazine and contributing stories in a booklet that our u3a writing group published for charity. I also compiled a little poetry booklet to give to friends and family.

I was thrilled to have come third in the recent NWC National Flash fiction Competition with my 100 word story 'Idle Hands' and that has spurred me on to join the Club and begin to write again. I have missed the challenge of a monthly task since our writing group disbanded because of illness.

I also belong to a Poetry Group and we read out and explore many different genres of poetry, and sometimes read out our own.

Thank you to Mars for her help in my initial contact with the group, I and would like to wish her a Happy 50th Wedding Anniversary.



Carole Footit

Workshops

Before the pandemic, we had plans to have at least two Saturday workshops per year but, like so many things, it was put on hold.

If you enjoy workshops, please let us know what subjects you'd like us to cover. In the past we've done writing for magazines, short stories, sci fi and romance.

E mail us your ideas.

Keith Havers and I both love to cycle and we were having a conversation about riding at night. He suggested I turned it into a poem, et voila.



Out On My Bike

I'm a mere ghost wandering streets.
Silent aside from the click of the chain;
Inert on the seat with paddling feet;
Bent to the pounding ceaseless rain.

But I'm not alone on my ride.
For as a ghost, I come to haunt;
Two girls holding hands, side by side;
Walking out on a midnight jaunt.

I greet them with a friendly voice.
But with street lights I am frightening;
And a judge upon their date choice;
And they run away like lightning.

Imagine being in fear of a walk.
Out with the one you love at night;
Hiding from some bike riding dork;
Who can't see shame in the gloomy light?

Elizabeth F Coates



Keppel's Column

Over the Jubilee weekend we made the short trip to view Keppel's Column. This 115ft stone tower stands proud overlooking the main road at Kimberworth, Rotherham. It is part of the follies in Woodhouse Park, including Hooper stand and the Needle eye. It has been closed to the public for some time.

Built in 1773 and completed in 1780 it commemorates the acquittal of Augustus Keppel of cowardice after his action in the sea battle of Ushant. Commissioned by his friend Charles Watson –Wentworth it dominates the skyline. Gradually over the years it has fallen into dis-repair until the council decided to give it a major overall.

My grandmother lived in the nearby estate of Shiregreen and as a young man we would visit her and with my uncles and aunt we would make the walk across field and over a metal Baily bridge to visit and climb its 100 steps. Open to the public back then we would stand on the top platform and admire the view before descending carefully down the stone steps.

My visit last week brought back so many memories and although covered with scaffolding it clearly shows the work and progress being made in its restoration.

I do hope that once completed it will open again to the public and the thought of climbing those store steps will bring back many happy memories.



Brian Webster

Quote of the Quarter

We turn to fiction for what we can't get in real life.

Lee Child



Colin Seager's Stories

I'm a member of Christchurch U3A Creative Writing Group which meets fortnightly in 'term' time to read (and discuss) interpretations of a subject. The subject is chosen on a rota basis by a member. The subject can be a word or phrase and responses prose or poetry with a broadbrush limit of 600 words.

When we have spare time following reading/discussion we put ourselves on the proverbial spot with exercises such as:



Someone will throw out a subject and in five minutes, say, we have to write a story.

Writing haikus.

Writing a story in five minutes, stimulated by a photograph or picture.

'Another First' is my interpretation of the subject Success, and the subject of 'The Power of Words' was Whispers.

Another First

When he awoke in the cottage after the first night, it dawned on Hadleigh how different things would be. From the first-floor bedroom, rooftops of the nearest house across the valley slowly emerged into view as the early morning mist evaporated. Gone was the usual clatter of breakfast and last-minute assembly of preparations for another meeting-packed day. He was alone. No soft-grey clad, peaked-capped chauffeur waited on the drive. The beckoning day, and as many ahead as necessary, would be filled with time devoted to his new quest.

Only Hadleigh would know when his task was complete. No longer did he need public acclaim to endorse his achievement or a nought to be added to his private wealth.

It had been a painstaking journey but eventually the Shangri-la he sought had been found on the edge of Exmoor. It was a good half mile on a narrow lane from the nearest B-road. On a clear day, from the summerhouse, that would become his studio, he could see the South Wales coast.

During the last of many conversations he had with his daughter before he made the move, Alice said, "You're crackers, Dad, what would Mum have thought? No car, miles from anywhere. How long do you think you can remain incognito?"

"Long enough. I've told you, darling. I've got a bike and a pod. I'm still vertical and have both legs you know. Stop worrying. I'm not abandoning civilisation; I've kept my phone and Internet. My techies have assured me that everything possible has been done to make them hack proof."

"I still don't understand why you're doing this."

"I've told you many times, how shall I put this? I've reached a point where I'm suffering from an embarrassment of riches. I can't go anywhere without seeing my name, or someone seeking my opinion on issues of the day."

"Fine, but why hide away? You could do anything, go anywhere. Hadleigh Solar powered personnel cars and pods are used on every road on the planet, without the need for an infrastructure of charging points. Nobody thought it possible: but you did it. You've invented so many practical things. Use your great mind to develop something else. It doesn't need to be world beating like the car."

"The fact is Alice, I'm exhausted by it all. I've already pledged billions to world-wide charities, the largest of which you run. I no longer want, or perhaps



need, to be the publicly owned creature that success has made me. Remember that Welsh saying I told you about? *Look for the place for the soul to find peace.* That was trigger for me to use as much time as it takes to find it."

"I know Dad, but I believe you're not a spent force, that's all. Turn your mind to something not in the public eye."

"We'll see. Funnily enough I had an idea last week I think the NHS would love; something practical you said. As soon as I've found the place for my soul, I'll patent it and give the intellectual property to a charity. Or, perhaps, you can have it now."

"You're going to tell me, aren't you?"

"Of course, I think it could be a winner without my name attached. It's a self-cleaning bedpan. First on the market. Over to you Alice."

The Power of Words

With his slight stoop and large aquiline nose, when Frederick Littler donned his gown ready to begin another history lesson, he could be mistaken for a vulture surveying a carcass. That was the image he presented to the boys of Hornborough Grammar School.

Of the many misdemeanours that invited the master's wrath, any boy caught whispering knew that he'd receive the harshest response. To Littler such a transgression was close to being a capital offence. So much so that before delivering the punishment he'd cover his shining bald head with his black mortar board, complete with its tattered tassel.

The boys of form 4S had good reason to believe that when he was born there was no place in the queue when senses of humour were distributed: not

even a semblance. To them, with little or no affection, he was known as 'Lennie.'

In one lesson, a continuation of studying the court of Henry VIII, young James Simpson make the mistake of being caught, not only whispering, but simultaneously passing a note to Robert Collingwood sitting at the adjacent desk. In the note Simpson had referred to Littler by his nickname using the correct spelling, 'LeNez.'

That was enough for Littler to reach for his mortar board, pull himself to his full height and demand, "Come here boy."

Unfortunately, Simpson was one of the three boys in the class wearing spectacles, a particular *bête noire* for Littler.

"What have I told you about whispering, Simpson? Only snivelling conspirators indulge in such... such idle nonsense. What devious games are you and Collingwood up to now? What? What?"

He waved the note at the whole class, all knowing what was to follow. All desperate to keep a straight face and avoid Littler's eyes.

"And what is this? L, E, N, E, Z? Do you think I don't know? Did you not think that I can speak French? At least God has given me the ability to smell a bad boy and know what needs to be done."

Kittler slowly removed Simpson's glasses, rolled up his right sleeve, opened his hand and spread his fingers. He angled the boy's cheek preparing it to receive the full force of his weaponised hand.

"That's for whispering, boy."

He tilted the other cheek, delivering another equally severe blow.

"And that's for insulting your elders."

Such occasions were the only time any of the students could remember Littler revealing a mere hint of a smile when, before dismissing a culprit, he'd study the cheeks in eager anticipation to see if there were any red wheals beginning to bloom.

The only pupil ever to avoid Littler's brutal educational methods was Biggs, who happened to be the son of the new headmaster.

On a late spring day, with windows open, Littler, suddenly stopped droning on about Queen Mary's sobriquet, 'Bloody,' being unwarranted, and turned on the class.

"Who's that whispering at the back?"

"Nobody, sir," said `Biggs, "It's the susurrantion caused by the breeze in the trees."

"Thank you, Biggs, I know now why your name is Alec." That was it, no "come here boy," just mild sarcasm.



James Simpson, who now wears contact lenses, felt no remorse when he learned that Littler, had been forced to take early retirement some twenty-years before the ban of corporal punishment in 1986. Neither did he care if the whispered rumours he started, about Littler having been a member of the Gestapo, contributed towards that decision.

Colin Seager

Happy Birthday, Marcel

The past month of May was my son's Marcel 9th birthday.

He is the most wonderful boy I have ever met. I feel lucky and blessed to have him as my son. He is growing to be tall and handsome and he says that one day he would like to be an Art teacher because he loves Art.

Marcel is important to all of us in our family because there is no happiness without him in our home. He enjoys going to the cinema, watching TV animations and getting toys. The day of his birthday, the 26th of May, he was happy to blow his 9 candles on top of his guinea pig cake, and he let his sister Elvira blow the candles with him as well.

We love him.

Happy 9th birthday Marcel.



Rosa Parra

Editors' Note. Rosa is a family member with her husband and children, and now her mother, Elvira, is joining them.



My mum and I wrote an article in Spanish about our opinion about the war and conflict between Russia- Ukraine.

We coordinated it together. I wrote the first part and she continued the second part and the end. The article has been published in my mum's writers blog (obviously in Spanish).

<https://elviraparra.wordpress.com/>

I have translated into English for anyone who would like to read it.

Name Dropping

Is it OK if I do a bit of name dropping?

Firstly - I was absolutely delighted to have my three entries to the NWC 100-word competition make it onto the long list and even more delighted when one of them became a runner-up. However, the cherry on the cake was when I learned that 3rd place was awarded to my very own Auntie Carole!

Carole has now joined NWC, so she will be introducing herself to you on another page in Scribe



but I just wanted to let you all know what an important influence she has been on my writing. She gave me my first grown up dictionary in my early teens, which I still have. It's looking a bit battered but then, so am I, half a century later.

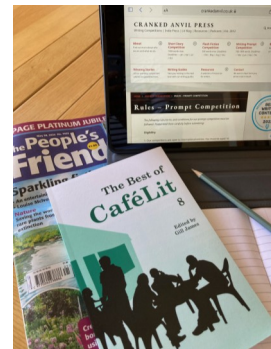
She's a very modest person so it's quite difficult to get a look at her work but I do have a cutting from Prima Magazine from about twelve or thirteen years ago when she was a runner-up in one of their competitions. It was a piece of flash fiction with a clever twist at the end and I've kept it, filed in my 'Inspirations' box, ever since. She

writes poetry too - often poignant, always witty - which I tell her she should submit to The People's Friend.

Carole introduced me to NWC when she entered one of your National Short Story competitions a few years ago. Since I retired and began doing more writing, she has been really encouraging and supportive. Everybody needs an Auntie Carole. Mind you, I'm not sure how I'll cope with the pressure of knowing that she will be one of my rivals in the Quarterly Competitions!

Secondly - Anyone who regularly reads The People's Friend will know the names of two of their favourite authors, Alyson Hilbourn and Alison Wassell. Their work can also be found in many other women's magazines and Alison has been published by the likes of Retreat West, Reflex, and Bath Flash Fiction.

So, what have they got to do with me? I was really pleased to be long listed in the March 2022 Cranked Anvil Prompt Competition. That was it, just long listed, but still a tremendous thrill for me because alongside me in that long list were Alyson and Alison (Alison went on to take 3rd place). How about that then? Please don't laugh! It really gave me a boost to think that I was up there with those two talented ladies.



That's it, that's my news. In the grand scheme of things not exactly earth-shattering, but if we don't find this sort of thing encouraging then we are missing out on some small but powerful little fillips. (And isn't that a great word, fillip?)

All the best and may your writing life be filled with fillips.

Kate Twitchin

Peter Hilton's Royal Jubilee

The road was closed, the bunting was up and the union jacks were flying. Then the rain started.

We had been planning our street party to celebrate the Queen's platinum jubilee for weeks. Families along the full length of the road had helped to amass tables, chairs, tablecloths, crockery, cutlery, cups, glasses, and a vast quantity of food. We had planned games, music, karaoke and a raffle.

There was much talk about the Queen's coronation, and we should have remembered that on that day in 1952, it rained non-stop.

70 years later in 2022, the weather was the same. Some things never change!

A new plan was called for.

One of our neighbours offered to host the party indoors and we all crowded in.

By bringing in garden furniture, seats were provided for everyone in the sitting room, kitchen and conservatory, with the food laid out as a buffet on the dining table and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, the entertainments had to be cancelled, due to lack of space, but everyone enjoyed the get-together and the raffle raised £250 for Ukraine.



Peter Hilton

A Whirlwind Month

It has certainly been that.

I joined LinkedIn, which means getting bombarded with thousands of job alerts every hour or so, all for technical or medical writers or requiring experience in the dreaded SEO. God only knows how many actual job matches I may have missed among the endless emails.

Luckily, one did catch my eye, and I am now a contributor to Meer magazine - an online platform with global reach and an internationalist outlook. My first article will be published on completion and submission of my fourth, so not until September, but at least it's the first step to being a bone fide freelancer, I suppose!

I have become so accustomed to rejection or simply being ghosted by agents that I actually submitted my latest novel, *As Long As There's Music*, to a few before it was even finished. Luckily, I did complete it last week. Which is fortunate, as I got a request for the full manuscript just days later! I am trying not to get my hopes up.

In other news, I have just enrolled onto an MA in Creative Writing with Hull Online University. The last time I went back to school, I left with a PGCE and as a result now have 15 years of teaching under my belt.

I am a great believer in the value of education and its potential to transform our lives. I really hope that in two years time my writing will be so much more than just something I do to keep busy in the school holidays.



Rae Toon

Success

I also have a novel available on Amazon. It's called *Post Midnight Blues*, and is the trapped narrative of a harrowed hermit and her home-sick hound. You can find it there with the following code.

Toonery, Rae: 9798543559918: Books

And read my work at:

www.raetoonery.com/blog



Welcome to Geoff Anderson

Hi everyone

I joined the NWC as part of the Flash Fiction Competition and this is a bit about me.

NON-writing info:

b1942. I have 4kids and 10grandkids. I built furniture for 5 years, played the guitar and sang, I was in the Uni squash team., managed the Russian choir for 7 year, acted in 20 plus plays and did a 2 year writing course.

Academic Writing:

Dissertation Exeter BA French; awarded three-year State Scholarship; got MA, quit PhD to form troupe to tour five cathedrals with m translation of 13thC French miracle. Later translated/produced Racine's only comedy.

Plays

for Liverpool Cathedral, Kidderminster Festival, and for two Helsby pageants.

Stories

(9) one to help American lover believe we'd survive a year apart (we did); two instead of essays at Queens Theological College: Christmas story 1985 in Church Times.

Short Humorous Dramas

40.

Sermons

100s!

Poems

dozen.

Musicals

(book and lyrics) 1981 Rock On Simon Peter "Some strains of Superstar" but generally refreshingly original, and, without being patronising, most in the same class." (Sheffield Star); 1983 Damascus Roadshow; 1998 Saul. (54 songs in all.)

Novel

The Legend of Aranrhod won the David St John Thomas award for Best Marketed Self-Published novel 2007. Sold 1,300. "Read it 5 times – my fave book!" (teen girl).

Deputy Edited

"Literary Magic", published online from NY. 2008-09.

Associate Writer

2002-09 global publisher, Redemptorist Publications. Helped found Anglican Dept.

Writing a novel.



Our Writing Friends News from Beeston U3A



I love poetry.

Unfortunately, not everyone in our creative writing group does. Many of us were put off by dry lessons with teachers stressing the importance of metaphors, enjambement and iambic pentameters. I should know as I was one of those teachers!

Consequently, members of our group have avoided any attempt at writing poetry because of negative memories.

Over the years we have persevered to include at least one session on poetry in every twelve months. We have had guest poets; we have had a poetry morning at Nottingham Castle; we have looked at ballads; we have enjoyed haikus; we have had as much 'fun' as possible to make poetry accessible to all.

For May's meeting a couple of us who are interested in poetry decided it was time that we took a more grown up look at it and its specific techniques. How to do this without killing off any interest whatsoever?

The first thing to tackle was not rhyme but internal rhythm. Everyone can hear when a poem does not scan as it has a natural beat.

Rather than look at music, where it also occurs, we looked at Limericks. A selection of Limericks was given to everyone but with a line missing. This line was then filled in following the rhythm of the poem - although, rhyme helped here as well. This led to some hilarious, if not rude, results but the message about the importance of rhythm was made.

For our second hour we looked at other poetic techniques: in particular, the importance of the senses, metaphors, similes, alliteration, and assonance. A crib sheet had been provided previously to remind writers what the techniques were, and the group was taken through a 'walk through' poem.

Having thought about a place which meant much to each of us, a list of the senses associated with that place was drawn up. Each line was then tackled separately with the instruction to include a simile, the next a metaphor, the next some alliteration and so on. Although somewhat contrived, nevertheless it produced some fascinating results which members of the group took away to work on in their own time.

The finished poems were then placed on our website beestonwriting.com. It was challenging but appreciated by the majority.

By the time that this newsletter comes out, we shall also have had a session on using similar techniques in our prose writing. We shall be looking at metaphors and similes and how to keep them fresh and not clichéd. Did you know that 'the apple of his eye' is as old as Alfred the Great?

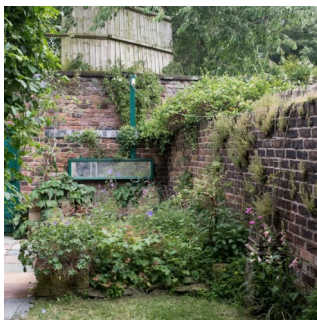
Time for some new ones, methinks.

**Helen Stewart
Group Facilitator**

Lockdown Garden

An enclosed garden like a secret,
Hidden from the outside world.
The shrill unfettered call of a robin reminds me
That he is free within this prison of greenery.
Growing grass gives off the essence of germination
Although I am wasting in mind and body and
Can detect an underlying stench of neglect in the air.
The earth should feel warm under my hands
But it gives cold comfort with its corpse-like touch.
The food in my mouth pierces me and
Leaves me with a blood-red, metallic taste.
Will I ever be able to escape my pandemic prison?

Helen Stewart



Romantic Novelists' Group The Nottingham Story Weavers

It seems a common theme these days here in Nottingham that writers get together in pubs, eat lunch and talk. Normally this one meets at O'Neills where they let us have the round table at the back which you see in the picture.



Last time, that area was booked out be a football club and we couldn't use it. Instead we had to sit in the main bar which is unfortunately much closer to the speaker playing loud music.

Not that it stopped us talking almost non stop, although it did go quiet for a short time while we ate our lunch.

Some of the conversation was about audio books and as I was the only one who listened to a lot of them, I was able to suggest to Tullia that the best ones are narrated by actors. Although authors can make a reasonable job of reading their own work, actors are much better at different voices which help to bring the story to life.

Caroline has had a busy career so far.



Carol

Talia

Vasiliki

Caroline

This Amazon bestselling author is widely travelled, having lived in Jamaica, Kenya and Canada and her writing reflects her travels and the wonderful diversity of the world.

She has also won many awards. Caroline freely admits to seeing life through rose-tinted glasses and loves blending the distinct cultures of her characters, oftentimes with explosive results, but always with a happy romantic ending.

With themes of substance, Caroline's novels not only entertain, but also teach respect for our differences. She is both traditionally and independently published and her novels have appeared in the Amazon Top 10 over various categories.

So far, Caroline has written ten novels and appeared in several international anthologies. The busy author is currently working on two novels and her first non-fiction self-help book intending to empower women.

Novels

Ladies Jamaican
Caribbean Whispers
Saffron's Choice
Call Me Royal
Call Me Lucky
The Cat Café
Distracting Ace
Convincing Kyle
Avoiding Matthew
The Pussycat Trap



Anthologies

Valentine Pets & Kisses (i)
Valentine Pets & Kisses (ii)
Shades of Love



Apart from always hiding behind the camera, I had to leave them early, so missed out on the last part of the lunch. It's never easy getting a group of writers to stop talking, but I finally managed it with a swift goodbye, a 'see you soon' and a reminder that the pub probably closed about 11pm.

CHANGES TO COMPETITION RULES

Check them out on Pages 55 and 56 and if you have any questions you can e mail us for more information. Our addresses are on the Committee Page 57.

The Problems of Writing Poems in Hot Weather

The problem of writing poems in hot weather is that the words get sweaty and stick together.

Brian Bilston



Poetry Results

This Year I Will

Adjudicator:	Mark Gilbert
First Place:	I'll No Longer Dream by Kate Twitchin
Second Place:	The To Do List by Elizabeth Coates
Third Place:	My Dancing Legs by Brian Webster

Adjudicator's Comments:

I was honoured to judge this competition as it is always a pleasure to see the skills of the members applied to poetry.

The theme allowed the entries to let their imaginations run wild over a very broad scope, and all of the poems had intricate structures as a foundation.

Above all they exhibited the kind of effortless rhyming than most of us can only dream of. As usual I encourage the poets to read their work out loud, to others or themselves, to get a feel for where the rhythm works or doesn't work, because in my view combining rhyming with a natural flowing rhythm can produce a really effective poem where all the components work together. All of the entrants had already done the hard work, in terms of meaningful and entertaining content (and rhymes, of course).

'*I'll No Longer Dream*' was my favourite. Well constructed with nice rhymes and for the most part a tight and entertaining rhythmic structure that I found very pleasing as it enhanced the content. I think a lot of us will relate to it as our writing changes over the years.

'*The To Do List*' had some delicious rhymes, such as 'basket/casket' and 'sir!/stir'. I really loved the line 'pinny on, full of pert and pep!' Like many millions I empathise with the sentiment here (apart from the pinny, in my case). For me it's a little too focused on the rhymes rather than balancing them with a rhythm which allows the words to flow more naturally, and in a few places I felt it was creaking a little.

'*My Dancing Legs*' was an ambitious and poignant story impressively expressed in a poem. The repeating line works well, keeping it grounded until the final twist. For me there's a lot of great content here to work on, and I feel it would be improved by considering how to get the rhythm to flow a little better.



Mark Gilbert writes short poetry, medium poetry and short prose. He is a regular contributor to on-line and print haiku journals, occasionally proper poetry journals, and even more occasionally publishes short prose or flash fiction. He also appears on podcasts talking about short poetry.

Winning Poem

I'll No Longer Dream

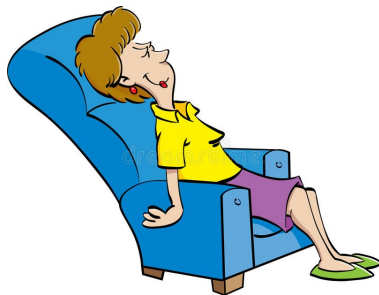
This year I will cast off my childhood dream
(Something that's long overdue)
That when I grow up I will write lots of books
Like Narnia and Winnie The Pooh

This year I will throttle my teenage dream
(Something I blush to narrate)
That I will write poems to rival the best
Heaps better than Shelley or Yeats

This year I will murder my mid-life dream
(Something too daft to relate)
That I will write novels to shake up the world
A pity I've left it too late!

This year will be different, I'll no longer dream
(So this is what old age is for!)
I'll write without reason, but plenty of rhyme
And I won't give a damn who I bore!

Kate Twitchin



Prose Results

This Year I Will

Adjudicator: Clare Cooper
First Place: No More Resolutions by Kate Twitchin
Second Place: This Year I Will by Mars Hill
Third Place: Better Late than Never by Keith Havers

Adjudicator's Comments:

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this year's entries. All were entertaining, with good, identifiable, strong leading characters, and all were that little bit different in their approach to the theme.

It's often surprisingly difficult to wind a story up in a way that brings it all together nicely, without being twee or trite, and I'm pleased to say all the entrants managed this really well.

No More Resolutions

This story has a great, "grabby" first line that immediately hooks you. A good, easy, flowing style. It packs a lot in and you get a real feel for her life. I'm sure many of us can relate to her sentiments, as well! I like that she carried on with the rest of her resolutions anyway – something many of us fail miserably at. A good ending, too.

This Year I Will

A nice idea, touching, well-written and with an upbeat ending which comes as a pleasant surprise. Again, you get a real sense of her life here and of her touchingly close relationship with her characterful aunt.

Better Late Than Never

I enjoyed this story. The ending is neat and satisfying and he has solved his own dilemma over his resolutions. Nicely done, with some light humorous touches. I especially enjoyed the brief interactions with his annoying older sister! I think the writer captures the fears and frustrations of adolescence really well.

Our judge, **Clare Cooper**, worked in Woman's Weekly magazine's Fiction Department for 29 years. As Deputy Fiction Editor, she was responsible for reading, critiquing, choosing and editing the short stories for her magazine and its monthly spin-off title, The Fiction Special. She is an avid book and magazine reader, although she can't quite break the habit of looking for errors. One day, she hopes to write something of her own. In the meantime, you can read her blog at claredotcooper.wordpress.com and find her on social media.



The Winning Story *No More Resolutions*



This year I will murder my mother. I've been saying it every year, for years, but it really does have to be this year because she's not getting any younger and I don't want her to die of natural causes.

I want it to look like natural causes, of course I do, I'm not stupid, but I don't want her to drift off peacefully into that long deep night or whatever the phrase is. That wouldn't do at all. Besides, I'm ashamed of myself for not keeping this particular New Year Resolution, the fulfillment of this desire has been outstanding for far too long.

I'm normally pretty good at keeping New Year Resolutions.

I've had lots of success over the years with all the easy ones: weight loss, exercise regimes, reduced alcohol intake. I started yoga one January about thirty years ago and still practice every day. I can play the piano, passably. Speak French, enough to get by. Bake all kinds of bread, even sourdough. I can do loads of things thanks to my ability to make and stick to resolutions.

Now I sound as if I'm bragging, tut tut, mother wouldn't like that. Anyway, about my resolution to smother my mother - ooh, that's funny, smother my mother, I like that - I've carried that one forward from year to year for, what is it now, fifty, no, fifty-four years.

Of course, I've never written that particular resolution down. For a start Mum used to read my diaries but, more importantly, I'd have been in hot water if I did carry it out one year and failed the 'natural causes' brief; the police would take my diaries as a gift. No, every January 1st, I write that resolution in a beautifully illustrated, imaginary diary, which I keep locked in a bejewelled, imaginary box, inside my mind. I take it out from time to time and read it, think about it, plan, dream and scheme, but, so far, I have failed to keep it. Obviously.

I'm aware that keeping a diary or 'journal' is all the rage now. Good for your mental health and well-being, apparently. I was nine when Ursula, my favourite aunt, gave me a proper grown up diary. I think she knew I'd need an outlet, somewhere to keep my secrets, to record and sort out my thoughts and experiences. She knew my mother (her sister-in-law) of old. But nine? It wasn't normal, in 1968, to consider a child's mental health, anyone's mental health, thinking about it. Phrases like 'pull yourself together' were the order of the day. I think Ursula must have been very forward thinking; she was certainly a very caring and perceptive woman. I loved her dearly and I miss her.

I adored that first diary with its thickly padded red velvet cover and pages edged with gold, and its delicate little lock. It only lasted six weeks, that lock and its tiny, weeny key, before it got broken. Mum said she accidentally knocked it to the floor when she was dusting my bookshelf and the lock got bent out of shape and the key disappeared, swallowed up by the vacuum cleaner. Anyway, that diary never locked again but it didn't matter because, as Mum said, there wasn't anything interesting in it.

I don't know what happened to it and its successors, maybe they got thrown out during one of her Spring cleans, I just know that none of them made it with me into adulthood. I sometimes think it'd be fun to read those diaries from my childhood and adolescence but maybe Mum was right, maybe all they contained were boring accounts of the sweets and comics I bought with my pocket money and what we had for tea.

I know I made resolutions as a child, I remember writing them in my neatest handwriting on the first page each year. They would have been things like: I will stop biting my nails, I will not dawdle home from school, I will not be noisy or untidy. I don't know, I can't really recall, but I do remember that I was aware, even as a child, that I must never write my innermost thoughts because they might be read and then I would be ridiculed, despised, humiliated, punished. Innermost thoughts? At nine years old? Yep, I had them, lots of them, mostly to do with getting orphaned and going to live with Aunt Ursula, or finding out I'd been mistakenly swapped for a royal baby in the hospital and going to live in Buckingham Palace.

So, what you are reading now is special, I need you to know that. I've had sessions with therapists and counsellors in the past; they identified low self-esteem as the cause of my depression. They taught me to love myself, to believe in myself, but most importantly, they gave me the tools I need to endure my mother's unnatural behaviour.

However, here I am, back on the couch or, in this case, your creaky wicker chair made comfy with old but friendly cushions. You are the first person to suggest I 'journal'. You said it would be good for me. You told me to buy a journal I would



enjoy holding, looking at and using. And you said I should use a nice pen. Seriously? To write down why I wish my mother was dead, I'm to use a 'nice pen'? As you can see, I've used a lined A4 refill pad and a biro.

Sorry to disappoint you but, really, my mother isn't worth the expense of a special notebook. Especially not one of those with quotes, with those nurturing and supportive little sayings. I've nurtured myself, thank you very much, albeit with the help of those therapists I told you about.

Don't ask me why the depression has come back, after all these years. Hang on, you are asking, it's your job, so I suppose I have to try to tell you. Why do I feel like there's a black hole in my heart that I'm falling into? I'm acting kind and caring whilst wishing I could clobber her over the head and be done with it all, with her. It's like I'm living a double life and it's exhausting. How mental does that sound? I need to think this through. Think. Think. Think.

The thing is, she's eighty-seven now, my mum, and she's just as nasty, bullying and professionally manipulative as she's always been. And me? I'm gritting my teeth and playing the loving, dutiful daughter. Running errands, making GP appointments, fetching prescriptions, doing her online supermarket shopping. She's getting more and more frail, disappearing before my very eyes. And she's scared. And lonely.

That should make me happy, shouldn't it? I should want her to stay alive long enough to get more scared, more lonely, to become totally dependant on others, particularly for all those personal things, the bathing and the toileting. I should relish watching her lose her dignity, witness her embarrassment and shame. All the things she made sure I felt as I grew up.

But I'm finding it really tough. You asked me to write about what I feel for my mother now that she is nearing the end of her life. I don't know. Pity? Maybe. Hatred? Strangely, no. It's weird, the more I think about it and put it down in writing, the more I find that I don't want her to suffer and I don't want to kill her. Punishing her is losing its appeal.

Crikey, is this it, is it working, this journalling thing? I think I feel...gratitude. Gratitude? I can't believe I just wrote that! The thing is... Let me get this straight. The thing is... She created me, that's it, she gave birth to me, yes, but more than that, she made me. Made me the person I am today. Yes, I've needed help from people like you but I've worked at it too, done the homework, learned to cope, to survive, to thrive. People tell me I'm a sympathetic and empathetic listener and that talking to me helps them to sort out their muddled thoughts. Maybe. I don't know, but it's what they say about me. Wow, where did that come from? I've just 'blown my own trumpet'!

I think I'm going to stop now. I've got better things to do, things I enjoy, that give me pleasure and make me feel good. Like yoga and playing the piano and baking bread. And I don't think I need to do this anymore.

You'll read this, of course you will, that was the point of the exercise, and you'll want to talk about it. But I don't think we need to discuss it. I think it's done it's job. All I will ask is that you destroy it after you've read it. I don't want it back. I live alone so there's no danger that my mother will find it and read it but, well, I'd really hate for it to fall into the wrong hands.

That's it.

Finished.

Thank you.

No more resolutions.

Kate Twitchin



Forthcoming Competitions **A Summer of Romance**



Prose

Write us a love story. It doesn't have to be the conventional tale of man meets woman, they argue a lot before falling in love and living happily ever after. It can be any kind of story featuring any of the many kinds of love.

Make us sigh with happiness or cry along with broken promises in no more than 1,500 words.

Poetry

Through the centuries, poets have written about love, so it should be very easy for any of our talented wordsmiths to find inspiration for this one. You can write in any style as long as it isn't any longer than 40 lines.

Please e mail your entries to marshill29@hotmail.com

NO MORE STAMPS

As you probably know, postage stamps are now bar coded and from the beginning of next year old stamps can't be used. The Committee decided this was a good time to make changes to the way competitions are paid for.

Stamps used to be useful. We posted entries to the judges, gave them stamps so they could post them back, posted stories and poems back to the members who didn't live in Nottingham. We don't do any of this now.

So, from this competition onwards (closing date mid September 2022), you can pay the £2 per entry in one of the following ways.

Bank transfer (BACS)

Cash at Club meetings

By cheque or postal order if you don't like online banking

Although this feels like an increase, it's actually a saving, because you will no longer need to pay for paper, printing and postage. The money we receive goes to our judges for their time and expertise.

Membership renewals are in September (except for people who joined along with the Flash Fiction competition), so, if you want to, you can include entrance fees with your renewal payment.

Four prose competitions will be £8.

Four poetry competitions will be £8.

Cont.

Any unused payments will be carried forward to the next year and our bank account details can be requested from our Treasurer, Carol Bevitt.

cbevitt@hotmail.com

If you need any more information, please let us know.

New Competition Rules and Guidelines

These have changed. Please read carefully.

Although all entries sent by e mail instead of being printed and posted, the following formatting rules still apply.

Prose entries must be typed with **double spaced lines**, and **indented paragraphs**. It does **not** need extra line breaks between paragraphs (many versions of Word add an extra line break between paragraphs as a default, but this can be turned off in your settings). **Each page should be numbered.**

Prose entries must have a cover page with the following information: The **title** of the story, the author's **pseudonym**, the **word count**, and **which competition** it is for.

Poetry entries must have a cover page with the following information: The **title** of the poem, the author's **pseudonym**, the **number of lines** and **which competition** it is for.

Your real name must not appear anywhere on the manuscript or as part of the story. This is to preserve anonymity and ensure impartiality by the judges who are occasionally members of NWC. Please use a different pseudonym for each entry.

You may submit as many entries as you like to the prose and poetry competitions unless there is limit set by the adjudicator which will be specified at the time.

If you come to meetings, please pay £2 per entry in cash.

If you live outside of Nottingham, please pay £2 per entry by BACS, cheque or postal order.

Although it is not mandatory, adjudicators will normally provide a short paragraph commenting on individual entries. However, some adjudicators may provide more feedback than others. In all cases, the adjudicator's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.

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***No member's work is published in this magazine
without their permission.***

Back Page Poem

Punctuation Blue's

My punctuations' awful
Although I've got a drawerful
Of books that help a lot,

My semicolons; tragic'
It quite destroys the magic;
My style; just goes; to pot;

Colons: are catastrophes:
I cant' get apostrophe's
To take their rightful s'pot,

My commas, are, too common,
I rely too much on 'em,
(The end should have a dot) ...

The exclamation mark! is
Supposed to shock! but "Hark!" is
My hundredth!! on the trot !!!!

I've punctuated badly
throughout my life – but "sadly
I couldn't give a JOT .,;?!:

Geoff Anderson