

# *The Society of Civil Service Authors*

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4 Top Street  
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LE15 8SE

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10 Malcolm Road  
Woodside  
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LONDON  
SE25 5HG

## Treasurer:

Adrian Danson  
38 Cumberland Road  
BROMLEY  
BR2 0PQ

## Competition Secretary:

Ronald C Jeffreys  
186 Lewis Flats  
Lisgar Terrace  
LONDON  
W14 8SQ

## Publicity Officer:

Bernard Stanley  
29 Stanley Green West  
Langley  
SLOUGH  
Berkshire  
SL3 7RE

## Diary

AGM Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2000

Closing Date WG & FG Froud  
Autobiography Competition  
31<sup>st</sup> May 2000

An Afternoon of Readings  
Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2000

Poetry Workshop Weekend  
14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> July 2000

Closing Date for PW Poetry  
Competition 31<sup>st</sup> July 2000

Annual Lunch  
Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2000

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## Editor:

Howard Frost  
'Denefield'  
Bradford Road  
Tingley  
WAKEFIELD  
WF3 1QN  
0113 252 6970

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# *The Civil Service Author*

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## CONTENTS

- 3 Editor's Notes
- 4 Letters
- 5 Competition News
- 9 Solution to 'Fruit' Crossword from Issue 148
- 10 A Hero *William Wood*
- 13 The Third Way Out *John Edwards*
- 17 Poetry Workshop Page
- 18 Poetry Pages
- 20 Spellbound *Iris Breese*
- 24 The Last Ashtray *Ken Muncer*
- 26 Market Information *Gordon E Gompers*
- 28 The Screaming Hill *Barbara Olive Smith*
- 32 Some Aspects of Buddha & Buddhism  
*Roger F de Boer*
- 33 Maupassant in Normandy *Brian Jones*
- 37 'Vegetables' Crossword *Karen Lowe*
- 38 An Afternoon of Readings Notice
- 39 AGM Notice
- 40 Map for St. Vincents Centre

## EDITOR'S NOTES

**Howard W. Frost**

**M**ay I first apologise for the late appearance of Number 148. Alan Gibb and I had a number of problems putting it to bed and as usual every delay, however slight, seemed to generate a longer one at the next stage of the procedure.

We are of course now a little more aware of where the potential danger areas are and will attempt to avoid them in the future.

For the record then and in order to “cut ourselves some slack” as the saying goes, the four annual issues will be – Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn and should (notice I am still being cagey, it's a self-defence thing) arrive with members during the months of December, March, June and September respectively.

It would help therefore if contributors could let me have copy by the last days of October, January, April and July so that I have time to fit in the necessary reading and selection which precedes the actual typescript production.

Will members also note that address changes should be sent to the Membership Secretary and not myself. As we now have the Data Protection Act to conform to, and as I do not need a copy of the membership list (Alan Gibb deals with mailing the magazine out to members) the Society would be hard put to justify my having a copy should it ever become necessary to do so.

I am also pleased to note that the Society has a new Publicity Officer – Bernard Stanley, so any publicity matters should now be addressed to him (see separate notice).

I cannot know how Winter affects all of you, and your writing, but my own creativity has been reduced considerably of late (except that is for the hundreds of letters, reports etcetc that I have had to produce at work and in college) and I must confess that I have found myself reading more fiction and listening to more music than I have had time to do for several years – albeit in short sessions at lunchtime and before bed. I recently borrowed a new translation of *Eugene Onegin* from my local library, which I must confess I enjoyed far more than the one I read a few years ago prior to appearing in the opera and I also seem to keep hearing snatches of Gilbert

and Sullivan Opera music (or should that be operetta – I have my own views and definitions).

For a little while I wondered why there was suddenly a new translation of the Pushkin and why I was hearing all the old familiar tunes again and then it dawned on me it is all to do with the power of the Movie camera. Whilst I was hibernating some bright spark has made two new films, one of “Onegin” and the other about G & S. As a result, however good or bad the movies are, two eras of creative history have been revisited and the creative talents of three people reconsidered.

Now there’s a thought folks, if what you write is good enough to be set to music by a good composer perhaps some day, in about a hundred years, someone will turn the subject matter into a film. ’Bye for now, I’m off to write an epic poem.

## **Letters**

### **Dear Howard,**

I’m writing to tell you that I am giving up my membership of the S.C.S.A.

The society has been kind enough to give me a forum to air my love of poetry and animals, and I have enjoyed my membership! It’s funny, as you grow older, that your interests change and develop! I now find myself writing radio plays and film scripts! (Still about animals!)

Thus, I’ve decided to join more appropriate societies, but shall miss the “companionship” of the society, and would like to thank everybody for their help and friendship. Also – thanks for putting up with me – within these hallowed pages.

I wish everyone well in their writing projects!

Never give up!

Love

Julie Marie Callan

Retired Poet!

My name is Bernard Stanley and I work in the Benefits Agency in Slough. I will be taking over the job of Publicity Officer from Valerie Whitmarsh. I would like to wish her all the very best in her retirement.

Before joining the B.A. I worked to a professional photographer and then drifted into freelance photojournalism. I also spent several years working in the art departments of several printing companies.

I love writing short stories and I think if I recycled all my rejection slips there would be enough paper to print the Author on for the rest of the year.

The Author is a great little magazine and I am determined to get details of it displayed on every notice board in Britain – and beyond. I think we should take that brave leap forward and get dot commed with our own web page. Hopefully by our next issue that will be up and running.

It will take me a few weeks to get settled in and get on top of all the bump that goes with the job. In the meantime, please write to me if you have any ideas on publicity. Let me have the name of any friendly librarian who will display our material. Send me details of your inter office courier services, etc.

If you're in the Benefits Agency send anything in a grid to me at 'FINANCE, SLOUGH B.O.' Everyone can write to me at 29, Stanley Green West, Langley, Slough, Berkshire, SL3 7RE.

## **THE DOUGLAS MORGAN MEMORIAL PRIZE FOR THE MILLENNIUM NOVEL COMPETITION.**

### **THE RESULTS.**

**The winner of the £200 Prize was:– NO TIME FOR POETRY William Wood, Etchingam, East Sussex.**

#### **Runners-up:–**

TO CURE THIS DEADLY GRIEF Sandra Gaffney

THE CRUISE Elvira Bridges

LOVE CHILD Margaret McKinlay

CAITLIN Terry Austin

ACKROYD'S LAST LAUGH M. J. Webster

A LAND AFAR

THE GLENS OF STONE

TOMORROW NEVER COMES Last three R. M. Stewart

***R. C. Jeffreys, Competition Secretary.***

I very much enjoyed reading all nine short listed entries. The criteria I adopted for making the final selection were:

Quality of the writing

How close did the novel come to publication standard?

Strength of characterisation

Readability – was it an effort to read?

Plot – was it sufficiently gripping or intriguing to make me want to read the whole novel.

William Wood's novel "No Time For Poetry" came closest to meeting all these requirements. It was well written (i.e. crafted) but not in the obvious "in your face" way that can sometimes make a reader feel patronised.

I would guess that William, like me, is a fan of the Latin American novel as I thought I detected in his writing some influence of the stylistic tricks of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Isabel Allende.

Although I only had the opportunity to read the first chapter and the synopsis I felt sufficiently interested in William's plans for his characters to want to read more.

Set in a mythical African republic in the early 80s before the communications explosion, when such countries were still cut off from the world, No Time For Poetry takes a satirical look at Britain's attempts at overseas aid and cultural representation. It promises a strong storyline including the kidnapping by rebels of the heroine and an exploration of how she copes with her situation. Meanwhile the main male character is overwhelmed by his experiences of Africa, which turns into a voyage of self-discovery.

My thanks go to all those who entered the competition, to Ron Jefferys, the competition secretary for his expert organisation and to Alan Watts, chairman, for the initial judging of the vast number of entries.

***Helen Matthews***

<p>The society extends sympathy to our vice chairman Victor Negus Moore on the recent death of his wife.</p>
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# MILLENNIUM NOVEL COMPETITION SIFTING REPORT

## Alan Watts

There were 57 entries, a considerable number to be judged. From these I selected 9 to send to the final judges.

In my opinion, novel competitions present problems which make it difficult for the judges to be really fair. Obviously it is not easy to compare 57 entries when the subject matter is very varied. Amongst the entries were futuristic, fantastic, crime, historical, romantic, war, and possibly other types of story I have failed to enumerate. I had to fight hard against my own prejudices so that I would not be biased against some types. I also had to put aside any cavils against poor spelling, and grammar, and any personal objections I have to obscene or blasphemous language. But when I felt I might be unfair (though I hope I wasn't) I remembered that publishers must have their prejudices too, and if a writer is aiming to get his or her work accepted, he or she ought to look carefully at what each publisher publishes and try to avoid giving offence. Even today, I do not think that "anything goes".

This applies especially to the appearance of the typescript. Some which were submitted to us had obviously been out several times. Their fastenings were coming apart. Some even had new pages inserted and numbered, e.g. 5A. Others were badly typed or had amendments in ink. Many looked incredibly weary as if they needed a rest.

I must confess to being impatient with a typescript which reveals its author's lack of knowledge about apostrophes. "Its" is a possessive. "It's" is an abbreviation for "it is". One entry had a succession of wrongly applied "it's" down the first page. It would hardly appeal to an educated publisher – and one cannot assume that the publisher you submit your work to knows nothing about these matters. Similarly, a knowledge of how to use inverted commas with direct speech is essential. One cannot write "Jack and Jill when up the hill, he said" when his speech ended with the word "hill". These blemishes may not spoil a good story, but they do not incline the publisher or judge to be tolerant with the story.

This brings me to the stories. Frankly I was very disappointed. I read the first few pages of several published novels to see how they compared with the entries I had been reading. The difference was striking and instructive. In very few of the entries did I want to read on and find out what happened

next. But in every one of the published novels, I found the characters interesting and the action begun and beckoning me on. In many of the entries the action had not begun, or if it had, it had no 'story value'.

Some synopses were longer than the first chapter and so complicated that I can't imagine any would-be publisher ploughing through them. I got quite lost in several, and could make very little out of the details of the characters. In some cases when I turned from the synopsis to the first chapter I found no mention of the characters I had just read about. Other synopses gave lengthy historical accounts of the setting of the story, or the setting of the fantasy-world in which the story takes place. In my opinion a synopsis is a means of telling the publisher or judge what the story is about, so that the publisher can get to the heart of it quickly.

I do not say that there was not some good work submitted. Yes, there was, and I hope I have selected it in the 9 entries I passed on to the final judges. But I do think that members ought to think more carefully about the art of novel-writing, and analyse good examples. The reading of the first few pages of a number of published works and seeing how the characters are introduced, and the scene set, and the suspense already being built up, would help members immeasurably. They must learn to 'play the sedulous ape' as someone (R. L. Stevenson, I think) once said. Furthermore, although we must be grateful for the generosity of the sponsors of this competition, I do not think we can have similar competitions in future without giving consideration to the method of judging. Although I have published nearly 20 books, I have never published a novel, so I am not sure I am really qualified as a judge. Even if I were, I cannot repeat this exercise and I am a loss to think of other members who could take on the task. In future I believe sponsors will not only have to donate the prize money but also the fees of competent expert judges, and also that these judges should be identified and engaged before the competition is announced. I also think there should be set parameters to define the type of story demanded.

The society want to thank Val Whitmarsh for all her hard work as Publicity Officer and we wish her well in her retirement in the North East. We welcome our new Publicity Officer Bernard Stanley who works in the Benefits Agency and has a lifetime's experience of journalism, press photography and design work and dealing with mail shots. He also did a regular page for his in-house magazine.



## **The WF and FG Froud Memorial Competition**

This competition is generously sponsored by Mr Roy Froud in memory of his parents.

**Subject:** An autobiography, competitors to submit any two chapters.

**Prizes:** First prize £100.00  
Second prize £30.00  
Third prize £20.00

**Closing date:** 31<sup>st</sup> May 2000

Open only to paid up members of the society. Judge to be announced.

Entries to be sent to the competition secretary RC Jeffreys (address on page 1) in accordance with the usual rules for annual competitions i.e. entries must be double spaced, a pen name must be used (the author's name and address should be on a separate sheet) and the autobiography must not have been previously published.

Please enclose an SAE for return of manuscripts.

**Fee:** £2.00 to cover postage for circulation of manuscript among judges.

### ***Solution to 'Fruit' Crossword from Issue 148***

**compiled by Karen Lowe**

#### **Across:**

1 Black 5 Bugle 8 Equal  
9 Ripen 10 U-boat 11 Tinge  
12 Toes 15 Pear 17 Medlar  
18 Orange 20 Gage 22 Hall  
25 Limes 27 Ajuga 28 Lemon  
29 Kyoto 30 Endue 31 Elder

#### **Down:**

1 Beret 2 Apple 3 Kent  
4 Quince 5 Blue 6 Goose  
7 Eater 13 Opera 14 Salve  
15 Peach 16 Angel 19 Damson  
20 Grape 21 Gourde 23 Aimed  
24 Lunar 25 Lake 26 Sloe

Turn to page 37 for this issue's 'Vegetables' Crossword

## A HERO

by William Wood

The storm had cast shingle across the esplanade and strewn flotsam high up the beach. By morning the wind had dropped. The regular early walkers were picking their way along the obstructed promenade, the curious and the opportunists were combing the tide line for treasures. They were soon joined by sightseers, risen early from a troubled night, to see for themselves what damage the storm had done.

Towards the harbour where a stone jetty protected the steeply shelving bay from the open sea, an animated group had gathered. A man in faded denims and red scarf ran along the railing towards a life belt. He struggled to release it from the three stiff clasps that had held it firmly in place during the night's battering. Someone else came to help. Together they prised the heavy ring off its fixture and carried it midway along the jetty to where others were calling and waiting.

A young woman in a track suit and trainers was going from person to person gesticulating. She spotted a man on the shore parking his car near a café that normally served all-day breakfasts, but which today, like the rest of the town, lacked a power supply and had remained closed. She ran the length of the jetty and after a hurried exchange of words through the car window, extracted from the driver a mobile phone. She stabbed urgently at the keys.

Observing all this a muscular man in his early thirties unhurriedly approached the crowd from along the beach. In contrast to the mass huddling in their winter coats and jackets or snug sportswear, he wore only a tight fitting jersey, thin black jeans and big, leather working boots that crunched on the stones. His shaven head was uncovered, his stubbled face looked raw in the cold, salt-smelling air and his right ear was punctured by three, small gold earrings, one above the other. His large nose was slightly off line but he had a square, determined jaw. People instinctively stepped back as he walked down the jetty into the hub of excitement. He looked over the railings at the cauldron of restless water.

“Geezer tried to fetch a dog off o’ them rocks,” an old duffel-coated man informed him. “Slipped in, didn’t ’e?”

The younger man needed no explanation. He took the scene in at one glance. The sea still swirled and writhed like a creature in pain after its lashing of the night. The rocks in question stood off the far end of the jetty. In better weather at low water fishermen would stoop through the railings at the end of the jetty and scramble on to the outcrop to cast their lines out into deeper water. Despite the warning notices, even in the calmest summer weather, children, lovers, day-trippers would occasionally be stranded on the rocks by the incoming tide. To have attempted to reach them today between the heave and surge of the waves was idiocy.

“Wasn’t even ’is dog,” continued the man in the duffel coat, absorbing a dewdrop from his red nose in the woolly first finger of his gloved hand.

The dog was wallowing in the swell, trying to climb back up on to the rocks from which it had been snatched so inexpertly. Each time it clawed a foothold the water would sink four feet and drag the dog down with it, or lunging, rise and float it off again. Its would-be rescuer was flailing for his own life now, too far out to reach the lifebelt that, despite the best efforts of the landlubbers, had flopped into the sea at the slimy foot of the harbour wall.

The young man went down on one knee and started to unlace his left boot. Then the other. He rose to his full six foot four, took a thin, greasy wallet from the back pocket of his jeans and handed it and the boots to the man in the duffel coat.

“Look after these for me, will you, mate.”

With that he walked without haste to the end of the jetty, waited for the next wave to bring the sea closer and lowered himself down into the rush.

A few gasped, rather more cheered and all the onlookers, quite a crowd of them now, pressed forward to the railings to watch the drama. The man was a strong swimmer, but he took it slowly, deliberately conserving his strength. He had to counteract a fierce longshore drift. Between the waves he appeared to be heading on to the rocks.

“He’s going the wrong way,” said a woman who, in her quilted anorak looked like a hen puffed up against the cold.

“It’s difficult for him to get his bearings so close to the surface,” said another man in a weather-beaten wax jacket and blue, bobble hat.

People began to shout advice. Above the clamour could be heard the approaching yee-yaw of the emergency services. The man held his course. Soon he was at the rocks.

“What’s he doin’?”

“He’s tiring. He’s going to climb out.”

“No, look.”

He was close to the dog now. He called to it. The dog turned. It was a sturdy, short-haired creature with a powerful snout, slightly off centre.

“Here boy. What’s your name? Come here.”

To his relief the dog heard him and approached. It was still swimming quite strongly. The man reached for the dog’s neck and powerful shoulders. He grasped the collar. Amidst the splashing he got a glimpse of the brass medallion. Tug, he read.

“Come on then, Tug. Let’s see if you live up to your name.”

Swimming on his back now he tried to coax the dog away from the treacherous rocks towards the safety of the beach. Terra firma was only a few hundred yards away, but probably out of the submerged animal’s field of scent and certainly of its vision. For the dog there was nothing in that direction but a heaving sea. All the man’s powers of concentration, of persuasion were focused on the dog. He did not glance once at the spectators, some of whom were now running round to the beach. He did not hear their shouts of encouragement, any more than he noticed the flashing blue lights of the coastguard Landrover, the men pulling on wetsuits, the big yellow reel. His thoughts, his whole will centred on the dog which was wheezing and trembling now.

Gradually they neared the shore but as the water grew shallower so the breakers began. For a few minutes man and dog were separated and the dog disappeared. It came up again, coughing, the man swam towards it, lifted its paws on to his own, broad shoulders and held it there a moment.

“Come on, mate,” he said, “we’re nearly there now.”

The dog looked at him. They were not safe yet, but whatever the outcome, the man got the only reward that would have mattered to him. The dog put its wet nose to his and licked his face in one, generous swipe. They were oblivious to the roar from the crowd as one of the professionals

reached the drowning man beyond the wall, and that other pair was reeled back in.

For the man with the dog one final effort was required.



## **THE THIRD WAY OUT**

**by John Edwards**

**F**or a while in my youth I lived in the small village of Ibleford on the border of Yorkshire. My father was a diplomat, usually posted off to some far-flung corner of the globe to argue commerce, contracts and colonialism with foreign governments. I was at boarding school, and during school holidays I stayed at Ibleford with a maiden aunt; Aunt Sarah.

She had some strange ideas about men. She had been jilted at the altar by a travelling salesman in ironmongery. Later she met a man who took all her money and disappeared with a local bar-maid. She believed that all men were lying, cheating scoundrels, only fit for menial tasks and not to be trusted.

“Where have you been?” she would ask me.

“Just down to the river to watch the ducks,” I would reply.

“You’re lying to me aren’t you. You’ve been down to the village shop to flirt with that young hussy. I know she gives you sweets. You’re just like all men. You can’t be trusted. Get up to your room. No supper for you tonight.”

My stays at her cottage were a form of medieval torture; something between the rack and the pillory. I took every opportunity to escape from the cottage and the dire company of my aunt. I went on long walks in the surrounding country.

That’s how I met Old Wilkey. I never did find out if that was his real name or simply a nick-name. It didn’t matter at the time. He seemed very old. To a young boy of fourteen anybody over thirty seems ancient. But Wilkey really was old. He had a wrinkled, wizened face with grey, thinning hair. He walked bent-over with a stick as he was liable to

stumble on the uneven ground of the tracks we walked that served as roads. He had a deep booming voice of rolling thunder.

But most importantly he had a wealth of stories to tell. We walked the tracks and the paths around Ibleford together. He told me legends of giants and gnomes; fairies and elves, and of dragons and knights in shining armour rescuing beautiful damsels in distress. I was enthralled by his stories. I knew they were all made up, but it was the way he told them that made me feel I was part of another world. I was transported to the place he was describing. I rode the white charger. I slew the dragon, and I rescued the maiden.

All but one of the stories he told were imaginary. The one true story he told me might have been a figment of his imagination, but he told it as though it was real. I leave you, the reader, to decide if it is true or not. When he told it to me I believed every word he said.

One day we passed the old derelict water-mill on the river. We were following a path on the hill-side above the Mill. He suddenly changed from a cheerful, chatty person to a silent, brooding man. I sensed that something was wrong and asked what was the matter.

“This is not a nice place,” he said.

“Why not?” I asked.

“The old Monk’s Mill; it’s cursed with a death in the water chamber.”

“What happened?” I asked. “Tell me the story.”

Old Wilkey stared at the ruined Mill standing alongside the river below us. It stood as a ruined monument to man’s industrial past. Now only a pile of stones, but once the heart of the thriving commercial life of the community.

“The river is partly tidal,” he explained. “The Monk’s Mill ground corn for the local farms, and because of the tidal back-flow, a chamber was built under the Mill to take the back-flow and allow the Mill to continue operating even when the river was flowing against the tide. The chamber filled with water and took just enough weight of water away from the river to allow it to continue flowing down river and turning the mill-wheel.”

“So, what about the curse?” I asked.

“It was about a hundred years ago,” said Old Wilkey. “The Monk’s Mill was in full production. One of the local farmers was Robert Belrose. He was a rogue. Over the years he had upset and swindled most of the local farmers. He didn’t pay his Mill charges. The owner of the Mill was Thomas Harding and he asked Robert Belrose to come to the Mill and discuss his debts. One rainy day in March they met at the Mill. Thomas Harding demanded the money due to him and Robert Belrose said he didn’t have it, but would meet any challenge that Thomas set him to purge his debt.”

Old Wilkey pointed with his stick to a point below the mill-wheel. “That’s where the water chamber is,” he said. “It’s below the wheel. It’s a large stone-lined room. The walls are covered in green slime. There is a dank, fetid smell in the room. Against the wall on one side is a grill, low down at floor level, which allows the water from the river outside to flood the room when the tide backs up the river water. On the other side of the room is a massive iron door leading to stone steps up to the Mill. The damp, slippery floor is rough and uneven, worn by many years of water invasion. It slopes downwards towards the grill so that the water can drain away when the river level falls below the chamber floor.”

“You’ve been in the room haven’t you?” I asked.

“Yes, I’ve been in there. I went in there for a bet many years ago. I was young and foolish then. I’d never go in there again. It’s a Hell hole.”

“So, what happened to Robert Belrose?” I queried.

“The story goes that Harding, the Mill owner, accepted the offer by Belrose to purge his debt. He suggested to Belrose that he spend the night in the Mill’s water chamber. At first Belrose was doubtful, but Harding told him there were three ways out of the chamber. He took Belrose down to the chamber and showed him the room. Belrose looked around the room and said:

*‘I see only two ways out. The iron door leading to the stairs up to the Mill, and the grill. But the grill’s only six inches high. Nobody can get out that way. And the iron door has a three inch bar to secure it on the outside. Nobody could get through that. Where is the third way out?’*

*‘That’s for you to find,’ replied Harding.*

*'Ah! I see,' said Belrose. 'There's a secret passage. This Mill used to belong to the old Monks of the Friary. They'd be the ones who built this chamber. They would have built a secret passage. They were being persecuted. They needed an escape route. I'll find it. I accept the challenge.'*

Old Wilkey paused and leaned on his stick while he surveyed the ruined Mill below us. The roof had collapsed long ago. The mill-wheel itself had lost the slats that drove it round. It stood like a wooden skeleton with arms upraised to the sky. The Mill door was boarded-up to prevent people getting into the Mill, which was now in a dangerous state of disrepair. I could see through the upper windows, with their lost glass gaping like a toothless hag, that rotting timbers and falling masonry made the old Mill a place to avoid.

“So, did Belrose find the secret passage and escape?” I asked.

“He was locked in the water chamber that night. Harding insisted that several other local farmers witnessed that he was locked in at his own request. Next morning his body was found in the chamber. He had drowned. He had a most fearsome look on his face, and his finger-nails were all broken where he had scratched the stones seeking for the secret passage. The story goes that soon after midnight his cries were heard cursing the mill owner and everybody living in sight of the mill for eternity.”

“He didn't find the secret passage then? Did you find it when you were in the room?”

“No. I went over every inch of that room and couldn't find any other way out. But I think Harding knew what he was saying when he said there were three ways out of that room.”

“What do you mean, Wilkey? Was there a third way out or not?”

“I think Belrose did find the third way out. Death was the third way.”

We walked on. I looked back at the old Monk's Mill with a new fear. I never passed the old Mill in the dark after that. And back at my Aunt's cottage I realised that the Monk's Mill was clearly visible from her bedroom window. Had the curse of Robert Belrose fallen on my Aunt? I believed it had.





## POETRY WORKSHOP PAGE

by Mike Boland

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**Chairman: Howard Frost, Denefield, Bradford Road, Tingley, Wakefield, WF3 1QN**  
**Treasurer: Terry Rickson, 48 Marlborough Road, Ashford, TW15 3QA**  
**Secretary: Mike Boland, 11 Boxtree Lane, Harrow Weald, HA3 6JU**

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### **PW 2000**

We have now received a firm price from the University for the PW Weekend to be held 14-16 July. The cost will be about £115.00 per person, to cover full board and conference facilities. Write to me for an application form if you are interested in joining us. If you haven't been to one of our Weekends before, and are unsure of what it's all about, drop me a line and I'll give you a summary of our usual events.

### **PW Competition**

Entries for our third annual poetry competition exclusively for PW members are now being invited. Details of the rules, how to enter, judges etc. are included in the Spring Newsletter.

### **Poetry Markets**

A cheap and cheerful alternative to the Small Press Guide featured last time is "Light's List 2000". In pamphlet format, this is a world-wide listing of over 1375 small magazines, containing names, addresses, price, frequency, page count and a brief note of interests and editorial policy. In its 15th year, "Light's List" is priced at £1.50 and runs to 62 pages. It can be obtained from Photon Press, 37 The Meadows, Berwick-on-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 1NY. Cheques, postal orders or stamps accepted (make cheques payable to John Light). Price includes postage. ISBN 1897968 07 8 ISSN 0950-6217

Barbara Dickinson suggests *Weyfarers*. It is, she says, "a well-produced magazine. They rotate editors which gives a nice variety of approach." It has published several of our members over the years. No payment for publication, other than complimentary copies of the issue your poem appears in. Published by the Guildford Poets Press, it costs £6 for 3 issues, and the address for subs is Weyfarers, Hilltop Cottage, 9 White Rose Lane, Woking, Surrey GU22 7JA (cheques payable to Guildford Poets Press).

Chris Heyworth has written a useful article called "Practical Tips on Getting Published". It is rather too long for this page, so will appear in the Spring Newsletter.

Don't forget, with all poetry magazines it is advisable to read a copy before submitting any of your work, as editorial tastes and policy varies considerably.

## **Dates to Remember**

31 March 2000

Last day for submissions to *Waves 2000*

14-16 July 2000

Poetry Workshop Weekend

31 July 2000

Closing date for PW Poetry Competition

## **POETRY PAGES**

This was the last selection of poetry for inclusion in “The Author” made by John Ward before his recent death.

I am publishing them in memory of him with thanks for his words of encouragement over recent years.

Howard W. Frost

## **Thoughts - Skittish DAPHNE DARKING**

I took my hat for a walk,  
(Other people have dogs!)  
We went for a spirited walk, my hat and I,  
Along the canal.  
It's a fashionable hat, not necessary for country walks,  
Under February skies, with their diluted sun,  
And cool winds rippling the surface of the water,  
But comfortable and warm.

Only a few ducks, and two moorhens,  
Were there to ignore me, and quite rightly,  
I'm only a human being, walking with no aim  
Except to enjoy myself and be grateful,  
Without the necessity of bending to the will of Nature,  
To attract a mate and create ducks.

Walking in February is the best time;  
It's lonely and a bit wild.  
Untidy sticks litter the paths;  
There's still some crunch  
In the leaves underfoot  
And boats rest gently on the water  
Battened down and well fastened;  
Seemingly abandoned.

The sounds of Spring are not yet here,  
But in the scrub the gorse is showing ...  
It's too soon; my hat and I head for home.

**Buried Alive IVY HUDSON**

Snow creeps slowly up  
the windows  
from the ground.  
If I open the door  
it tumbles in  
invading my world  
inside four walls.

Snow creeps up  
and suffocates me  
and the walls press in.

**Merely a Lottery JOAN HYKIN**

Not a game of Chance  
Not 'spend, spend, spend'  
Just a child sitting still  
Genetically impure

The doctors said 'not wise'  
The vicar said 'God's will'  
The couple went ahead  
Only wanting to be Mum and Dad.

Said Dryden of the hoi-polloi they are  
Sometimes in the right  
Sometimes in the wrong  
'Their judgement is merely a lottery'.

But maybe they took the jackpot.

## SPELLBOUND

by Iris Breese

“About time!” a voice snapped from inside the thermos flask.

Jemima shook her head. She must be hearing things.

“You are not hearing things,” said the sharp voice.

“A mind reader, too,” thought Jemima as she peered fearfully down into the flask she had found at the back of the shelf. Empty – but definitely musty.

She jumped as she heard movement behind her but she could see no one in her kitchen except Micky, the black and white cat, who was arching his back at an empty chair.

“I’m taking a long time to materialise,” said the voice crossly. “I’m out of practice.”

“Sorry,” said Jemima humbly. “Is there anything I can do for you?”

“Yes. Wash out that flask. It’s smelly.”

Obediently Jemima filled the flask with soapy water and after rinsing placed it on the draining board.

Slowly the hazy figure of an old lady appeared, laced boots, long skirt with a shawl pinned neatly across her bosom. The face was still a blur topped by scraped back hair and an unbelievable bonnet.

Jemima, standing paralysed beside the sink, wondered fleetingly whether the apparition had a broomstick.

“No, I don’t,” said the lips in the blurred face. “I’m not a witch – I’m a genie. I’m a fairy tale come true, dearie. What would you like me to do for you?”

“Disappear,” thought Jemima.

“Naughty, naughty,” reproved the old voice. “Now you must have wished for *something*.”

Jemima nodded slowly. “I’ve always wanted a win on the Lottery, not a million, just a few thousand.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” said the genie graciously. “But first you can do some shopping for me.”

“Newts or toads,” wondered Jemima but the order was simple. A skin lotion to hasten the rejuvenating process.

“Glycerine and rosewater,” said the elderly man behind the counter. “That’s a very old recipe.”

“It’s for a very old lady,” sighed Jemima.

She had chosen the little run-down chemist shop in the turning off the High Street, and he had not laughed her to scorn. He had shuffled into his back premises returning with a large bottle wrapped in white paper. He sorted Jemima’s money into the wooden hollows in the cash drawer and thanked her for her custom.

Tucking the bottle into her shopping trolley she trudged home with watering eyes and the occasional sneeze. Fortunately Adrian was away at one of his too frequent Conferences, but what would her husband say when he returned and found a half visible old lady ensconced in the kitchen. She must get rid of her unwelcome guest as soon as possible – but how?

She was unloading her trolley in the kitchen when the telephone interrupted muddled thoughts of tranquillisers and automatically she lifted the receiver from the wall. Behind her the old lady let out a sudden screech.

“Who the hell is that?” demanded Adrian’s voice.

“It’s a genie,” said Jemima coldly. “And I’m not well thank you.”

“Jeanie? Jeanie who?”

“A genie – as in old lady you can see through,” said Jemima between her teeth.

A long pause, then Adrian said in a tone of wonder, “Who would have thought our skeleton in the cupboard would reappear after all these years? Where did you find her?”

“I was clearing out the top shelf in the pantry.”

Adrian whistled. “The old flask.”

“And you didn’t think to tell me?” queried Jemima icily. She put a hand to her muzzy head. “What do I do with her?”

“Grandmother Sarah got her sloshed on gin,” said Adrian. He added briskly. “She also baked her a cake.”

“She did WHAT?”

“Baked a cake from her own cookbook. It’s in her ditty box in the pantry. I’m sure you’ll manage dear. I’ll be home tomorrow.”

Jemima sneezed, said a peevish goodbye and sneezed again as she scrabbled in the box for another paper handkerchief. She blew her nose and

wondered how you could pour a mind-reading old lady back into a thermos flask even if she was tiddly. But it had to be tried.

She found half a bottle of gin in the drinks cabinet, and with two glasses, returned to the kitchen. The old lady stopped patting her face with a sweet smelling tissue and eyed her suspiciously.

“What’s that stuff?”

“It’s for my cold,” said Jemima thickly. She slanted the bottle. “Would you like some?”

She poured half an inch into the second glass and offered it to the genie, who sniffed it, then generously dosed the cat. Finding that Micky purred incessantly for more, she sampled the drink herself. Swiftly she emptied the first bottle and Jemima opened a second.

She refilled both glasses and went to the pantry to search for the cook-book.

She found it, labelled Receipts, in an old tin box together with small bottles of essences and flavourings. Returning to the kitchen she took a fortifying swig of the gin and began to turn the pages of neat rectangular writing.

By the time she had read the fourth receipt, Jemima knew with cold certainty that Grandmother Sarah had been a witch.

The old lady’s sharp voice demanding to know what she was reading dragged her fascinated attention for a recipe for spotted fever.

“My husband told me to bake you a cake,” answered Jemima. “I’m looking for a suitable recipe.”

She turned another page. That must be it.

GENIE SHORT CAKE. Must be mixed quickly and put into a very hot oven for ten minutes.

Jemima switched on the oven, assembled the ingredients, which looked innocuous enough, except for two drops of golden nectar which had to be put into the bowl first.

Back she went to the ditty box and examined the small bottles, picking her way through foxglove, sloe and dandelion. A small brown bottle with Nectar on the yellowing label, was at the back.

Carefully she measured the thick syrup into the bowl and as instructed, added the cake ingredients in the reverse order.

Disappointed, she put the plain sponge-like mixture into the oven and set the timer. She poured herself a tot of gin and sipped it as the scent of a summer rose garden filled the air, the bees droning into each flower ...

The strident ringing of the timer jolted Jemima out of her dream and she turned the fluffy golden sponge onto a wire tray. Then, following the written instructions she immediately put it onto a plate and together with another plate and knife put it on the table in front of the genie.

But the old lady didn't move, just sat there, holding a half empty glass. Was she too far gone to eat?

Desperately Jemima cut a slice and put it on the small plate. Very slowly the genie put out a hand and broke off a piece.

Once started, she polished off the rest of the cake as fast as she could eat it. Jemima obligingly topped up her glass and sat down.

She jerked awake into rose-scented stillness, staring dazedly at two empty glasses, a bottle and two empty plates – and an empty chair.

The genie had vanished!

Dragging herself to her feet she peered over the kitchen table to see a perfect miniature genie, chin on her shawl, still sitting on the wooden seat.

Hardly daring to breathe Jemima wrapped a paper handkerchief round the unresisting form and carried it over to the draining board. Carefully she slid the figure into the flask and snatching up the stopper screwed it down firmly. She placed the cup over the stopper and screwed that down – tight.

Sleepily she washed her cooking utensils and replaced the book of receipts in the ditty box. The flask went back onto the shelf. She inspected the cat slumped in front of the fridge and decided that although Micky must have a monumental hangover all he needed was tender loving care.

To clear her aching head she threw open the window and the blast of cold air set her sneezing again.

There had been a receipt in the old book for a Sneezing Fever but Jemima prudently used her own prescription of hot lemon and honey.

She raised her mug in silent salute to the witch who had seen off a genie and sat on at the kitchen table, sipping and sneezing, wondering how much to tell Adrian.



## THE LAST ASHTRAY

by **Ken Muncer**

he squirrels in the park were having withdrawal symptoms. They, in their Tfrenzy were attacking and biting children and grown-ups. They had lost their fix of tobacco from cigarette ends. Many attempted suicide, but always managed to land on their feet when they jumped from a high tree. The keepers of small shops and proprietors of station kiosks marched from Embankment to a rally in Hyde Park. Closely monitored by N.A.P. The newly formed Nicotine Abuse Police. This elite force were created to make sure that the World wide ban on smoking was observed. The date of the march and rally coincided with the newly created Bank Holiday, 'Hate Sir Walter Raleigh Day'. The ash-tray making industry was shut down.

The ban started in Europe. A European Union grandee had been short-changed by fifty centimes at a Tabac kiosk. This distraught but energetic man declared war on the tobacco industry. With wheedling, conniving, bullying and horse trading he had created a total ban on all tobacco products in Europe. The United States followed. Russia decided to go along. China, Japan, and the whole of the far and middle east soon joined. Thousands became unemployed. Marches and protests took place in every country. To no avail. Wall Street witnessed a suicide rate to equal that of 1929 when financiers were jumping from windows at the time of the Wall Street crash. The Health Freaks were jubilant. Many Chest, Heart and Lung specialists wondered if their livelihood would be affected. The Dept. of Health were kept busy calculating the amounts of money that could be saved by the N.H.S., and deciding which hospitals could be closed. In fact their budget was cut considerably as the Treasury had to somehow make up the shortfall from the tax on cigarettes. Parents of teen-aged children were happy that their off-springs could no longer smoke, unmindful of the other dangerous substances which were available. The Colombian Association of Joy Promoters and Coco-Leaf Farmers could not believe their luck. Growers of certain crops in 'The Golden Triangle' north of Burma paid tribute to their gods.

Percy Oldroyd was in his middle fifties. A life-long smoker, he was not happy with the ban. He had smoked his way happily through life without coming to any harm. His wife had left him years ago.

"Can't stand the stink of your bloody fags any longer. It's in your clothes, the furniture, the curtains and look at the colour of that bloody



ceiling!” With these words she had stormed out, never to speak to him again. Percy consoled himself with a Rothmans Number One.

He sat on the sofa on this summer evening and pondered about the situation. Should he commit suicide? He considered the possibility, went through the motions of lighting up, then decided that suicide would be cowardly. “Us lads from up ’ere are made of sterner stuff,” he thought. It was looking at the Tele programmes that gave him an idea. An old gangster movie about bootleggers. “Of course, prohibition. Didn’t stop the Yanks from drinking. I’ll grow me own.”

Then he had another think. “Alright to say I’ll grow me own, but how? Where do I get seed?” Percy had an overgrown back garden. With a shed. A shed full of disused pots, dead compost, dying plant food, separated weed killer and rusting tools. Twenty-five years ago Percy was a keen and energetic gardener. His love affair with the soil lasted about a month. After that he would just sit in the shed, smoke and look at naughty books. Now, without a fag, he couldn’t take much interest in that sort of thing. He rummaged and clattered about frustrated and almost angry. He was lethargic by nature. He kicked over a bucket. On the floor behind the inoffensive item lay an old packet of five Woodbines. He picked it up, trembling with excitement. He examined the contents of the paper packet.

“Oh God, they’re as dry as dust,” he moaned. “Can’t smoke these. Bloody hopeless.” He was nearly in tears. Then, in a state of stupid optimism he sprinkled the powdery tobacco into a seed tray, watered it, then went back indoors as it was nearly time for Neighbours on the Tele.

Three weeks later he was almost amazed to find small shoots emerging from the Woodbine tray as he had called it. Using all of his half remembered skills he potted out the shoots. Within six months he had, in his old shed, flourishing tobacco plants. From the library he found a book which helped him to treat and deal with the forbidden crop. From being all his life, a medium working honest man, Percy had become a criminal. He took early retirement from the council depot and concentrated on what had become a flourishing but illegal industry. He was selling his product in the pubs and clubs. He had become a ‘Pusher’. But word was getting around. The local police, many of whom liked a smoke, left him alone. The Nicotine Abuse Police were too busy hanging around school playgrounds hoping to catch pupils behind the bike sheds to be a threat to Percy’s business. It was the drug dealers who were getting interested. Squirrels in

the neighbourhood parks began to recover, but certain organisations were getting angry. Some had tried to buy into Percy's set-up, but he was old-fashioned and preferred to remain a cottage industry. He was happy with the situation. Having traded working for the council for three hours a day to working for himself for about two, with plenty of smokes, he was content. But it was not to be. There was no room for minnows in the forbidden substance business. They found him shot dead in his living room lying under the even browner ceiling. He looked content with a half finished fag in his mouth.



## **MARKET INFORMATION**

### **HIT THE BIG TIME WITH IPC**

**by Gordon E Gompers**

When I was the editor of this magazine (a long time ago now) I was sometimes accused of making adverse comments. Sometimes perhaps a little unfairly when my efforts to save the ill-fated magazine *WORDS* was not appreciated. However, critics can praise when merited.

There is one publishing house that I cannot praise enough for its generous treatment of freelance journalists. IPC Magazines Ltd (sometimes calling themselves IPC Connect Ltd) publishes a large number of magazines. They are always helpful to would-be contributors and they are generous with the dosh.

My introduction to this publishing house was when I tried my luck with the now defunct boys' magazine *Look & Learn*. They accepted an article on the history of magnetic recording. Encouraged I then sold them a six article series on the Channel Islands. It was the first time that I had received a really big cheque. I then sent the editor another series: on the history of flight. They returned it because they had decided to wind up that publication but they sent me a cheque for £100 for my efforts.

Since then I went into a different direction mainly musical criticism. However, recently when studying a writers' magazine I saw an advertisement from *Woman's Weekly* for short stories. I wrote for guide

lines which I received. Short stories are hardly my forte as I have only had some forty published. I followed their advice and now take *Woman's Weekly* regularly. So I now read it for the same reason why I read *The Beano*: because I hope to write for it. One thing for sure if all that lovely dosh came my way I would not waste it: I would spend it on women.

IPC publishes many women's magazines. Here are some with their circulation figures.

*Woman's Journal*: 250,000

*Woman's Own*: 630,000

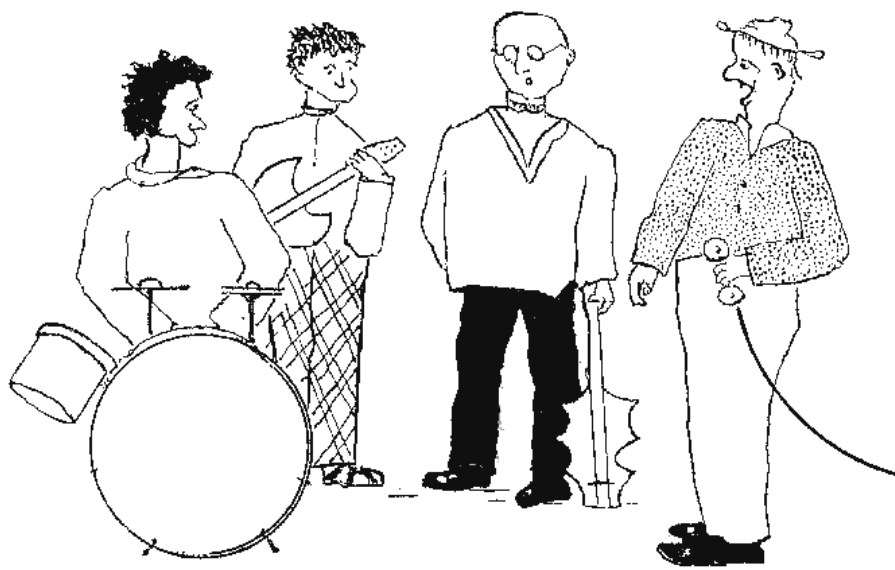
*Woman's Realm*: 210,000

*Woman's Weekly*: 530,000

***They can be got at any W. H. Smith Ltd.***

The address is:

IPC Connect Ltd.,  
King's Reach Tower,  
Stamford Street,  
LONDON,  
SE1 9LS.



The man upstairs must be a musician; he said he'll swing for us!

*By G E C Webb, Southampton*

## THE SCREAMING HILL

by Barbara Olive Smith

I walked to the end of the garden, leaned over the hedge where Bob Leatherby's cows were grazing in the field, and screamed. I screamed long and loud. It did nothing for the pain, but I felt better. Some of the pressure building up inside me had been released. The cows looked up for an instant, before returning to their steady chewing of the cud.

"What the heck was that for?" a voice called.

I debated whether to answer. How could I explain without sounding foolish? I turned to walk back to the house, but was arrested by the voice.

"Coward," it said, sounding close by.

I looked back over my shoulder. A face, topped by a shock of bright red hair, peered at me over the hedge.

"What good d'you think screaming's going to do?"

"Mind your own business," I said.

"Okay, be like that," the young man said, and the face disappeared. Piqued, I ran to the hedge and shouted.

"Sorry."

"And so you should be. You're very rude."

I could see all of him now. He stood on the bank below the hedge in tattered jeans and a shirt that looked a size too small for him. It was blood-stained and his wrists stuck out of the sleeves like a scarecrow.

"Where's that blood come from?" I asked. I knew I'd been churlish, but I didn't want to dwell on that.

"It's not blood, it's blackberry juice."

For the first time, I noticed the basket down by his feet; it was full of blackberries. I was puzzled; I'd never seen the man before and I knew everyone in our small village.

"Who are you?" I asked. "Are you trespassing? Are you a gypsy?"

"Mind your own business," he said.

Touché, I thought; but now I wanted to know more about him. Where had this ... this *tramp* come from? I leaned further over the hedge in an effort to glean more details, to get a better picture of him. The top of the hedge was thin and couldn't bear my weight, it cracked and split, tumbling me over to arrive in

a dishevelled heap at his feet. I felt my face redden at the ignominy of such an introduction.

“Nice pants,” he said.

I struggled to my feet, pushing my skirt down over my underwear.

“Tell you what,” I said, “you tell me who you are, and I’ll tell you why I screamed.”

“Fair enough. I’m Charlie,” he grinned.

“That’s not enough. Charlie *who* ... and where d’you come from?”

“I’m Bob Leatherby’s nephew. He broke his leg, so my father came over from Rigton to give him a hand.

“Where do you fit in?”

“I just came along for the ride.”

He must have noticed the way I looked askance at his scruffy appearance, for he said:

“I’m wearing this clobber because I knew Aunt Ethel would have me doing mucky jobs as soon as I set foot on the farm.”

That, I could appreciate. On the occasions when mother had sent me over with messages for Ethel Leatherby, the crabby old biddy usually gave me some dirty chore to do. ‘It won’t take you a minute,’ she’d say, shoving a bucket and scrubbing brush into my hands as if I were a servant.

“Come on, it’s your turn now. Why did you scream?” Charlie’s voice brought me down to earth.

I’d forgotten about my hurt, I’d forgotten my need to scream; but now it came back, like a splinter digging into me. I didn’t know how to say it, I didn’t know how to explain. I’m not a child and it shouldn’t have affected me like it did. My brother and sister didn’t seem too upset and Dad was coping. Everyone was kind to him; offering help, talking quietly, being gentle. But I came in for none of this. They were brusque with me. ‘You’ll have to be mother to the young ones now,’ they said. ‘You’ll have to look after your father now. You’ll leave university of course.’ You’ll do this, you’ll do that and the other. Not one of them asked me what I’d like to do. Everything had been assumed, and no one, not a single person had shown me any sympathy. I’m not supposed to have feelings. Mother’s death is something for me to accept. They don’t realise she was my best friend. Can’t anyone understand I’m bleeding inside?

I kept a small photograph of Mother by the side of my bed and pretended she was in my room, smiling at me. I don't want to believe she'll never be there to share private thoughts with me any more. Mary Dawkins, who comes in to clean, hid the photo. 'Your mum wouldn't want you frettin'. You shouldn't 'ave 'er there lookin' at you, remindin' you.' Bursting with indignation, I told Dad, but he nodded, 'Mary's probably right,' he said. If only he'd put his arms round me, if only he'd said 'Never mind, love.'

Charlie touched my arm. My face was wet with tears. I brushed them away with the back of my hand, realising too late, that it was muddy from my fall and now my face must be smeared.

"My mother died," I blurted the words down into my chest, unable to lift my head to look at him. Would he understand, or would he be like the others, making me feel guilty and selfish?

"Did screaming help?" Charlie asked. His voice was not gentle, but matter-of-fact, as if he were genuinely interested.

"For a minute, it did."

"That's good," he said. He seemed to be deep in thought, his eyes focused away in the distance. "I know a good place for screaming. I'll take these blackberries home to Ethel, then I'll pick you up and show you where it is, if you like." He smiled and offered his linked hands. "Come on, I'll give you a bunk up over the hedge."

True to his word, Charlie knocked on our back door about an hour later. He could have been a different person; his wild red hair had been slicked down and was almost tamed, he wore dark trousers and a biscuit coloured shirt, open at the neck. The tramp had been replaced by a presentable young man, and I was glad I'd made haste to change out of my own clothes which had been grass stained and covered with bits of twig from my encounter with the hedge. My father had looked me up and down when I came in, and asked me what I'd been up to. I cobbled up a story near enough to the truth, but with little mention of Charlie, but I could see by Dad's expression that he didn't believe me.

I didn't invite Charlie in, for fear that Dad would give him the third degree and my brother and sister would pester to come with us. I shut the door behind me, pleased to escape without the usual questions: where are you going, how long will you be, will you be back in time to make supper. That had become the pattern of my life since Mum died, I had to account for every move I made.

Charlie held the garden gate open for me and together we walked down the lane as far as the stile into Bob Leatherby's meadow. He climbed over the stile

ahead of me and put his hand up to help me jump down. He made no attempt to hold on to my hand. I didn't know whether to be glad or sorry. I'd been along this way many times with village boys before I went to university, and by the time we'd got this far, I been subjected to an amateur sexual assault course in the hawthorn bushes. This was different. A revelation, really. And I'd thought he was a tramp!

We walked up the side of the hill overlooking the downs, now bathed in the last of the September sunshine. Rabbits watched us, then flashed white scuts as they disappeared down their burrows. A sparrow hawk swooped and carried off its prey in silence except for the whisper of the wind in its wings. We talked very little. We were just strangers who had been brought together by a scream. A scream of anguish, or a scream for understanding? I couldn't be sure, but I felt it nurtured a seed of unspoken agreement between us.

When we arrived at the top, Charlie took my hand and led me off the rough track and away towards the Three Sisters, the trees which grew close together, their branches holding hands above our heads. From the village, they looked as if they had grown here by accident, aloof in their splendid isolation, but now, touching the brown bark, listening to the rustle of the leaves above us, I could believe they had been planted by some visionary, not just to break up the flat table-top landscape, but for some secret reason. We found a saucer-shaped hollow below the Three Sisters and sat on the grass, looking down on the village and farms below. People looked ant-like, busy about their every-day tasks. Tractors and combine harvesters traced up and down the fields, leaving neat lines behind them, but none of the noise and bustle seemed to reach this far. We were held on an island of tranquillity.

"You can scream now," Charlie said. "This is a good place to scream. No one will hear you up here, so it's perfectly safe."

"You'll hear me," I told him.

"No I won't, because I'll scream with you."

"But why? Why do you want to scream?"

"To keep you company. I don't think anyone should scream on their own."

I felt silly. I felt a fraud. I no longer wanted to scream for Mum, and screaming because I felt trapped in a demanding household suddenly seemed pointless. But I screamed loud and hard, for pure joy. And Charlie screamed with me. I was free.



## **SOME ASPECTS OF BUDDHA AND BUDDHISM**

**by Roger F. de Boer**

**W**hen in the Sixth form at school it was expected that each pupil would give a lecture on a chosen subject and when my choice of INDONESIA was usurped by a colleague I was forced to find another topic. I had remembered the Buddhist stupa at Borobudur on Java and saw an opportunity to redirect my research for a new talk.

It was more than two hundred years after his death c. 483 B.C. that his history was recorded, and now some two and a half thousand years later his influence remains.

Born to the Sakya tribe of warrior caste centred at Kapilavastu (now situate in Nepal) Gautama Buddha was also known as prince Siddhartha. His mother, Maya, died soon after he was born – leaving his father – king Suddhodana to rear him in luxury but from his early years it was apparent that he possessed a special personality. He was contemplative and serious. He was to spend all his life in the North Eastern part of India until his death as an octogenarian (having choked on a piece of pork). He lived and died a Hindu but his teachings were to spread to Central, Northern and Southern Asia. It was his character, rather than his findings – the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path – that attracted followers. His original teaching declared death to be the end – which was not such a harsh proposition when considering the alternative rebirth of suffering from existence to existence. Basically the perfect man (Anharat) would abstain from causing hurt for good and evil actions would respectively bring good and evil consequences.

What became religion and culture was preserved in the scriptures of Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese. The tales and legends surrounding his birth, infancy and youth inspired poetry. The birth stories known as Jatakas adorn the walls of the temple at Borobudur in bas-relief form.

Competition from Hinduism – acknowledged as the oldest formal religion known to man – Jainism and ultimately Islam caused Buddhism to fail in India. The caste system which had no place in Buddha's teaching was too strong to be displaced. A religion which denied the existence of God and the human soul "could not appeal to people if they



could not believe in them both” (Edward Conze). Buddhist priests invented Bodhisatvas or “saviours” to promote hope of immortality and gave divine honours to Buddha himself – both ideas directly contrary to the original teachings of the “enlightened one”.

What I did learn from this study all those years ago is that as with Buddhism, Christ’s original teachings became changed and amended over the centuries – both religions are full of paradox – and the former more difficult to practise in the Western World.



## **MAUPASSANT IN NORMANDY**

**by Brian Jones**

One of Guy de Maupassant’s most memorable short stories is called *The Model*. This cruel and disturbing tale is about an artist’s model who quarrels with her lover and jumps out of the window of his apartment, breaking both of her legs. The lover, a painter, no longer loves the girl but he marries her out of pity. The story begins with a vivid description of the Normandy seaside resort of Étretat, Maupassant’s boyhood home.

‘On the beach, a crowd of people sat by the water’s edge, watching the bathers. On the terrace of the Casino, another crowd, sitting and strolling under the luminous sky, showed up like a floral garden, ablaze with women’s dresses and bursting with red and blue parasols embroidered with large silk blooms.

On the promenade, a young man was walking gloomily by the side of a small invalid carriage in which a young woman – his wife – was sitting. It was a type of Bath chair and was being pushed by a manservant. The invalid, who was severely disabled, gazed dejectedly at the joyous sky, the balmy sunshine, and the happy crowds.’

Grimness, irony, disillusionment – typical ingredients of a Maupassant story, and so often the background is the fair region of Normandy. In another short story *Correspondance* an old lady lyrically

describes Étretat when it was just a village and when impromptu dances were arranged at a nearby farm and they would dance until ‘we could hear the roosters crowing and the horses stamping in the stables.’

The landscapes and seascapes of Normandy are used to remarkable psychological effect in many of Maupassant’s novels and stories and there has always been something of a literary cult about his tales of Norman people and places, especially his peasant anecdotes and stories, and they are often praised at the expense of his Parisian and ‘society’ fiction.

Guy was born in 1850, he was the elder of two children of Gustave and Laure de Maupassant. His mother’s claim that he was born at the Chateau de Miromesnil, near Dieppe, has been disputed. It seems likely that the parents rented the chateau, but it is not possible to conclusively prove that Guy was born there.

After this grand abode they rented another chateau, Blanc, at Grainville-Ymauville, near Étretat. Guy used Blanc as the setting for several of his stories, notably *Clochette*, about an old seamstress.

The Maupassants both came from Normandy families, the father from minor aristocracy. The marriage was a failure and the parents separated when Guy was eleven years old, the boy going into the care of the mother he adored. The broken marriage strongly influenced Guy both as a man and an author with regard to love, desire and the married state and gave him a highly cynical attitude to them which would last all of his life.

At Étretat he explored the woods and fields and roamed the beaches. His mother permitted him to make small voyages out at sea with local fishermen after herring and turbot; the local people, young and old, were his friends and he learned the dialect, the folklore of the region. He was a handsome, popular boy, strongly made, with curly hair and dark brown eyes. Years later the name Étretat evoked a childhood Eden, free from all care and anxiety, a kind of rapture.

The parish priest gave Guy his primary education, then he was sent to a seminary at Yvetot. He was expelled from the hated seminary for a minor offence and then completed his studies at Le Havre.

In 1869 he became a law student in Paris and then served in the army during the disastrous Franco-Prussian war. His experiences as a soldier were later incorporated into some of his stories.

After demobilisation he became a civil servant in Paris. Guy could hardly manage on his small salary, but he wrote extensively, mainly poetry. For recreation he very much enjoyed swimming, boating, drinking and chasing after girls. He befriended the great Gustave Flaubert, who became his mentor.

Maupassant published very little until 1880 and the superb short story *Ball of Fat*, the tale of a prostitute travelling from Rouen to Dieppe in a stagecoach full of disapproving passengers during the Franco-Prussian War. This was followed by hundreds of published articles, short stories and six novels. It was as the master of short stories that Maupassant found enduring fame and world wide success. Soon he was France's best selling author, second only to Zola, and he commanded huge sums for his magazine stories, which were swiftly republished in book form.

The stories were set in Paris, Corsica, the Alps, but many were rural. *Our Hearts* is a homage to the Summer Normandy landscape. 'Undulating countryside, with fertile valleys with the peasants' dwellings, their pastures and orchards, all enclosed by rows of massive trees whose heads shone tufted in the rays of the sun. Here and there a river appeared, winding along the foot of poplar trees, while under a thin gauze of weeping willows a grassy stream would occasionally flash.' He noted the huge cows whose 'glaring patches of white make bizarre designs on their flanks' and 'ruddy bulls with huge curly foreheads.'

His first novel *A Life (Une Vie)* is mainly set in Normandy. It is strongly autobiographical. After a convent education the heroine moves with her parents to a remote chateau and, for love, marries the local vicomte. He treats her badly and gets deep into debt. The chateau is sold off and she finishes off in modest circumstances bringing up a grandchild with her maid, her husband's former mistress.

The novel is nearest of all Maupassant's fiction to the reality of his mother's life. He made two pilgrimages to Miromesnil while writing *Une Vie*.

Maupassant contracted syphilis when he was a young man. As he grew older the disease took a stronger hold, and although he continued to write and publish, his behaviour became increasingly strange. In 1891, while on holiday in Cannes, his condition worsened. He saw his own ghost. He believed a fishbone had entered his lungs and was rotting there. Stories such as *The Horla* and *Who Knows* chart the progress of his descent into madness, tales which brilliantly depict the supernatural terror of the incomprehensible, tales of horror that rival Edgar Allen Poe.

Maupassant was taken to Paris, to the clinic of Doctor Blanche. There were periods of sanity but during the next eighteen months the delusions became more terrifying or bizarre. He thought that he was the richest man in the world. Everyone wanted to steal his tons of gold. Sometimes, flying into a mad passion, he would tear round and round the room in pursuit of some phantom thief. He died during one of these terrible paroxysms.

Guy de Maupassant was a man capable of displaying the deepest contempt and prejudice against the established institutions of France but one element was constant and unchanging – his love and deep understanding of the countryside and people of Normandy.

Maupassant wrote fiction set in Avranches, Étretat, Fecamp, Dieppe, Rouen, and the world famous Mont Saint Michel, and they are all still places to visit and linger in. World War II, industrialisation, commercialisation, have affected some of the places Maupassant held dear but the Normandy of today remains as one of the gems of France, with or without its literary associations. Boys growing up in rural Normandy still enjoy the same adventures and discoveries in the open air that made his own childhood so idyllic.



Due to lack of interest the proposed writers weekend in Leicester has been cancelled.
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Karen Lowe has compiled a book of garden crosswords.

This one's called 'VEGETABLES'

**ACROSS**

1 Bean or pea (6)

4 White as *Flora*\_\_\_, Cauli (6)

7 Resting (2,4)

9 Small plants (4)

11 Soaring plant for 15d (6)

13 Trees-Dutch? (4)

14 Rota (4)

16 Alliums (6)

17 Veg - may be Giant red, pink or white (6)

20 *Mange*\_\_\_, type of 1ac (4)

22 Heroic story (4)

23 Veg - a white icicle? (6)

26, 2d Musical variety of 19d - prey gent confuses! (4,4)

28 Logic (6)

29 Corn cob's hairs (6)

30 Best cabbage variety? (3,3)

**DOWN**

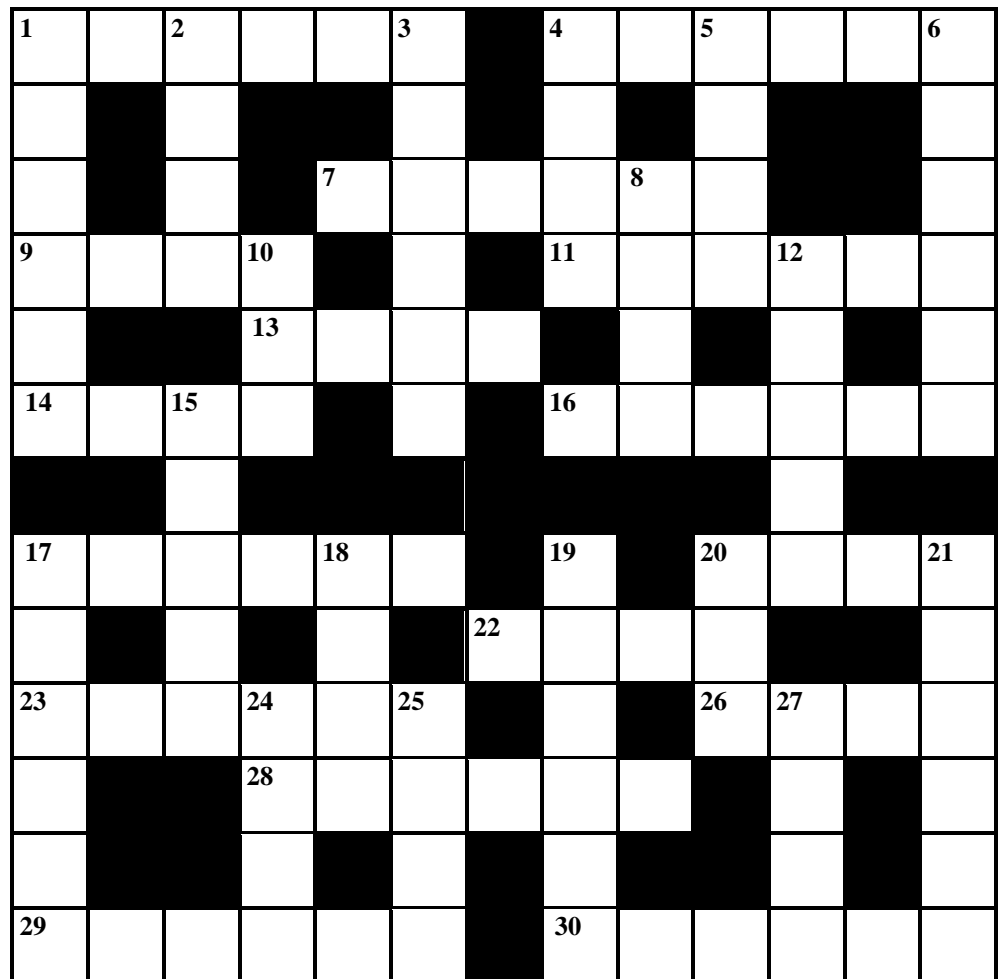
1 Type of 1ac (6)

2 See 26ac

3 Potato is meat reformed (6)

4 Suffer (4)

5 Smart chap (4)



6 Lessens (6)

8 Seeded (4)

10 Ready to fruit (3)

12 Japanese cucumber? (5)

15 Lettuce (5)

17 Root of *Autumn King*? (6)

18 Flower for tea? (4)

19 Belgian veg? (6)

20 Antiseptic (1,1,1)

21 Root - a snowball if put in about right! (6)

24 Flower of the eye (4)

25 Greet icy rain! (4)

27 Way out (4)

Copies are available from Karen at:  
34 Grange Road,  
Shrewsbury,  
SY3 9DF                      **£2.99 inc p&p**

# *The Society of Civil Service Authors*

## **An Afternoon of Readings**

AT ST. VINCENTS CENTRE

Carlisle Place

Westminster

LONDON SW1P 1NL

ON SATURDAY 24<sup>th</sup> June 2000

From 2.00pm

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Please bring Short Stories, Poems and/or articles

For critical appraisal

Tea/coffee & biscuits will be served.

£3.00 charge includes a contribution for room hire.



To: Ethel Corduff  
Meetings Secretary  
SCSA  
10 Malcolm Road  
South Norwood  
LONDON SE25 5HG

Please reserve tea/coffee (delete one). I enclose a cheque for £3.00  
and SAE for ticket.

**NAME**.....

**ADDRESS**.....

.....

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*The Society of Civil Service Authors*

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**AT ST. VINCENTS CENTRE**

**Carlisle Place**

**Westminster**

**LONDON SW1P 1NL**

**ON SATURDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> May 2000 at 1.30pm**

(Optional refreshments - sandwiches, wine or fruit juice -will be available by ticket only at 12.45pm)

At close of meeting (approx 3.45pm) tea and biscuits will be served. The total cost to ticket holders will be £6.00

(Tea & biscuits £1.00 for non-ticket holders available on the day)

You are, of course, entitled to attend the AGM without the above - and you do have a vote! Please return the slip below if you would like refreshments at £6.00

**Ethel Corduff**



To: Ethel Corduff  
Meetings Secretary, SCSA  
10 Malcolm Road  
South Norwood  
LONDON SE25 5HG

Please reserve refreshments for me at the AGM on 13th May 2000. I prefer wine/fruit juice (please specify). I enclose a cheque for £6.00 and SAE for ticket.  *Tick if vegetarian.*

**NAME**.....

**ADDRESS**.....

.....

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