

The Society of Civil Service Authors

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Diary

An Afternoon of Readings
Saturday 24th June 2000

Poetry Workshop Weekend
14th-16th July 2000

Closing Date for PW Poetry
Competition 31st July 2000

Closing Date WG & FG Froud
Autobiography Competition
30th September 2000

Annual Lunch
Saturday 21st October 2000

DATA PROTECTION ACT
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EDITOR'S NOTES

Howard W Frost

What can I say? Life here at Frost Towers is as hectic as usual, with one hundred and one things requiring immediate attention and a few others I shall not have to bother my pretty head about until tomorrow at the earliest.

Surprisingly, what there is a dearth of as at 15th May, is submissions of a story or article kind for "Author 150". Regular contributions and competition results are here a-plenty, but I am definitely going to have to look "on the spike" and/or publish my own contribution if we are to reach the usual size of magazine.

"Any excuse!" I hear the doubters murmuring, yet, truth to tell, I have not been published in this magazine between winning the Patricia Chown Sonnet Competition in the '80's and commencing as Editor of "The Author" last year.

Why have I not been published? Because I didn't submit any work for consideration. "Don't enter and you can't win", is as true of publishing as any thing else.

Truly, if I had a few more contributions, Alan Gibb assures me as "Pagemaker", we could fit more into your magazine.

One member recently commented that "The Author" was sadly, only up to the standard of a not very good school House Magazine.

If that is so, several reasons may affect that result. Firstly, you may conclude that I am not selective enough in my reject policy, but remember, it's your magazine and we are a broad church. Secondly you may blame my failure as Editor to turn ordinary work into masterpieces. Sadly, I have neither the time nor the skill to do so. Thirdly, you may conclude that I am not exactly awash with contributions to choose between. Each, any, or all of the above might be true.

Please let me have more pieces from you. You, the Members of this Society have a right to be heard in its magazine. You all aspire to authorship in some form or another. Tell fellow members about what you've seen, heard, or observed around you. Make it funny, if you like. Make it gloomy if you have to. But please make it at least three hundred words.

This edition, as punishment (to whom and for what, I shall not say) Poetry Pages will consist of – ME. This will be a temporary situation, as I have enough information on various poetical suspects to have been able “blag” one of them into taking the job of Poetry Editor.

Seriously though, I am happy to announce that Joyce Thornton has been persuaded to take over the chair left vacant by the death of John Ward. Like John, she is an “Ab Initio” member of the Society’s Poetry Workshop and has earned the respect of her fellow poets for her skilled and helpful input into many workshop sessions over the years.

Joyce is a member of “Pennine Poets”, a West Yorkshire writers workshop of almost thirty years standing, which must be a record for a local society of this nature, and is also a talented musician whose regular orchestra “The Morley Ensemble” has introduced and accompanied many a poetic performance.

Please note Joyce’s address from the usual place in the magazine and let her have contributions to consider for the Autumn edition of “Author

MISS COURTNEY’S BLOOMER

I had the pleasure of attending the Saturday matinee of the musical *Miss Courtney’s Bloomer* on the first of April at the New Theatre Royal in Portsmouth. Very appropriate for April Fools’ Day you might think! Though the musical is *a comedy of manners* it has also got a serious feminist message for the year 1851, the time of the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park.

The musical is based on the book written by our President Charles Neilson Gattey and when the original play *True love or the Bloomer* was first performed the previous leading ladies were Anne Stallybrass and Janet Suzman.

In the new version with equally high standards, Jennifer Perry was the very talented leading lady, she was superb. It was hard to believe she was a mother of three young children, and she played opposite her own husband was the leading man! I could not help wondering who was looking after the babies!

The costumes looked as if they were straight out of *Great Expectations*, the music was all newly arranged by musical director Harold Murphy. Supported by a very good cast, whom we had the pleasure of eating with afterwards and seeing them as they really are.

But I do not want to give too much away as I am sure it will make the West End and I urge you to see it when it does. I enjoyed it immensely. Congratulations Charles!

Ethel Corduff

MARKET INFORMATION.

Not only but also.

Dosh is not everything although I have explained why it can be important. There is more to be got from writing than just dosh; and I have had some very nice presents. In my early writing days I used to specialise on tape recording and an electrical firm used to send me gifts of any gadget I mentioned.

When writing on sound effects for *Amateur Stage* a recording studio (*Stage Sound*) invited me to go over their premises. On my leaving I was handed a gift of sixteen sound effects discs: very useful for my subsequent work as an effects man in the amateur and semi-professional theatre. When I wrote a couple of articles for *The Southwestern Musician* (organ of The Texan Music Educational Corporation) I was given quite a lot of LPs of American college bands.

As a music critic I go to a lot of concerts free of charge, even being able to take a female companion. There are also a lot of stately homes I get into gratis: Blenheim Palace; Broadlands; Leeds Castle; Abbotsford etc. As I have stated there is more to writing than just dosh.

I am a man of maxims. One of my favourite is: "Nothing is all there is". I reject the concept of superior and inferior forms of writing. That is since poetry is the highest form of literary self-expression any poem is better than any piece of prose writing; and the critics are the lowest form of life. I think that what really matters is the standard. As George Melly put it: "It ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it".

No activity should be damned for what it is not. I once was infuriated after my reading an article at a writers' club meeting (before I joined the CSA) by the comment that it was "only a technical article". I knew that, what I wanted to know was whether it was up to a publishable standard and where it can be placed.

Not even writing is all there is. We should also have an eye to the graphic arts. Remember one of our most talented Vice Presidents, Frank Laine, was a great photographer. In case anyone thinks that I am an anti-poet I do have a lot of poetry published.

Gordon E Gompers

Competition Results

THE SOCIETY OF CIVIL SERVICE AUTHORS
ANNUAL COMPETITIONS 1999/2000
THE GEORGE FARLEY PRIZE
THE RESULTS

The number of entries received for this competition was 20 and in her comments about the entries and competition Pamela Farley says: "...It is disappointing that there are so few entries this time. Perhaps the Civil Service is losing its sense of humour – certainly there is no sense of fun and jollity in the poems; what a shame, I'd like to think that our administration isn't composed of earnest and serious people who can't have a giggle now and again. We wonder if perhaps the idea of this prize has run its course, and the time has come to call it a day. Let us know what you think.

Anyway we have enjoyed reading the poems and are happy to award the prize to:- ROYAL by Geraldine Smedley, Habertoft, Lincolnshire. Dept. Prison Service (Employed).

It is a smart little clerihew, and Pop was a great admirer, and producer of this form of jingle. We were enchanted by the entry *OUR ADA'S WEDDING* by Miss Stammers MBE, Leeds (Dept. D.E. Retd.). Quite one of the most charming and evocative poems, which lost out for the prize for not being overtly humorous, though certainly wry.

Also highly commended is *From BST to GMT and back again* by Doreen Fay, Portsmouth, Hants. (Dept. Mod DRA Retd.). A nicely tight presentation, with economy of word and elegance of rhythm.

Well done all. Keep up the good work; goodness knows we need a few laughs these days.

R. C. Jeffreys
Competition Secretary.

ROYAL
By Geraldine Smedley

When you're Royal the Press expect's ya
To have raving anorexia
Is it any wonder that
I like to stay mundane and fat?

THE SOCIETY OF CIVIL SERVICE AUTHORS
ANNUAL COMPETITIONS 1999/2000
THE LEWIS WRIGHT SHORT STORY COMPETITION
THE RESULTS

The number of entries received for this competition was 31: The judge was Anne Graham and her report will appear in the Author.

FIRST PRIZE £100:– *DEGREE OF CONFUSION*

Peter Rolls, Camberly, Surrey. Dept. RAE Retd.

2nd PRIZE £50:– *PAPER TIGER*

Geraldine Smedley, Habertoft, Lincs. Dept. Prison Service Emp.

THIRD:– (£10 To each of the following runners-up)

THE EMPTY ROOM Doreen Fay, Tipher, Portsmouth. Dept. MOD

THE GATE-CRASHER Doreen Dugdale, Hove, E. Sussex. Dept. BT

VIEW FROM THE BALCONY Elvira Bridges, Harrow, Middx. Dept. POT
Retd.

TEACHING TERRY TO READ AND WRITE Derek Taylor, Lincoln. Dept.
R.M. Retd.

ENVY THE DEAD Dr. Vivian Edwards, Newhaven. Dept. DHSS Retd.

R. C. Jeffreys

Competition Secretary.

ADJUDICATOR'S REPORT: LEWIS WRIGHT SHORT STORY
COMPETITION, 2000.

There were 31 entries in the 2000 competition and they covered a variety of topics. A popular subject was the underlying fear of the speed of scientific change and the potential for disaster therein. I have attached a short note to each entry but there are a few general points that I want to make.

✎ Dialogue is of course dear to my heart. Properly used dialogue shows character, dramatises events and moves the plot along. Improper usage is

to provide padding or to shovel on past history. Lack of dialogue is often caused by fear that the voices won't sound right. Practise and read how others do it – you can too.

- ✎ Pace is so necessary to a successful story but several entrants got into third gear and stayed there. Speed kills but a little provides a satisfying adrenaline rush. Pottering along may send you to sleep but a little will steady you for that rush to the climax or, indeed, after it.
- ✎ Characterisation was in some cases not strong enough or stereotypical. Know whose story you're writing and make them interesting enough for the reader to care.
- ✎ Themes should be clear in the writer's mind and not be confused with your favourite hobby horse.
- ✎ Humour -- more please. Doesn't have to be laugh a minute. Try it out to relieve tension.
- ✎ Length – is it appropriate? Does your theme need 3,000 words or would less suffice?
- ✎ Style should be individual unless you are trying for pastiche. Style does not mean abandoning all known grammatical form or slavishly keeping to it. Try to be fresh but not self-conscious.

Enough of my hobby horses. Why '*DEGREE OF CONFUSION*'? It made me laugh. I liked our student and sympathised with her predicament. I enjoyed the irreverent take on higher education. There was a good word picture of the squabbling academics and the story had a beginning, a middle and an end.

Thirty of you will be more interested in why not...? In the first place, you all entered and well done for making such a big effort. I enjoyed the task enormously and hope that my short comments will prove useful to you. All adjudications are subjective and, therefore, a different judge might reach a different conclusion. Clues can undoubtedly be found in my general points which are intended to be helpful.

ANNE GRAHAM.

THE SOCIETY OF CIVIL SERVICE AUTHORS
ANNUAL COMPETITIONS 1999/2000
THE VINCENT BRENNAN TRAVEL ARTICLE
THE RESULTS

Number of entries 11. The judge was Iain McIntyre and his reports will appear in the magazine.

First Prize £50. *WALKING HOME*

D. J. Woodward, Whitfield, Dover. Dept. Home Office (Empl'd)

2nd Prize £25. *FLORA, FAUNA AND FUMEROLS*

Stephen Bibby, Reading, Berks. Dept. I.R. (Empl'd)

3rd Prize £10. *IDYLLIC IGLES*

Ethel Corduff, South Norwood. Dept. N.H.S. (Empl'd)

R. C. Jeffreys

Competition Secretary.

VINCENT BRENNAN TRAVEL ARTICLE

Judge's Report by Iain McIntyre

Members' travels covered a fascinating range of destinations but it was interesting to see that one did not need to reach out to far away parts of the globe in order to tell a good traveller's tale. Thanet, Rye, Winchester, Northern Ireland and London were all represented as well as more distant parts of the world like the Sudan, Canary Isles, Austria and Costa Rica. The standard throughout was excellent and there were no failures.

1st *Walking Home* by D. J. Woodward had a good opening line: 'The bus to Rye took just a couple of hours but the walk back home lasted a week.' This made the reader feel straight away that the author had really done the walk, examined the buildings, tramped through the rain, and proved that a few miles on foot are worth more than any bus or train

journey. The views were interspersed with historical information which was expertly handled. I particularly liked the descriptions of wild flowers and spicy perfume. There were wonderfully detailed aspects of history including people like Joseph Conrad and Kitchener. I loved the bit about the house with the plaque which read 'In 1802 at this spot nothing happened'. It covered a wonderful range of history and geography and this made it my 1st prize winner.

2nd *Flora, Fauna and Fumerols* by Stephen Bibby was set in Costa Rica and gave excellent descriptions of the landscape. The forest was particularly well described by a guide called Vinny who was an expert ornithologist. He also seemed to have a good grasp of all of the fauna and flora and what a bonus this must have been for the visitors. My favourite part concerned the three-toed sloth which only needed to come down from the trees on Sundays in order to go to the toilet! The volcanic explosions on the landscape came a close second.

3rd *Idyllic Igles* by Ethel Corduff was full of excellent descriptions of scenery, flowers, mountains, buildings, food and just about everything that goes to make up an interesting travel article. The language was simple with no pretensions and I had no hesitation in putting it among the winners.

Highly commended:

Queen Victoria's Thanet, by Brian Jones had a good opening and the area was well described. It was all very interesting with its references to Dickens and Broadstairs and perhaps there was a little too much description of the same locality for this to succeed as a travel article. The explanations of Dickens' work, the donkeys, Betsy Trotwood made me feel I had been there before and in a sense, like many others, I had. It was a very good effort and a near miss.

A Fine Country House is described by John Buchanan and has excellent descriptions of Osterley Park House which made me want to visit. All of the main rooms are described together with many of the historical facts. There is a large list of famous people who have lived or lingered there. I think the sheer accumulation of facts made me feel that 'A Fine House' was not entirely appropriate to the travel article. In short, it was history. This is of course a personal opinion for the writing is first class and can be highly commended.

Other entries:

In Positive Error. I was immediately taken by a difficult and dangerous journey in the Sudan, by William Wood. It described a flight, transporting a sick traveller, across a desert which had few landmarks. This had all the makings of a superb tale. The material available was the stuff of which writers dream. Unfortunately, however, I did not feel that the author made the best of

such a dangerous situation. There was a lack of excitement and what could have been a true daredevil adventure did not quite work for me. The author/traveller had an exciting time without doubt but he didn't quite convey it to this reader.

In my opinion, *Winchester Experience* by J. Lancaster might have done better as a first person report. The English usage is a little stilted, dare one say old fashioned and this tends to detract from the actual story which is good. As I read on I began to think that the prose needed more simplicity, less complication. The details of St Swithuns, Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy, John Keats were nevertheless fascinating and well worth setting down.

I liked the personal approach of *London Hotels* by W. Wood. 'Let me take you into one of these,' it began. Then there were quite detailed descriptions of every aspect of these establishments, covering everything from tap water to bed-spreads pockmarked with cigarette burns. As I read on, however, I became disenchanted by the list of hotel failures, particularly since they did not line up with my own experiences of London Hotels. This was probably wrong of me, but maybe I just like happy tales.

A Giant Step North by B. Stanley began with good technique: the group of travellers teasing each other, almost as in a novel. The descriptions were well detailed but in the end I found them a little overdone. Sentences like, "We'd better move on," Dave sighed, did not feel like modern writing and I felt it read more like a romantic novel than a travel article.

The title of the article by J. A. Simmons is *An Essential Guide when Travelling Abroad* and it tells us all about 'loos'. Not the first world-war battlefield of Loos in Belgium, but the one which comes in handy at awkward moments. The difficulty I had with this subject was that it seemed limited in scope. There were French loos, Austrian loos, Italian and other loos to begin with. Then there was a fairly sudden switch to Turkish loos which were pretty bad by all accounts but not a patch on some others. In fact I have a feeling 'some others' would have felt indignant.

Hullo, Vera? by F. Crewe had a good breezy start. However, I felt the introduction was a bit too long for a travel article. In this kind of writing one needs to get straight to the point and keep it going. This is of course an opinion and other judges would see it differently. A lot of space was used up by side issues like the sneezing and to some extent by the relationship of the partners to each other. One aspect which I think would have helped the reader was to establish where the name Fuerteventura came from. I had to look up my atlas to find that it was in the Canary Isles. This would have been useful information for people like me who had not heard of Fuerteventura before.



IT'S SPRING AGAIN

By Ethel Corduff

“It’s spring again.” Joanne sipped her coffee as she stared out of the kitchen window. After two days of almost continual rain, the sun was shining and glistening on the soaked patio. New life was now more visible, the first crocuses were pushing their way through, the daffodils were making their presence known and swaying in the slight breeze. The tree at the end of the cramped small garden had some tiny fresh buds sprouting.

Since Joanne had retired three years ago from the Ministry of Health, the garden had been a great interest for her. Once Spring arrived she spent hours out there weeding and pottering about. An added bonus had been her daily chats with her neighbours Leonie and her five and half year old son Jack.

Thinking about them both, which she did continually, pained her as much now as it did two months ago. There had not been a word from them since then. She spilt some coffee on the table cloth and ignored it as she went over and over again the last day she had seen them.

Jack had wanted to come and visit her, it had been too cold to chat in the garden and Leonie had put him over the fence to Joanne. In the kitchen she made him a cup of hot chocolate in the little plastic humpety dumpety mug she had bought especially for him.

“Can I have a biscuit with it Jo.” He had not been able pronounce Joanne.

“Say please Jo,” she handed him the tin and he choose three.

“Please Jo. I got a secret I want to tell you.”

“Perhaps you shouldn’t tell me, you should keep secrets to yourself,” Joanne said smiling.

“I’ll only tell you...we’re going to live in Ireland sometime.”

They usually holidayed in Ireland as his dad Danny was Irish.

Joanne felt a little wrench but she did not show it. “That’s nice for you but not for me as I would miss you so much.”

“I will miss you too,” Jack said busily licking the remains of the chocolate biscuits from his fingers.

The following week Joanne was to recall this conversation. She had been to Dawlish to spend a few days with her sisters and she had brought back a toy boat for Jack. She was so looking forward to seeing him open it. There was nobody in when she knocked at all that day, the next day or a week later. By then the For Sale sign had gone up outside the house.

Even Mrs Jackson who lived opposite and knew everybody's business had not seen a removal van come and they had not said goodbye to anybody. They had totally vanished.

Joanne dwelt on it for weeks, she could hardly sleep, she felt very hurt, she had been so close to them and to go without saying goodbye. Not even a note through the door. Had she offended Leonie in some way. She had baby-sat for them. Many times fetched shopping for her especially when Jack had the measles. Leonie had been like a daughter to her and had helped her when she slipped on the icy path and sprained her ankle.

But above all she missed Jack and now that Spring was here again, she would be spending more time in the garden but without the company, much of the joy was gone from that.

Until now she had not realised how her life had revolved around them since she retired. But she had not been of much consequence to Leonie and Jack might miss her a little but children soon forget.

Several families came to view the house, she kept in out of the garden while they were looking about outside. When a young couple with a baby moved in, she was determined despite her loneliness not to get involved with them.

But the garden needed attention. She was mowing the lawn when the young mother came out to hang some baby clothes on the line.

Joanne politely stopped the mower briefly to say "Good Morning, hope you are settling in all right." And was getting ready to restart it when the young woman came over to the fence.

"Yes, thank you. Did you know the people who lived here before me?"

"Yes they were friends," but was Leonie really a friend, friends do not hurt or lose contact.

"There were so many letters from the inland revenue and bills, the tax inspector was here today looking for them the house was repossessed. That's why we got it so cheap. I wonder where they have gone you don't have a forwarding address by any chance."

Joanne shook her head, she could not speak.

"They left some old furniture and child's painting. I'll fetch it."

Joanne stared at the crude painting of an old bent lady in her garden holding a little boy by the hand, the little boy had tears on his face, the tears were dripping to the ground.

The weeks of suppressed tears flowed from Joanne, she knew she would never see them again but Jack had said goodbye he could not have done it any other way. Her new neighbour stared at her and said, "I am going to make us a nice cup of tea, come and see my baby."

A POEM FOR ROSE.

By Daphne Hayes

It had been one of those mornings. Bella Townsend let the events slip through her mind as she pushed her bicycle up the hill towards the vicarage.

Bella was married to one of the doctors in a small village in Dorset and she combined the role of wife with part-time receptionist in the practice. This morning she was hot and harassed and to put it mildly, feeling very irritable.

To start with Miss Parker the young receptionist had rung in sick. A lorry driver had come in with an injury to his hand; Mrs Jelkes the daily lady had been acting strangely, and Nick, her stepson had gone back to his regiment early without saying farewell. He had been home for the weekend. True, he was stationed quite nearby and would probably phone, but Bella felt a bit rattled at his neglect. They usually got on very well.

Then there was the business of the magazine. It had been lying open on the desk in the surgery, and when Bella had gone in there first thing she had paid no attention to it, but Mrs Jelkes had made a point of directing her gaze toward it.

“Disgusting, I call it – showing off her figure in that lewd and rude way,” she had said, dusting round Bella who was sorting out the appointment book. Bella hid a smile at this remark; she had long ago accepted the woman’s narrow-minded views, but she wished she could be left in peace this morning.

“Oh! it’s not too bad,” she replied. The figure was that of a young woman dressed in very little except black garters and a G string. “There is plenty of that sort of thing published everywhere nowadays, Mrs Jelkes.”

“Hmm – I know, but...somehow I think the face looks familiar...like someone we know,” said the woman, “and there’s more,” and she made as if to turn over the page.

“Oh, never mind,” said the doctor’s wife. “Well, you could put it out of sight; perhaps it is a bit rich for the waiting room,” and she continued with her perusal of the diary. Mrs Jelkes dusted her way out of the surgery and that was that. Or so Bella thought.

Hugh, her husband came down and the morning proceeded. It was busy even though appointments were usually kept to a minimum on Saturdays. The weather was hot and muggy and Bella slipped into the kitchen for a break. Mrs Jelkes was there but still in an odd mood, very touchy, Bella thought.

“That Miss Almond was on the phone just now,” she said to Bella.

“Yes?” said Bella. “By the way, did you put some more magazines in the waiting room, Mrs Jelkes?”

Moodily the woman mumbled something. Bella was just about to go into the waiting room to check, when she heard her husband on the phone. Was it her imagination or did his voice sound guarded and quiet?

“Hello! is that you Cecilia? Yes, I saw it – no I shouldn’t worry. Nobody around here would recognize you; besides it was a long time ago!” he laughed uneasily. “Oh, alright, sorry, not so very long ago, then.”

Bella glanced back at Mrs Jelkes, lingering at the kitchen door. Did she imagine it or was there a crafty smirk on the woman’s face?

The rest of the morning sped by. Hugh came out of the surgery about 10.45. “Oh, Bella, I need a drink,” he said. “By the way, was there a magazine on my desk this morning?”

“Yes, why?” asked Bella.

“Well, it should not have been taken.

“Mrs Jelkes, get it back, will you?”

“I’m off for the day,” said the woman. She was already half way out of the door. “In any case, the papers have already gone up to the vicarage for the Scouts. Bob Jones collected them half an hour ago.”

“Damn!” said Hugh, and stalked back into the surgery; a woman with a small girl was waiting there for attention and the child was getting restless.

Bella’s head was beginning to ache. There really was a lot of tension in the air. Why was Hugh acting so strangely? What was wrong with Mrs Jelkes? Why had Nick gone off so early?

Bella decided to get that magazine back and see why, seemingly, it had some importance. Besides, she thought, seeking to justify her suspicious action, she really did not want near-pornographic magazines sent up to the Vicarage for the scouts. The minute the last patient had gone Bella picked up her car keys and went toward her car. “Going to the Vicarage,” she called over her shoulder. She really did not want to stop and talk to Hugh

right now. Impatiently she tried to start the car but after two or three desultory flickers the ignition petered out.

“Damn! Damn!” she said, and made for the shed and her bike.

“I’ll go,” called Hugh, but Bella peddled off furiously. What a day!

Bella was relieved to see the Vicarage come into sight. She got on her bicycle and free-wheeled the last few yards. She had no idea how to approach the subject of the magazine. Could she just ask to riffle through the pile of papers which had been collected this morning from the surgery? She could not just say – ‘Look here, you’ve got one of our porno magazines and we want it back,’ could she?

Helen Twelvetrees tall, and gracious, met her at the front door. She was just seeing off her last coffee-morning visitor.

“Bella, my dear,” she said, “you look rather flushed. It’s too hot for cycling, surely? Do come in and sit down.”

With relief mixed with some trepidation, Bella followed her into the cool dark hall. “There’s still some coffee, will you have some...? or perhaps a cool drink? Actually I was going to phone you in a minute to tell you...”

“Tell me...?” asked Bella warily. “Well, I’m really sorry it got mixed up with the others, but...”

“What’s that you say? No, I was going to phone to congratulate you, really, on...” With deliberate grace the vicar’s wife poured coffee. “I think I will have another myself.”

Bella looked anxiously round the pleasant morning room. Had Mrs Twelvetrees even see the magazine yet? Seen it? Oh yes, she had, for here she was coming toward Bella with the magazine open at the middle page and...she was smiling broadly.

“Yes, Bella my dear, I came across this.”

Bella forced her gaze toward the scantily dressed figure on the page. Why was Helen Twelvetrees looking so pleased she wondered.

“I wanted to congratulate you on Nick’s success,” and she deftly turned the page to reveal a series of verses printed thereon. Bella scanned the page rapidly but did not recognize any of the writing. Then she saw the name printed beneath. Nicolas Townsend.

She looked up into the smiling face of the Vicar’s wife. “Oh, Nick, his poetry,” Bella said faintly.

“Yes, isn’t it wonderful; you must be very proud; he’s been published at last...and in such a prestigious Art magazine.”

Bella tried hard to collect her thoughts and compose herself but her face wore a look of utter puzzlement. Helen Twelvetrees looked at her curiously. “You did know he wrote, didn’t you?” she said.

“Oh yes, of course,” Bella replied. Yes, she knew Nicolas wrote poetry. It was one of the surprising things about her soldier step-son. She had seen some rather dull verse of his which aspired to be comic, but in her opinion, which she kept to herself, it did not amount to much.

“May I?...Hugh would like to see it,” Bella said and held out her hand hopefully for the book. She really hoped to get it back without any embarrassment, and she was also desperate to find out what further significance the wretched thing had. Those comments of Hugh’s on the phone, and Mrs Jelkes’ prissy behaviour. Bella tried not to let her suspicions take firm root, but she must have that magazine back.

Maddeningly Helen Twelvetrees still held on to it. “Yes, I know, Bella, it does seem an odd publication for his work but these arty magazines often take up young and aspiring writers, to their credit, really, I suppose,” and she handed the gaudy publication to Bella.

“Well,” said Bella to herself as she free-wheeled down the hill; you can’t take anything for granted these days,” and she put a spurt on to get home and read Nick’s poetry.

The events of the morning seemed less important now as she enjoyed the sunshine and the freedom of cycling and the fresh air.

The first thing she saw when she got home was Nick’s motor-bike in the drive. Hugh came out to greet her with her step-son close behind.

“Where have you been? Why have you been so long?” asked her husband, then – “Oh, so you got it back then,” seeing the magazine poking out of her jacket.

“What are you doing with that?” asked Nick. “I left it here this morning for...”

“For?” said Hugh, with a teasing note in his voice.

Bella glanced from one to the other. Was she mistaken or was Nick blushing?

“Rose did not come in this morning,” said Hugh.

“Oh, she is alright, isn’t she?” said his son, anxiously.

Comprehension dawned upon Bella. Nick had left his poems for Rose, the receptionist, to see first thing. How sweet!

“Nick, how wonderful! Your poetry has been published.”

“Yes,” said Nick, “and I got paid well for it too. Sorry Bella, I had to rush off this morning, but I’m on leave now, for a week.”

They decided to go for a pub lunch. There was still some explaining to be done, amid the cheerful scene. Over her second glass of wine, Bella broached the subject of the magazine again, even though she did not want to spoil the day. “Hugh...why was Mrs Jelkes acting so suspiciously this morning, and that photograph...?”

“Oh, come on Sausage, you really did not pay any attention to that, did you? It was her way of trying to get back at Cecilia Almond, one of the secretaries at the hospital. She can’t stand her. Also she is jealous of Nick paying attention to Rose Parker; didn’t you know she regards the males of this establishment as her own? After all, she has cooked and cleaned for us long before you came to Denia Lodge.”

“And a jolly good cook, too,” said Nick innocently.

“Yes, things have slackened off a bit in that direction,” said Bella’s husband teasingly.

“Oh, you!” Bella laughed, and settled back into her cushioned seat contentedly.

“Bu...?” and she put down her glass and leaned forward...“What’s this about Cecilia Almond?”

“Oh, it’s not such a mystery. I knew her...we were friends in the old days at college. She used to do a bit of work for the Life class, and...she rang me this morning because she was worried. Jelkes had phoned her about the photograph, trying to make out she would let people know that picture was of Cecilia in her younger days...I told her not to worry. No one would recognize her now; she wasn’t too pleased at that.”

A fleeting picture of Cecilia Almond crossed Bella’s mind. She had aged comfortably; that was the best way to describe that woman now.

“So what!” said Bella to herself, and she let her thoughts wander.

Hugh looked at his wife affectionately, and yes, a tiny bit anxiously. “Come on Sausage,” he said, “let’s get another drink,” and he made for the bar. Bella pondered for a few moments longer, then...“Yes...let’s,” she said.



DEATH ON THE HIGHWAY

By Elvira Bridges.

Wasn't my fault. I couldn't 'elp it. I was driving along minding me own business, not doin' more than 40 or 50, when out of the blue comes this kid. Runs straight in front of me. Didn't look neither way, just run straight out. Cars are always parked on that road, nose to tail they are and this kid run out between 'em. Wasn't none of my doing. Not as if I was speedin'. 40's not much to do these days. I'd been going along, as I say, mindin' me own business. There was this geezer, young bloke in a sports car. Tried to get in front of me 'e did. But I was not 'aving that. Cheeky young bleeder. Should 'ave seen the look he give me when he overtook. Not 'aving that, I said to meself. Huh! Not likely, so I put a spurt on. Only the two of us on the road at that moment in time. Quiet it was. Dinner time, so I s'ppose everybody was indoors.

I'd come from seein' me old mates out Luton way, an I 'ad a couple o' drinks with 'em. Used to work together, gang of us. Know the road like the back of me 'and. Come down the M1, bit of a race track on there. Speed limit's supposed to be 70. Not many do that though, I can tell you. I'd just 'ad me engine tuned and I wanted to let 'er rip. Got used to the speed on the motorway, you know how it is, an' when I get to the town wasn't so easy to slow down. Then this young fella tries to overtake. Weren't going let him get away with that so I put a wriggle on an' so did he. No more than eighteen I bet. Shouldn't be in charge of a powerful car like that. But I showed him, showed 'im what mine could do.

Trouble was this little girl. Didn't see her, honest to God I didn't. She come out between the cars, an' before I know what's 'appening I hit 'er.

She should have looked where she were going. I blame the parents, should have shown her 'ow to cross the road proper. You got to have eyes in your backside, I mean, it wasn't my fault. That copper said I had to give a breath test. I'm not breathin' in no breathalyser, I said. Told him straight. That's why I'm waitin' 'ere, see. Got to pee for 'em. I 'ave tried. Can't do one, so they'll 'ave to wait.

That big beefy copper said I smelt of drink. I only 'ad four pints, honest to God I did. An' I can hold me liquor, ask anyone. Me mates'll tell you. Well, yeah, I did have a couple of whisky chasers, but that was a long time before I set out for 'ome so it would have worn off. Anyway doesn't affect me, see? Can hold my drink. In fact I think it makes me a better driver. I'm more in control, know what I mean? Sharpens me senses.

No, that other fella. It were 'is fault, trying to beat me. An the kiddie, she shouldn't 'ave run out in the first place, run right in front of me. I didn't stand a chance. An' where was the mother? That's what I wanna know. Should 'ave kept an eye on 'er little girl. Trouble wiv people these days, they don't take no responsibility for their kids. Nor nothin' else, if you ask me. It was 'er fault. Not that I'm blaming the poor little kid, she was only five, an' I reckon she was pretty. Well, she 'ad been. Yeah, that mother should have had 'er by the 'and. An' you should have heard her, the mother, she didn't 'arf 'ave a go at me. Screaming I'd killed her baby.

Wish I could get me 'ands on that young fella, but he scarpered. Guilty conscience, that's what I think. Knew he was in the wrong. Told you didn't I? Racing me he was, and as soon as he see the accident he was off like a bat outta hell, couldn't see 'im for dust. Knew he'd get blamed see. Well, it was down to 'im. 'Im and that sports job he'd got. Tasty drop of motor though...wouldn't mind one like that meself.

Who's that coming in? Oh, Gawd it's that beefy copper again. I'm not breathin' in no bag. They can't make me, I know my rights. Anyway I'm not worried...wasn't my fault.



‘WAR AND PEACE’ IN THE CINEMA

by Brian Jones

Leo Tolstoy’s epic ‘War and Peace’ is regarded by many as the greatest novel ever written, but many years would elapse before this gargantuan work could be adopted for the screen. Ninety minutes and a restricted budget, the norm around the world for decades, would inevitably result in a travesty of a novel that consists of over a thousand pages, encompassing more than one hundred principal characters. It was not until the 1950’s when long, expensive historic epics were popular that the first sound adoption of ‘War and Peace’ was released (there had been a ‘lost’ 1915 Russian version). This was the 1956 King Vidor production with Audrey Hepburn, Henry Fonda and Mel Ferrer.

All three versions of ‘War and Peace’; Italian-American, Russian and British BBC television, are now available on video. Each adoption has its own strengths and weaknesses and make fascinating comparisons.

Before the films there was, of course, the mighty novel. ‘War and Peace’ follows the fortunes and intricate relationships of four aristocratic families in Russia during the eight turbulent years, 1805- 1812, when the vast country was caught up in the swirling and irresistible tides of history. The families are the Rostovs (central figure: the vivacious, teenage Natasha), the Bolkonskys (central figure: the cynical Andrei), the Kuragins (central figures the sybarite Helene and Anatole), and the Bezukhovs (central figure: the intellectual Pierre).

The story begins in 1805 when the spectre of Napoleon Bonaparte hung over the tapestry of Eastern Europe like a shroud. Fashionable St. Petersburg and Moscow are far from the scenes of Napoleon’s early conquests, but there is no doubt that Russia is being drawn, irrevocably, into a struggle for survival. These two grandiose cities are the settings for much of the tale.

‘War and Peace’ was written at the Tolstoy estate at Yasnaya Polyana, some 130 miles south of Moscow. Here, Count Leo Tolstoy was born in 1828. It was at Yasnaya Polyana that he wrote ‘War and Peace’, perhaps the world’s greatest literary achievement and here he was laid to rest in 1910.

The shrine and museum at Yasnaya Polyana symbolise the genius of Tolstoy. He was many things; a soldier, a pacifist, an educator, a mystic. He was licentious, lustful and devout. He was an aristocrat and a socialist. He was a writer of soaring imagination, yet much that was brilliant and evocative was highly autobiographical.

Over four decades after the death of Tolstoy filming began on the Italian-American adoption. The producers were the Italian Carlo Ponti and Dino De Laurentiis, the director American veteran King Vidor. The logistics of the production were impressive: 15,000 Italian soldiers, the best of the army, were hired. In Rome, in the increasingly oppressive heat of the summer of 1956, King Vidor staged snow scenes, with snow machines blowing corn flakes dipped in gypsum, as replicas of the real thing. The Moscow of 1812 was recreated on the banks of the Tiber, complete with onion domes and Byzantine towers and palaces. One afternoon, special effects men went about with torches, setting the mock city aflame. This was Vidor's bid to rival the famous burning of Atlanta in 'Gone with the Wind'.

More significant than the soldiers and the special effects was the presence of the lovely, elegant Audrey Hepburn as the effervescent Natasha, an inspired piece of casting. No other actress, at that time, could have expressed with such conviction the vital young girl blossoming into womanhood and experiencing the rape of everything she holds dear. Her co-stars were her husband Mel Ferrer as Andrei and Henry Fonda as Pierre. Supporting players were very international – Barry Jones, Anita Ekberg, May Britt, Vittorio Gassman, John Mills and Herbert Lom as Napoleon.

The Vidor version runs for 208 minutes, much longer than most productions of that year but still too short, too sketchy and superficial to do halfway full justice to Tolstoy's multitudinous story. Inevitably, when Hepburn is off the screen, it is the spectacle that impresses – the grand Czarist Ball, the Battles of Austerlitz and Borodino, the disastrous Retreat from Moscow with the emaciated French soldiers struggling in deep snow and biting cold, depicted by Vidor in sombre, menacing, washed-out colours. The graphic scene of the Grand Army being shelled by the Russian gunners as they attempt to cross the River Berezina is actually not in Tolstoy's description of the Retreat.

Another huge asset to this version is a classic score by Nino Roto, his haunting work is fascinating in its own right.

Vidor's 'War and Peace' was premiered in Moscow, as well as other foreign capitals. Russian film critics were not kind and the leaders of the Soviet film industry began to prepare their own version, which they promised would be completely faithful to Tolstoy's vision.

In the entire history of the Soviet film industry no film and no filmmaker received the attention, the financial backing, and the artistic freedom that was given to the director Sergei Bondarchuk and his team. Bondarchuk's version cost \$100,000,000 to make; production took five years (1960-65); every resource of all the arts in the U.S.S.R., plus the Red Army, was made available to Bondarchuk. At the end of the day this version lasted 6½ hours and was clearly the most expensive film ever made.

Bondarchuk's film has a sweep and grandeur only equalled by such classics as 'Ivan the Terrible' and 'Intolerance'. Technically it is masterly, with Bondarchuk able to move effortlessly from the most tender and intimate scene to epic vistas of landscapes and soldiery. Lighting and colour are superb, scene after scene glowing like mellow old master paintings. The battle scenes, made on an unparalleled scale with the Red Army, can only be described as awesome.

The two greatest contributors were clearly Bondarchuk, who directed, participated in the writing of the screenplay and played the role of Pierre. As with Vidor's version much depended on the playing of the heroine Natasha. Ludmila Savelyeva, like Audrey Hepburn before her, carries much of the weight of the epic on her narrow shoulders. Her performance is a triumph from beginning to end. An exquisite blue-eyed brunette she portrays Natasha in all her mercurial moods and passions with total conviction. Ludmila, who had trained for ballet as a child, was born in Leningrad during the World War II siege. She was chosen out of 3,000 applicants. Before being tested for the part Ludmila was engaged to be married. She agreed not to get married until the film was completed, a wait of five years.

One could make a few minor criticisms of the Russian film. Some of the Soviet stars seem to be too mature for the roles they are playing (including Bondarchuk as Pierre) and their style of acting is slightly more larger than

life and expressive, in the Soviet film tradition, than the underplaying we are accustomed to in the West. The Battle of Borodino is rather clumsily paralleled with Leningrad in World War II in a dated post-Stalinist montage. On the whole, the Soviet production must be regarded as a classic film epic.

‘War and Peace’ was distributed in Britain in the early 1970’s. Because of its length it was usually shown over two weeks.

Shortly afterwards BBC Television began to broadcast their 20 part version. BBC dramatist of the serial, Jack Pulman, wrote: ‘There has never been a novel like ‘War and Peace’ quite like it for its scope, its depth, its romance, its humanity and its view of an historical epoch.

‘Sooner or later, the popular mass medium of our day had to deal with it. Oddly enough, television is more suited to this task than the wider screen and wider resources of the cinema. Part of the novel’s effect is achieved by the sheer weight of detail, the piling up of incident. To get through to the end is to have lived, with the characters, through an epoch. Sitting through the episodes, week by week, the same effect is achieved. No potted cinema version can do this.’

True to most television drama the emphasis was upon dialogue rather than visuals, as it had been with the cinema versions. The enormous running time made it possible to include most of the subordinate characters omitted from the big screen epics; such as the touching romance between the orphan Sonya and Nikolai and the relationship of the plain Maria and her father. These characters were just shadows in the cinema adoptions. Also, the length made it possible to include the idealistic Pierre’s search for religious and philosophical truths and give a detailed description to the historical events and day-to-day politics of the period. The BBC serial was more truly Tolstoyian in its depiction of family life but rather failed with the spectacle.

Much of the playing was adequate but pedestrian. A young Anthony Hopkins portrayed Pierre and Natasha (not such a dominant element here) was depicted by Morag Hood. Unfortunately Morag Hood, though very short in stature, never looks like a teenager at all and it was unwise to give her the role of 13 year old Natasha in the early scenes. Supporting roles were played by Alan Dobie, Joanna David, Rupert Davies and Fiona Gaunt. Some controversy was created at the time by the bold cleavage of Fiona Gaunt as Helene.

The best of the three versions? I would have to say the Russian adoption.

Five years of Bondarchuk's life was devoted to 'War and Peace', possibly the greatest epic film made anywhere in the world.

POETRY WORKSHOP PAGE

by Mike Boland

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

Bill Barnes Poetry Competition

In tribute to our founder, the annual PW poetry competition, open exclusively to members of the PW, has been renamed the Bill Barnes Poetry Competition.

Closing date for this year is 31 July 2000. Full details, rules of entry etc. are given in the Spring edition of the PW Newsletter.

Subscriptions

A final reminder to all members that if you haven't renewed your membership of the Poetry Workshop, you will not receive any future Newsletters. Subscription remains unchanged at £3.00 for yet another year, so don't miss out by default. If you haven't already renewed, send your cheque/PO to Terry Rickson at the address given above. As usual, cheques should be made payable to "Society of Civil Service Authors Poetry Workshop Account".

Poetry Markets

One of the best poetry magazines for both quality and quantity is that old favourite, *Envoi*, which has been running since 1957, and has now reached its 125 Edition. Each issue contains around 176 pages of poetry, reviews, a lively letters section and editorial, plus its own competition. It publishes poems by both experienced and new writers, and will consider sequences and longer poems. Many PW members have appeared within its pages over the years, and it is one of my favourites. No payment for publication beyond the usual 2 complimentary copies, but acceptance looks good on the CV. Edited by Roger Elkin, it appears three times a year (Feb., June and Oct.) at a cost of £4 per issue, £12 p.a. Contact Roger Elkin at 44 Rudyard Road, Biddulph Moor, Stoke-on-Trent, ST8 7JN. Cheques payable to "Envoi".

If you are new to writing poetry, or are only now thinking about submitting your work for publication, you could do worse than consider *First Time*. As its name suggests, this magazine caters particularly, but certainly not exclusively, for novice poets. It is a very accessible magazine, and the work tends towards the traditional. The editor is Josephine Austin, who also organises the annual Hastings Poetry Festival. It is a well-established magazine which appears twice a year at £3 (plus p&p) per issue. Back copies can be obtained for £1.25 (plus p & p). Cheques payable

to “Josephine Austin”. The address for both copies and submissions is Burdett Cottage, 4 Burdett Place, George Street, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 3ED.

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 vary considerably.

POETRY PAGES

Two pages, but only one poem this time, and as threatened, from my own pen. It features in my collection “Between Heaven & Undercliffe & Lister’s Mill” and will shortly re-appear in a new collection – “The Old Grey Fox Poems” which will cover my “Sword and Sorcery” oeuvre.

Howard Frost

A LESSON AT THE CROSSROADS

I saw him standing, waiting at the crossroads.
A slight and wiry man, no longer young, but straight
As any arrow I have ever seen.
Just standing, waiting, by the roadside.

For six successive days he merely stood and waited.
Each dusk and dawn revealing him the same. Still waiting.
Patient and in the same place.
One man and his seemingly endless vigil.

On the next day at sunrise as I rose from sleep
Seeing he was still there, my curiosity, like a cat’s
Gained mastery of me and I went
To where he stood, still as death, at his post.

As I approached, he turned and faced me warily. His eyes
Following my every move, his hand ready to seize his sword.
Waiting for my next move.
Attentive to every move, each sound, each step.

“Good morning, friend,” I said. “I have observed your vigil
Since Sunday last and come to seek its reason, for this road,
These crossroads are my life,
My own backyard, my viewpoint, study, interest.”

“Sir? He said. “Since you ask and for no other reason.
I am commanded to wait here for The Lord, The Knight, my master
And shall not move for any man,
Until he comes to order it. Whenever that shall be.”

“How long shall you wait?” I asked. “For maybe, your master
Is detained, or has forgotten his arrangement. Or, God forbid,
And gone to his own master.
Leaving no one to come to this place to tell you of it.”

“In that case Sir,” He said. “You must get used to seeing me.
For I shall still wait where he bids me. But of your charity
A little bread and water send.
My master will repay when he arrives. Be certain of it.”

And so I did and for another three times seven days,
He waited as before. Standing or sitting at the crossroads.
Until one morning he was gone.
And at my door a ring was found, wrapped in a little note.

The note but said. “With thanks for service rendered”
And when I wore the ring, I found no one could see me.
Not understanding I consulted
Almanacs and other books of knowing, still amazed.

Then as I pondered late one Winter evening, at moonrise,
I recalled what day it was the squire had disappeared.
The night before was moonless,
At the month’s end and the servant’s master was not knight,
But NIGHT!



DÉJÀ VU

by Jessie Heard

Do you know the feeling? Driving along in a strange part of the country, with a bend in the road up-ahead. Suddenly, with absolute certainty, you know what lies beyond that bend. A small turreted church behind a low stone wall. The village green surrounded by thatched cottages, a rustic pub. You must have driven this way before. Except that you know you haven't.

A pleasant summer morning led my husband to ask, 'Where shall we go today?' Our Sussex beach would offer hordes of ice-cream licking visitors, deck-chaired, or aimlessly meandering. Not an enticing prospect.

We decided to visit a house of historic interest, owned by National Trust, in an adjoining county and both enjoyed the ride through leafy Sussex lanes with their sleepy sun-drenched villages. An hour later, we turned into the grounds, parked the car and walked up the sweeping gravelled driveway. That's when it all began.

The large red brick house with its white stone centrepiece was still brightly contrasted after two hundred and sixty years. But something was odd, something missing. Where was the stable with its distinctive clock which had weighted hanging chains? My husband, camera in hand, said, 'Let me take a snap of you at the top of the steps by the front door.' I answered, 'No, there shouldn't be a porch and the steps aren't in the right place.' He looked at me rather oddly, 'You're tired from the ride, let's go and have lunch and a cup of coffee.'

The basement, with its round supporting pillars, had been whitewashed and converted into a large restaurant. We sat among the other visitors and enjoyed a pleasant meal. Coffee arrived, but before I had time to taste it, restaurant, visitors and whitewash, suddenly disappeared. I was alone in a dingy, gloomy and completely silent basement. Cobwebs hung in clusters from dark corners. I heard the sound of footsteps at the far end of the cellar. A maid in ankle-length dress, covered by an equally long white apron, ran into a small room, cap streamers flying out behind her. She emerged with a dusty wine bottle in each hand and looked fearfully round.

A touch on my arm made me jump and I looked round too; into the worried face of my husband. ‘Where were you, I’ve spoken a couple of times, don’t you feel well?’ Disorientated and dizzy, I followed him up and out into the grounds. In a few minutes, everything was back to normal. The impressive front door was opened at two o’clock to admit everyone into the marble hall and from there we began a tour of the lower rooms. Disdainful eyes of supercilious earls gazed down from their full-length portraits. But where was the panelling against which they had previously rested? This room was white. Surely the Queen Anne chairs belonged in the Green Room and the marble-topped table, originally gilt, was now black. It was like going home to find that your furniture and fittings had been moved around so much, that your house was unrecognisable. We slowly made our way up the broad oak staircase, to the upper regions. There, in an empty bedroom, was the stable clock! An accompanying notice explained that the stable had been demolished many years ago.

Our tour completed, we went back out into the gardens. My husband had his eye on some lovely deep violet lavender bushes and wanted to take a couple of cuttings for our own garden. He strolled back to the car for a plastic bag.

I wandered up a grassy slope to the grotto. It seemed very familiar, something I had done dozens of times before. Just as quickly as in the basement, time stood still again. I looked down at my dress of ankle-length sprigged muslin, complete with deep flounces at the hem. No longer a middle-aged tourist, I was seventeen, the daughter of an earl and about to make an exhibition of myself, as on so many previous occasions, by lifting my skirts and running full-tilt down the slope.

The sound of voices from the direction of the grotto shocked me back into the present again and found me clutching the sides of a skirt not made to be lifted, nor my advancing years, inclining me to run.

Looking back, it was a very odd experience, frightening rather than enjoyable. In a way, it was worse than meeting the ghost of a Japanese soldier in the underground telephone exchange in Hong Kong. But that’s another story —



COUNTERIRRITANT

by Margaret Gregory

Have you ever noticed how a dramatic or highly emotional occasion in life can descend into the ludicrous because of some unexpected detail? In my case the detail was a dustbin.

A while ago we moved from a much-loved home to one closer to our family. After the usual anxieties of selling and buying houses the removal day dawned. It was a breezy August morning. The van arrived punctually and the removal men were pleasant and hard-working. With drinks served every hour they made excellent progress.

A number of items including the vacuum cleaner was put to one side to travel with us by car to our new home. Unfortunately I had not realised how many these items had become, and by the time the removal van was sailing up the road the car was packed to the gills; squeezing in the last object, the vacuum cleaner, required a major re-organisation of the car's contents; understandably at this point my husband was more than irritated. Apart from driver and passenger nothing else could possibly be integrated into the remaining car space.

Our own departure was drawing near, and the heart-wrenching moment when we closed the front door behind us for the last time. Then suddenly this simple act developed into a major obstacle. The catch on the door lock had been dropped to prevent the door from slamming closed. But one tremendous gust of wind had hurled it shut with such force that the lock was now completely jammed.

The thought of delaying our next three to four hours' drive to scout around for a locksmith in our rural situation was appalling; it was a moment of real panic. Just at that point some marvellous neighbours arrived via the back door to say goodbye. They were able to replace our damaged lock with a spare one, amidst our heartfelt thanks.

We could now walk out of, and lock our front door for the last time. As I sat in the car while my husband did his final round of windows and doors I surveyed our dear home, pent-up emotion rising uncontrollably. It was then that I remembered the dustbin. My husband had most specifically

said he wanted to take it with him. What if he noticed it still standing in its accustomed spot? Short of strapping it on the car roof it was impossible to convey it. The explosion of anger and frustration would be unbearable.

As I reversed the car out of the drive the picture of our home implanted itself on my inner eye, warm red brickwork in the August sunshine, borders bright with flowers, the window box by the kitchen luxuriant. A time for loving memories, nostalgia, regrets? Forget it. The only thought on my mind was whether my husband, at the very last moment, would remember the dustbin.

But not a word was spoken as we eased our way on to the main road and made our stately progress to the village centre. The danger began to recede as we stopped for a final call at the estate agent to hand in the keys. I kept a low profile staying in the car park and then not arguing when my better half insisted on going to the local dump before beginning our main journey.

Perhaps this uninspiring diversion was beneficial too because, as a result, there was no last drive down the village high street with fond glances at its flower-bedecked, medieval cottages and shops, black timber beams on white plaster. Instead it was a quick zip down the bypass and eventually numbing miles of motorway.

Of course, some three or four hours later, and now on minor roads we mistook our route. We were not so far from our destination, but it was already getting dark. We were bogged down in village streets, devoid of signposts, and had the feeling we could be driving until midnight and beyond. My husband asked the way from a man who had just collected his fish and chips. At first he gave us directions, but then taking pity he drove ahead of us until we were on the right track again. Such kindness is not readily forgotten.

In the following days the long haul of moving in began. But as we stirred around the chaos of boxes and possessions the inevitable question came bubbling to the surface.

“Didn’t the dustbin get put in the van?”

“Didn’t it?” I replied innocently.

“Anyway it doesn’t matter,” our daughter interjected, already in the know. “I’ve got an extra one you can have.”

And there the matter has rested.

The WF and FG Froud Memorial Competition

Revised closing date 30th September 2000

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

Open only to paid-up members of the society.

Judge to be announced

Entries to be sent to:

The Competition Secretary,
R C Jeffreys,
186 Lewis Flats,
Lisgar Terrace,
London,
W14 8SQ

The usual rules for annual competitions apply 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 SAE for return of manuscript.

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

Statement of Income & Expenditure for the period
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	Income £	Expenditure £
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AGM receipts	121.00	
New Year Party receipts	78.00	
Annual Luncheon receipts	765.00	
Cost of room hire & refreshments		1,249.44
Honoraria		580.00
Committee members expenses & stationery		186.99
Bank interest & charges	19.55	32.66
Competition receipts	244.5	
Competition prizes		545.00
Competition sponsorship contributions	10.00	
Competition judges fees		40.00
Gifts, reimbursements & advertisements	55.50	
Total receipts/expenditure per above	5228.33	5886.21

Income less expenditure	(657.88)	

	Balance @ 31.3.9 £	Balance @ 31.3.00 £	Difference £
Treasurer account	1,188.84	1,163.05	(25.79)
Moneymaster account	1,872.47	1,233.91	(638.56)
Joyce Brennan account	521.10	527.57	6.47
Totals	3,582.41	2,924.53	(657.88)

Prepared by A F Danson Audited by A S Watts

REPORT OF MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY, 13TH MAY 2000

Those Present: The Chairman (Mr A. S. Watts), the Membership Secretary, the Meeting Secretary, the Treasurer, the Publicity Officer, the Minutes Secretary, the Competition Secretary, the representative of the Poetry Workshop and four members.

1. Apologies for absence were received from Howard Frost, Gordon Gompers, Charles Neilson Galley, Victor Negus Moore, and Iain McIntyre.
2. The Minutes of the Last Meeting were agreed.
3. Matters arising from the Minutes -- Following the resignation of Val Whitmarsh, Bernard Stanley had kindly undertaken to fill the post and was welcomed at his first meeting.
4. Correspondence had been received from Gordon Gompers and Liz Rowlands, and the mailers they raised were discussed.
5. The Membership Secretary reported that the membership now stood at 212, and there had been only 5 new enrolments since January. The question of broadening the field from which members might be recruited was discussed, which led to consideration of the proposal put forward last year by the Poetry Workshop to change the name of the Society to 'The Society of Civil and Public Service Writers'. Many members would welcome this change, but there were difficulties in the way of implementing it which needed to be overcome.
6. The Meetings Secretary reported that a meeting would be held at St Vincent's Centre on 24th June when members would have the opportunity to read their work and have it criticised.
7. The Treasurers Report was received.(A copy is attached.) It was decided not to award any honoraria this year.
8. The Publicity Officer reported what he had been doing since taking over from Mrs Whitmarsh, and his plans for future publicity campaigns.
9. Editor's Report. In the absence of Mr Frost, Ethel Corduff read his report.
10. The Competition Secretary reported the results of the Lewis Wright, the Herbert Spencer the George Farley, and the Vincent Brennan Competitions. Apart from the poetry competition there had been reductions in the number of entries. After some discussion it was decided to delay the final date for entries to the S.F. and F.G. Memorial Competition (for 2 chapters of an autobiography) until the end of September 2000. The results to be announced at the New Year Party.

11. The Poetry Workshop had suffered serious losses with the deaths of John Ward and Bill Barnes, but great interest in poetry-writing remained unabated.
12. Arrangements were in hand for the Annual Lunch and the President was seeking possible speakers. The possibility of inviting someone connected with the Navy (the lunch being arranged for Trafalgar Day) or alternatively, a photographer, as suggested by Mr Gompers, were discussed.
13. It was decided not to nominate a Writer of the Year in the absence of any member having published any significant work.
14. The President and Vice-President were re-elected. It was decided not to elect another Vice-President to fill the vacancy left by the death of Iris Murdoch.
15. Members of the Committee had expressed their willingness to serve for another year, although Mr Danson gave notice that he would not wish to remain as Treasurer beyond the current 'Society's' year. The Committee was therefore re-elected in toto.

Solution to 'Vegetables' Crossword from Issue 149

compiled by Karen Lowe

Across:

1 Legume 4 Blanca 7 At ease
 9 Tots 11 Rocket 13 Elms
 14 List 16 Onions 17 Celery
 20 Tout 22 Epic 23 Radish
 26 Peer 28 Reason 29 Tassel
 30 Tip-top

Down:

1 Lentil 2 Gynt 3 Estima
 4 Bear 5 Alec 6 Abates
 8 Sown 10 Set 12 Kyoto
 15 Salad 17 Carrot 18 Rose
 19 Sprout 20 TCP 21 Turnip
 24 Iris 25 Hail 27 Exit

The Early Days

The seeds for the formation of a Society of Civil Service Authors first germinated in the mind of A.A.Rayner during the latter part of 1935. This idea was mulled over with two of his colleagues, I.O.Evans and Bernard Newman, firstly in the office (Office of Works later to become the Ministry of Works) and later in the comfort of the aptly named pub The Two Chairmen, which was situated in nearby Dartmouth Street.

However, it was not until the 18th February 1936 that the first recorded meeting of the Society took place, and this was held at 6pm in Conference Room 'A' of H.M.Office of Works, Storey's Gate, Westminster. Those present at this inaugural meeting were:

A.A.Rayner	I. O. Evans
Bernard Newman	J.R.Barker
James Layer	E.M.Keate
W.H.Chappell	C.C.H.Borley
Vincent Brennan	Jackson Budd
I.A.Campbell	Grierson Dickson
Charman Edwards	M.Knight
H.E.L.Melhuish	L.A.Pavey
D.A.Shephard	Miss Mary Codd
Miss A.M.Paterson	C.Harwood Gibbs-Smith

Charles Neilson Gattey (a young man not yet out of his teens).

Bernard Newman was in the Chair at this initial meeting and spoke of the two main aims of the proposed new Society as:-

‘The development of the social possibilities of such a corporate body of authors, and the practical assistance which might be rendered one to one another amongst them.’

Membership was open to both serving and ex-Civil Servants who had had at least one book published (not at their own expense), whilst Associate Membership was extended to all Civil Servants who were free-lance journalists, contributors to periodicals, plus other aspiring authors.

A twelve member Executive Committee was proposed comprising a nucleus of seven or eight, with power to co-opt as necessary. The following nucleus were elected:-

Grierson Dickson/J.R.Barker	Ministry of Labour
Jackson Budd	Customs & Excise
Charman Edwards	Dept. of Overseas Trade
H.E.L.Meluish/L.A.Pavey	Inland Revenue
Bernard Newman/A.A.Rayner	Office of Works

It was suggested at this meeting that in order to meet initial expenses those present should contribute 2/- as a first instalment of an, as yet, undecided annual subscription. It was an indication of the interest generated by this first meeting that the majority of those present paid up on the spot. (Although it has also been suggested that no doubt there were some Civil Servants, then as now, who did not have a couple of bob to spare).

The second meeting of the Society was held at The Two Chairmen pub in March 1936 and it was during this meeting that the following rules were drafted:-

- 1) The Society shall be called 'The Society of Civil Service Authors'.
- 2) Objects: To foster friendly relationship among the members, to furnish mutual assistance, and to further the interests of the members generally as authors.
- 3) Membership: Full membership shall be open to Civil Servants and ex-Civil Servants who can substantiate to the Committee their standing as authors, and to the Editors of Civil Service periodicals. Associate membership shall be open to all other Civil Service writers at the discretion of the Committee.
- 4) Subscription: The annual subscription shall be 10/6 for full members and 5/- for associates.
- 5) Committee: The Committee shall consist of, the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and nine other members. The Committee shall have the power to co-opt. Five shall form a quorum for the transaction of business.

Alteration of Rules: These Rules may not be altered except by a two-third vote at a General Meeting.

It was agreed that Humbert Wolfe (Director of Establishment at the Ministry of Labour) should be asked to become the first President of the Society, and James Layer of the Victoria and Albert Museum to be invited to serve on the Committee. The official address of the Society would continue to be that of H.M. Office of Works (subject of course to obtaining official permission).

The first General Meeting of the Society was held at The Two Chairmen on the 21st May, 1936 with Bernard Newman in the Chair, and about fifty members and prospective members present. (Presumably there was a room in the pub large enough to cope with the influx of extra customers). It was during this meeting that the decision was taken to hold future meetings at the Camera Club in London's Adelphi W.C.2., and a list was prepared of members willing to offer their services as lecturers to the Society.

In November 1936 a new Committee was elected (as the six-month term of office of the former Committee had expired). All members were re-elected with the exception of Grierson-Dickson, whilst three new members were appointed, thus bringing the new Committee to the full twelve allowed under the Constitution. The new members were:-

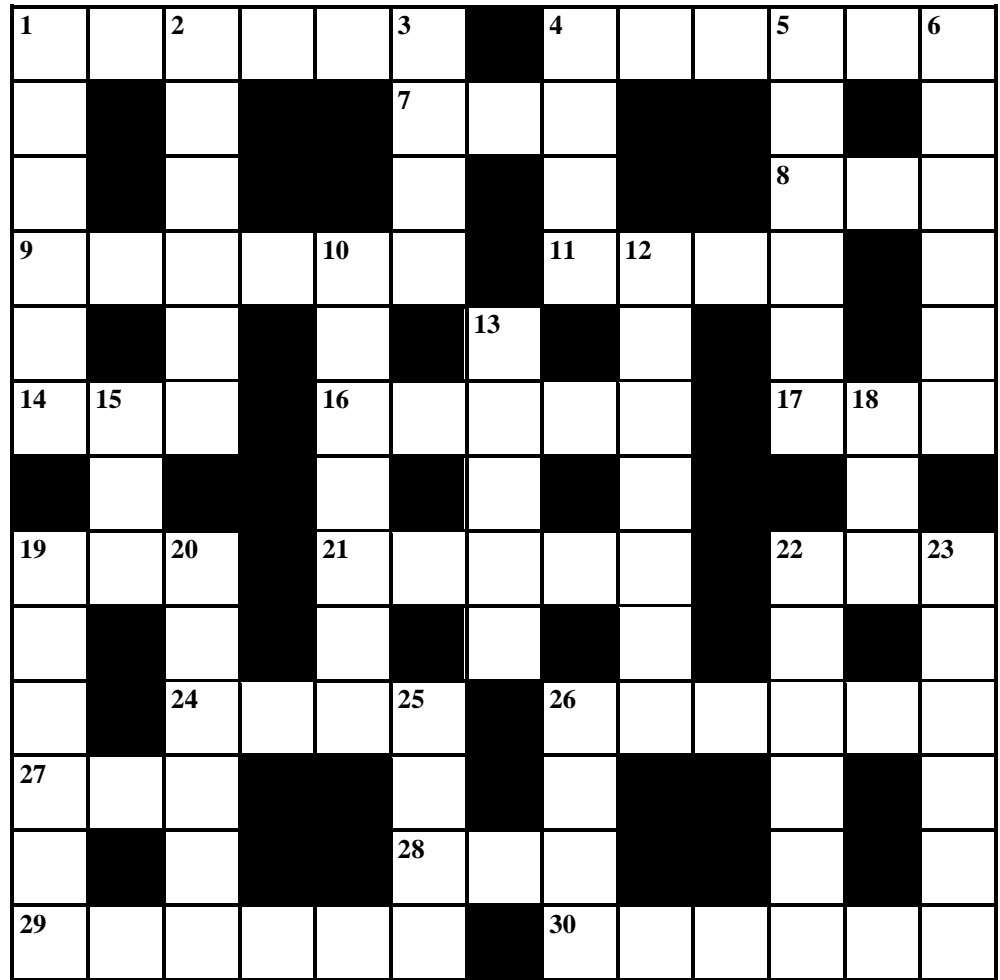
Miss E.M. Neate	Foreign Office
Vincent Brennan	Air Ministry
Mr Harris	Dept. of Trade

In April of the following year (1937) H.E.L. Melhuish of the Inland Revenue was appointed Treasurer, and in April 1938 Grierson-Dickson was re-elected to the Committee; whilst Charles Neilson Gattey replaced A.A. Rayner. Also in April 1938 Jackson Budd was elected Chairman following the resignation of Bernard Newman; Grierson-Dickson became Vice-Chairman and Charles Neilson Gattey was appointed Publicity Officer.

To Be Continued...

CROSSWORD

“LITERARY
WORKS”
compiled by
KAREN LOWE



ACROSS

1 26ac, 10d, 28ac

Le Carre's 1d (6)

4 Job for Forester
hero? (6)

7 Pilot as good as
Biggles? (3)

8 Oscar Wilde's
1d? (3)

9 Unemployment
(6)

11 '____ Barton',
Mrs Gaskell's tale
of 22d workers (4)

14 Diminutive
nun? (3)

16 Shepherd Oak's
charges (5)

17 In which the catcher's found? (3)

19 Married – midweek? (3)

21 Sexton's work (5)

22 Pirate guide to *Treasure Island*? (3)

24 Ground by 22d (4)

26 See 1ac (6)

27 Mr Herriot's job (3)

28 See 1ac (3)

29 Seldom (6)

30 Record keeper – or who beats him (6)

6 Shake like a snake? (6)

10 See 1ac (7)

12 Country of poet Rainer Maria Rilke
(7)

13 Ironworker Wilbur? (5)

15 '*The ____ man cometh*' – O'Neill (3)

18 Agreement found in W. B. Yeats? (3)

19 Silas Marner's occupation (6)

20 M. Bovary's occupation – or Johnson
(6)

22 Chaucer's tale-teller – at Dorlcote? (6)

23 Carrier – of Cole? (6)

25 Prying (4)

26 Geppetto's creations (4)

DOWN

1 Jobs (6)

2 Tends – to Juliet? (6)

3 Where to find Dick Francis hero? (4)

4 Mined in *Germinal*? (4)

5 Rumpole's job (6)

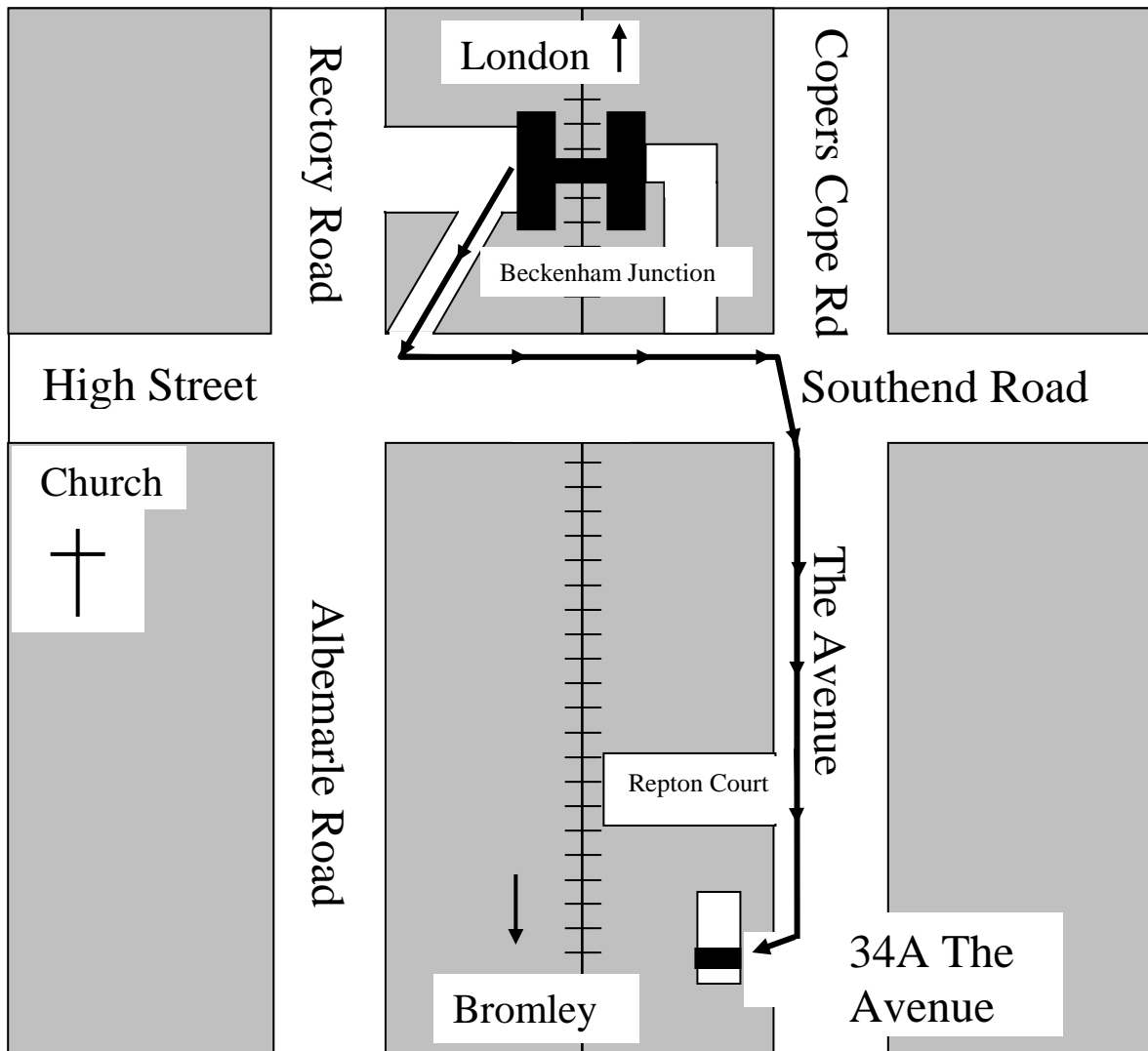
Solution in Issue 151

‘Awayday’ at Beckenham

On Saturday 9th September 2000, Alan and Marjorie Watts will be hosting another ‘Awayday’ at their home: 34A The Avenue, Beckenham, Kent. All members welcome. Don’t miss this excellent writers’ workshop.

You may wish to bring along for criticism, a short story, article or poem, not exceeding ten minutes reading time.

10.00 am	Assemble - Coffee - Workshop
12.00 noon	Lunch - bring own sandwiches - soup/tea/orangeade available
1.00 pm	Workshop continued
	Mid afternoon break for tea
4.00 pm	Finish



How to get there: Take the train from Victoria (main line) station stopping at Beckenham Junction. Members coming from the south may have to change at Bromley South Station. Alight at Beckenham Junction Station and follow directions on the map.