

# The Society of Civil & Public Service Writers

## Former Presidents:

Humbert Wolfe (1935-40)  
Lord Vansittart (1940-57)  
Sir George Rostrevor  
Hamilton (1957-67)  
Bernard Newman (1967-68)  
James Laver (1968-75)  
Lord Snow (1975-80)  
Charles Neilson Gattey (1980-2005)

## President:

Alan S Watts

## Vice Presidents:

Richard Adams FRSL  
John le Carré  
Iain McIntyre

## Chairman:

Terry Rickson

## Vice Chairman:

Vacant

## Membership Secretary:

Joan M Lewis  
17 The Green  
Corby Glen  
GRANTHAM  
NG33 4NP  
membership@scpsw.co.uk

## Meetings Secretary:

Ethel Corduff  
10 Malcolm Road  
Woodside  
South Norwood  
LONDON  
SE25 5HG  
meetings@scpsw.co.uk

## Treasurer:

Beryl Jones  
37 Lingham Lane  
Moreton  
WIRRAL  
CH46 7SA

## Competition Secretary:

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

## Publicity Officer:

Jenny Chamier-Grove  
jchamiergrove@hotmail.com

## Diary

PW Weekend  
18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> July

## 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.**

## Poetry Editor:

**Terry James  
1 Thornleigh Park  
Bangor  
County Down  
BT20 4NN**

## Editor:

**Adrian Danson  
78 Palace View  
Bromley  
Kent  
BR1 3EL  
adriand@onetel.com**

ISSN 0959-0064

# THE SCPSW AUTHOR

NUMBER 180

WINTER 2007/08

## CONTENTS

- 3 Editorial
- 4 Chairman's Chat
- 5 Obituary
- 6 SCPSW Annual Competitions 2008
- 7 Ragharok *Stephen Bass*
- 13 Poetry Workshop
- 15 Meetings Outside London *Ethel Corduff*
- 16 Markets- with the help of Gordon  
*Ethel Corduff*
- 17 Continuing the History of Our Society  
*Compiled by Beryl Jones*
- 19 Poetry Pages
- 22 The Unknown Du Maurier *Terry James*
- 23 Misadventures in Art *Terry James*
- 30 Publisher's Guidelines *Joan Lewis*
- 31 Fins et Orgo or the Source and the Origin  
*Review by Joan Lewis*
- 32 Drama at the Flat-House *Kathleen L Barber*
- 39 Annual Statement of Income and Expenditure

## **Editorial**

Adrian Danson

Your committee and I hope that you will all enjoy the season's festivities and have health, wealth and good fortune in the coming year.

As ever, it seems, we prevail upon those generous individuals who can spare more than the amount of annual membership subscription, which regrettably is once again due, to add whatever they can to ensure our continued survival. Although Beryl Jones has reported an improvement in our financial position, this is modest to say the least, so we continue to depend upon your generosity. Your committee continues to contribute by making no claims for expenses from our meagre resources.

Will everyone please send their renewal details and payment to Beryl by the due date of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008, using the form included with this issue of Author.

I wish that I could report that I am now in a position to take on the publishing of our magazine and thereby make a further contribution to reducing our costs. I regret that this continues to be my aim, but other commitments continue to interfere, so it remains my hope for the future.

When I receive items for publication by other means than email attachments via my computer, I use a scanner to copy it to my computer file for onward transmission to our worthy publisher. I spend hours looking at the screen and trying to spot errors that my copier has introduced, such as converting "I" to "1", but I still miss some. Consequently I hope that you will recognise such errors that remain and that it will not spoil your enjoyment of the contents. I have belatedly noticed in Leslie Wilkie's poem 'second Childhood' the line "It's jelly babies that I eat" has become, "It's jelly babies that I cat".

Although I like cats I was not previously aware that my copier did also. Of course my cat sometimes goes to sleep on the copier, so perhaps they have developed an attachment. I still find it annoying; indeed it's almost enough to make me have kittens.

Don't forget to send me your stories or articles that have not won competitions, many such contributions have proved most entertaining in the past and I hope the writers enjoy seeing them in print.

Once again I ask our poets to send their work to Terry James, so that he can pass a selection to me for inclusion in future issues of Author. I have included some in this issue, but we never seem to have enough. Surely you have been more creative during this predominantly overcast summer; you have not been *averse* to writing as you were unable to lie tanning yourselves on the beach.

I have not heard of anyone taking up my suggested compilation of a dictionary of annual trendy idioms, but I mean basically you know I'm looking to make a massive contribution here.

I scream at the TV, "No I don't know, if I did know I wouldn't be wasting my time listening to you," but the speaker not only takes no notice, but says, "You know" another six times. Perhaps people can't stop themselves, but in my recent brief contribution to Working Lunch on BBC2 I'm sure I didn't use any of these expressions. I assumed that everyone I know would have missed my 15 seconds of fame and I wasn't going to mention it, but a surprising number of people seem to have seen it and are thus aware that I missed the chance to publicise SCPSW. Drat!

When compiling items for the last issue I failed to identify Beryl Jones contribution, "Merseyside CS Writers" Club" as a continuation of her sterling work on our history, though I trust it was recognised as such. Her latest contribution is included for our continued education and enjoyment.

### **Chairman's Chat**

Travelling to Chichester this summer, my wife and I turned off the A3 to visit the village of Steep in Hampshire. The poet Edward Thomas lived in the village, with his family, from 1906 - 1915, it was from here he enlisted in the Artists" Rifles in 1915. Set into the south wall of the parish church are two small windows, designed and engraved by Laurence Whistler in 1978 to mark the centenary of the poet's birth, depicting scenes around Steep that Thomas loved. It was appropriate, perhaps, that the window was dedicated in 1978, in the presence of his redoubtable namesake, the Welsh poet R.S. Thomas.

At Eastbury, in the Lambourn Valley, Berkshire, is another window, also by Whistler, celebrating the life of the poet and his wife, Helen.

In one of his fine poems, “As the team’s head brass,” Thomas uses his love of the countryside to great effect, through euphemism and imagery, to contrast the peaceful scene with violence and death in war. The poem has something of a conversational style, as the poet passes the time with the ploughman going about his age-old task.

Edward Thomas was killed on 9th April, 1917, within minutes of the huge barrage that opened-up, preceding the Battle of Arras.

The British Isles is awash with places of literary interest to visit, from great houses to humble cottages, libraries, blue plaques or literary walks. All make for a pleasant day or half-day outing. I remember our children were intrigued and delighted to see “The Tailor of Gloucester’s” little shop in that city. Then write about your visit! Send your piece, as an article, poem or short-story, to “The Author.” Even better, as well as writing for “The Author”, join one of the folios to share your enthusiasm.

With my best wishes for Christmas and the New Year and enjoy your writing.

Terry Rickson

\*\*\*\*\*

PETER W. STOCK

It was with sadness that I read Andrea Stock’s letter telling me that her husband, Peter, had died in April. She wrote “please tell the officers and members of your group how much Peter enjoyed participating, entering competitions and the one meeting we were able to attend, together, a few years ago”. Peter had lost his battle with an obscure form of cancer.

Peter won the Vincent Brennan Travel Competition in 2002 and came second in 2004. In that same year he also won two “thirds” in the Lewis Wright Short Story Competition. In 2005 his wry, amusing story “Les Feuilles d’Automne” appeared in the magazine. His contributions will be much missed.

Joan Lewis

## **SCPSW ANNUAL COMPETITIONS 2008**

### **Lewis Wright Short Story Competition**

Maximum length 3,000 words, double spaced on A4 paper. Entries will be returned if accompanied by s.a.e. Entry fee £4.00 per story. Prizes as follows: 1st: £50.00; 2nd £30.00

### **Herbert Spencer Poetry Competition**

No restriction on theme or form, but maximum forty lines and one poem per sheet of paper. (Writers of humorous verse should consider the George Farley Prize). Entries will be returned if accompanied by s.a.e. Entry fee £2.00 for first and £1.50 for each subsequent poem. Prizes: 1st: £30.00; 2nd: £20.00.

### **Vincent Brennan Travel Article**

Maximum length 2,000 words, double spaced on A4 paper. Entries will be returned if accompanied by s.a.e. Entry fee £2.50 per entry.

Prize: one only £30.00

### **George Farley Prize**

For light humorous verse only. Judges and sponsors, Pamela Farley, Aline Shee and Jean Squires (daughters of George Farley). Judges look for the qualities their father valued in humorous verse – “wit, clever construction and interesting language”. Entries returned if accompanied by s.a.e. Prize £25.

### **Notes for Entrants to all Competitions**

1. Unless entrants state on entering competitions that they do not wish their entry to be published, all winning entries will be published in Author if space permits. The entrants name will also be quoted, unless entrants advise on entry that they prefer to use a pen name.
2. Entries must be the original work of the entrant and must not have been published at the time of the submission. Entries exceeding specified number of lines or words will be disqualified.
3. All entries should bear only the pen name (which should be varied to avoid recognition) and a separate sheet quoting: pen name used, title of entry, real name and address. (Optional for serving members, Department and staff association for potential publicity use.)
4. All entries should be sent to Competition Secretary, Ron Jeffreys, 186 Lewis Flats, Lisgar Terrace, London W14 8SQ not later than 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

R C Jeffreys

Competition Secretary

## Ragharok

Stephen Bass

(This story won second place in the 2007 Lewis Wright Short Story Competition.)

**S**now. Snow and ice. And a cold that seeps into the very marrow until it is a part of you, your face so numb you no longer feel the sting of the ice in the wind. Summer has finally failed, and winter's iron grip squeezes the last life from the land. So now the cold has killed us. It is the end of the world. All warm things must die, for now is Ragnarok, the time of the Ice Giants.

It was a slow death. I remember the summers when I was a child. Summer was always short, but to a child it went on forever. Running in the fields, playing in the haystacks, a clear blue sky and days so long the sun had barely set before it rose again. For sure, the winters were hard, the nights long and dark, but during the short days there was always seal hunting and fishing through holes in the sea ice, and in the evenings feasting and merrymaking and storytelling, until the spring melted the snow and ice and a boy could run in the fields again.

The first game of spring was to climb the hill behind the village and watch for the first ship of the year. When we saw the distant sail we would all run down the hill, screaming and shouting and racing to be the first to bring the news to the village. Then we would hurry with the rest of the village down to the dock - young and old, men and women, all eager to welcome the first visitors of the year and to see what goods they had to trade.

There was always trade. We had furs and pelts, walrus tusks and whalebone, dried meat and salted fish. We were rich, and we traded for grain, iron, cloth - we could even afford to dress in silk and silver! Oh yes, richly woven fabrics from Byzantium, wine and olives from the Mediterranean, amber from our fellow Danes, and gold and silver from all over. Yes, we were rich - rich and soft, and we lost sight of what was really happening around us.

Oh, there would be summers when the crops were poor, but that happens everywhere. There was always fish - we never went hungry, not then. One cast of the net would feed a family for a week. But then one bad summer would follow another. One year cold rains would ruin the crops just before harvest, then the following spring would come

late and frosts would blight the new growth. But still we did not care. It seemed the fish were more numerous than ever, and with the fish came seal and walrus and whale. The hunting became better, and so did the trade. We came to rely more on the grain we bought than the food we grew, but no one seemed to notice. And when the merchants told tales of poor crops in the south we rejoiced, for they would need our fish even more.

But we were foolish. Wherever there is water, there are fish. Who sends grain across the ocean to buy fish when he can catch it in his own waters? Someone with grain to spare. And if there is no grain to spare?

After a very harsh winter the ice was late in melting. The ships did not come. We waited, the children watched from the hill, and still no ships. Our stores were empty, we were sick of fish and salted meat - we were hungry for bread. Finally in early summer a ship appeared. But there was no grain.

The year before the harvest had been bad all over. Rain pounded the crops until they rotted in the fields. Then winter had come early and cold and hunger had seized the lands. Bread was scarce and what grain had been saved was soon gone. Now there was no grain left to trade - not for fish. No one would send what little was left to buy our fish when a loaf could buy a netful in their own waters. So we traded our fish for amber and cloth and silver - pretties to dress ourselves, but nothing for our bellies.

As the summer past more ships came to trade. Not as many as before, and all brought tales of hunger and hardship. Many of our own families looked to their own crops. After the long winter we had little seed left for that year's sowing, and again late frost had taken its toll. Even if the weather was kind, the crop would be poor and there would be hunger this winter. And if it failed entirely?

People started to leave. As each ship left, a family or two would leave with them. All along the coast villages started losing their people. As word spread among the merchants, more ships came to call, and the price of passage went up - no longer fish and meat, now only gold and silver and ivory would buy a place in a ship. Families tried to sell their possessions to those who were staying. But how many plates, tables, benches can a man have?



I was among those who decided to stay. I had a young wife, with a baby on the way - the long sea voyage would do neither of them any good. And maybe being young myself I felt I could take on whatever was coming, be it cold or hunger. Besides, I did not have the price of the passage.

We watched our crops, we watched the weather. And we watched as others left. And we prayed. Not to Jesus, not to the Christian god, but to Thor, to Odin, the gods of our ancestors. The village priest had already deserted us. One of the first to leave, he had said he would go to Rome, make a pilgrimage on our behalf and so save us from the coming winter. We believed him – had we not sent tribute to Rome? And we believed his promise to bring back a whole fleet of ships loaded with grain and bread. But after he left, when we went to the church to pray for his success, we saw the bare altar and knew he had bought passage with the church silver.

So we turned to the old gods. As we sat around the fires we told tales of the Age of Heroes, of Asgard and Valhalla. And of Ragnorak, the final battle, when the gods would fail and the Ice Giants would reclaim the land.

In early Autumn the first storms came - vicious winds howling out of the north, bringing freezing rain to hammer the ripening crops. We struggled in the fields to salvage what we could, soaked by the rain that turned the ground to mud as we laboured. But it was in vain. What little crop that had survived the spring was ruined. Our barns held sheaves of unripened grain - too green and wet to winnow - and wet hay that would rot before the first frosts.

We settled down to wait our fate. The storms were fierce that Autumn. We tried lighting fires in the barns to dry what we could, but the air was damp and heavy and the fires just smouldered. We tried fishing, but the storms wrecked many of the boats on the shore, and when we could put out there was nothing to catch. It seemed the fish themselves had deserted us. There were no feasts to celebrate the harvest that Autumn.

We started to slaughter our livestock. With no fodder they would not last the winter anyway, so we slaughtered and dried and salted as best we could, keeping only the very best stock for the future.

Rain turned to snow, far earlier than anyone could remember. It mixed with the mud to cover everyone in a filthy slush. A final ship made it to the village, but not the great fleet promised by the priest. The captain told a magnificent tale of fierce seas and roaring winds and the battle he had fought to get here. But he found no gold, no silver, just desperate, dirty people. He cursed, we begged, and finally he agreed to take a few back with him for what little they had to pay. But not me. My wife was ready to birth, and I thought it safer on land than in the hell of the ocean.

With my daughter came the cold. As my wife and I celebrated the birth with a pot of mutton stew and a flagon of soar beer, the sky cleared, and that night the mud beneath the dirty snow turned to iron. It has not changed back.

With the cold came a respite from the wind. The air was clear and still, the sky blue. It was a relief, to stand outside with no mud or rain. And as the days past the sea froze. Snow came again - big, lazy flakes that settled and covered all in a thick blanket, then thicker still. Through the long nights we huddled together, my wife and child and I, sharing the warmth of our bodies as we gazed into the flickering fire.

With no bread the meat in the village was soon gone. We all tried to eat less, but you cannot starve yourself in the cold - the body needs food, needs fat. You cannot fight the cold on an empty belly. We tried to fish, cutting holes in the ice and dropping in lines, but caught nothing. We dragged boats to the edge of the ice - dangerous, many a man has fallen through to his death this way, but we had to try. But the nets came up empty. We saw a few seal, out on the pack ice and too far away to hunt, but there was none of the bounty of earlier years. So we returned to the village and slaughtered the last of the livestock, sharing out the meat as fairly as we could. It was the last sharing in the village - the last time we could call ourselves a village.

As the days grew shorter still, so the cold deepened. No one left their home any more - we stayed in by the fires, but even they were failing. There was never much wood in the village - peat was the main fuel, but the poor summers meant the fresh cut peat had not dried. As the last of the old supplies dwindled, so did the fires. After I used the last from our store, I started to tear the roof from the store itself. When that was gone, I started on the barn. I saw few people as I worked, but others had thought the same - other barns were disappearing too.

But fire cannot fill an empty belly. Each day we tried to eat a little less of what meat and fish we had left, boiling it with a little mouldy grain to make a thin gruel that only served to remind us how hungry we really were.

I tried to visit our neighbours, an elderly couple who had chosen to stay when their sons had left. I ploughed chest-deep in the snow to their hut, pounded on the door. Getting no answer I pushed my way in. Inside was as cold as out. The fire was dead, and so were they, frozen together in their furs and bedding. How long had they been dead? Who knows? In earlier years, if they had no family, the village would have kept their fire burning and their bellies full. But not this year. I went to the next hut, tried to summon help. We must at least bury them. But I was met by a haggard face, worn and thin with hunger. Did I look this bad? I must have. He shook his head. Let them lie, I must look to my own. So I dragged them out myself. I dug down through the snow, but the ground was too hard to dig, so I buried them in the snow and left the fresh snow to hide them.

A few days later I went to their house. We needed wood for the fire. As I started to pull their roof off, I saw their grave. Freshly dug snow and scattered clothing and furs. Where I had seen dead bodies, someone else had seen fresh meat.

That night I killed my dog. Yes, I had kept my good dog while others were starving. He had been loyal and faithful, as good a friend as any man could have. He too was starving, but unlike the rest of us, he accepted it. The master would provide. The master always provides. But I could not provide. He looked at me with solemn eyes as I approached him, raised his head and wagged his tail. Good master. Kind master. The only gift his master had was a knife.

A few days later our daughter died. I realised it from the way she hung limp in my wife's arms. How long had she been dead? My wife did not know. Sleeping, she said. Just sleeping, babies are always sleeping. But babies always cry as well. I do not remember her crying in days. Gently I took the pathetic little body from my wife. She did not resist, she was too weak. She too was starving. I know her milk had already failed - the scraps of meat I could cut from my dog had not been enough. Our daughter had died in her arms as she tried to suckle, and now the only warmth in her was the warmth of her mother's own stick-thin body.

I took her outside to bury her. Remembering what had happened to the last grave I dug, I buried her at the foot of the wall of the peat store, then tumbled the stones of the wall over her body. Then I stood vigil over her, huddled in furs and blankets against the cold through the long night. No one would disturb her final rest.

And now it is all over. The cold has won. There has been no snow now for weeks, just the cold that freezes your nose, your lips, your tongue. My wife finally died last night. We had lain still in each other's arms for many days, watching as the last of the fire faded, smouldered, died. Nothing left to eat, nothing left to burn. Time seemed to stop - the cold and hunger so deep even thought was an effort. Then I looked down and realised she was dead. Passed away in my arms without a sound. I managed to rouse myself to one last effort. I dragged her outside, to where our daughter lay at the foot of the wall. Slowly I scraped a hole in the snow. It was not cold, my hands no longer feel the cold. They are stiff and twisted, the fingers black, and they feel nothing. I pushed her in, covered her with snow, and with my shoulder pushed a few rocks down over her. She had a robe, a beautiful fox-fur robe that she had worn for our wedding. I had wanted to bury her in it, but my hands were too stiff to wrap her properly. So now I wear it across my shoulders. I need the warmth, for tonight I must stand vigil over her grave, as I did for our daughter. I don't think anyone will try to take her - I don't think there is anyone left now except me, but I must stay awake, just in case.

But I am so tired, and the cloak is warm. Has she left a little of her warmth in the cloak, just for me? As I crouch here in the snow it would be so easy to sleep, so easy. But I will stay awake, for her, for my daughter, for my village. Maybe I will see the Ice Giants?

(Background Notes: The story is set in a Norse settlement in Greenland. There were settlements there for about 4 - 500 years from the 10th century. They became very rich but relied very heavily on trade with Europe. Nobody really knows why they died out but one theory is that Medieval Europe was warmer than it is today, but as the climate changed they were unable to survive the worsening conditions.

Ragnorak is from Norse mythology, a sort of Nordic Armageddon, when the world will be seized by a terrible winter and the Gods and the Ice Giants will wipe each other out in one final battle. I don't know what fuel they used for their fires in Greenland.)

## **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

---

### **Review of the Year**

As 2007 draws to its close, I thought it would be a good idea to review the activities of the Poetry Workshop over the last twelve months. It has been another vibrant and successful year for us, and the four main areas of activity have been:-

#### **PW Open Day**

This event, held in London in May, was the first of its kind organised by the PW. Our aim was to meet those members of the Poetry Workshop who don't usually come to the Birmingham Weekend, to give them a taster of activities that take place there and also provide a one-off enjoyable day. The event was a success, and the PW committee hope to hold similar events in future at various locations around the country, given sufficient interest.

#### **Waves 2007**

The annual showcase anthology of PW members' work goes from strength to strength, and is attracting attention in the wider literary world and favourable reviews. The current editor is Liz Rowlands. See the winter issue of **wavelengths** for details of how to submit work for consideration for the 2008 anthology.

#### **PW Weekend**

After so many years at the University of Birmingham, the annual PW weekend took place in July at a new venue, in the lovely surroundings of the Quaker Study Centre in Selly Oak. The 2008 Weekend will be held there on 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> July. A Booking Form will be included in the winter issue of **wavelengths**.

#### **Bill Barnes Competition**

This competition, named in memory of the founder of the Poetry Workshop, attracted a record entry of 87 poems this year. At the time of sending this article to Adrian, the results were not yet known, but will be announced in the both the next issue of **Author** and in the spring issue of **wavelengths**. The latter will also publish the winning entries and those the judge highlights for Commendation.

In addition to the four main events above, two other Poetry Workshop activities bubble away throughout the year. There are now five **Postal Folios** circulating which give members access to constructive criticism of their work. Finally, there is the quarterly magazine, **wavelengths**. Running to at least 20 pages each issue, it is issued free to all members of the Poetry Workshop.

Finally, I can report that there are currently 78 member of the Poetry Workshop, making for an extremely healthy and vibrant section of the Society.

### **Subscriptions**

Subscriptions to the Poetry Workshop will fall due on 1 January. A renewal form will be enclosed with **wavelengths**. The fee remains unchanged at £3 for Society members.

### **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 **wavelengths** 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 December 2007	wavelengths # 13 publishing date
1 January 2008	PW Subscriptions due
1 February 2008	deadline for wavelengths #14
1 March 2008	wavelengths # 14 published
31 March 2008	deadline for Waves 2008
18 -20 July 2008	PW Weekend

I'd like to wish all members of the Society a very Happy Christmas and a successful New Year.

## Meetings Outside London

Ethel Corduff

**T**wo members of my folio have asked about having meetings, particularly the AGM, outside London. This is something that has been raised before and in the Author. In the past no member has ever come up with a solution to inherent problems.

We are a very scattered group and most areas have only one or two members. We do not have the money to go around the country. For some years now we have been unable to pay travelling expenses for committee members. In fact two committee members who live in the Wirral and Leicestershire pay their own fares to London. Five committee members live in the London region.

We always have a committee meeting in the morning prior to the AGM particularly to discuss any issues that will be raised at the AGM. Also it is more efficient as it allows the members who live far away to attend both committee meeting and the AGM on the same day, saving them double train fares and time. It would be impossible to do this if we had to travel, also we would not be properly prepared for the AGM then.

After all we give our time voluntary without claiming expenses except for essential items. Without local knowledge it is difficult to arrange bookings and refreshments and to guarantee with train delays arriving on time to conduct the meeting.

However I do realise as Meetings Secretary I should cater for all members. I have asked the two folio members if they can find a suitable venue in their area with possibly light refreshments available where I can hold a workshop on a Saturday afternoon.

If any other member knows of such a venue please let me know. I would then contact all members in the vicinity and would need at least five people to attend to make it viable. I would be willing to do this twice a year if it works out.

## **Markets- with the help of Gordon**

Ethel Corduff

I have acquired an archive of copies of the “Author”. Many have articles on marketing and some of those are by the late Gordon Gompers. I have gone back to his earlier articles starting in the 1980s. I will relate the most relevant information and relate it to markets today. This time I will discuss travel articles and first relate Gordon’s tips. Though he mainly travelled in the British Isles he said it is easier to sell a well written article about an English town than a badly written article about some exotic place. He was very successful at placing articles about islands as they hold a fascination for people. He gave an example of visiting Christchurch, Dorset where he visited the town’s three main points of interest. The Priory, the Redhouse Museum and the Castle Keep, with the help of a guide book he had enough material for an article. He wrote a separate article on Tucktonia outside Christchurch, a site on which is built models of some of the most famous buildings in Britain. Gordon found museum curators, deans, vicars and town hall officials useful sources of information. Of course we also have the internet today as another source of information. Also people are more important than buildings. He included people in all his articles. He had two articles from his visit published. These magazines are still published today. They are *The Lady* and *The Universe*. In the current issue of *The Lady* are several travel articles titled – *Island Hopping*, *Time for tea in Barbados* and an extensive feature on *Where to go for Christmas*. *The Universe* features many pilgrimages and advertisements for them. If you could write an article about a country where pilgrimages take place, not necessarily about a pilgrimage but about having a holiday in the vicinity of pilgrimage places like Lourdes, Fatima, and Knock, the editor may be interested.

**Contacts** Universe 1st Floor, St. James Building, Oxford St., Manchester M1 6PF, Website <http://www.the-universe.net>

*The Lady* 30-40 Bedford St., London WC2E 9ER email [editors@lady.co.uk](mailto:editors@lady.co.uk) Of course photographs are essential to accompany travel articles. In my next article I will discuss photographs, a subject on which Gordon was very knowledgeable.



## **The History of the Civil and Public Service Writers (continued)**

Beryl Jones

Officers of the Society - Presidents:

### **Sir George Rostrevor Hamilton 1957 - 1967**

Sir George Rostrevor Hamilton was the third President of the Society, a post he held for ten years until his death in 1967. Unfortunately there is no data in the Society's archives on Sir George not even an obituary. The only thing that has come to light is a letter written to Charles Neilson Gattey accepting the post of President in which he writes "I shall be proud to be President of the Society of Civil Service Authors, although diffident at following in the succession of Humbert Wolfe and Lord Vansittart".

[Having a computer with broadband connection to the internet and due protection from viruses and the like, I was able to access information on Sir George that I will quote here, with acknowledgments to Wikipedia and "Three Neo-Georgian Poets of Britain", by F W Nielson Wright. - Ed]

Sir George Rostrevor Hamilton, poet and critic, had 33 published works. His experience as Inspector of Taxes enabled him to help his friend Walter de la Mare. He was educated at Oxford, knighted in 1951 and his published work included anthologies of Latin and Greek verse for Nonesuch Press. He was a WW1 poet, known for the rather conventional sentimental "A Cross in Flanders". His book "The tell-tale particle on the Auden Group" made an impact by the expedient of counting the proportion of definitive articles in Auden's verse, remarking that it was much higher than in older styles. In general he was a steady conservative in matters of literature. He was a director of The Poetry Book Society and well connected as a correspondent of many literary figures; including E R Edson and Owen Barfield.

### **Bernard Newman 1967 - 1968**

The fourth President was Bernard Newman (he became Vice-President in 1939 and was also the Society's first Chairman). However his tenure as President lasted for only one year when at the age of 71 he did not recover from an operation, made necessary by a wound to his mouth received during World War

Bernard Newman was a prolific writer, 136 by 1966, including travel and espionage and he travelled all over Europe in search of the authenticity on which he always insisted. He did most of his travelling on a bicycle called George which became almost as famous as Bernard. He was also a brilliant lecturer and broadcaster and apparently a beloved figure on BBC Children's Hour.

As a very young soldier in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War he served on the Western Front where he was mentioned in despatches and awarded the French decoration Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur for his work as an interpreter.

One of his early books "The Cavalry Went Through" was put on the list of recommended reading for military students and according to a programme for The Lecture Agency, another of his books "has been used as a textbook in the Russian Army." The blurb also says that from one of his books "Hitler got the idea of his Panzer Divisions: the idea was later adopted here." A leading Sunday newspaper referred to Mr Newman as "the spiritual father of the Commandos." A further work which created a sensation was "Danger Spots of Europe" in which he foretold, with astonishing accuracy, where Mussolini was leading his country. Mussolini was apparently furious and demanded his dismissal from the Civil Service.

A fraction of Bernard's other achievements apparently included appearing in grand opera in Paris, writing comic songs for Arthur Askey, broadcasting from most of the radio stations of Europe and America; was a visiting member of the Brains Trust and a commentator on several television programmes. He also hunted lion with the Massai, armed only with a bow and arrow, attacked by the Fellagha in Tunisia, patrolled with the Foreign Legion in Indo-China, flew across the Atlantic in one of the first Liberators, lived on a collective farm in Russia and worked for Walt Disney in Hollywood. He also wrote a series of detective and spy thrillers under the pseudonym of Don Betteridge.

The Lecture Agency concludes with "a man with a background like that ought to have something interesting to say!" The question could also be asked when on earth did Bernard Newman find time to work for the Civil Service?

## Poetry Pages

Poetry Editor Terry James

### **Our Eyes Meet** by Eleanor Broaders

Our Eyes Meet  
And in that space  
A straight line  
From eye to eye  
An energy is exchanged.  
No smiles, we know  
Hearts flutter, souls shimmer,  
Time slows.  
All the world is still  
Except you and I  
And in the moment  
No fear just peace.  
Happiness is measured  
In moments  
By eyes and hearts  
And souls  
But life is lived  
In reality  
Tinged with fear  
And moments  
Are forgotten or ignored,  
Until the next time  
Our eyes meet  
And a moment is remembered.

### **New Particular** by Mike Boland

Smog; a yellow terror.  
It haunted the Autumns of my childhood,  
wraithed under doors, pursued us  
into school, chased us onto buses.  
Sulphurous, greasy, it clung to hair.  
You woke one morning to a nightmare world,  
a world two street-lamps wide,  
with decapitated houses,  
roofs lost in murk.  
Sound distorted, sight impaired,  
disorientation crouched at every corner.  
  
In 1962, the fog returned,  
fastening on Autumn's back;  
oily, threatening, familiar.

Then, on Boxing Day, snow fell.  
It fell and fell and kept on falling  
and didn't thaw until April.  
It cleansed our skies, seared  
the taste of grease from lungs.

Looking over heat-hazed roofs this summer  
I realised I'd witnessed, long ago,  
the last of London's famous smogs.  
Not the pea-soup ones of ill-repute  
and Holmesian legend, the so-called  
"Old Particulars", but killers nonetheless.  
For many died; the old, the young,  
the pulmonary weak.

Smog passed from our thoughts,  
moved into legend, now merely hearsay.  
But a New Particular threatens London;  
summer heat brings photochemical death.  
Children and the old choke once more.

We fooled ourselves our air was clean,  
but nothing really changed.

### **Waterloo** by Norman Bissett

Still sitting upright  
in Death's Valley  
in the dawn mist,  
on the morning  
after the attack  
on Hohenzollern Redoubt,  
a simple soldier boy,  
short, stumpy  
and most uninteresting  
to look at,  
an artiled clerk  
in Civvy Street,  
who used to blow  
his cornet and play  
British songs to us,  
is still clutching  
his cascading guts,  
still gathering in  
his spilt intestines,  
like a harvest  
offering to the

girl from Peckham,  
still waving her hankie  
and still smiling  
as, hissing steam,  
his train draws  
slowly out of  
Waterloo.

**21/08/06** by Eleanor Broaders

Be still my heart.  
Let the dust lie down.  
All is calm now,  
In this part of town.

For more than a month,  
There was no noise.  
Gone to sleep,  
Mum, girl and two boys.

No one to miss them.  
They lay dead on the floor.  
Till the smell seeped in,  
To the house next door.

**Sweet Siesta** by Mike Boland

The steps to where *signora* waits  
are narrow, paved and steep.  
The steps to where *signora* waits  
are sun-kissed, drowsed with sleep.

The scent from crimson flowers fills  
the soft siesta air  
with sensual thoughts of longing,  
and *signora* waiting there.

Behind the purple shutters,  
she sighs away the day.  
Behind the purple shutters,  
*signora* waits to play.

**Rice Pudding** by Norman Bissett

Like a Dead Sea Scroll  
or parchment snatched from the fire,  
the best part's the skin-  
and the raisins, like poems,  
awaiting discovery.

## The Unknown Du Maurier

Terry James

Amid all the celebrations marking the centenary of Daphne du Maurier's birth, spare a thought, if you will, for Angela du Maurier.

Angela was. Daphne's elder sister by 3 years, and has had published, some 14 books. Her last book seems to have been a volume of memoirs entitled "Old Maids Remember", which was published in 1965; but since the late 'seventies" not one of Angela du Maurier's books has been in print.

Yet, she was arguably as talented as sister Daphne, but perhaps a little less ambitious. And she seems to have been a more approachable and down-to-Earth person than Daphne.

One of her novels- "Treveryan" - written in the "forties" rivals even "Rebecca" in terms of mystery and suspense, and is just as compelling as the Daphne du Maurier classic. Indeed, "Treveryan, was Angela's own favourite book; and as she reveals in "Old Maids Remember" was at one time to be made into a film. Alas. the project fell through, and this magnificent novel is all but forgotten.

Interestingly, one of Angela's best friends and supporters was the late Naomi Jacob, a very popular post-war novelist in the Catherine Cookson tradition. Today, however, Naomi Jacob is out of favour with modern readers, although the seven volumes of her brilliant "Gollancz" Saga"are - as far as I know - still in print.

It is surely tragic that, whilst most - if not all - of Daphne du Maurier's books are currently in print, not one word of her talented sister's literary output is in print. Indeed, not only the books, but also the name of Angela du Maurier has gradually faded into obscurity.

I have a copy of "Treveryan", and it sits beside "Rebecca" on my bookshelf. I read it from time to time, always with a sense of regret that "Rebecca" gets all the accolades, and "Treveryan" none.

Perhaps the one glimmer of hope on the horizon, is that some enterprising television producer will come across "Treveryan", and realise its potential for TV adaptation. If so, then this unknown du Maurier may at last gain the recognition she so richly deserves.

## Misadventures in Art

Terry James

When I was a teenager I had a terrible urge to pursue a satisfying creative hobby. I'd been through the usual phases of stamp collecting, chemistry, trombone playing, trumpet playing and model railways. But these harmless activities never gave me any real satisfaction, nor did body-building, which I tried for a few weeks until I dropped a barbell on my toe. The year of my discontent was 1958.

Velvet collared teddy boys swung their chains in time to the heavy beat of rock 'n' roll and the teenage revolution was well under way.

But I was an intellectual, or so I pictured myself. As well as the teddy boys, there was another type of teenage rebel around during this period - the beatniks, easily recognisable by their beards, sloppy sweaters, duffle coats with optional dirty toenails, and for the ladies, black stockings.

Greenwich Village was the mecca for the "Beats" in America, but in Britain, the Kings Road in Chelsea, London was their territory.

I envied these folk. I loved their clothes, their freedom - and their beards. It was my ambition to date a beatnik girl, with long blonde hair cascading over her shoulders, pale face devoid of make-up and skinny as a rake, thanks to a diet of baked beans on toast.

However, in my job as a trainee Bank Clerk beards and scruffy clothes were definitely out, so how could I possibly join them?

Then one day I suddenly noticed that a lot of the local "Beats" or "Weirdies" as they were also called carried portfolios under their arms - these were students at the nearby Art College.

Every day I watched them passing the Bank laughing loudly, happily discussing landscapes and seascapes (I presumed) seemingly without a care in the world whilst I was imprisoned in this horrible Bank, an automaton in a pin-striped suit.

How could I be like them I pondered, until it almost became an obsession.

Then suddenly, one afternoon, I had the answer - become a painter!

A new hobby, art - perhaps the most creative of all hobbies. I felt tremendously exhilarated; - why didn't I think of it before.

A small voice within whispered “Talent” but I ignored it, talent didn’t count hadn’t I read about the hundreds of Sunday painters who apparently had no talent wasn’t it the effort that was important, the actual art of creation? - Of course!

I pictured myself walking around with a portfolio under my arm, showing the world that I was a painter. The “image” I felt was important.

I needed a pair of sandals and a pair of jeans, perhaps a dark polo-neck sweater -like Colin Wilson often wore. These I purchased the next day and also popped into my newsagent for a copy of the “Art News and Review”, which I gleefully read on the bus home, thinking the other passengers sitting opposite would be impressed. Actually the magazine was so full of eccentric looking, and therefore to my mind interesting ladies and gents, that I later placed a regular order for the magazine. I was building up my image without as yet having even lifted a paintbrush. However this was soon rectified. At the end of that momentous week I strolled into a large Artists Suppliers, bought a set of poster paints, or “gouache” as it is called in artists circles, a sketch pad, pencils and a few brushes. I was brimming over with ideas for my paintings and just couldn’t wait to get something down on canvas. Initially, my first canvas was a roll of old wallpaper which, I was advised, made quite a reasonable surface for poster paint. I didn’t feel like attempting anything as grand as oils, and water colours seemed to me a little insipid, but poster paint with its bright colours and matt finish seemed ideal. At the Bank I discovered that Jim, a fellow clerk and a most ordinary looking chap, painted in oils. I couldn’t understand his lack of an artistic image and I think he didn’t know exactly what to make of me, but he did give me quite a few valuable tips on the use of painting materials.

In the pursuit of a satisfactory hobby money was no object and I bought a number of expensive beginners’ books on painting, which, if nothing else, fired me with a tremendous creative urge. Abstract art appealed to me, it was colourful and really looked quite easy to do. So, one memorable Friday evening found me in my studio cum bedroom grinning like a Cheshire cat, with paintbrush poised ready to create an original masterpiece on the wrong side of old wallpaper. Oh, what excitement in creation! An hour or so later my first painting was completed. It featured a plain yellow background on which was painted various oblong shapes of contrasting colours. A design which, when properly done, was popular at this time.



My effort, I think, resembled a cemetery seen from the air, but to me, it looked wonderful. No time was lost in telling my friends about my interest in art and I soon got used to their asking about my current creations.

During the next few weeks I rattled off 3 or 4 more assorted beauties and then decided I would have to try something a little more conventional; but what to choose as my subject I pondered. Portraits? No, later perhaps, still life? -I don't think so. Seascape? Why not, I always liked the sea.

And so my first outdoor assignment, I planned would be a pencil sketch, to be coloured later with poster paint. An easel of course was not needed for sketching, so I chose my largest and as yet unused sketching pad. To be honest, as a beginner, I would have felt uncomfortable using an easel in public. I didn't mind anyone seeing my paintings when completed, but a chap sitting at an easel seems to draw the public like a magnet. Perhaps I was just afraid of being laughed at.

Anyway, a sketching pad was much handier and would give me, I reasoned, a degree of mobility. In other words I'd be able to tuck the pad under my arm, and scarp if Joe Public came too close.

Weatherwise the following Saturday was just right - a cloudless sky, beaming sun and a gentle breeze. I had already mentally selected a spot near some rocks about a mile and a half from where I lived in a seaside town. As it was such a glorious day I buoyantly set off on foot for the shore,

I was hoping I looked "arty" enough with my new suede shoes, old khaki drill trousers, open neck blue shirt and most daring of all, a maroon and white spotted cravat, as worn, I had noted, by "okay" guys like Adrian Hill, Mervyn Levy and other popular artists.

The beard was something I still longed to have, but I had a sneaking suspicion that being a fair-haired one-shave-a-week man, I couldn't have grown one, even if the Bank had allowed me; however, I compromised by postponing a haircut indefinitely, or at least until the Bank Manager told me off. A few motorists and lorry drivers eyed me curiously as I slouched along in my best student fashion. Coward that I am, I contemplated taking the cravat off, but a dazzling smile from a blond in a sports car restored my confidence. Pity she was going the wrong way. At last I reached the rocky area of the beach and soon found a suitable

perch. There were dozens of rowing boats in and around the bay and lots of children playing noisily on the sands some distance away, otherwise my isolation was complete.

I opened my sketch pad, lit a cigarette and inserted it into a black and gold holder (another arty touch), selected a scene and began merrily sketching my seascape. The waves were quite easy to draw, it seemed, but the sky wasn't just so simple. I realised of course that as this was my first time using the pencils, slight difficulties were to be expected.

Having outlined the general scene, I concentrated on getting down on paper some interesting looking clouds. Alternatively, I lifted my eyes from sheet to sky and back again. Suddenly a loud cry of "Romeo" made me shift my gaze to the sea. There before me were 6 or 7 rowing boats filled with people all obviously enjoying the spectacle of this strange cravat-wearing figure, hair blowing in all directions, sitting on the rocks with his head bobbing up and down. My surprised look was greeted with assorted cheers and a round of applause. I felt my face turn scarlet and wished I could just disappear beneath the waves.

Unfortunately the cheering from the boats had attracted the attention of a group of bathers some distance away, so my audience was increasing. With panic mounting, I decided to call it a day. Some people might have gloried in the attention but not me, I had no wish to be elevated to near-celebrity status. I quickly stubbed out my fag, slammed the sketch book shut, breaking my pencil in the process and clambered down from my rocky perch, drawing another cheer from the spectators as I slipped and impaled my person on a sharp rock. And so ended my first venture into sketching out of doors. After this slightly disastrous expedition I resolved that in future total privacy for outdoor work was a must. As far as the sketch went however, all was not lost, I completed the seascape from memory when I got home and then painstakingly painted it. The result was, shall we say, vivid, like my imagination. Such bright colours I thought, gazing at the finished product proudly, were reminiscent perhaps of Van Gogh's best. Soon I had quite a portfolio of paintings and sketches.

I didn't feel any urge to delve into oils or watercolours, which demanded, I considered, a more subtle approach or as a small voice within told me - a little more talent than I possessed. The "Gouache" poster paint definitely suited my flamboyant style though I still wasn't 100 per cent sure I was an actual artist. In my black moments that small

inner voice would say all sorts of unkind things to me such as ‘show off’ and “bluffer” but I refused to be given the brush off - if you’ll excuse the pun. What I really wanted though, was an assessment of my talent and my paintings.

As well as the weekly “Art News and Review” that I carried about, I occasionally bought the glossy monthly journal “The Artist” which, though expensive for my modest pocket was worth it as it featured an interesting “problem page” - painting problems that is. But it was another readers service that caught my eye one month - a critical assessment of three paintings for only ten bob - just what I was looking for!

In a state of great excitement I pondered and mused over my stock of paintings and eventually selected three gems which, I felt, reflected my unique style best. The fact that they were painted on wallpaper didn’t concern me greatly, indeed I surmised, it might even impress the eminent artists who would judge my work.

Perhaps they would think of me as a penniless, though immensely talented, young painter - unrecognised, undiscovered, forced through lack of funds to paint on humble strips of wallpaper; moved by the demon of creation burning inside, to record my visual thoughts and feelings on life and living on my makeshift canvas.

Why, those poor magazine art critics were probably bored stiff, judging top quality canvases on which stinking rich though terribly untalented ladies and gentlemen had recorded their thoughts and feelings with diabolical results.

Then, like a breath of fresh air, along comes this new talent, this unknown Bank Clerk wielding a brush loaded with poster paint who astonishes, amazes and delights the art world with his dazzling wallpaper-backed beauties.

I hummed happily as I placed the art works between pieces of sturdy cardboard, wrapped the lot in a brown paper parcel, stuck on the address label, and sped off to the Post office.

No time was wasted telling my friends about my latest venture, including my colleagues at the Bank who had noticed from time to time traces of paint on my fingers, and spotted the art magazines and catalogues sticking out of my pocket, leaving no doubt in their minds that here indeed was a painter.

During the next few weeks I was almost in a daze - a happy daze. My standing as an artist had gradually gained momentum since I posted off the paintings. Indeed the girls at the Bank began to look at me in a different way, even adoringly I imagined. A week passed and people began enquiring if I'd heard anything. Two weeks passed and the enquiries continued. At almost every tea and lunch break at the Bank someone would pop the question "What about the" - "Any word from" - it became almost a routine.

The other members of staff had rather more conventional hobbies, such as gardening and tinkering about with cars, hobbies that I secretly despised.

Anyway, one wet morning I was just about to set off for the Bank when a slim rolled up package was shoved through the letter box; ah, I thought, this must be the new art magazine I'd sent for a few days previously, and quickly tucked it into my brief-case. Almost 3 weeks now and still no sign of my paintings, how dare they keep me waiting!

No one seemed in particularly good humour at the Bank that morning until tea-break arrived, and then the frowns began to ease a little. Conversation was a bit thin on the ground so I set down my steaming mug of tea and reached for my new art magazine. Idly I tore open the wrapper and lifted out the contents. A familiar abstract pattern caught my eye - surely this hastily wrapped crushed bundle couldn't be my - "Oh No" I said aloud, as I straightened out the wallpaper with the paint cracking and flaking all over the floor. Everyone stared, fascinated, and I felt a deep flush spread over my face. A letter sandwiched between the almost unrecognisable paintings fell to the ground. With trembling hands I lifted it, noting the impressive heading. My eyes stared afraid to read further. Someone began tapping a foot impatiently. "Well, is it good news?" - a female voice chirped, "or not so good?" a coarse bass voice rumbled. "Read it out" another voice suggested. "Right" I managed to croak. "Eh - Dear Sir - your paintings are returned herewith. After studying them closely we regret we can find very little merit in your efforts.

Abstract art, we would point out, evolves from a sound knowledge and practise of the fundamental techniques of painting. Your work appears to be lacking in these basic techniques. We would, therefore, advise you to scrap these canvases and start again from scratch and perhaps we shall

then be in a position to be more helpful and constructive. Yours” - my voice trailed off.

I sat stricken, glass-eyed and motionless.

For a moment there was silence, then a surprised titter, which triggered off someone else’s mirth. Titters gave way to guffaws, grinning faces became creased with smiles. The laughter became louder and louder, then it died down and stopped. Embarrassed faces looked expectantly at me. Not daring to look up, I slowly crumpled the letter and tossed it into the waste can.

“Drink your tea, Terry”, a kindly voice said and shoved a cup into my hand. I gripped it tightly to stop the tears. “Don’t worry lad” the Chief Cashier murmured. “Try stamp collecting - you’ll enjoy it”. “Aye” said Janet the pretty junior “or a spot of gardening - I’ve just started it myself and I could lend you a book if you like”. I looked up at her glumly and shook my head slowly. A hand patted my shoulder gently. “Goldfish m’boy” said old Bob the Accountant “very relaxing, keep me sane my fish do”. I sighed deeply, took a swig of tea and stared into the cup. “You’re all very kind”, I muttered. Then I remembered the letter - what was the advice it offered - scrap them and start again. “I’d better take their advice” I said aloud. The others looked on silently as I tore each painting into small pieces and tossed them into the waste basket. “That’s me finished with art” I announced as the last pieces fluttered from my hands.

That evening as I left the Bank, still shaken by my artistic failure, a hand on my shoulder made me turn round. It was George, our Assistant Manager, “sorry to hear about your disappointment” he said sympathetically. “I’ve had the same thing happen to me”. “Have you” I asked. “I didn’t know you went in for art”. “Oh no, not art old boy, Drama. Shot down in flames by an adjudicator who hated my performance. That’s what I want to see you about. We’ve a number of vacancies for actors and you would seem to fit the bill - if you care to pop down to the Club.” Well, I did, and 20 years later I’m still popping down - not a Bank Clerk but a Civil Servant now with a passion for play acting. Oh, and I haven’t picked up a paint brush since -why? - because I’ve been too busy picking up cues!

PS Above was written in 1973. I spent 15 years as an amateur actor before I moved from stage to page. But that’s another story.

## **Publisher's Guidelines**

Joan Lewis

**W**hen you've just finished an article, re-read it, cut it and decided that it's as good as you can make it, then you can't wait to prepare it for posting and then you run to the letterbox. But hang on, do you really know what the Editor wants?

Do you know the number of words he favours, to fit one page or two? Does he want illustrations and if so, how should you present them? Does he want only hard copy or disc and hard copy? Do you know his name? An old copy of a magazine is a death trap – I had a fairly recent copy of "Collect It" and nearly chanced sending off my precious article and even more precious slides but decided to check on line. Sure enough, there was a new editor, who welcomed enquiries. I've been in email contact with her while she sorted out what she wanted and whether I could meet that: she now has the whole and I'm figuratively typing with my fingers crossed. Don't forget each new editor has to make his/her mark and requirements change constantly.

Most magazines will forward publishers' guidelines if you send a stamped address envelope with your request. If you are on line you have no problem, most magazines will give their web address on the editorial page, somewhere underneath a list of who does what. Otherwise take a peek at those in W.H Smith's. I'll look at a couple of women's magazines:-

Woman's Weekly: "...no longer looking for predictable boy-meets-girl romances or nostalgic looks at the past. Romance and nostalgia can be important parts of the story, but there should be other elements, too. We want stories to portray up-to-date characters in believable, modern situations. We welcome stories on a wide range of themes and moods, for instance, warm stories about children, teenagers and family problems of various kinds, love stories, funny stories and even stories with a crime or thriller element, as long as they are not violent or too incredible." Predictable outcomes fail a story, there must some tension. Short stories should be 1000 or 2000 words long. Consideration may take sixteen weeks and email is frowned on. Send to Gaynor Davies, Fiction Editor, WW, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS

People's Friend: quite different. Readers from 30 to 80, like being entertained and not depressed. Accept realistic stories but not too realistic with sex, drugs, violence etc. Sanctity of marriage and importance of family still reign. Short stories vary in length between 1000 to 4000 words, or very short. There is much more available on their requirements so send to PF, D.C.Thomson & Co Ltd., 80 Kingsway East, Dundee DD4 8SL or email peoplesfriend@dcthomson.co.uk. BUT study this one before submission, it's unique among women's magazines.

Next time I'll look at markets for Gardening articles. Don't forget "Freelance Market News", Editor, The Association of Freelance Writers, Sevendale, 7 Dale Street, Manchester M1 1JB – it's extremely useful.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Fins et Orgo or the Source and the Origin**

This awesome title is that of a booklet by fairly new member, Alan Blackstone of Warrington, who joined us in March of this year. The content isn't awesome but very interesting – his introduction says the booklet is "an attempt to explain, where possible, the origins of a number of things these days we take for granted – for example: the "Origins of Writing and the Alphabet". Alan has gone into research including myths and legends as well as the serious stuff, touching on Cuneiform and Hieroglyphics, and looking on the way at Minoans, Sumerians, Cretans and Phoenicians. He stresses the different origins that have been put forward by all sorts of pundits, and then starts on the "Origins of English" – but it's not in the least dry.

And how about the "Origins of James Bond" – that makes you sit up. Who did Ian Fleming really base him on? On to "Origins and Development of Computers" – and this is fascinating, as I thrash this piece out on my PC. Lastly "Origins of some Common Sayings and Words" – it was news to me that Jerry built referred to the walls of Jericho, which reputedly did fall down.

Alan published this booklet privately and asks five pounds for a copy. The small profit he makes from each sale goes to the British Heart Foundation, as a way of saying "thank you" for those who helped him through heart bypass surgery. A copy can be obtained from Alan at 49 Limetree Avenue, Stockton Heath, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 2DQ.

Joan Lewis

## Drama at the Flat-House

Kathleen L Barber

**W**e were climbing the stairs when my four year old niece said, “This is a house isn’t it?” “Yes, Joanne, it is a house,” I replied, “but I live in the top part of the house and that part is called a flat.” Joanne pondered this for a moment then said, “Oh, it’s a flat-house!” Well, who could argue with such logic? Henceforth it was known as a flat-house and consisted of a lounge and kitchen facing south, with a north facing bedroom at the back. The lady owner of the house had the ground floor and basement as her home when not working in Cornwall, where she was the manageress of a Conference/Holiday Home. So it was that when the Sunday drama took place I was the sole occupant of the fiat-house.

It was a lovely sunny day and having come in from morning-service at the local church, I went into the kitchen to prepare lunch. The sun had been streaming in all the morning making the room very hot. My first action was to go and open the window, which operated by somewhat old-fashioned sash-cords. I released the catch but before I could reach up to pull down the top half of the window, the sash-cord snapped and the top section of the window slid down, neatly trapping both my hands between the two halves of the window. The four fingers of each hand were held firmly between the panes of glass, immovable in spite of my strenuous efforts to release them.

The street outside was deserted, obviously there was no point in calling out. Anyway, I had locked the front door as I came in from church. The key was now lying on the table in the lounge, no passer-by would be able to get in. I redoubled my efforts to release my hands, thinking that if just one hand could be freed I would then be able to use it to help release the other one. It was no use, the fingers were stuck fast. The room was becoming quite warm, I was thankful that neither the oven nor hotplates had been switched on. The sun gave out more than enough heat, its glinting rays caught a knife which had been left on the draining-board near the window. Niggles of fear began creeping into my thoughts. How long would I be trapped like this? Would anyone hear me call? What if I fainted before anybody realised something was wrong? Someone passing by might, perhaps, glance up but would probably think I was just standing there looking out of the



window. Even the ticking of the kitchen-clock sounded ominous, the situation was becoming quite serious.

In the flats across the road there was no sign of life until, suddenly, a young woman appeared at the window of her flat on the first-floor. She appeared to be dusting and glanced across in my direction. I immediately began nodding my head but she turned away, probably thinking I was talking to someone in the room with me. After a few moments the woman began cleaning her windows, again she looked over towards me. I quickly resumed nodding. This time the woman stopped what she was doing and stared at me. Seeing my head nodding even more vigorously she pointed to herself and mouthed the question, “me?” I nodded very slowly this time to emphasise my answer, “yes”! She disappeared from the window and minutes later emerged from her front door. The woman ran across the road and stood on the pavement outside my home. I explained that my fingers were trapped in the window, but before I could say anymore the young woman rushed up the steps to my front door, which of course was locked! I asked her if she would go to the police station, situated in the next road, to get help. The police would be able to rescue me, even if it meant calling in the fire brigade, ladders an’ all! This seemed, to me, to be the best and safest course of action. The young woman, however, had her own ideas, she said firmly, I’ll get my husband.” She returned to her home soon reappearing with her husband.

The couple considered the position from where they stood. There was a drain pipe leading from my kitchen, under the window sill, down the outside wall, to the basement of the building. The young man took hold of the drain pipe to ascertain its firmness. I immediately realised what he was contemplating and begged him not to try climbing the drain pipe but to go for help from the police station. My plea went unanswered, the woman said to her husband, “be careful,” as he started on his climb to the kitchen window.

Fears for my own safety quickly vanished, I was filled with horror at what might happen to my would-be rescuer were he to fall. From the pavement below, his wife’s gaze never left her husband. Neither she nor I dared to speak as the climber gradually ascended, finally reaching the window ledge. Somehow he managed to balance himself, keeping one hand on the drain pipe until he was able to move sufficiently to enable him to get hold of the section trapping my

fingers. Not one of us spoke, I was holding my breath as the young man tried to prise the two sections apart. After what seemed like an hour was in reality only minutes, the window loosened enough for me to remove my right hand. Only then did the young man speak, he asked if I could possibly reach the knife on the draining board. Stretching my hand out I just managed to get hold of the knife and pass it to him. With the aid of this utensil my rescuer was able to slightly prise open the two parts jamming my left hand. It was sufficient! His endeavours succeeded and I was able to pull my hand free, joy at being released had to be suppressed, the top priority was being able to assist the hero. Carefully raising the window I helped him clamber into the kitchen hardly able to believe what he had accomplished. My fingers did not appear to have suffered injury, apart from the initial numbness, it was difficult to put into words my gratitude for this incredible rescue.

As I let the young man out at the front door to rejoin his wife, I realised I did not even know his name! Neither was I absolutely certain in which of the flats opposite, the young couple lived. Later in the day having written a letter of thanks to the couple, I took it across the road and put it in what I hoped was their letter box! My kitchen window remained closed after that episode, until in due course the sash-cords were replaced.

I no longer live in the flat-house but occasionally pass by it. The drain pipe is still there, serving to remind me of that Sunday drama and the fact that truth is stranger than fiction!

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Ponies and Mind Readers**

Ruth Sear

“I want a pony,” I said.

“Well you can’t have one,” replied my Dad.

It was a Friday during the long boring school holidays in the summer of 1955, on a clear sunny day with a brisk lively breeze. I was eight years old, and we were on our way to collect Dad’s pay at the colliery. I liked to accompany him whenever I could because he always bought a Kit Kat for me from the canteen.

We walked through a patch of woodland and arrived at the edge where a clump of silver birch were rustling and trembling. In the distance, towering

over the green Derbyshire fields and hedges, was an industrial landscape of black pyramid shaped slag heaps. And the grimy colliery, where Dad worked as a miner, also rose and towered over the far view.

As we walked over a field I gathered armfuls of ox-eye daisies. In the next field we saw several ponies cantering wildly and tossing their manes. Others, wearing eye patches, were either standing or eating the grass.

“They’re pit ponies,” Dad said. “They must think they’re in heaven after working underground for months at a time. They’re blindfolded when they first come up.”

“Why?”

“Because they’re not used to the light and it would harm their eyes without some sort of protection at first. Their blindfolds are gradually taken off.”

“How did they come up from underground?”

“same way as I do, the ostler says they, don’t like the lift!”

I tried to imagine the animals in the lift, it was not a nice picture, so I quickly looked around me.

“It’s lovely here in this field, Dad. It must have been like this, all around here, before the mines came along.”

“That’s true. But coal won’t last for ever and one day there won’t be a single mine here.”

“Then the birds, animals and flowers will return, and it will all be quiet and peaceful again.”

“No it won’t. They’re going to build a huge long wide road called a motorway, through here. No end of traffic will use it; everyone wants a car nowadays. They say it’s going to be called the M1”

I thought about the ponies as we made our way to the pay office where a long queue of miners was waiting for it to open. Why couldn’t I have a pony of my own? Surely it could be kept in a field. Its food would be free, I reasoned; let it eat grass. And surely I could ride it without a saddle. After all, the cowboys and Indians in the films at the Saturday morning pictures sometimes rode bareback; hadn’t Roy Rogers lost his saddle and ridden Silver without one only last week at the Odeon? And hadn’t the Lone Ranger been pursued by bareback Apaches (or Cheyenne or Sioux or some other tribe) the week before, uttering their war cries and thundering across the screen before they bit the dust?

We joined the queue and there was the blind man who stood in the same place each Friday. He was dressed in his usual shabby overcoat, wearing

dark glasses and carrying a white stick. A collecting bowl lay on the ground at his feet. He has been blinded in a pit accident years ago. Every miner put a sixpence or a shilling in his bowl.

From a small aperture in a wall, the clerk distributed the pay. Then we went to the canteen. Mum had requested some soap and towels. Both were cheap and of excellent quality; each year, a couple of months before Christmas, extra towels were purchased and sent to my Aunt in Canada.

We went home by bus and I glimpsed at the ponies through the window. The acquisition of one required a great deal of thought.

My flowers wilted before we returned home, and quickly died despite putting them in a jam jar full of water.

I was an avid reader and always borrowed books from the local library. It had been converted from a house and was situated on two floors connected by a flight of steep steps, all presided over by a pleasant helpful lady librarian. The books were stacked on shelves from floor to ceiling and how cosy and warm it was in the winter when both rooms had a fire in the grate burning merrily. At that time I was reading any books on horses I could find.

My Gran, white haired with a caustic tongue, lived in the next street to us, in a state of matrimonial disharmony with Grandad. She liked detective fiction and had a large stock of books with highly coloured and lurid dust jackets. Their illustrations were usually gruesome scenes of murder; often depicting a lurking shadowy figure, holding a smoking gun and wearing a trilby hat (just like my Dad's.) Who was the murderer and who was the sleuth was difficult to know from the illustrations. There might be an illustration of a corpse, sometimes with a knife protruding from it; or a scantily dressed young lady, screaming, her eyes wide with fright, her hands held up in horror. One of the books had a particularly nasty scene; a torso was lying on a slab of marble, apparently trying to rise! Perhaps it found the marble was too cold to lie on. And people were always smoking. (The torso wasn't smoking, of course.)

Gran was also an avid reader of another type of fiction. It was science fiction, mostly to do with galactic exploration and encounters with aliens. No one I knew had ever seen an alien or a flying saucer. Not even Grandad on his nocturnal journeys to and from the outside loo.

The dust jackets of those SF books were also lavishly and vividly decorated. There was one entitled.. *The First Men in the Moon*. It had a strange scene on the cover. Men in top hats and evening jackets strolled on the moon and in and out of craters. Some men wore monocles, and most of

them were smoking cigars. Their shiny shoes were immaculate, even though the moon's surface was dusty.

The day following my visit to the pit Gran gave me a book to read entitled: *The Mind Reader*.

“Yer will enjoy this yarn,” she said. “It ain’t frightening, in fact it’s ‘ardly sci-fi at all. “

I began to read the book. It was about a blind man who could read anybody’s mind. He performed this amazing trick by reading details of their finances. He grew rich and successful. The story was so convincing that I began to worry. What if there were people out there who could read minds? Had someone read mine? I remembered a man staring very hard at me last week, in the fish and chip shop. Was he a mind reader? I tried desperately to remember what I had been thinking about as I waited in the heat of the shop, among the smell and sound of frying. And what about the blind man at the pit? Was he also a mind reader?

Next week I saw another pony. Lightning was old with a mangy brown coat and had hauled the cart belonging to the rag and bone man for years. Master and beast roamed the streets of our village and the cry of what sounded like “*Ra-bo!*” stirred many a housewife to stop the cart and fetch various old unwanted items for his inspection; however I never saw any bones offered!

The cart always stopped at Mrs Black’s house and the man disappeared inside for several minutes. I felt sorry for Lightning and often gave him a lump of sugar (correctly offered on the palm of my outstretched hand.) Mrs Black was a widow and known locally as the Black Widow. She was tall, dark and had a menacing air about her. Goodness knows what the rag and bone man found inside her house to interest him. He always emerged empty handed.

I patted the long nose of Lightning and wished I could take him home. If he were mine I could find a field for him to live., a field to graze and to gallop about in, how he would prefer that to pulling a heavy cart about the dusty streets. I wished I could steal him and take him away.

“Oi! What are you up to? Bloomin’ kids! Trying to steal the old nag?”

I froze. Was the rag and bone man also a mind reader? I turned away and quickly ran home.

A few days later I saw lightning again. As I approached he exhibited three downsides of his equine personality. First he tried to bite me, and secondly he lashed out at me with his hind leg. And thirdly he deposited

something outside our front gate that caused Mum to say.” “Fetch a shovel, child, and put that manure on your Dad’s roses.”

That evening Mum and Dad went to friends for supper and I was left with the instructions: “Don’t get up to mischief” As soon as they departed I retrieved *The Mind Reader* from underneath my mattress and began to read.

An hour later I looked out of the window and was surprised to see it was nearly dark. Then I thought I saw a shadowy figure standing underneath the lamp post.

Yes; *someone was out there!* It was the figure of a man smoking a pipe!

A full moon shone in competition with the gas lamp; I could even see the row of tall poplars that lined one side of the recreation ground. Immediately I was frightened and wished I wasn’t in the house on my own. When would Mum and Dad return? Perhaps the pipe smoker was a mind reader!

I returned to the window and saw that the figure had disappeared. Where was he? Suddenly I heard the back door open. (No one in our street kept their door locked except when there was no one in the house.) I froze, and felt a nasty tightness around my throat. I was terrified.

A voice called out.. “Hello where are yer?”

It was Gran! An enormous feeling of relief went through me.

“Oh! I’m ever so glad it’s only you, Gran. I thought it was a man coming in to read my mind.”

“A man?” The old lady entered the room. -If he does, tell him to come and see me. Tell him not to bother with reading any minds, just to have a bit of decent company would be a change. The last man who come to visit me to read something were the man to read the gas meter. That were a waste of time, “cause we ain’t got any gas. Himself is out at the boozier tonight as usual, spending his dosh. Are yer coming over to our house, or are yer staying here waiting for yer mind reader? Yer Mam said you were on yer own tonight.”

“I’ll come with you, Gran.”

“How about bringing that book yer borrowed off the library, the one about the pony?”

“No Gran, I’ve gone off the idea of owning a pony. We read an animal story at school last term called *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi*, by Rudyard Kipling. Gran, where do you think I could get a mongoose”

## SCPSW - Annual Statement of Income and Expenditure

April 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 - March 31<sup>st</sup> 2007

INCOME:	2006-7	2005-6
Subscriptions:	2107.50	2184.50
AGM Receipts:	100.00	72.00
NY Party Receipts:	144.00	136.00
Luncheon Receipts:	608.85	617.90
Competition Receipts:	537.00	264.50
Sponsorship	175.00	
Donations:	318.00	358.00
Bank Interest:	.31	1.63
Bank Charges Reimbursed:	-	-
'Author' Sales:	-	-
Poetry Workshop:	155.00	135.00
Sundry Income:	167.00	68.00
Unrepresented Cheque: (not recorded).		6.13
<b>TOTAL INCOME:</b>	<b>4312.66</b>	<b>3843.66</b>

### EXPENDITURE:

'Author' Printing & Dist:	2296.94	2323.32
Sub. Refunds:	91.50	57.50
Subs to P/W:	126.00	135.00
Room Hire/Refreshments:	862.25	1108.06
Committee Expenses:	41.48	68.63
Competition Prizes:	510.30	365.00
“ “	-	140.00
Bank Charge/Unpaid Cheques:	-	-
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE:</b>	<b>3928.47</b>	<b>4187.51</b>
<u>Income less Expenditure:</u>	<u>384.19</u>	<u>343.85</u>
Balance b/f 1 <sup>st</sup> April:	1824.45	2168.30
Receipts: 2005/6	.16	
	<u>4312.66</u>	<u>3843.66</u>
	6137.27	6011.96
Payments:	<u>3928.47</u>	<u>4187.51</u>
Balance 31st March:	<u>2208.80</u>	<u>1824.45</u>

TREASURER ACCOUNT:

Bank Statement:	2240.80	2402.54
Unrep. cheques:	<u>32.00</u>	<u>578.09</u>
Available Cash:	<u>2208.80</u>	<u>1824.45</u>

BUS: MONEY MANAGER:

Opening Balance:	66.31	66.00
Closing Balance:	68.43	66.31

Audited by:

Alan Wood ACMA BA HONS.

18th August 2007

\*\*\*\*\*

THE SOCIETY OF CIVIL & PUBLIC SERVICE WRITERS

Forecast as at 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2007

Balance @? 2/9/07	£2724-69
Less G. Gompers Legacy:	£1000-00
	£1724-69
0/S cheques:	£697-07
	£1027-62
December Author:	£550-00 (approx)
Balance:	£477-62
Plus Money Manager:	<u>£68-82</u>
	£546.44

Ron Humphries received £136 in competition fees and paid out £110 - a profit of £26.00. The first for quite a while. With Roy Froud's competition still to come the bank balance is looking a little rosier. The long term loan has now been repaid.

\*\*\*\*\*

