

The Society of Civil & Public Service Writers

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Diary

Annual Luncheon
21st October 2006

Closing date for entries to W.F. & F.G.
Froud Memorial Competition
23rd October 2006.

DATA PROTECTION ACT

Members' names and addresses are held on a computer database which is used for mailing copies of the Civil Service Author.

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in the SCPSW Author are those of the contributors and are not necessarily those of the Editor or of the Society.

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CONTENTS

- 3 Editorial
- 5 Letters
- 6 A Member's Success *Ethel Cordoff*
- 7 Poetry Workshop
- 9 Poetry Pages *edited by Joyce Thornton*
- 13 Number Please *Elvira Bridges*
- 14 Summary of the AGM *Ethel Corduff*
- 18 Obituary - Albert Thornton
- 20 SCPSW Competitions
- 24 Palace in the Sky *Norman Bissett*
- 25 After the Riot *Don Nixon*
- 25 Mane Advantage *Jenny Chamier-Grove*
- 26 Norfolk *Norman Bissett*
- 27 A History of the Society of Civil Service Authors –
continued *Beryl Jones*
- 30 Cairo to Aswan Sights and Sites of the Nile
Stephen Bibby
- 35 The Crossing *Don Nixon*
- 40 Annual Statement of Income and Expenditure

Editorial

Adrian Danson

The saga continues; normality evades me; chaos reigns. We are living in a flat in Croydon and much of what I need has vanished into store, despite all efforts to avoid this. Roy Froud has asked where are the details of the Froud Memorial Competition for 2006? I can only say that I did the best I could in the circumstances, but the date of the AGM when the details of the competition were agreed was so near to publication date that this was not included. I hope we can avoid such problems, if and when I ever get a permanent home.

14th September is the intended date of our move, followed by many weeks of searching for missing items, e.g. the front door bell for our previous house was a wireless version and was packed off to storage by the removal people. The new owners had to remove the button from the front door and replace it with a new system. We gave our redundant lawn mower to our next door neighbours, but they cannot use it until we recover the grass box that also went into store. I get the feeling that there is some evil influence behind all this. Da Vinci is on my list of suspects.

All members will wish to join me in offering our condolences to Joyce Thornton, whose husband Albert died recently. Of those who had the good fortune to know him I am sure we will have words to describe his contribution to our Society and Poetry Workshop in particular. We have all enjoyed the benefit of his contribution to *Author* over many years and I hope Joyce will offer us more of his work that has not yet been published in *Author*. Joyce's final contribution as poetry editor is included in this issue. We welcome Terry James as the new editor and hope our poets will provide him with plenty of material for future issues. (Since writing this Joyce has provided an obituary.)

Although I mentioned it in the last issue, any members who have never joined one of the SCPSW folios should consider joining one. The exchange of member's views on each other's work is a valuable contribution to the progress of writing skills, not least by the creation of such views.

For members who use computer ink-jet printers, my own experience supports recent advice from a computer magazine on the subject of ink. Printer manufacturers sell printers at cost or below and make their profit from the subsequent sale of replacement ink cartridges, but cheaper cartridges are available, as advertised in computer magazines and the internet. Manufacturers try to frighten us by saying that their guarantees will not apply if ink other than their own is used. Fortunately printers have a life of some years.

Those I bought have never broken down, despite using the cheaper ink cartridges. Only a basic second-hand computer is needed for those using it solely for writing. With a £50 printer/copier and the cheaper ink cartridges, total cost is not much greater than a typewriter, but with many advantages, e.g. numerous fonts (type-face, for those unfamiliar with the term) and use of colour if you wish. Be assured that age is no barrier to using a computer for writing and fax. Using it for e-mail and research via the internet requires the addition of free virus and anti-spy protection, with automatic up-dating and application. The equivalent of junk mail can be filtered out with free Mozilla software and pop-up advertisements can be stopped altogether.

In essence, I strongly recommend computers to all members.

A thought has occurred to me on the subject of our diminishing membership numbers, namely that we might consider offering associate membership for those not eligible for full membership. They would need to pay the same annual fee, to cover our operating expenses, but would not have voting rights or be eligible for office. This could be considered at the 2007 AGM, but in the interim I invite members to write to me on the matter, either for or against.

As always you are invited to write to me on any subject, e.g. I still await advice on which of you is creating, for future writers of fiction based in this period, the dictionary of bad English in current use, or inappropriate use of words, such as the current excessive use of the word "basically", or the phrase "I have to say".

Letters

Dear Adrian,

The Author is always welcome when it is delivered to this Lancashire address, because it keeps me in touch with the interesting activities of the society. Unfortunately it also informs me of your own on going trials and tribulations purgatory and all that. Well after purgatory, there must be some reward, so hang on in there!

I also thought I might refer to your comment in the summer issue of our journal that; "a lack of material from members leaves me with much space to fill." I mention this because I have a letter here from Ron Jeffreys which came after the results of the 2005 competitions had been made known. It advised me that my Travel Article entry; "Winchester Experience" had won 1st prize and had been sent to the editor for publication. Now I'm not aware that it has yet been published, but if not, it could help to fill some space! (Lost in the post perhaps, as I would welcome it, but did not receive it - Ed)

I am a member of The Thomas Hardy Society and earlier in the year was pleased to win a competition set in the journal. This required writing an alternative demise for one of Hardy's characters. I chose to find another way for Sergeant Troy to leave the scene in Far from the Madding Crowd.

In June at a meeting of the Lancashire Authors' Association I received trophies for first places in Historical Article and General Article categories, and second place certificate for Prose in Standard English (there is a Lancashire dialect section which I do not attempt!) I seem to enjoy the challenge of competitions.

However Adrian, despite any domestic problems, I hope that you get some enjoyment from editing the Author although I do visualise a deal of hassle also comes with the task. But I hope too that whenever you see another newly published edition, you also experience a well deserved feeling of satisfaction. (Satisfaction mixed with relief - Ed)

James Lancaster.

A Member's Success

Ethel Corduff

At a writing workshop I attended in Spring this year, we were asked to go to a large newsagent and choose a magazine we would not normally read. Study it and then write something for it.

A type of magazine I dislike is one containing true confession stories. There are several of these on the news shelves, all costing less than a pound. To help me decide I choose the cheapest, it was called "Real People " cost only sixty pence. The cover featured the main stories " The shocking cost of my 12 year affair. "Stabbed by my ex but he was not getting my little girl " Hero Mum I had to steal my daughter's baby to save her life "

I was amazed to see on flicking through the many sordid stories that payment is up to £500 per story. No wonder people who are probably hard up are willing to bare all! I could not bring myself to read them let alone try to write them, also it had to be true! No amount of money would persuade me to tell a personal story complete with photos and all details

However I discovered a page called "You Clever Lot' which was looking for people's ideas or in other words household hints for £ 15 and if you provided a picture you can make £25. Now this was something I could do. I have always loved hints. When I was newly married I read Shirley Conran's "Superwoman" from cover to cover many times following her ideas, most of which I have forgotten now. I decided to send a hint of my own on the use of Vaseline around the house. I got my son to take a picture of me cleaning my patent bag and shoes with Vaseline and only my hand could be seen. For good measure I sent another one on what I use clothes pegs for!

Guess what! Within weeks I was sent a cheque for £25 for the Vaseline tip which they called a Fashion tip (they only use one tip at a time from a contributor) On enquiring which issue it would be in they told me it had been two weeks previously. They were very good and sent me a free copy. They had changed my wording a bit but they used the photo. Also I found the two editorial ladies I spoke to extremely helpful. So don't discount magazines you would not normally buy as there may be others with pages such as these that you can earn a cheque. If you are brave there is always the £500 page to consider.

Poetry Workshop

Mike Boland

Chairman: Liz Rowlands, 19 Arkley Court, Maidenhead, SL6 2YR

Treasurer: Terry Rickson, 48 Marlborough Road, Ashford, TW15 3QA

Secretary: Mike Boland, 11 Boxtree Lane, Harrow Weald, HA3 6JU

PW Weekend 2006

By the time this edition of the Poetry Page appears, the Poetry Workshop will have held their annual Weekend at the University of Central England, Birmingham. A report on the activities of the group plus the Statement of Proceedings of the PW's Annual General Meeting (which was held during the course of the Weekend) will be published in the autumn issue of wavelenghts, the PW magazine.

Waves 2006

This year's edition of Waves, the annual collection of work by members of the Poetry Workshop, is now available from Liz Rowlands (address above) at the price of £2.50 (inc P&P). Contributors should have received their copies by now. If you haven't received yours yet, please contact Liz.

Wavelengths

Wavelengths is the quarterly magazine of the Poetry Workshop, issued free to all its members. The autumn issue, due out in September, will focus on the recent Weekend in Birmingham. As well as a report of the activities that took place there, and the Statement of Proceedings of the AGM, the issue will carry the text of one of the talks given over the Weekend, plus the winning poems of competitions set as part of the Weekend's activities. The regular Newsletter section will give details of events of interest to members of the Poetry Workshop. Contributions are welcome from all members of the PW. Submission guidelines are given at the end of the magazine.

Bill Barnes Competition 2006

The Closing Date for the Bill Barnes Competition is 30 September, so presuming this copy of The Author reaches you early in the month, you

will still have time to enter. Rules for the Competition, which is for PW members only, were given in the summer issue of wavelenghts, but if you have mislaid them, contact me, Mike Boland (address above) as soon as possible and I will try and get a copy to you before the deadline. The judge for this year's Competition is Rosemarie Morton.

The Poetry Workshop

If you are a member of the Society, have an interest in poetry but have not yet joined the Poetry Workshop - what are you waiting for!

The cost of membership is only £3, and for this small sum the Poetry Workshop provides:

- four issues of our magazine wavelenghts each year - contributions of poems and articles on
- poetry are welcomed from PW members
- the chance of publication in Waves, the PW's annual anthology of members' work
- access to the popular Postal Folio scheme
- eligibility for the Bill Barnes Poetry Competition (open exclusively to PW members)
- eligibility for the annual PW Weekend at the University of Birmingham

If you are interested in joining us, contact our Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Terry Rickson, at the address above. Cheques should be made out to: SCPSW Poetry Workshop Account.

Dates to Remember

1 September 2006	wavelenghts #8 published
30 September 2006	closing date for Bill Barnes Competition
31 October 2006	deadline for wavelenghts #9 (winter issue)
1 December 2006	wavelenghts #9 published

Poetry Pages

Edited by Joyce Thornton

Trees

Mike Boland (A triolet)

I think that trees are most charming;
except after dark.
Then they can be quite alarming.
I think trees mostly charming,
their differences simply disarming,
those patterns of leaf and of bark.
I think that trees are most charming;
except after dark.

Fabric of Illusion

Eleanor Broaders

Touch me with your words
And I will turn them into song
And I will sing them to myself
When nights are cold and long

Touch me with your laughter
And fill my heart with gladness
That I may use it as a potion
To soothe on days of sadness

Touch me with your dreams
And I will weave them into mine
For promises made in dreams
Will stand the test of time

But do not touch me with your eyes
For it will only blind my sight
To the shadows in your soul
That are hiding from the light

Nor do not touch me with your kiss
For it will only break my heart
It tears the fabric of illusion
That keeps reality and dreams apart.

I'm A Lazy Parker

Bill Torrie Douglas

always go for the big space
or the pavement with no other cars.
Not for me the crowded bays
nearest to the superstore,
or next to the four tracks
and camper vans. The wife has to
walk a bit further, but it's her own fault,
she should never have married a lazy parker.

Indeed if I can park front first, I will,
which also makes me a nosey parker
rather than a tail end Charlie Parker.

Sentinels of Spring

Margaret Gregory

She did not see ten thousand daff'odils,
The lakeside glory, that once had filled the poet's gaze,
But a front garden small, low hedge enclosed,
Where black earth concealed spring's golden blaze.

No new bulbs planted there last year, she thought,
Surveying the garden's unkempt plight.
Yet look, from older stock, green swords were thrusting,
Piercing black earth into life giving light.

That winter had brought both heartache and sickness,
With a last goodbye, pain too stark to share.
Now she spoke, she moved, she even smiled,
But no one could fill that empty chair.

The first flowers that spring were two daffodils.
They poked straight through the boundary hedge
And from their parapet nodded to passers by,
Smiling broadly from their thicket ledge.

When she saw them she laughed, and then she cried
To see such force in a fragile bloom.
Yet it seemed that time had begun to heal
As spring drew fresh life from earth's dark womb.

Retirement

Steve Glason

For umpteen years I've travelled up
via Hither green, Lee, Sidcup
Suburban Kent in a Thirties sprawl
Through Borough junction slowly crawl.

On platforms in the freezing cold
I've stood awhile it can be told
Inward groaned when trains are late
Explanation tempting fate.

Hasty breakfast raided fridge
Sardine tight to London Bridge
Endured the tube like bees in swarm
Heading for an office warm.

At meetings I have scribbled notes
Decisions I have given votes
In margins wide ideas in ink
Roll on my pension index link.

There is a chance I could retire
To tend the garden my desire
On the horizon hope next year
Putting motions now in gear.

Farewell the trains in Dartford Loop
{The very thought quite cock a hoop!}
More time for wife (devoted fan)
Oh happy, happy Eltham Man!

You're Fired!

Roy Stevens

(TV series The Apprentice)

The contestants,
Pushy young Execs,
Sharp suited, power dressed,
Cocksure, green,
Strut their stuff,
Straining to impress.

But Sugar,
Shrewd, rude and street wise,
Has the measure of them all,
Well able to puncture
Their overblown egos
With a devastating put down.

With a voice
As abrasive as a file,
He castigates the hapless one
Who has failed the task,
Fixes him (or her)
With those bleak, black eyes,
And, stabbing a finger,
Rasps;
YOU'RE FIRED!"

Bookshops

Bill Torrie Douglas

Not the newly published, neatly racked type,
with authors of the month and three for the price of two,
but the smelly type where bookshelves bend around
corners and an erudite bibliophile has taken care
to catalogue poetry and politics separately.
Forgotten novelists still live within hard covers
and reference books refer to facts that were relevant
when the world was younger.

A seam of such shops
runs raggedly throughout the kingdom and
within each one a vein of gems waits to be mined.
I thank those bibliophiles who provide such
service to the community, where the profit
goes to charity and the treasures come to me.

Botanic Gardens (Winter)

Bill Torrie Douglas

Trees in filigree against dismal sky,
bare of clothing and naked
to hostility from the wind.
Mothers wrapped in earthen colours
chase their children round the bushes
as children chase the pigeons.
Edinburgh's grey features of aloof tolerance
sit beneath a grandiose skyline.

A winter oasis of empathy,
fusion within the perpetual cycle
of life and growth and death.
Trees give comfort with their longevity,
constancy in the midst of change.

Number Please

I tried to make a phone call to trusty Telecomm
This former operator who worked with such aplomb
They welcomed me with open arms; would serve my every need,
A disembodied voice then said, "We'll work with utmost speed."

I smiled and asked for help to join the BT Internet.
The voice returned and told me that they couldn't do it yet.
For first I had to press on one, or two for information
Or press another button to reach my destination.

I am so sad that modem times have changed things telephonic
And being told that our switch board is very anachronic
Old fashioned me will ever be immune to all the choices
I have this plea for you BT, please bring back girls with voices

Dedicated to telephonists of old. Happy memories!
By Elvira Bridges, nee Cadwallader, who joined London Gladstone Telephone
Exchange in 1948.

Summary of the AGM held at Civil Service Club, Whitehall on Saturday 20th May 2006

Ethel Corduff

The meeting was chaired by Terry Rickson, who welcomed those attending.

1. Matters Arising from the minutes of the last AGM, which were read and, as proposed by Roy Froud and seconded by Brian Scott, accepted as a true and accurate record. Roy Froud asked for a reminder of the folios in Author. (This was effected in the following issue) Terry Rickson wrote to Alan Watt to pass on our proposal that he become President of SCPSW. Alan expressed his delight in accepting this role. Roy voiced the sentiments of the meeting in expressing our sadness at the loss of Gordon Gompers, who contributed a great deal over many years, and how much he would be missed.

2. Membership Secretary's Report

I am sorry not to be with you this year. Current membership stands at 131, of which 9 are new members. This means that a larger number of members did not renew their subscriptions. Some of this is accounted for by age, infirmity, etc., and every year some people move on to something new, but the low figure is worrying. The article folio is going great guns and is a really interesting read.

The membership issue was then discussed, with the Civil Service dispersal recognised as an unfortunate contributory factor. Reminders would be sent to those not renewing, as this is often an oversight. Val Whitmarsh pointed out that membership often falls in good times, the Writer's School going bust when the last recession ended. Few young people are joining. (But are they reading, apart from Harry Potter, and writing, or are they content to play computer games? - Ed) Ethel said that Croydon Writers have young members, but none attended their AGM. The Society needs 200 members to be viable, in the meantime current costs are obscured by committee members not making any expenses claims, other than occasional travelling expenses. In recent years several committee members have tried to obtain funds from outside sources but, for one reason or another, we have never qualified for financial help.

3. Meeting Secretary's Report

Meeting are at present sufficient, with enough members attending the Annual Luncheon and New Year

Party. Other meetings, such as writer's workshops, do not currently have sufficient support to be viable. Although St. Vincent's Centre costs remain constant, we have to meet the annual increases imposed by the Civil Service Club. Val Whitmarsh offered to hold an Awayday at her house. Ethel will invite Jean Bowden, novelist and President of Croydon Writers, to be our guest speaker at Annual Luncheon.

4. Treasurer's Report. (See page 40)

5. Publicity Officer's Report.

On the publicity front, I have compiled a list of Civil Service Staff magazines and web based bulletins. My list covers:

- The Civil Service Sports Council
- The Dept. for Education and Skills
- The Dept. of Trade and Industry
- The Ministry of Defence - "Soldier", "RAF News" and "Navy News"
- The Dept. for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs
- The Dept. of Transport and
- The Central Office of Information

It is some years since I took early retirement from the Civil Service. I'm a bit out of touch and I would welcome help in tracking down staff magazines or web-based Bulletins for other government departments, including for instance, Work and Pensions, Revenue and Customs. When I worked in the Civil Service, in the Information Division, we used to get a very useful booklet known as the "White Book", issued every six months, entitled "The IPO Directory - information and press officers in government departments and public corporations". It's incredibly useful and if any member could procure for me an up-to-date copy I'd be eternally grateful.

Some Civil Service staff magazines are bimonthly, such as the Dept. Of Transport magazine, "A two B" producing, for instance, a joint November-December edition. This means, for example, in order to publicise SCPSW annual competitions, copy must be sent no later than the first week in September.

What should be publicised? Apart from annual competitions, I'm relying on you all to tell me when something should be publicised (and, in that respect, many thanks to Ethel Corduff and Joan Lewis).

Betty Griffin mentioned Advantica, only had one person follow it up. Roger De Boer said a new magazine replaced Portcullis, it is no good. (How good it is must surely be irrelevant, as we only want publicity - Ed)

6. Editor's Report

Due to house move, my publishing of the magazine will be delayed. I am also advised that printing costs may be higher than initially quoted. I continue to struggle for time to prepare the magazine and would welcome a suitable new editor, whilst continuing to enjoy and appreciate the support of so many members. I have continued to be late in submission to our publisher and must thank Alan Gibb for dealing with this. I would like to record my thanks to Beryl Jones for her History of the Society. Doing my own scanning of submitted work has reduced our costs by about £200 per annum. If I am ever able to do my own publishing, I have a number of ideas for change of layout, but this remains to progress from plan to realisation.

Val asked if anyone had applied to become Editor. Adrian advised that one person had said that they would consider it at a future date.

7. Competition Secretary's Report

Apologies for lateness in competition details going out. Entries received are - Lewis Wright 7, Herbert Spencer 21, George Farley 13 and Vincent Brennan 4. Reduced entries believed to be due to late advertising.

8. Poetry Workshop Report

Membership for the year stood at 76, a reduction of 11 over the previous year. A sad aspect to the year was the death of two stalwart members, Barbara Dickinson in January and Pat Brindle in November. Barbara, along with Bill Barnes, had been a founder member of the Poetry Workshop and was greatly respected for her love and knowledge of poetry. She judged the Herbert Spencer competition in 2004. Pat was a tireless and enthusiastic member who for the past three or four years had planned and organised the Annual Poetry Workshop weekend in Birmingham. Appropriate tributes had been made to both members.

On a happier note, "Waves", the annual collection of members work, had been well received; the cover design provided by Barbara Stewart once again. The Herbert Spencer poetry competition was judged by Joyce Thornton, her report and winners names was published in the Autumn issue of "Author". The Bill Barnes poetry competition was judged by Liz Rowlands and Terry Rickson. The winner was Norman Bissett with "The Neighbours Cat" second was Andrew Milcan's "Stobart" and third Ann Froggatt's "Diddle Dactyls". Other poems by Norman Bissett and Ann Froggatt, together with James Lancaster, were accorded "Highly Commended". All poems entered into the competition will be published in the Spring 2006 issue of "Wavelengths".

Joyce Thornton continued in her role as Poetry Editor for "Author", although her husband's increasingly poor health has made the task harder. (As recorded elsewhere, subsequent to the AGM Albert sadly died and Terry James has taken over as Poetry Editor - Ed)

The poetry postal folios continue to flourish and were enjoyed by contributors.

The annual Poetry Workshop Weekend took place at Birmingham University between 29th and 31st July. The theme of the weekend was "Foreign and Fun", producing poems for reading, discussion, workshop criticism and competition. Two talks were given by members, Roger de Boer and Muriel Stammers on American poets. The ever popular Saturday evening quiz was ably devised once again by Bill Douglas and much enjoyed.

The AGM re-elected Liz Rowlands as chairman, Terry Rickson and Mike Bowland as Treasurer and Secretary/Editor of "Wavelengths" respectively. Subscription to the PW remains £3 for further year. Plans for the 2007 PW Weekend are in hand. Ethel said that PW keep costs down because Mike Bowland does the printing and publishing himself.

9. Annual Lunch

No increase, menu has been chosen, speaker being arranged.

10. Writer of the Year

After consideration of member's work, including Gordon Gompers' booklet on Morley College, Margaret Pelling for her book "Work for Four Hands" was considered the most worthy. It had very good reviews. Margaret was the unanimous chosen as SCPSW Writer of the Year by the committee and this was then supported by those attending the AGM. Our chairman, Terry Rickson, will notify her formally by letter and invite her to the presentation of the award at the Annual Luncheon.

11. W.F.and F.G. Froud Competition

The topic was discussed by the committee and a story for 7 to 12 year-old children of 1,000 to 2,000 words was decided upon. Roy Froud expressed his pleasure in the choice. Ethel said that she could ask her sister, who teaches children in Ireland of that age group, if she would act as judge and Roy said that he was happy with this. He asked what income was generated by the last competition. This will be referred to Beryl.

12. Gordon Gompers' Bequest

The AGM expressed our pleasure of the promised £1,000 from Gordon's estate. We intend to do something specific to honour his memory and generosity, with an anthology as a possibility. Acknowledgement of his faithful support over many years and of his achievements appeared in the Summer issue of "Author".

13. Election of President and Vice-Presidents

The re-election of those in office was proposed by Val Whitmarsh, seconded by Brian Scott and agreed.

13. Election of Committee

After the existing committee agreed to stand for another year, Val Whitmarsh proposed their re-election, which was seconded by Roy Froud and agreed by all present. Roy nominated Brian Scott as an additional member, but he declined. It was agreed that a request for a volunteer new member should be made in "Author", such new member initially being ex-officio.

14. Any Other Business

Short story and article folios were reported to be running well, as are the poetry workshop folios run by Bill Douglas, Terry Rickson and Mike Boland. Ethel said that Roy Froud had produced a comprehensive article on grammar that would be ideal for "Author". Roy has not yet offered it for publication. Adrian spoke of the possibility of publishing an anthology of work from past editions of "Author", but this needs costing and an agreed method of selecting suitable material and must remain on ice for now. He also mentioned the possibility of issuing "Author" on audio tape at some time in the future, to assist those with impaired vision.

Albert Thornton

3.4.1921 - 19.5.2006

Notable for the exquisitely detailed covers he executed for the Poetry Workshop's annual anthology, FOCUS and latterly WAVES, Albert passed away peacefully on 19th May, after a long period of indifferent health including impaired vision. Senior Art Master at Whitcliffe Mount Grammar School, Cleckheaton West Yorkshire from 1948 to 1966, he was born in Bamoldswick and in 1932 won a County Major scholarship to St.Ermysteads Grammar School Skipton which he attended as a day pupil.

His daily journey by train from Barnoldswick to Skipton took him past many images both pastoral and industrial which he referred to later in paintings, poetry and prose, finding them rich material for self expression. At the outbreak of the war in September 1939 Albert commenced the Art Teacher's Diploma course at Leeds College of Art but his studies were interrupted when, in 1941 he was directed to do war service as a Technical Illustrator in the Research Technical Publications Department of the Ministry of Aircraft Productions, based with other central government departments, in Harrogate. His drawing skills were employed by the Ministry to illustrate life saving dingy drills for crews of 'ditched' bombers and perspective drawing for aircraft recognition. It was at this time that he met his wife Joyce, a Civil Servant who had been evacuated to Harrogate in 1940 with her Government Department and who, like Albert was practising her drawing skills in evening Life Drawing classes at Harrogate College of Art. They were married in North London in 1944 when the Ministry of Aircraft Production briefly returned to London, returning to Harrogate when V1 and V2 bombings disrupted sensitive Ministry war work.

When the war ended in 1945, Albert worked temporarily at the then Ministry of Social Security which was involved with the implementation of the Beveridge Report, before he returned to Leeds College of Art to complete his Art Teacher's Diploma course.

His first son, Philip, was born in 1946 and Stephen was born in 1947. In September 1948, as a newly qualified Art Teacher he took up his post at Whitcliffe Mount Grammar School Cleckheaton and quickly established himself with his individual approach to teaching art in the widest sense.

Senior pupils were encouraged to develop their skills not only in the classroom but also in field studies and in the Thornton household where art, music and literature appreciation evenings were held. In an effort to encourage pupil's pottery skills he built a kiln in the school grounds at no cost to the school, the materials being donated by parents who were as equally enthusiastic about this particular art form. With his interest in dramatic art he became involved in all the Whitcliffe stage productions creating scenery, backcloths, costume design and stage effects in collaboration with colleagues and pupils for plays and Gilbert and Sullivan operas. For several years Albert was an advisor to the Northern Universities Joint Matriculation Board, attending meetings in Manchester concerning the setting of 'O' and W level Art examination papers, later becoming an examiner for the Board. Through other connections he illustrated technical booklets and designed educational wall charts for Educational Productions Ltd in the 1960's and an Art Correspondence Course for the publishers Collier MacMillan. In 1966 Albert left teaching and moved to the West Riding Programme Learning Unit based at Whitwood Mining and Technical College, Castleford where he illustrated training programmes principally for the Fire and Ambulance Services. His love of teaching continued even there where he encouraged young mining apprentices to go out and use cameras to record their local environment as a means of expressing themselves. He retired in 1980 and set about constructing a motor caravan ready for Joyce's retirement in 1982 for their travels together at home and abroad with their sketch books and cameras. During their retirement they have participated in the activities of many and varied arts organisations including Pennine Poets, Poetry Business, Dewsbury Arts Group, Society of Public and Civil Service Writers and Cleckheaton Music Centre, illustrating their publications and his own poetical autobiography 'Thornton in Craven (and Other Places)'. His eyesight began to fail in 2001 and he was registered blind in 2005. Although he could no longer illustrate or express himself visually, with Joyce, he continued to attend life drawing sessions at the Dewsbury Arts Group, producing works depicting shadowy shapes and forms in his own distinctive style. He is survived by his widow, Joyce, and one son, Stephen.

WF and FG Froud Memorial Competition 2006

Subject - A Short Story for Children aged 7 to 12 of between 1000 and 2,000 words.

Many writers have risen from obscurity upon writing a successful children's story, so take the first step by seizing this opportunity to become one of them.

One entry per member, with entry fee of £3 by cheque payable to SCPSW and sent to Competition Secretary, Ron Jeffreys, to arrive not later than 31st October 2006.

For those with friends who might like to enter, the fee for non-members is £5. Should they be eligible to join SCPSW and do so this year, the £2 difference will be credited against their annual membership fee.

Entries to be typed and double-spaced on one side of A4 only.

Only pen-names should be marked on manuscript. Quote name, address and pen-name on a separate covering sheet.

SCPSW ANNUAL COMPETITIONS 2005/2006

The Herbert Spencer Poetry Competition Results

25 entries were submitted for this competition and the judge was Shafi Ahamed. He was appointed by the Poetry Workshop and his report, list of winners and poems will be published in "Author" as space permits.

1st Prize £50 Palace in the Sky

Norman Bissett, Edinburgh

2nd Prize £30 After The Riot

Don Nixon, Albrighton, Wolverhampton

3rd Prize £15 Norfolk

Norman Bissett, Edinburgh.

Highly Commended:

Foveran Sands by Norman Bissett, Edinburgh

Springtime Renewal by James Lancaster, Chorley.

The Vincent Brennan Travel Article 2006 Results

There were six entries for this competition. The judge was Alan Watts (assisted by his daughter).

First Prize £30 Cairo to Aswan
Stephen Bibby, Silchester, Reading, Berks,

Second Prize £20 Small World Isn't It?
Mrs. Davina McLean, Sheffield.

Third Prize £10 Interlude in Oman
Norman Bissett, Edinburgh.

The George Farley Prize Result

There were sixteen entries for this competition. The judges were Pamela Farley and her sisters.

Winner Mane Advantage
Jenny Chamier-Grove

The Lewis Whight Short Story Competition. 2006 Results

There were eleven entries for this competition this year. The judge was Joan M. Lewis and her report and the details appear in the magazine.

First Prize £75 The Turkish Enigma
Jenny Chamier Grove, Kew Surrey

Second Prize £50 The Crossing
Don Nixon, Albrighton, nr.Wolverhampton.

Joint Third Prize £12.50 The Right Prescription
James Lancaster, Charley, Lancs.

Joint Third Prize £12.50 Arrivederci
S.Bibby, Silchester.

Ron Jeffreys
Competition Secretary.

Herbert Spencer Poetry Competition

Judge's Report by Shafi Ahmed

All the poems submitted were well crafted and readable with much pleasure and thought provoking. They varied enormously in length and subject matter covering sometimes specialised topics requiring detailed esoteric knowledge to fully appreciate them. Travel in native or foreign climes, steeped in historical nostalgia and unfamiliar place names featured in many poems. Some shortish poems had literary or artistic allusions which were easy to see but difficult to fathom. Some poems were just deft exercises in rhyme and rhythm on a mundane or specialised theme or event. Inevitably judgment of poetry like any other judgment is subjective. However it is made more manifestly difficult because the poems are in turn entirely the subjective creation of poets.

The Vincent Brennan Travel Article Competition 2006

Judge's Report by Alan Watts

I have judged the Competition, which was a very interesting collection. There weren't very many, but nevertheless they were a good lot; in fact I thought they were extremely good and very interesting. We must congratulate all those who took part in it, and commiserate with those we have had to reject as prize winners.

Eventually we did arrive at a decision, and I'm talking about 'we', as my daughter did help me here, because I can't write, as you may know, I can't hold a pen or anything. I have to resort to assistance from machinery and help from my daughter as amanuensis. I'm rather like John Milton. He poor fellow was blind, and he had to rely on his daughter I too am blind and have to rely on my daughter but of course I can't write poetry like John Milton!, but I can do some things, and I can judge competitions. (Alan's daughter Fleur assures us that he is joking, though he does now how have some impairment to his vision.)

We liked "Small World isn't it?" because of the humour in it, and humour in some of these articles is a scarce commodity, but it was very good here, and we enjoyed reading it. I will not say anything further as I thought the standard was so high.

The George Farley Prize for Light Humorous Verse

Judge's Report

Once again a splendid selection of entries. From strong competition the winner that emerged was "Mane Advantage" by Jenny Chamier-Grove. It has everything - an appealing idea, satisfying length, sharp word selection - and even rhyme and scansion, like verse used to have.

(I have to quote pen names from here as I do not know the identity of the authors - Ed)

Runner up comes from among the short poems:- "Bring on the Clowns" by Saroyan which just tickled our funny bone.

Lots of Highly commended:-

"Oh Dr. Williams" by Surplice carries the reader along, sticks to the idea and makes some pertinent points in a kindly humorous way. "Wholly Lowly" by Tesco. Delightful until the last verse which was too harsh to complete a gentle sympathetic poem. "Moose" by Attenborough. Charming, conjuring up excellent images.

The Lewis Wright Short Story Competition 2006

Judge's Report by Joan Lewis.

There were only eleven entries for this competition this year. This was probably the smallest entry ever, which I find disappointing and very sad.

Entrants should remember that presentation and punctuation are important. If proper indentation for dialogue is ignored, the story looks confused and is not easy to read. The common faults of change of viewpoint, too much trivia and lack of conflict do bedevil short stories, as do too many adverbs. The 'cheat' ending e.g. everything is a dream, is also to be avoided. 'Twists in the tail' are said to be no longer fashionable but I did not penalise where the twist made for a good story.

Two entries failed to qualify: one because it was a monologue, not a story; the other because it was a sketch for several voices, with no central character and no conflict to be resolved.

As the total entry was so low, I felt justified in adjusting the allocation of prizes, after discussion with our Chairman, Terry Rickson. Instead of five Third prizes of five pounds each, I awarded two Third prizes of twelve pounds fifty pence each. Second prize wins fifty pounds and the First prize seventy five pounds.

**Herbert Spencer Poetry Competition 2006, 1st Prize:
Palace in the Sky**

Norman Bissett
(Mesa Verde, Colorado)

We enter
through a fissure in the rocks
ill designed
for contemporary American hips,
squeezing between
two granite massifs,
then zigzag gently down
an easy man made path,
shaded by gambol oaks.

The Anasazi lived here
for seven hundred years,
Puebloan Indians,
squatting within their cave
beneath the overhanging cliffs
in brick built dwellings,
clinging like swallows to the rock,
like hermit crabs.
They hunted squirrel, rabbit, deer,
tended their patch of crops, made baskets,
pottery, covered their nakedness
in loin cloths, feathers, hides,
told tales about their ancestors,
and gazed into the abyss.

We leave by ladders, conveniently fixed
against the canyon wall,
climbing up chimneys
like the children of Blake.
As we ascend, we note
the hand and toe holes
chipped in the vertical,
ant holes in sandstone.

This was their AI (M),
their Route 66,
which they ran up and down
with pitchers on their heads,
or toting loads
of corn, beans and squash.
Upwards to Father Sky.
Downwards to Mother Earth.

Herbert Spencer Poetry Competition 2006, 2nd Prize:

After the Riot

Don Nixon

The ward is dark. Is that my name they call?
I strain to hear as whispering voices pray.
The cause of all that hate is past recall,
Just fragments flashing of the nightly fray.

Again the stench of petrol swills around;
I feel the searing heat, skin flaying flames,
As bottles blaze and arc into the ground.
I hear the shouts, the partisan shrieked names.

These footpad images skulk and hide
And stalk the tattered hedgerows of my mind,
Cudgelling shards of memory inside.
Synapses trip and neural knots unwind.

Which colour? Creed? Which rituals did I chant?
Which god was ours? All now irrelevant.

The George Farley winning entry

Mane Advantage

Jenny Chamier-Grove

Dear Agony Aunt, I'm perplexed and amazed
For my tousle haired partner is chosen for praise,
Though he steals all the food
From his very own brood
And for days he just lazes and dozes and plays.

Dear Mrs Lion, I'm shocked, I confess,
To perceive how this poser contrives to impress.
You'd think that they'd rather
Select a good father
To symbolize strength on the Queen's Royal Crest.

Herbert Spencer Poetry Competition 2006, 3rd Prize:

Norfolk

Norman Bissett

Norfolk lacks mountains.
The Everests of Gog and Magog
soar further west, nearer the Rockies.

It neither Cuillins boasts nor Caimgorms,
no bens, no glens, no straths
and no Munros. No heather grows
in Hethersett or Sheringham.
No golden eagle ever stooped
on Wymondham, and Landscer,
panting, never stopped to paint
the many antlered deer of Diss,
to rest and be thankful
on the climb to Cley.

Its polders, pampas, plains,
savannah like, stretch towards Spalding,
the horizon and the Zuyder Zee.

Where mediaeval farmers dug
for peat, low lying lakelets grew
and, linked by rivers, meres became
waterways, a sunlit chain, drawing
regattas, trippers, weekend Nelsons.

Fens, Broads and coastal marshes
gleam in the sun. A conger eel uncoils.
Heron and booming bittern scarcely blink.
A fisherman in waders casts
a weather eye above the reeds.

White clouds accumulate,
like Matterhorns, like towering
cotton castles in the sky.

Clouds can make mountains.

A History of the Society of Civil Service Authors: continued

Beryl Jones

Magazine

In 1947 the Management Committee decided to launch a quarterly magazine. Prior to this date the Society had issued a two page printed leaflet which gave details of the Society's aims and principles, the current President, Chairman and Secretary, and a list of committee members: also included was an application form for prospective members.

The first issue of the new magazine, entitled the Civil Service Author, appeared in the New Year of 1948 and was of moderate size (twelve pages 8"x 5-1/2") and issued free to members. Three hundred copies of this first issue were printed at a cost of £9/16/ plus £2 for wrappers and post.

The first Editor of the magazine was Tommy Martin who had had thirteen years experience as Editor of 'The Journal of the Customs and Excise Federation' which had, during his tenure been published weekly. Tommy was Editor of the Civil Service Author from its inception to his resignation in June of 1959 at the age of 85 when he moved to Worthing. Writing about the Society in 1948 Tommy made the following comments regarding the magazine:

"The Committee of the S.C.S.A. have well justified hopes that, when publishing conditions become easier, the "official organ" will be issued monthly. Beyond doubt its pages can easily be filled with matter of high order; the quality of the abundant entries to recent competitions is ample proof on that point.'

The aims of the magazine, amongst other features, were to keep members (especially those in the provinces and overseas) informed about the 'many interesting and instructive events that form a vital part of the Society's annual programme.' The contents of the magazine consisted of monthly meetings, social events and competitions; reports of members' books (and other books of interest), literary competitions and winning entries in both prose and poetry competitions.

From 1948 to 1951 the magazine was issued quarterly, 1952 to 1956, three times per year (the twelve pages had by now increased to sixteen); and two in 1957 up until October of that year. In all a total of thirty three numbers had been issued and 'for its purpose and design it was a creditable magazine.'

From October 1957 due to rising costs (the printer's estimate for four printed magazines was £78, whereas the Roneo estimate for six issues was only £45), the magazine became a stencilled eight page 6"x 8" to be issued monthly, except for June, July and August. This stencilled magazine was intended, not only to take the place of the printed one, but also the Society's leaflets and circulars announcing meetings and other events. Unfortunately the official sections of the Civil Service Author became rather proportionally greater than the literary section.

The cost of the magazine gradually increased until by 1963 it had risen to £95 per annum. In 1968 nine numbers were issued with the September number issued early and called the 'Summer Number.' By 1969 one issue was now costing about £20, thus in 1970 after five issues were published (January to May) it was decided that due to the rising costs the magazine would be suspended. The magazine was replaced by the Secretary's Newsletter issued monthly, and was about half the size of the magazine and without a cover. This newsletter was produced by the Cheshire Homes and four were issued during that year.

As stated earlier Tommy Martin was the magazine's first Editor and he was succeeded by James Batchelor, who combined this position with his position as General Secretary. James was a worthy successor to Tommy until he handed 'the pen over' to Alan Watts in 1958.

Alan continued to maintain the very high standard of the magazine, helped by his considerable experience as a previous Editor of the 'Mersey Packet' the journal of the Merseyside Civil Service Writers' Club. Alan occupied the Editorial chair until the middle of 1971, and under his editorship the magazine rather changed its character. He ran a number of mini-competitions to encourage beginners to write and see their work in a form of print. He also contributed a regular feature called 'Obiter Dicta' which contained both personal items and official notices. The Secretary was allotted a page or more each month and included in it notices of meetings and outside competitions.

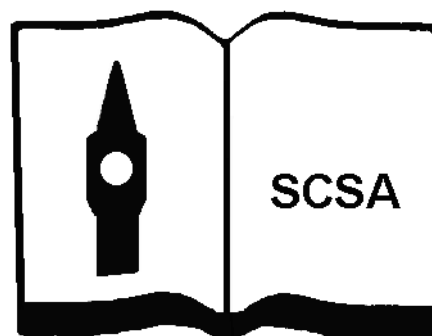
Alan Watts was editor until the middle of 1971 when Sidney Dobson took over, what was now the Newsletter. In October 1958 Sidney had taken over as Secretary on the resignation of James Batchelor, and like James combined both jobs until December 1973 when he felt he could no longer carry on. Charles Neilson Gattey (who was Chairman at that time) wrote the following tribute to Sidney in the November/December issue of the Newsletter:-

'Since he was elected to these posts he has devoted himself wholeheartedly to the welfare of the Society and its members

He has sacrificed his own literary projects to devote himself with an altruism very rare nowadays to the encouragement of authorship among our members. I know how many long hours he has spent answering letters and giving valuable advice and in editing the Newsletter with a skill which has won much praise from experienced Editors of other Civil Service journals and from appreciative members, many of whom found their way into print thanks to his excellent Market Information.'

Alan Watts once again took over the editorship reins and held them from 1973 until February 1978 when Mrs Hilda Hickman agreed to become the new Editor. Hilda a former Writer of the Year (1974) occupied the editorial chair with distinction until the middle of 1980 when she was forced to give up due to ill health. During her two year tenure the 'Author achieved a very high standard and earned Hilda praise from all sides.'

George Kissell became the next Editor and he continued to maintain the excellent standard established by all his predecessors.



Cairo to Aswan Sights and Sites of the Nile

Stephen Bibby

(Vincent Brennan Travel Article - 1st Prize)

Start your visit to Egypt dramatically in Cairo. Its skyline is dominated by the only surviving wonders of the ancient world; it is home to some famous historical exhibits; and it straddles the broadening northern Nile which beckons southwards to the interior.

I recommend commencing with the Egyptian Museum, although in truth this idiosyncratic repository houses far too much to appreciate in one visit. I suggest you view two exhibitions starting with the vast gallery displaying the entire contents of King Tutankhamun's tomb. When Howard Carter first glimpsed the interior by flickering candle light he is reported to have whispered that he could see 'Wonderful things.' Indeed the artefacts are truly wonderful. There are rows of gilded statues, musical instruments, weaponry, jars, utensils and, rather poignantly, the delicately carved and brilliantly coloured throne depicting the boy king sharing a foot slipper with his wife. In the secure treasure room two large cabinets hold the famous full sized effigies of the pharaoh's outer coffins, rich in gold, studded in precious stones of red and blue. But the highlight is the famous death mask a work of incredible beauty. Although perhaps idealised, the king's features preserved in pure gold from the delicate curve of the cheek to the cleft in the chin, retain a youthful vibrancy. Tutankhamun's eyes gaze at you as if he has achieved immortality and still commands attention 3,000 years after his death.

My second recommendation is the Mummy Room. Some of the ancient Pharaohs are swaddled from head to toe but the wizened faces of others stare blankly at unimagined spectators. Here, six inches in front of you, lays the great Ramses II, his shrunken visage still framed with wisps of white hair, his blackened nose and chin still imperious. This is the very person who oppressed the Israelites, conquered the Hittites, and ruled Egypt as a living god over 1,000 years before Christ.

Yet incredibly it was over 1200 years before Ramses II that the pyramids at Giza were built. Unmistakeable, seen from hillside or hotel, they draw you like a magnet. The oldest, built for Cheops in about 2500BC, still seems to boast its primacy. Although one of the world's most familiar images, until you approach you cannot fully appreciate its

sheer bulk or the ingenuity of its construction. Each limestone block is a 5 ft. cube, perfectly proportioned and perfectly positioned. Look closely and you will see that each contains colonies of compacted fossils adding geological antiquity to ancient human endeavour. It is worth venturing down the claustrophobic tunnel to find the 4,000 yearold burial chamber like a perfect small church secreted in the heart of this remarkable monument.

Nearby is the famous and mysterious Sphinx. Despite the ravages of time the Sphinx possesses an enigmatic and commanding presence. Somehow it appears all the more noble in the 21st century peering disdainfully over the milling tourist crowds towards the garish awnings of nearby souvenir shops.

After Cairo it is best to travel southwards by air or land directly to Luxor. This ancient city of Thebes is now a modern settlement servicing both the busy tourist trade and the communities farming the narrow fertile strip of the Nile. Along the Corniche the floating hotels carrying cruises to Aswan, rock patiently awaiting their passengers. These most contemporary of amenities offer vistas over antiquities so ubiquitous as to be commonplace. Those boys kicking a ball in the dusty park are actually using a pair of sphinxes as goalposts!

The great temple of Luxor dates back to about 1400BC although its construction was actually completed about 200 years later by Ramses H. The solid outer walls known as pylons stand sheer, several storeys high, displaying huge relief carvings of military exploits. Strategically placed by the temple entrance are huge granite statues of the pharaoh himself. The sculptor has captured the imperious living visage a breathtaking contrast to the desiccated face in its glass case in the Egyptian Museum. Inside the temple you can find a venerable old mosque and in the inner sanctuary Coptic crosses indicate that Muslims were not the only worshippers to make alternative use of a ready made religious site.

But if the temple at Luxor is impressive, it pales into insignificance beside the Kamak complex just 3 kilometres away. This enormous site could house St Peter's and seven other great cathedrals of Europe. The entire area measures 1.5 kilometres by 800 metres and contains temples, a sacred lake, avenues of sphinxes and an enormous display of ancient sculpture. The most famous attraction is the great hypostyle hall in the Temple of Amun, containing no less than 134 columns massive in

bulk and height. These great pillars resemble papyrus stalks, their capitols opening out like papyrus flowers.

Originally the entire hall would have been enclosed making it dark and mysterious. Now open to the elements, it is possible to study the intricate hieroglyphics and the distinctive oblong cartouche of Ramses II.

From Luxor a short coach trip takes you to the famous Valley of the Kings. The word 'valley' seems misplaced for in fact it is a large jagged cleft in a mountain of parched crumbling rock. The valley contains no vegetation whatsoever no scrub, blade of grass or solitary flower. A snaking train of linked passenger trucks ferries you to the royal burial area where your ticket permits access to four tombs out of the total of 62. Having seen the exhibition in Cairo it is interesting to make the tomb of Tutankamun one of these particularly as, of comparatively recent discovery, it is one of the best preserved.

The tombs are like subterranean palaces with halls, galleries and ante rooms leading to the burial chamber. Each surface is decorated with intricate paintings and illuminated hieroglyphics to guide the deceased pharaoh through the afterlife. The colours are truly remarkable, from the warm ochre of the exotic god figures with animal heads to the bright yellows and blues of birds and sky. Sadly the more these wondrous sites become accessible the more the colours will fade with exposure to light and human breath. A knowledgeable local guide explained wistfully to me that within his lifetime there had been a noticeable deterioration and his children will never see the full lustre of the ancient art as he first saw it.

Continue further southwards on a cruise boat the best way to experience the timeless Nile. After Luxor the first stop is usually Esna, but here unfortunately there is often a queue of boats waiting to traverse the lock. The wait can be entertaining. As passenger craft approach numerous small rowing boats set off from the banks carrying enterprising youths yelling raucously that they have clothes and souvenirs to sell. They provide an amusing diversion as they dexterously hurl parcels of goods up five storeys of floating superstructure before paddling furiously to catch the tight bundles of notes dropped back in exchange.

Make sure you are on deck to watch your boat squeeze through the gigantic lock gates and, once free, swiftly create wash and wake. The itinerary will now offer visits to Edfu and Korn Ornbo temples. Do not miss Edfu. Substantially covered in silt from the Nile floods until excavated in the mid 19th century, it is the best preserved temple in Egypt. It is also youthful at only 2,000 years old. In the 3d century BC Alexander the Great conquered Egypt and on his death one of his generals, Ptolemy, became Pharaoh and founded a new dynasty. Wisely, he fostered the ancient religion and he and his successors developed this and several other spectacular sites.

What is fascinating about Edfu is that it was itself a recreation of an historic monument. It was built as a replica of the great temple at Luxor already by then 2,000 years old. This assists the modern visitor to envisage how the temples must have appeared in the days of the Old Testament prophets. Here at Edfu every surface is expertly carved with exquisite reliefs portraying battles and religious rituals. The surviving traces of colour give a final hint of how overwhelming these edifices must have appeared to artisans, fanners or Israelite slaves.

The Nile experience beyond Edfu is incomparable. In the shallows of this mighty river, never less than 500 yards wide, cattle stand nonchalantly drinking as they have done for thousands of years. Boys in small boats flap at the flowing water beating it into small waves to drive fish into their nets. Across the surface kingfishers dart purposefully while the heron indolently flaps; the egret and ibis watch stately and detached in the bulrushes. You cruise past small villages of flat roofed mud brick houses, the desert never far away behind. Occasionally on the west bank the sandy hillocks reach to the water's edge. Everywhere beyond the dense fields of sugarcane you have a glimpse of desert dunes, vividly demonstrating that the Nile valley is a unique fertile strip the cradle of civilisation in a barren land. Then finally you moor at Aswan where the famous dams bar further passage.

Here the best place to stay is the Old Cataract Hotel, a rambling colonial building set on the banks of the Nile where it channels into eddies and whirlpools past enormous granite boulders. But the main historic site is just outside the town on a small island in the lake between the new High Dam and the original lower dam. This is the famous temple of Philae, another manifestation of Ptolemaic power. Due to the construction of the High Dam this edifice was to be

permanently submerged. To save it for posterity it was moved stone by stone from its original site and reconstructed on a nearby island. One can but marvel at the ingenuity of the ancients who ferried the giant stones across the river and also at the modern engineers who raised them from the rising flood to preserve the temple's command over the waterway.

There is one final opportunity to admire an even greater feat of ingenuity. It comes at the southernmost point of the tour 175 miles from Aswan. It is worth taking the trip, flying over the featureless dusty desert, to the small settlement of Abu Simbel. Here some 1,200 years before Philae was created, Ramses II decided to demonstrate emphatically his mastery over the entire length of the river. On the upper Nile he built an enormous temple complex literally cut into the sheer rock of a mountain face. Following the building of the High Dam, the rising waters of the newly created Lake Nasser meant that, like the temple at Philae, this unique monument would be submerged. With the help of the international community, in the 1960s the temples were literally cut from the rock and raised 200 feet to front a new man-made mountain.

The four colossal statues of a seated Ramses have been much photographed. But nearby there is also an impressive second temple of similar scale dedicated to Ramses' wife Nefertari. Both temples reach deep into the mountainside, their galleries and chambers adorned with pillars and statues. In the subdued artificial light you can see the vivid carvings and decorations including an enormous frieze of Ramses firing arrows from his chariot at fleeing Hittites. Ridden at the far end of the great temple are four statues Ramses and three deities. The temple was so designed that at daybreak on 21 February and 21 October the first rays of the rising sun would light up the face of the Pharaoh. Not only has the transportation of the temples preserved every detail they have also been sited so that still after 4,000 years Ramses is revealed 'in glory on the appointed day

Your last glimpse of Egypt will be as dramatic as your first. From the banking plane the great statues can be seen serenely surveying the lake. Ramses intended an imposing presence on the southern Nile. He has it to this day.

The Crossing

Don Nixon

(Runner-up in the Lewis Wright Short Story Competition)

There was an icy chill in the night air as the ferry ploughed into the gusting wind and salt spray spattered the upper deck.

The cold had driven the other passengers into the warmth of the saloon or back to their cabins. Sheltered by a lifeboat, she glanced at the man still remaining on the upper deck. She had noticed him earlier, hurrying up the gangplank just before they sailed. In his dark business suit, he had stood out among the throng of casually dressed holidaymakers returning from France. He had looked up and for a moment their eyes met in mutual appraisal. He was in his early forties and his hair was lightly flecked with grey. A scar to the left of his mouth prevented his face from being too symmetrically handsome and gave him a slightly crooked smile. Women would find him attractive she thought. She certainly did. Physically he reminded her of her lover, Jean Claude. He was also tall and lean and had Jean Claude's arrogant tilt of the head. But her young lover's arrogance had been his undoing and he was now locked away in a French prison. She might soon be joining him, she thought, if they found the Renault on the out of town car park and traced her to the docks.

She looked back at the Brittany coast, now fast receding in the fading light. She felt the tension seizing her shoulder muscles and willed herself to relax. It had gone well so far. Only another twelve hours and then safety. She made herself take deep and regular breaths and her calm and confidence gradually returned.

The man was watching her openly now as he lounged against the rail. He was certainly attractive and she missed the sex with Jean Claude. Perhaps this might be one occasion when she combined business with pleasure. She waited but he stayed at the rail. Clearly she was going to have to make the first move. High waves slapped against the side of the ship and a plume of foam rose and fell, sprinkling her shoulders. She gave an exaggerated shiver and wrapped her cloak more tightly around her. Picking up her overnight case, she made for the saloon entrance. As she drew level with him, he smiled. She stumbled as the deck tilted suddenly. He held her arm and steadied her.

'It's getting a bit too cold to stay out here much longer. The wind is whipping up the sea. It's going to get a lot rougher I guess.'

The accent was American. East Coast. Probably Boston, she thought. He had the nasal clipped intonation that went with the elite frat houses at Ivy League universities and that usually meant old money was in the background. She smiled up at him.

'This one is never an easy crossing. It's the pull of the Bay of Biscay. It can be a pig.'

She looked directly at him. 'I've had enough out here. A stiff brandy is called for I think.'

He grinned and his fingers lightly brushed against the inside of her arm.

'Perhaps you'd join me. I'd welcome the company. I hate drinking alone.'

He took her case and followed her into the crowded noisy saloon. After the clean air on deck, it felt stuffy and oppressive. She felt the pressure of his hand on her back as he guided her to the bar. When they were in the queue, he left it there. She leaned gently against him.

'I only decided to cross at the last minute so it was too late to get a cabin.'

She looked with distaste at the packed saloon. In the corner a package tour group was celebrating the last night of their trip. A crop haired man, his football club tee shirt straining against his swollen beer gut began to sing. He was badly out of tune. The rest of the party joined in.

She winced.

'I usually fly but there was no plane out of Brest so I drove up the coast. I was too late to get a cabin. I've to be in London tomorrow first thing. I hate this Brittany crossing. It's never ending.' She yawned. 'It's going to be a long and boring night.'

Would he take the hint? She felt him press more closely against her. He nodded.

'It's the tourist season. I booked ages ago so I have a cabin. It's quite spacious. They've given me a double. It's one of the perks. I'm a regular on this route so they pamper me a bit. Gold card treatment they call it. It means I can avoid all this.'

He pointed to the package tour group who were now on their feet and encouraging holiday makers at other tables to join in the singing. A woman staggered to her feet and started to dance. Her friends shouted encouragement as she began to mime the actions of a drunken striptease. The ship lurched and she lost her balance and fell to the floor knocking over a tray of glasses as she went down. The tour group cheered.

'Get 'em off. Off! Off! The man with the beer belly shouted. The others took up the chant.

Her companion shrugged. He put his lips near her ear so he could be heard above the noise.

Travelling on this ferry isn't what it used to be. Mind you it's a lot quieter in winter. Pretty well empty most weeks.'

He grinned down at her.

'By the way, I'm Paul. '

She chose a name at random.

'I'm Jane.'

The silence between them lengthened. A holidaymaker, carrying a tray of drinks, bumped into them and the ship began to roll in the heavy swell as it met the full force of the gale.

'It's terrible in here,' Paul said. He hesitated. 'There's lots of room in my cabin.'

She laughed. It was going to be easier than she had thought. She rolled her eyes and fluttered her lashes in a parody of mock innocence and put on the accent of a Hollywood southern belle. She drew out and tortured the long exaggerated Georgian vowels.

'My! Landsakes Captain Butler. Ah do declare you're trying to pick me up. What would mah Daddy say back in Atlanta?'

His mouth twitched.

'With an accent like that he'd probably say that it was no wonder that the South lost the war. And tell me Miss Scarlett, would it bother you if I were trying to pick you up, as you so inelegantly phrase it.'

She tapped her case and reverted to her normal tones.

'I've got a very good bottle of brandy in here,' she said. 'Let's go and share it.'

The cabin was large with a double bunk. She noted the holdall with its many zippers on the side pockets in the luggage rack. It was perfect, she thought. She handed him the brandy from her own case. As he poured it, she kicked off her shoes and sprawled back on the wide mattress. She could really relax now. For the first time that day she felt safe. She let her body sway to the motion on the ship conscious that he was watching her closely. For a moment she closed her eyes. It would be so easy to give way to the tiredness she was just managing to keep at bay. She breathed deeply and felt the energy returning. She must keep in control of the situation. Too much was at stake. Jan in Rotterdam had been right to insist she drive down to Brittany and cross by the longer route where they wouldn't be expecting her. And Paul was a bonus in every way. He had an air of respectability that was just perfect. He began to loosen his tie. He was older than Jean Claude but probably more experienced. Jean Claude had been an apt pupil but he was little more than a boy. Now she wanted something more. She needed to celebrate, to unwind. The last few days had been difficult. She reached up and gently touched his arm and slowly drew the tie from around his collar. Outside, the waves smashed against the glass of the porthole in surges of splintering foam. The ferry shuddered as it moved broadside into the full power of the gale. The overhead cabin light flickered and went out.

She giggled and he snapped on the lamp by the bunk.

'To ships that pass in the night,' she toasted.

They drained their glasses and she gently pulled Paul to her. She tasted the brandy on his tongue and for a time she blotted out all the worry and tension the past few days. Finally, they drifted into a satisfying sleep. She woke during the night to hear him curse softly as he stubbed a toe against the luggage rack. She reached for him as he climbed back on the bunk and teased him until he made love to her again. He then slept soundly but she remained awake until the dawn light streaked through the porthole.

The gale had blown itself out and the sea was calm. Only the distant hum of the engines broke the silence. He was still fast asleep. She gently disengaged herself from him and dressed quickly and quietly. She glanced at her watch. They would dock in an hour. The timing was perfect.

She took the package hidden in her cloak and zipped it into a side pocket in his holdall. Taking her own case, she let herself out and hurried to the cabin Jan had booked for her. The reception on her mobile was good and she rang Jan waiting for her at the docks.

'You can't miss him,' she said and described Paul. 'Follow him and get them once he's through Customs. There shouldn't be any problem. He's a regular. A businessman. They probably know him and he'll go through without any trouble.' The police are here,' Jan warned. 'I think they're waiting for you. They've been tipped off. Eric must have talked. He blames you for Jean Claude. I did warn you,' she laughed. She felt good. Paul had been a very special bonus. Jean Claude was history. 'They can search me with pleasure. I'm carrying nothing now. See you in London.'

She followed Paul at a distance across the quayside, hidden in the crowd. There was no problem. He went straight through Customs and Passport Control. On the other side of the barrier, she spotted Jan checking them coming out. Jan was a professional. Paul wouldn't even know he'd been carrying the package. She watched as her partner casually followed Paul out of the hall. It was all going to plan.

As soon as she saw the two detectives approach, she knew Jan had been right. Eric had talked. But so what? They would deal with him later. She was light-hearted as she gave them her keys. The room to which she was taken overlooked the car park and she saw Paul lounging by a car. Perhaps he was waiting for her. In that case, getting the package back unnoticed would be easier than leaving it to Jan. There was no way they could hold her here. She looked down at Paul. It would be a pity not to see him again. She grinned. She had enjoyed their encounter in the cramped confines of the cabin. Next time she would choose somewhere more luxurious. Jan had plenty of contacts in London. There would definitely be a next time she decided.

The officer's tone caused her to turn. 'Can you explain this Madam?'

Among the folds of underwear in her case, was a large packet wrapped in plastic. He opened it and tested a grain of the white powder on his tongue. He frowned. 'This is heroin Madam.' The detectives looked puzzled. These were not the uncut stones they had been expecting. She glanced down at Paul. He looked at his watch and began to stare anxiously at the entrance to the Customs hall. She remembered how he had stumbled by the luggage rack during the night. That was when he must have slipped the drugs in her case. The bastard had made her his mule.

She sighed wearily. It was the story of her life. She had never been good at picking her men.

SCPSW - Annual Statement of Income and Expenditure.

April 1st 2005 - March 31st 2006

<u>Income</u>	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Subscriptions	2,184.50	2454.00	2869.50
AGM Receipts	72.00	138.00	78.00
NY Party Receipts	136.00	133.00	214.00
Luncheon Receipts	617.90	621.00	616.00
Competition Receipts	264.50	406.50	219.50
Sponsorship Receipts		300.00	175.00
Donations	358.00	241.50	271.45
Bank Interest	163.00	1.27	1.41
Bank Charges Reimbursed	-	-	4.00
'Author' Sales	-	-	16.00
Poetry Workshop	135.00	153.00	-
Sundry Income	68.00	92.00	-
	3,843.66	4540.27	4464.86
<u>Expenditure</u>			
'Author' Printing & Distribution	2,323.32	2438.86	2373.08
Subscription Refunds	47.50	82.00	30.00
Subscriptions to PW	135.00	165.00	153.00
Room Hire/Refreshments*	1,108.06	1213.03	1322.71
Committee Expenses	68.63	109.95	118.33
Competition Prizes	365.00	162.00	504.95
Bank Charge/Unpaid Cheque	-	-	26.00
Competition Prizes not recorded	140.00	-	-
	4,187.51	4170.84	4528.07
Income less Expenditure	(343.85)	369.43	(63.21)
Balance b/f 31 March	2,168.30	1,798.87	
Receipts	3,843.66	4,540.27	
	6,011.96	6,339.14	
Payments	4,187.51	4,170.84	
Balance c/f 31 March	1,824.45	2,168.30	1,798.87
Treasurer Account			
Bank Statement	2,402.54	2186.43	
Unpresented Cheques	578.09	18.13	
Available Cash	1,824.45	2168.30	
Business Money Manager			
Opening Balance	66.00	64.91	
Closing Balance	66.31	66.00	64.91
Notes			
Room Hire/Refreshments AGM		288.95	
Luncheon		660.50	
Committee Meeting		57.78	
New Year Party		205.80	
Total		1,213.03	

Audited By:

Allan Wood ACMA BA Hons

June 8th 2006