



NAWGW



LINK newsletter

Out of My Comfort Zone

by **Lynne Hackles**

Isn't it strange how a few sessions in a painting class gave me an insight into writing?

For several years now, Writers' Holiday at Caerleon have included painting and drawing classes in with all the ones about writing. This year I tried painting. Apart from walls and skirting boards, the last time I held a paintbrush was way back in my schooldays. Painting was way out of my comfort zone. What if I made a complete fool of myself? What if an expert sat next to me? This was when I remembered all the beginner writers at Caerleon that Monday morning, making their way to classes about writing articles, short stories, travel articles,

novels... They would be feeling nervous too.

My tutor gave me acrylics and pastels, together with a choice of pictures to copy. It made sense to choose one that didn't feature people or animals. The other beginner, a prolific writer, sitting next to me, decided on the same picture – a surreal mountain scene with lots of sweeping curves and twiddly bits. (See how I've learned all the technical artists' jargon?) For the first five or ten minutes we both stared at the blank paper. Does that sound familiar? Writers do that too. This was my first insight into the psychology of writers and artists.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Firstly and perhaps most importantly, on behalf of the Committee, I want to thank those of you who were able to make it to the Festival this year: your support is greatly appreciated. We were not a huge crowd, but what a great buzz there was all through the weekend! Personally, I had a wonderful time. It was a joy to get together with regular Festival-goers but also a pleasure to meet new faces. I know that all of us on the Committee came away with the feeling that the event had been a success, and we are determined to build on that to make next year's Festival even better.

Of course, your views and ideas continue to be important – so do please let us have your thoughts. Some feedback appears in the letters section below, but, as they say, 'every little helps'. Two snippets that stick in my mind are: 'Can we arrange a shortlist for the Mini-Tale competition?' and 'I wish there was proper tea in the rooms.' (!) The first we can certainly arrange, the second we'll have to negotiate once we have settled on a venue for 2012. And I received a note of special thanks from Jo Sadler to all those whose mime interpretation, lip reading, scribbled note deciphering, kindness and patience enabled her to have as much fun as ever at the NAWG Festival.

Stay up to date with Festival news in LINK and on the website.

Other points the Committee want to mention:

- Please consider supporting LINK by sending articles, letters, snippets, news of publishing success, etc. NAWG member Jennifer Margrave has suggested a

regular *cross-referencing* facility in LINK. So if, for instance, you have proof-reading skills, you might offer these in return for having some typing done, etc. What do you think?

- We would also like to start up a regular feature called *Where I Write*, consisting of a brief description of your favourite writing place plus photo. First come, first published.
- If you have views or useful tips on self-publishing, we'd like to hear them. We would also like to print articles on vanity publishing. Accounts of your experiences will be useful to other NAWG members.
- Where do the LINKs go? We've heard from some members that their copies of LINK arrive at the writing group and then seem to vanish forever. What can we do about this? One idea we had was to offer a downloadable copy in addition to the paper version we mail out. What do you think?
- Apropos the point above, the suggestion has also been made for NAWG to start up a regular email newsletter, perhaps once a month, featuring news, views and other material that we don't have room to publish in LINK. It seems the best way to do this is to subscribe to a bulk mailing company. Obviously NAWG will have to pay for this, so what do you think of the idea? Would you be willing to see a modest rise in NAWG subscriptions for it to happen?

Welcome to the following new members of NAWG:

Groups

Dorset Writers
Phoenix Writing Group
Ripon Writers

Vale Royal Writers
The Poetry Box Club
Leicestershire Writers' Circle
Caldicot Writers

Associates

Victor S Msoka
Lauren Patrick
Jean Morriss

Submissions for the next issue of LINK by 18th November, please.

Steve Bowkett

LINK LETTERS



Dear Steve

I brought a copy of the NAWG newsletter home from our meeting last night and am responding to Wendy Fleckney's plea on the above.

My suggestion would be that a selection of the Mini-Tale entries from the Festival might make interesting *fillers*. Personally, I would like to periodically read short items of members' work in LINK in addition to the interesting articles already printed.

What I would prefer not to see are the shaded blocks of type which I find difficult to distinguish, particularly in artificial light. I can see the reasoning behind them – to bring contrast into the publication – but I really don't find them easy.

Many thanks to all of you for the various aspects of NAWG work you voluntarily undertake.

Kirsty Adlard

Chairman, Fosseyway Writers

Editor's Response:

I think this is an excellent idea. If other members feel the same way, we'll get the ball rolling. I suggest in that case that we make permission to print Mini-Tales one of the conditions of entering the competition.

* * * * *

Dear Editor

What a fantastic front page to the August LINK Newsletter. *Double Success* for the Thames Valley Writers' Circle with their anthology at the annual award ceremony of the David St John Thomas Charitable Trust. The judges liked it so much they awarded them the *Winner of Winners* too! Well done Thames Valley Writers!!!

The 2011 NAWG WRITING COMPETITION FINALISTS was what we wanted to see. Here again Hexham Writers' Group has no less than nine in that list. Well done to you!!! I was particularly pleased to see Andrew Connolly's Ten Minute Play is amongst the finalists because he belongs to Writers Reign and we are very friendly with that group, so here's hoping he wins.

The article on *The Turn of the Tide* by Penelope Alexander gave us food for thought. How many of us could never aspire to writing a novel, yet could do *something about a serial?* Then at the end of the serial there is a story.

Moving on to Poet's Soapbox No 1 – the debate about punctuation in poetry was the one that caught my eye. It seems almost absurd to think of omitting punctuation, for when would we know to take a breath, pause, or come to the end of a sentence? These are things applicable when reading out aloud. (Mind you, when I was a young typist, my boss accused me of having commas in a pepperpot.)

Then on to Poet's Soapbox No 2 and the lengths to which some poets, living far from our shores, are prepared to go to stand up and be counted.

Congratulations to Wendy Fleckney for upholding the good work our volunteers do to run the NAWG. Without them, where would we be? Just think of the

good work which Mike and Diane Wilson did for years and years. We are all very grateful to you.

Sincerely yours

Thora Beddard
Friday Writers

* * * * *

Dear Editor

We are a modest lot at Peterborough Writers' Circle but would like to point out to Dick Sawdon Smith (front page, August LINK newsletter) that we are indeed members of NAWG, unlike Warminster and Wensleydale, and one of us, Pam Fish, is Chairman of the organisation and another, Judith Stronach, is about to step down as Hon Treasurer.

While these two were doing the admin., the rest of us were, as a perusal of the fine print of a recent edition would show, picking up the 2010 Denise Robertson award for a group anthology and, consequently, made judges for 2011.

It was this collection which – and I don't think I'm blowing our trumpet untowardly – was awarded second place at the recent David St John Thomas competition.

Nice to be noticed by other writers, however vaguely.

Yours faithfully

Gerry Watson
*Minutes Secretary and Editor
Peterborough Writers' Circle*

* * * * *

Dear LINK

Congratulations to the NAWG Festival Committee on organising a fantastic Festival of Writing at Nottingham University. It was good to see so many writers with smiles on their faces throughout

the conference, enjoying the warm ambience that complemented first class workshops and hospitality.

The world of writing groups needs a rejuvenated organisation like NAWG, that is moving forwards with 21st century innovation, examples reflected both in the successful Festival of Writing and future ventures like the Writers' Retreat. The latter is being held at Wentworth Castle, South Yorkshire, in conjunction with Holmfirth Writers' Group on 8th and 9th October; the location is also where part of my latest short film *Summer Ice* was filmed. I can say first hand NAWG could not have chosen a more beautiful and tranquil place for a Writers' Retreat.

Thank you again to the new look NAWG Committee for organising such a successful Festival and giving writing groups so much to look forward to.

Keith Large
Loughborough

* * * * *

I found the weekend inspiring – especially James Nash's workshops – and I don't think it necessary to add my praise or grumbles regarding the venue.

However, I would like to comment on the Award Ceremony. This is the climax of the Festival for many (I was delighted to receive a runner-up award), yet the handing out of prizes seemed a little *messy*, mainly because of the business of taking photos. Yes, there should be a photo of the winner in each category, but I wonder if the runners-up and commended could be taken as a group – maybe afterwards – and I don't think it appropriate to have photos of representatives of award winners who are not present.

... Continued on page 4

LINK LETTERS

(Continued)

Also, it would be good to hear the judges' comments for each category, either in person or read out, on the evening. This would of course extend the ceremony, but as the after-dinner entertainment (Sparkles, Afterglow...) has never been entirely satisfactory, perhaps it could be dispensed with?

Thanks to you and the Committee for all your hard work. I look forward to next year.

Best wishes

Dorothy Cooke

Committee's Response:

These are very helpful comments that we will certainly discuss at our next Committee meeting. We're pleased to include judges' comments on the winning entries in the anthology (about to be published at the time of writing). As for After Dinner Sparkles, whether or not it continues to sparkle depends entirely on what members think.

* * * * *

Many thanks to you and to all the Committee of NAWG for an excellent Festival of Writing. I know that its success did not just happen; it is because of damned hard work by you all. It may not have been quite such a luxurious venue as St Aidan's College, but I fully understand that NAWG must concentrate on reinforcing its financial position for another year, maybe more, before considering such matters, as well as the (ultimately desirable) increase in the number of workshops on offer. The venue was also more central, geographically, which is a point many of us have raised repeatedly over the years.

I would suggest that the Committee do not fix on *any* venue for the Festival Weekend

as being the *permanent* one; various alternatives (not excluding Durham) could be considered, year by year. Convenience/fairness of the location, price, and overall standard (food, rooms, ambience), feedback from the membership: these are all factors in making the choice, I would suggest. I would be very interested to read the opinions of fellow attendees at Nottingham; could they be printed, anonymously, in LINK?

Hope to see you all again next year!

Thanks again.

Barry Adams

* * * * *

A big thanks to the Committee for all their work over the Festival weekend, the tutors of all the workshops were brilliant. Pam Fish working hard kept going through it all, Chris Huck, with his whoops of joy whenever anyone won a prize in the raffle; all made it a great weekend.

Looking forward to next year, wherever it is.

Edyth Ward

Salford Women Writers

OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE

(Continued from front page)

Beginning in the top left hand corner I worked on two inches of sky, until it was as good as I could get it. Meanwhile, her-next-door covered her entire sheet of paper in paint, using bold sweeping strokes. As I worked my way further down my paper, concentrating on mountain tops, she began adding little details. Naturally, I had to ask how she wrote. Can you guess? She pours every-

thing out and then goes back to polish each section. Exactly the same way she had tackled her painting. And moi? I polish as I go along and then polish again once it's complete.

Another lesson was colour. Next-door's colours were far more subdued than mine, which made me realise that my reds, yellows and oranges were nothing like the original. Later, when we invited carefully selected friends to view our efforts, they all knew who had painted what, which proved, I think, that our personalities showed through in our work.

My final lesson was realising that painting had relaxed me and given me another creative outlet, one without any pressure as, so far, I have no intention of entering competitions or attempting to get shown in galleries – the equivalent of publication.

You'll have to excuse me now. I'm off to the art shop to buy myself some materials.



www.lynnhackles.com
www.lynnhackles.blogspot.com

GHOSTWRITING – How to write for others, Aber Books, Studymates, £10.99. Available from Amazon and all good bookshops or buy direct from me.

WRITING FROM LIFE (Second Edition), How To Books, £9.99. Available from Amazon and all good bookshops or buy direct from me.

DIAMONDS AND PEARLS, Accent Press Limited. An anthology of short stories by many of the UK's best known magazine writers. A donation from each book will go to the charity Against Breast Cancer.

THE NAWG 2011 FESTIVAL OF WRITING WAS A WINNER!

by Pam Fish

It was 'the best ever', according to many of the delegates at this year's Festival. The atmosphere was electric and I have certainly never been to a festival that sported so many happy faces. We, as the new organising Committee, were given so much enthusiasm and support, that £10 for £25 off next year's event vouchers went like hot cakes. (If you are interested in buying one, they will be available through the Committee until the end of the year.)

We had scriptwriting from Julie Bokowiec who had all of her workshops brimming over and she has already been booked to come again next year. We saw the return by popular request of writer/tutor Tim Wilson, aka Jude Morgan, who once again gave eager delegates professional, informative workshops. James Nash, well-loved for his poetry, gave the poets amongst us a new insight into their craft, and of course our own Steve Bowkett, always popular, added to the winning mix of tutors. Linda Lewis did us proud with an invigorating talk on getting your short story published in magazines and she too has agreed to join us next year.

It was a new idea for this year's Festival to have talks that all delegates could attend if they wanted to, and so, as well as Linda's talk, we had NAWG member Chris Day on Friday evening giving us an hour of his expertise. Chris gave an uplifting talk about self-publishing and the various ways of promoting yourself in order to get your book into the buyers' market.

We also hosted a very lively Market Place which ran all day on the Saturday. Chris stayed to continue from his talk with

advice to individuals and to promote his business, Filament Publishing. Also there were representatives of Berfort's, the printers who are sponsoring the prizes for our Open Writing Competition. They were giving very sound advice about book printing and they are going to print our upcoming Anthology *The Write Path*, for us. Glenford Books and New Writers UK had book stalls and Byker Books returned from last year and made a very popular and informative display for their independent publishing company.

The Grand Raffle made nearly £200, with the ticket sales boosted by a last-minute prize offered by Chris Day. He gave £500 worth of book PR and marketing to the lucky winner – a magnificent win. The Silent Auction for the Writers' Bureau correspondence course brought in another £70.99. And lastly, the Annual Draw amongst all members for a free year's subscription went to two associate members, Linda Lewis and Linda Sawley. We had to give the free year to both of them because the printed names came out stuck together!

Our president, Denise Robertson, was unable to attend the Gala Dinner this year and so the job was cheerfully taken over by Jacqueline Smith, NAWG Chairman from a couple of years ago. Jackie and her husband Alan were happy to renew old acquaintances and we greatly enjoyed their company. Thanks to both of you.

Denise sent this letter to Nottingham: *I wish I could be with you tonight but a previous engagement prevents it. Thanks to a great deal of hard work and*

inspiration on the part of the officials, NAWG has moved a long way this year. I am more optimistic about its future than I have been since the beginning. Hopefully, as well as encouraging new writers, we will eventually be able to provide them with opportunities. This was our original intention. It has taken a long time but at last I feel we are on our way. I hope you are all having a wonderful weekend and will go away inspired to write. My very best wishes to you all. Denise.

After the opening of the gold envelopes revealing the winners of the Awards (listed elsewhere), it was time to reveal the winner of the Mini-Tale. But here began a great mystery. No one came forward. So – who is Ann Blundell? The prize-winning tale, which will be included in the Anthology, was called *Bread, Milk, Coal, Life*. Can anyone shed any light on this? There is a trophy to be collected.

The anthology, *The Write Path*, can be ordered pre-publication through the website or from any member of the Committee. A cheque made out to NAWG for £5.99 and sent to me at 65 Riverside Mead, Peterborough, PE2 8JN will secure you a copy.

We are pleased to announce that two NAWG members came forward to join our Committee; Helen Woodhead and Eddie Walsh. A warm welcome to them and to the many people that came forward at the Festival, unable to make the full commitment of being a Committee member but offering help for the future. We still need a qualified Treasurer.

Pam Fish
Chairman

DAISY WATKIN'S COLUMN

At the Writing Festival, I observed the styles of the four tutors.

Tim Wilson is a successful novelist writing under male and female pseudonyms. He is quietly spoken, using a strong voice held carefully under control. He talks to the room and often stares at the wall but at times catches the eye of each student, though his blank expression carries no message. Surprisingly, this works quite well because the voice dispenses good solid information. Tim tends to lecture and it's easy to think that you are back in college. Towards the end, he asked each student in turn for characteristics so as to create characters and then situations, giving useful handouts for later.

Julie Bokowiec is a talented playwright, producer, dancer and actress. She is an animated tutor using her hands and body to underline her information. She stands and moves around her desk making eye contact all around the room, using a strong voice, with a big smile on her face and twinkles in her eyes. There is an air of amateur dilettantism, which couldn't be further from the truth but which makes for strong contact with the class. On her desk is a small clock to which her eyes regularly flicker so as to keep to a tight schedule. Julie showed us enigmatic film clips using a laptop and a projector. We read scripts, some taking characters and reading out loud.

James Nash is a poet who writes strong, well-polished verse. His voice is rich, he talks like an actor and he barely stops smiling for a second. It is difficult to ignore someone like this. He uses his own poems to illustrate his points and always

uses props. Sometimes it is a battered silver trumpet; this time it was a sculpted clay head of an African boy which he made even more special by revealing it slowly. Later he used a collection of enigmatic photographs. He uses these props to stimulate students to write verse. He also encouraged people to tell apposite anecdotes, picking them carefully and not letting them run on beyond their point.

Steve Bowkett has written over fifty books, mainly for children. He does school workshops and teaches at writing festivals. Steve is a first class workshop leader and is always on my list. He has piercing blue/grey eyes and a strong pleasant voice. He speaks to the point and is always interesting. He leans into the table with a deceptive, worried look that is quite commanding and controls the group by force of character and force of argument. His hands constantly move to accentuate his words. The subject was self-hypnosis and he put us into a mild trance before taking it deeper with two volunteers. We studied a drawing full of enigma that can be used by people to probe their own minds.

Linda Lewis gave us a talk on selling articles and stories to *Take A Break* magazine. She too has a strong voice which she uses with a shy smile and a biting wit. She showed articles from the magazine which she had sold and explained how they were targeted and written. She used sarcasm to raise roars of laughter, looking down demurely as she did it.

All these tutors made people laugh, which is a device that wins people over and binds them together. They used strong voices. Where props were used, they caught the interest of the

students and all of the tutors gave printed handouts.

AVAILABLE ON AMAZON

I thought LINK readers would like to know that even at the age of 76 I have managed to put both my books – *Daddy's Little Spy* and *To Catch a Daring Thief* – on Kindle as ebooks sold by Amazon. See my website for details:

www.pamelastrange.com

There was quite a lot of hair-pulling at the start but it's easy when you know how. I was lucky enough to be given help by another Kindle writer, Carol, who was writing about her successes in the magazine. It seems that price is the key, but also you need good reviews or a number of *likes*, so if anyone is feeling generous would they please give me a push up the ladder by writing a short review.



Many thanks.

Pamela Strange

I suppose I learned to write by handling the output of hundreds of other writers during my lifetime in print and publishing. Journalistic writing seems easy for me as the years of reading others' articles instilled good grammar, sentence construction and punctuation from an early age. The difficult part of writing is knowing just what to write.

The most important thing is that one should write what someone else wants to read, not merely what one wants to write.

Mike Wilson
Free Spirit Writers

REVIEWING THE SITUATION

by Irene Black

So – your book is finished, launched, and yes – published! Now you need to market it. And central to this is getting professional reviews that will be printed in magazines and newspapers with wide circulations and good reputations. Not easy. Whether you have self-published, or published through a small publishing house, as I have, you'll have a hard time getting a professional review of your work. And even if you have been taken on by a mainstream publisher, you'll usually find you get minimum support unless you are one of the few who have really hit the big time. Or unless you know *the right people*.

Well, I don't know the right people. I've had a few lucky breaks with my first two novels, but now I'm stuck. Even my own local paper, the *Surrey Advertiser*, refuses to review local authors ('If we do one, we'll be inundated,' they told me...). We've stopped sending copies to the big dailies. What's the point? They only end up being sold for a penny on Amazon.

So I'm swallowing my pride and appealing to you – yes, you out there, Mr or Ms Professional Reviewer. Won't you take a chance and review my new Young Adult fantasy novel *Noontide Owls* (publication date 19th September 2011)? I promise you, you're in for a treat. Go on – do something different. You never know, you might be discovering the next Philip Pullman. There's a free book in it for you – but please don't sell it for peanuts on Amazon!

One of the pleasures of writing for a living is having written.

Keith Waterhouse

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Synopsis

When the city-state of Ambamar is liberated from 100 years of oppression, freedom releases long-suppressed animosity between its inhabitant groups, leading to aggression and conflict. 14-year old Maara, the girl with three blessings, sets about to try to bring peace with the aid of a magic speaking book. Her quest leads her through deep forests, deserts and raging seas, in a world populated by nature spirits, monsters and magical creatures.

'Mindboggling and absolutely faultless.' *Anjali Mittal, children's author.*

About the Author

Irene Black has been a psychologist and a teacher and has lived in the USA, Australia and India. She has a Masters degree in South Asian Art, specialising in South Indian temples. She has won numerous national and international prizes for short stories, poetry and articles, including the 2003 National Association of Writers' Groups Annual Short Story award.

Other Books by Irene Black

The Moon's Complexion – a novel set in Britain, Sri Lanka and India (Goldenford Publishers Ltd (see above)
 Darshan: a journey - a novel set in Oxford, New York and India (Goldenford Publishers Ltd (see above)



UNFORTUNATE TYPOS

Me again. Anne's just shown mw (!) the typo story of my Dad in the LINK which I hadn't read. The Austin Seven has come out as Austin Sven. Scandinavian model perhaps? This typo gremlin feeds on itself. Anne thinks we should ask the readers for a name for the gremlin and a drawing too! *Chris Huck*

This isn't a written typo but a verbal classic from my little granddaughter, Lola, almost four. She was dressed in her doctor's white coat with her toy medical bag sorting out mosquito bites on my arms with plastic plasters, etc.

When I said I thought I had a bite on my foot, she'd obviously had enough: "Well Nana, I think you need to see the hell visitor." We all know about those visitors from hell but this was a different slant. Out of the mouths of babes, and all that! *Carol Hurlay, Wombourne Writers*

Diamonds and Pearls, a new collection of short stories. Royalties go to the charity Against Breast Cancer. Available from the publisher:
www.accentpress.co.uk

Website: www.akacatherinehoward.weebly.com
 Blog: <http://akacatherinehoward.blogspot.com>

... HAPPILY EVER AFTER

by Elizabeth Parish

She never wore red, although it would have suited her dark good looks and her slim lithe figure. People often commented on her figure, and the clarity of her complexion.

'It's because I'm a vegetarian,' she would say. 'I can't bear the thought of meat...' ... *and the smell of blood, hot and steaming from the severed jugular, and the white bone embedded in the gleaming flesh. Only a strip of fur holds the head to the carcass, and the head flops back and the bitten tongue drips blood and saliva mixed until it is lost in the complicated shapes on the Turkey carpet...*

So she wore her blue velvet sheath to the reception, and carefully ignored the wolf-whistles from the labourers on the half-completed building site opposite, as she slid her nylon-clad legs from the mini-cab.

'Get a load of that, Bill...'

Their eyes followed her as she ran up the steps and through the revolving glass doors.

'Sassy...'

She made the right noises to the managing director and the officials in the reception line, aware of the importance of the occasion, though she felt a little out of place among so many up-and-coming young executives. Now she stood in a corner with a cocktail in her hand, while a swirl of acquaintances and strangers eddied around her, and snatches of their conversation washed over her.

'... it's the sort of job you can really get your teeth into...'

'... did you hear...?'

'... that one's worth watching...'

'... and he made a killing in the city...'

Someone else was making his way along the line, a man she had never seen before, and yet a man who was somehow familiar. Like a cliché, their eyes locked across the crowded room, and a frisson shivered her shoulder-blades. As soon as he conveniently could, he shook the last hand in line, and threaded his way over to her corner. For a long moment, he simply stood there, staring at her.

'You look good enough to eat,' he told her. 'Did you choose that dress to match your eyes?'

All the better to see you with... The brown eyes boring into hers, sizing her up, watching her every move. You must never show you're afraid – and why be afraid of someone so familiar, even if today she seems so strange... She blinks hard, and looks towards the cap set slightly askew on grey hair. Strange how the grey hair makes the ears seem grey, too, and so large... all the better to hear you with... And the smile that goes with the remark reveals sharply pointed teeth... large and wicked...

'I'm sorry...' Now he looked slightly abashed. 'Was that too personal? Should we start with introductions, and small-talk?'

She blinked, and shook her head, as if to rid herself of some unhappy thought, and gave him a doubtful smile.

'I'm sorry, too,' she told him. 'You took me by surprise, is all. Tell me about yourself.'

And so he did. He told her about his fledgling company, and the big contract the developers had promised him, and she listened carefully, her eyes fixed on him, drinking in his words.

'So what about you?' he asked in his turn, but she shook her head nervously, and took another cautious sip of her drink. 'Have you got a promising career mapped out for you?'

'I'm not sure,' she said, and falling back thankfully on another cliché she observed, 'It's a bit of a jungle out there...' *and the paths are all twisty and the trees crowd in, looming over the path, making a darkness as close as fur. And the path is covered with stones, and the twigs reach out to catch at the hair, and lying in wait round the corner is something...*

'I must go,' she said, abruptly. 'I'm not exactly sure why I was invited, but I've done my duty, and now...'

'Stay a bit longer,' he urged. 'Look, let me get you something to eat... one of those little pastries...' And then, with a quick change of tone, 'I say, are you all right? Let me get you out of here...'

His solicitous arm steered her through the crowd, and his white teeth flashed an apologetic smile towards their hosts. 'The heat, you know... I'll take her home...'

She was quite dead when they found her, a small crumpled figure with blood pooled over her head and shoulders like a red riding hood.



PROFESSIONAL JUDGING from Thames Valley Writers' Group

Normally, internal competitions held by Thames Valley Writers' Circle are judged by the members themselves. For their latest competition, however, they sent the entries to leading short story judge Iain Pattison, well known to many NAWG members. Iain not only judged them but gave a critique on each entry.

The stories had to be no longer than 1,700 words and had to take as their driving force one of six items: a screwdriver, a riding helmet, a page of lonely hearts adverts, a large fluffy toy rabbit, a belly dancer's bra, or a map. After Iain had sent back his findings, the stories were read at a weekly meeting. There were too many entries for the readings to take place on one evening so it was spread over two weeks. As well as the stories, the critiques were also read out, providing the author agreed. Generally members were happy with Iain's comments and were appreciative of the lengths he went to explaining and illustrating where he felt the stories could be improved. It all made for a very constructive competition.

The winner selected by Iain was *Under the Clock* by Colin Ferguson. It told of a soldier, depressed by his disfigurement after injuries received in Afghanistan, who was set up by a lonely hearts advert to meet a woman similarly injured in a car accident but who still retained her GSOH. Runner-up was *Love Never Dies* by Dick Sawdon Smith about a couple in love who break up acrimoniously only to get together again when she has an incurable illness, but tragically she mistakes his love for pity. In joint third place were Gerry Robinson's *Tale of Two Bears*,

where the abandoned teddy bears tell their life story to a toy rabbit, and Chris Mundy's *More Than Meets The Eye*, a Sherlock Holmes spoof, where a female spy joins a belly dancing troupe and sends Morse code messages with her navel.

Even those who didn't take part felt that it was well worth getting the views of a professional judge, and if any other NAWG groups feel that they would like to make use of Iain's services, he can be contacted on:

iain@pattison.freemove.co.uk.

SELF-PUBLISHING by Barbara Cooper

Reasons for self-publishing can range from the possible financial rewards of doing it for yourself, to having complete control of the finished product or publishing to a targeted readership.

The downside is the marketing.

It is important to write for your audience, produce quality and style, tone and point of view. Place an enormous emphasis on accurate editing and, if used, well-produced illustrations.

Consider overall design, cover and layout, trimmed size and estimated costs. It is important to select appropriate paper. Consider the pros and cons between litho and digital printing. Ensure the print run is right first time by checking arrangement of the pages. Serif Page Plus is recommended if using photographs or any illustrations, so that text can be arranged to the best advantage on the page.

Linda Lewis's Top Ten Short Story Writing Tips

1. Read as many short stories as you can.
 2. Study the market before sending anything out.
 3. Check that the word count fits the market/competition.
 4. Have a strong opening line.
 5. End the story sooner rather than later.
 6. Make sure you know whose story it is you are telling.
 7. If possible, link the end and the beginning.
 8. Read stories out loud before submitting them.
 9. Proofread with care.
- And most importantly of all –
10. Keep trying and never give up.

Print On Demand has revolutionised printing for self-published authors. It is now possible to print a single copy or just a few to be reviewed so that reviews can be added to the back cover.

Costs may be added or subtracted depending on the choice of paper, whether digital or litho, the use of a two-colour cover or more colours, hardback or paperback, sewn pages or glued.

While your book is being prepared for print preparation, marketing is essential. Estimate all costs, including how many free copies will be needed. Apart from purchasing paper, padded envelopes and stamps, prepare your press releases and where to send them. Have your photograph taken to be used on your flyers and posters and on the back cover of your book. Contact Gardners and Bertrams, book suppliers, to see if they will stock your book.

... Continued on page 10

SELF-PUBLISHING Continued

Establish contact with the books editor or news-desk editor of local and national magazines and newspapers. Seek editors to review your book.

Prepare your flyers announcing your date of publication. This will gain pre-orders or pledges to buy your book. Organise your book launch, be inventive in your approach; seek out a celebrity that may have a connection with your subject. Consider a charity auction, seek out companies prepared to sponsor food and drink, and display relevant photographs and even examples from your text.

Order extra copies of your book cover for display purposes in bookshops and libraries.

Consider the best time to market your book; seasonal events like Christmas could be exploited as a marketing time. Contacting Amazon, and constructing a website for direct sales, is a must.

Do your homework. Write a *pitch* for sales to book managers. List the groups that will be interested in your book. These might include demographic groups, businesses,

societies, educational bodies and special interest groups. Be prepared to talk to radio, even television. Find out groups willing for you to give a talk. Investigate book fairs. List five points you want to get across to interviewers. Write your profile. Write a press release that is entertaining and informative, describing the theme of the book with interesting anecdotes. Provide an interesting profile of yourself and finish with comments from critics.

When all this is done it is time to consider your book launch. Timed to suit the best marketing opportunities, it should be at least two weeks after the promised arrival time of your books from the printers. The venue should be unique to draw as many people as possible – think big and memorable, yet affordable.

Produce a one-page letter to editors and bookshops, describing the book and authorship and a reason for needing this book. Include your short press release, information of readers' comments and a flyer with an eye-catching order form to promote sales and the book launch invitation.

You will need help to host the occasion. Consider seating and display space – maybe to add interest: photographs and rough drafts of chapters as conversation points. Where will you sell your books: near the door or in the centre of the room? Invite an honorary guest who might give a little talk in praise of your book.

Who else will you invite? Why would they come to your book launch? Invite the press. What will you say to them?

Be prepared to give a talk. Be entertaining, brief and informative. Describe the contents of your book, your research and human-interest stories. A computer or slide presentation will give added interest.

And finally, self-publishing is not vanity publishing. Only a highly polished book will be successful. And success is only likely if you produce quality writing critiqued at top level for a target market. It is a do-it-yourself package. Amassing pre-orders and getting some of your outlay up-front may cover your initial costs but self-publishing is not for the faint-hearted.

AND THE WINNERS ARE ...

The winners of the NAWG 2011 Writing Competitions, as announced at the Gala Dinner, Ancaster Hall of Residence, Nottingham University, on 3rd September 2011:

OPEN POETRY
John William Pratt

The Professor David Lodge Trophy
SHORT STORY WITH A FINAL LINE
Craig Pay
(joint winner)

The Sir Alan Ayckbourn Trophy
TEN MINUTE PLAY
Shelagh Wain

HAIKU, TANKA & TRIOLET
Sheila Crawford

The Professor David Lodge Trophy
SHORT STORY WITH A FINAL LINE
Jennifer Foster
(joint winner)

The Denise Robertson Trophy
GROUP ANTHOLOGY
East Dulwich Writers' Group
"Hoovering the Roof 2"

POEM FOR CHILDREN
Elizabeth Parish

The Jilly Cooper Trophy
CRIME SHORT STORY
David Lake

MINI-TALE
Ann Blundell
(pseudonym)



See back page for a small selection of photographs taken at the Festival.

THE BENEFITS OF ATTENDING WRITING EVENTS

by Morgen Bailey

Although I had dabbled with limericks and enjoyed English at school, I came to study creative writing relatively recently (Sally Spedding's Monday evening critique workshop at Northampton's University of Leicester in January 2005) and I've never looked back. My mum said to me recently: 'Don't let writing take over your life,' but I didn't like to tell her that she's a couple of years too late. She'd also said at the beginning of my studies, 'Hurry up and get published so I can tell everyone that you're a published author,' – as if it's that easy. I was fortunate however with *Woman's Weekly* publishing the first thing I sent, although the journey since then has been somewhat rocky, which if anything has made me stronger.

In late 2007, Sally announced that she and her husband were moving to Wales and with no other tutor stepping forward, the workshop disbanded. After some months of bumping into a former classmate (a brilliant poet called Pat) and agreeing that without a focus our writing was now a trickle, I found myself volunteering in March 2008 to run the group and we're still going strong, with a writing workshop added March 2010.

As the months ticked by, with occasional visits to library talks, I promised myself I'd go to this, that or the other event, and it wasn't until I saw an online advert for the one-day February 2010 Verulam Writers' Circle's Get Writing Conference that I finally clicked on the 'book and pay' button and felt the thrill of having something 'proper' to look forward to. With a packed schedule of talks and workshops, it started my desire to go to everything that time and money would allow. I often joke that I'd go to the opening of a rejection letter envelope, but my friends would probably say that's not far from the truth.

I was then lucky enough to win a ticket to the Oundle Literature Festival's Readers' Day in March 2010. It not only opened my eyes to how accessible 'real' authors were and began my 'authors I know or have met' bookcase (which is now overflowing), but that day I also met a lady (in the toilets!), Denny, who turned out to not only be a Northampton writer, but lives two roads away and has been coming to my Monday nights ever since.

Also local to me is the Althorp Literary Festival which I went to for the first time in June 2010. Although I enjoyed the talks by Linda Bellingham, Alan Davies, et al, there were too few fiction authors for my liking, a lacking which one of my other writers and I were discussing recently on Twitter only to then be invited by Althorp's Twitter co-ordinator to suggest names for the future; a request you don't turn down.

Bitten by the eventing bug, I started an internet search for festivals slightly further afield and found the November Chorleywood Literature Festival. A quick email to them offering my services came back with a resounding 'yes' and, when the time came, I had a ball putting out chairs, taking tickets, handing Peter Snow a glass of water and anything else that needed doing. Apart from being surrounded by all things literary, it was interesting to see how much hard work goes into what seems like an effortless event. The highlight of that weekend for me was the Festival's Sunday morning writing workshop hosted by Toby Litt where I met my future editor Rachel.

Keen not to wait 12 months before we went to another event, Rachel and I met up at the VWC Get Writing February 2011 (which for me this time included a scary three-minute agent pitch, which produced a very encouraging email) where we made some new friends who, as it turns out, live as close to my mum as Denny does to me. Through the joys of Facebook and Twitter, we all reunited at the early April Oxford Literature Festival which was made up of a variety of talks and book signings, with famous names such as Philip Pullman and Michael Rosen (who was great!).

Held just a couple of weeks after volunteering at the wonderful 2011 Oundle Literature Festival you would think that I'd be 'festival'ed' out with Oxford, but within days I booked my place at the epic 31st Winchester Writers' Conference. As I type this, Winchester was less than a week ago and it's already beginning to blur, although I'm wearing the T-shirt hoping that it slows down the process. Again a mixture of talks and workshops (including a two-parter by Crysse Morrison, a crime workshop by Lesley Horton and a Q&A by the fantastic Jane Wenham Jones, who I'd been looking forward to meeting – we were already Facebook friends – and didn't disappoint, even offering to do a blog interview for me), it was a non-stop 48 hours ... literally!

Sally Spedding and I had to sneak out of the competition prize-giving early to record a half-hour podcast interview (released Monday 18th July) finishing just in time for the Saturday evening meal. Interspersed with some of the talks were three agent 10-minute one-to-ones and whilst the 105,000 word chick-lit I presented didn't grab them enough to grab me, I had some invaluable feedback (including the fact that chick-lit isn't apparently so popular anymore and that I'm a 'crime writer and should write crime', which funnily enough I had seriously been considering, as I do read it) and would definitely return to the conference for round two next year.

Winchester is a new-found friend and after concluding this article, next on the list is a letter to the lead organiser Barbara Large MBE saying how much I enjoyed the 'long' (it flew by) weekend, not only because it's true but also because their funding is under threat and needs our support. If such a well-established event has a chance of ceasing then it would be a tragedy and travesty for literature festivals, conferences and author talks, going the way of bookshops (Northampton has one and a half) and libraries, but with so many budding authors attending I like to think that it is only a temporary threat.

Many of the events have competitions, open to attendees only, and for instance with Verulam (who I notice have recently joined the NAWG), I have entered their short story competition both years and been shortlisted both times. I had the opportunity to enter any number of the seventeen Winchester Writers' Conference competitions but, most unlike me, didn't get organised in time so sat in the theatre congratulating those who had done so (many of whom where surprisingly absent).

Whilst I still have Hay, Charleston Small Wonder (short stories are my first love) and Edinburgh Book Festival (and many others) on the 'wants' list, I'm hoping to achieve those three in 2012, the stalwarts will remain on my literary calendar: Verulam, Winchester and Althorp, with Oundle and Chorleywood as a volunteer again if they'll have me.

Whilst writing may be a solitary occupation, it's at times like these that we realise we're not alone, that there are hundreds of people all going through the same thing and that coming away from our studies, kitchens or garden sheds, even just for a day, gives us a renewed focus, a chance to network and just a little bit of hope.

Morgen Bailey

<http://morgenbailey.com>

<http://morgenbailey.wordpress.com>





PICTURE GALLERY ABOVE

- Top left:** Chairman Pam Fish presenting Jackie Smith with a *thank-you* bouquet
- Bottom left:** David Lake's award in the Crime Short Story category
- Top centre:** Member of East Dulwich Writers' Group accepting the trophy for the Denise Robertson Group Anthology
- Middle centre:** Sheila Crawford, winner of the Haiku, Tanka and Triolet
- Top right:** Craig Pay, joint winner of the Short Story With A Final Line
- Middle right:** One of the tables of happy Festival-goers at the Gala dinner
- Bottom four small pictures, left to right:** Keith Large performing at the After-Dinner Sparkles; Tutor James Nash; Chris Huck in his role as Festival photographer; MC and sex god Steve Bowkett

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Mail for the LINK Editor should be marked as such; other mail will be distributed to other Committee members as required.

DON'T FORGET TO VISIT THE NAWG WEBSITE REGULARLY:

www.nawg.co.uk

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As a freelance writer, you can earn very good money in your spare time, writing the stories, articles, books, scripts etc that editors and publishers want. Millions of pounds are paid annually for free and creative. Earning your share can be fun, profitable and creatively most fulfilling.

To help you become a successful writer we offer you a first-class, home-study course from professional writers - with individual guidance from expert tutors and flexible tuition tailored to your own requirements. You are shown how to make the most of your abilities, where to find ideas, how to turn them into publishable writing and how to sell them. In short, we show you exactly how to become a published writer. If you want writing success - this is the way to start!

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