



WRITE ON!

BEFRIENDERS HIGHLAND LITERARY NEWSLETTER



ISSUE NUMBER 5

SPRING 2015

Welcome to the latest edition of Write On. As ever, we have some great new writing inside, including the first part of a short story by Vanessa plus the beginning of some serialised diary entries by Jim, both a really good read. We hope you enjoy Issue 5 and remember, it's your group so help us shape the future of Write On.
- Alan

The group has had some great entries from the 'Who Said That?' challenge. The diversity in the entries really does highlight that even when writing to a brief, people's individual perspectives and creativity shine through. All of the entries thus far are published in this issue so check them out. It's not too late to enter if you feel inspired. We will be concluding the challenge by publishing any further entries in the next issue. After this, all the entries will be passed onto our impartial panel of judges. Our new Director Keith and other members of Befrienders Highland who are not associated with Write On will be awarding the winner.



Since the last edition the film project has kicked into life. Graeme & Jim have both been busy writing parts for the films script & are currently working towards bringing both their pieces together to form a cohesive narrative. Once the script is finished the team will look at exploring the visual aspect of the narrative seen through the camera lens. Exciting times! If any members have any ideas or would like to get involved with this or any other aspect of the film please contact us.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Alan's Welcome and Updates
- Sayings to Remember / Word Play
- Cherished Days- Colour Me Happy
- That Special Someone
 - ★ Poem & Short Story
- Short Stories :
 - ★ To Be Continued Story
 - ★ Serialized Diary
 - ★ Animal Tales
- Member Profile
- Reviews: Books, Film & Event
- The "Who Said That?" Challenge:
 - ★ Featured Entries
 - ★ Invite to Submit Entry
- Issue 6: Call for Submissions



Member contributor Maureen has suggested that Write On feature an ongoing story where an opening line is supplied and thereafter one member at a time then continues the story by adding three more lines. Sounds like a creative way to get us all involved in writing as a group.

THE MYSTERY DRESS COLOUR SOLVED

Black-and-blue only appears white-and-gold because of what scientists call "colour constancy", the process by which we can recognize the same object under different light sources.



we're wearing the same dress, how embarrassing.



SAYINGS TO REMEMBER

Contributed by Maureen

ALWAYS BE
A FIRST RATE
VERSION OF
YOURSELF,
NOT A SECOND
RATE VERSION OF
SOMEONE ELSE.

JUDY GARLAND

"WISDOM IS OFTENTIMES NEARER WHEN WE
STOOP THAN WHEN WE SOAR."

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

One of the secrets of life is to make stepping stones
out of stumbling blocks - Jack Penn

Not everything
that is faced can
be changed. But
nothing can be
changed until it
is faced.

James Arthur Baldwin



W₄ O₁ R₁ D₂ P₃ L₁ A₁ Y₄

Limericks

There was once a grey pigeon in love
Who'd set his sights on a white dove
He strutted and cooed
But said something rude
So she flew away high up above

By Isolde



Daddy may I marry soon?
I love him, I'm over the moon.
What? Could I delay,
Until April or in May?
But you'll be a Grand Dad by June.

Contributed by Maureen

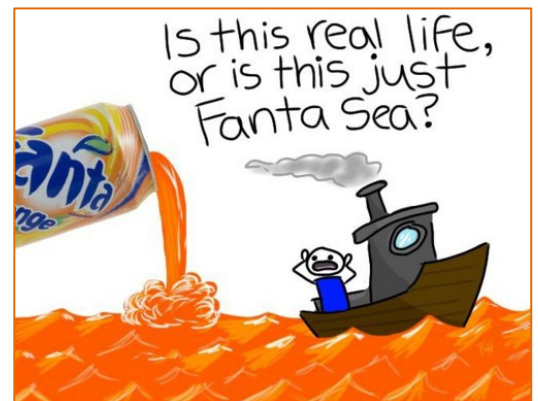


OTHERWORDLY

William Yan - Tumblr. Blog

querencia - Spanish

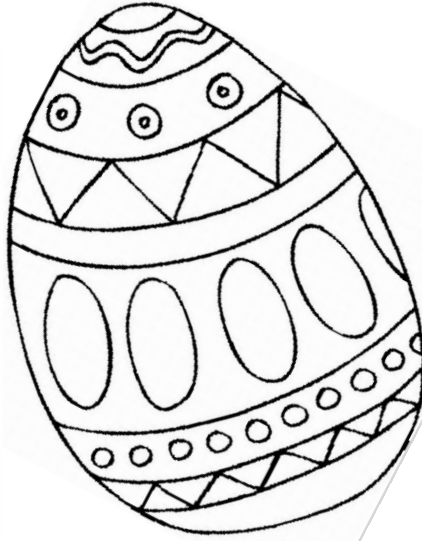
(n.) a place from which one's strength is drawn, where one feels at home; the place where you are your most authentic self



CHERISHED DAYS



LET US PLAY!



color me *Happy*

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY



LOVE,



Happy Valentine's Day!



That Special Someone

Meanwhile

by Betty

I work upstairs with no call to visit the level below.
I wouldn't dare come to see you just to say hello.
There isn't any reason why I'd be down there alone.
If we needed something from you we'd simply phone.

When duty calls you nervously appear here,
Take care of business and then you disappear.
Bewitched, I stand in the isle and stare into space,
'Til the manager suggests that I pick up the pace.

It's very stressful to work in such a place
And harder still to meet you face to face.
I wait for you to speak to me every single day.
If there was someone else, surely you would say.

On the rare moment when I stand by your side,
My attraction to you is very hard to hide.
Your face would go red if I told you how I felt,
That a fleeting glance from you just makes me melt.

It's no use saying I'd walk a mile for your touch.
In truth my courage doesn't amount to much.
Maybe someday I'll come up with a plan.

Meanwhile

Happy Valentine's Day, my dear sweet man.

THE MEETING by Graeme

He looked in the mirror, adjusting his tie. His appearance had never been his strong point, always just making an effort but never pushing the boundaries so that people paid attention to him. Never wishing to stand out in the crowd. Of course, circumstances often dictated he take centre stage but he was never comfortable with this, preferring to be anonymous, living his life of quiet desperation.

Today was always a good day though. He was meeting up with his friend after work. The monthly meetings that he always found solace in. Of course he had the support mechanisms that got him thru the day; the thoughts of the dream girl in the office. She was surprisingly single and even more unbelievable was the fact that he had been able to tell her he liked her without getting a slap on the face but that was what made her such a special lady. Although deep down, he knew there was no chance. Music and his love of books, mainly science fiction were his other support mechanisms.

The work day was the usual drudgery, he dreamed of a life less ordinary. His lack of self-belief meant he was enslaved to the monotony of the nine to five for the rest of his working days. A small part of him has wondered what is like on the other side. But with the way things were in the world, he was grateful for a job in the first place.

Time dragged slowly along. The smiles from the dream girl enhancing his day! God, how sad was his life! Maybe she just felt sorry for him. He knew that other workers slagged him off behind his back. But was that not human nature?

Eventually the work day finished. He was fortunate that unlike some of his colleagues he was not required to work overtime that frequently. Perhaps being a minion did have some benefits. With a zest for life he did not display at his desk, he walked the short distance to his work. Today though, he did feel even better. His friend had not been required to work overtime either.

His excitement was starting to overcome him. At the entrance to the bar he stopped, trying desperately to control his breathing. After a few seconds he felt relaxed.

She was there in the usual place.
The dream girl from his office. His friend.
His support mechanism.



His reality
fantasy that
kept him going
through life.



Valerian



Horned Poppy



Sea Kale

THE CRUMBLES – PART 1 by Vanessa

The man walking his dog watched the girl racing along the grassy trail through the shingle dunes with her arms wide and flailing like aeroplane wings. The area was known as The Crumbles. 'Mrreeeeeyooooowww' she trilled, in imitation of an engine noise she had heard often in films, rarely in life. Her long mousey hair trailed out behind her like a slipstream. Chubby knees worked away as shock absorbers on the bumpy trail, going blotchy red and blue with their effort on this crisp spring day, above the long white socks gradually falling down to her ankles.

She had gone there to be alone and carefree and to marvel at the mass of pebbles of all shapes and hues that formed this, for her, utterly enchanting place, with all the gorgeous, glaucous foliage and flowers that grew only there – nowhere else. Valerian, horned poppy, sea kale... she knew all their names. No sounds except the occasional screech of a seagull and the rustling of long grasses and always in the breeze the musty salt tang of the distant sea. Very few people went there, so she felt she could be herself, unobserved and therefore unconstrained. She could imagine and pretend; she could populate her imaginings with anyone she chose. She could talk out loud and give those people voices too, without fear of faintly mocking adult laughter.

A dog yelping made her stop and turn around and she saw the man, still watching her. She felt pleased that she recognised him as her next-door-neighbour and even more pleased that remembered his name. Many eleven year olds would not remember such things, she proudly imagined.

She shouted 'Hello Mr. Sutton!' and gave him a cheery wave before turning and racing away again. He waved back. Thankfully he was far enough away it would have been inappropriate to approach him and strike up a longer conversation. You had to be wary of talking to adults as a child. It was so easy to unwittingly put your foot in it. Parents, in particular,

were uncomfortable about you talking to adults outside the family in case you gave a bad impression and this would reflect badly on the family's standing within the community. 'Whatever will people think' was a reprimand frequently issued. She wondered whether she had been right to greet Mr Sutton. It was always difficult to know whether you were doing the right thing as a child. There were so many rules of behaviour that you were expected to conform to, but many of them were unspoken. You only learnt the existence of a rule when you broke it and received a ticking off. There were so many rules about how you were supposed to walk and sit and talk, for example.

'Don't stick your feet out when you walk – you're not a duck!'

'Don't slouch at the dining table – it's slovenly!'

'Don't drop your aitches – its common!'

It seemed to Daisy that the world of adulthood was something she had only recently felt obliged to try and understand. She could not imagine herself being an adult, even though she realised she would inevitably become one in time. She felt her parents (and indeed the rest of the world she found herself in) were pushing her towards becoming more adult. She thought it had something to do with her recently passing the 'eleven-plus' and moving to the 'big school'. The reprimand 'Don't be so childish' had been used a couple of times recently.

But adults could be so confusing. Daisy had overheard here mother comment sotto voice to her father one day 'Oh no ... I think she needs a bra'. She had said it in a tone of her voice that suggested mild disgust, like the changes Daisy was beginning to perceive in her body were unwelcome and something she should feel embarrassed and guilty about. And so she did. Because parents were unquestionably right.

----- To be continued

My Memories Fade (Jim's Diary Entries)

A series of events which at the time seemed significant and were written down for the future. So many things forgotten. Pity this was not started earlier.

I cannot put down on paper the amount of joy, happiness and fulfilment of life that was the culmination of my upbringing, parents, relatives, friends and the ladies in my life; they being at the time, my wife Grace and my girls, Madelyn Grace, Evelyn Riley and Kylie Alexandra, who have grown into such beautiful young ladies. Bringing up any family can be hard, with many highs and lows. I can assure you we had much of both. However, Madelyn is married to Arthur Rutherford with two sons, Adrian Carson and Miles Jordan. Evelyn lives with Nolan Turner with two daughters, Aubrey-May and Lauren-Jasmine. At the moment, Kylie has a long relationship with a boyfriend called Ronald, so we must see what the future has in store for them.

This happiness is in my mind and not something that can easily be shared although it very much wants to be expressed.

Moving to Suffolk

Coming from the smoke of London with its swirling yellow smog, tramlines and steam trains. And stonemasons chipping away another headstone of some poor soul who once given life, was afraid to live the life he or she was given. With so many graves to fill, it occurred to me that there was one living person who I had to touch, both body and soul. She was in my mind and her being a phone call away. We seemed to enjoy each other's company and soon it was time for us to marry. However, as we had both been married before and so knew the obvious expense that was involved (this we perceived would be a saving for our fathers, yet our mothers were upset), whatever we did and with the best intentions, we were not going to win. We decided that Suffolk would be as good a place as anywhere to be particularly as I was already living in the tiny parish of Ballingdon, Subury. Also, the cost of houses whilst expensive, was still affordable.

Birth of Our First Daughter

During those days of warm cradled flesh and nights of pure exhaustion, it led the way to our first child, a girl born on the 11th of September 1977, who we decided to call Madelyn Grace Harper. Grace Avery Harper, maiden name Hamilton, woke me and told me that her water had broken. This was about 1:30am. I got up at once and was about to phone the hospital when I had an epileptic fit. Not the best time.

Dad Harper was staying with us. Grace phoned Richard Pearson, a close friend who had been our Best Man at our wedding. He rushed Grace to hospital while Dad put me to bed and looked after me. Anyway, around 3am, still in another world of my own, I rang the hospital and was proclaimed the father of a baby girl, fit and named Madelyn. The way I was feeling, I just needed my bed.

When I finally did see Madelyn, Gosh was she ugly and while I was sitting on the hospital bed, she let loose with a real man-sized burp. This was Madelyn's first utterance to me. I was very pleased with Grace and myself. I well remember walking into the hospital ward and seeing the radiant smile on her face. She was so proud and happy. A time always to be treasured, never to be forgotten, it was complete harmony. The scales of life balanced, candles burnt and the mists rolled back to reveal a purpose to our being. Grace has always been my love, the wind that gives me strength to spread my wings even if at times I cry tears of despair and I do.

After seven days Grace brought Madelyn home to the grandparents. Then, one by one they examined and discussed her, putting her looks down to whoever. For a while Madelyn just ate and had her nappies changed at some unearthly hours. I will hasten to add this was Grace's department, although it was something I was to learn.

Fireside Chats

We lived in an old house surrounded by very good neighbours. The house was so low in the street that when the river flooded, so did our house. Ours was a street where even rowing boats were not out of place. But of course, traction engines or steam rollers and antique cars would have to pass our front door en route to the Melford Hall showground. Inside the house was a large inglenook log fire creating smoke and spitting flames that reached up into the darkness of its red brick, blackened chimney.

As these logs flickered so to Madelyn, our early conversation was to spit back verbally. In your own way you had a lot to say. You would chat away with your Mum but it was really quite a while before I became part of your life. SO delicate were you, I was afraid to hold you at first but I did and soon you would happily be held.

I would take your weight, holding your arms and we began to walk a bit like a puppet on a string. It could only lead to mischief. After growing out of your carry-cot (I still have a blanket from the carry-cot), you were put into a cot in our bedroom.

Madelyn's Explorations

Christmas came and went. Afterwards while eating the remains of Christmas Past, we had ice-cream. You just sat beside me. It was then and ever after that I would try various foods on you, often expecting your face to cringe but your taste buds were well developed. In point of fact Madelyn, you were a pig. The ice-cream had melted beside the fire so I put the bowl to your lips and no sooner had I done so, you put your whole face in, nose and mouth. Gobble, gobble, gobble.... I had to lift you away screaming and protesting. Otherwise, I think you would have drowned yourself in ice-cream. Soon Madelyn you were crawling and trying everything you could lay your hands on. I remember you would crawl in one side of the cupboard, then get stuck inside and scream. Then to, from inside would come all the goodies.

There were times when the sun shone and we put you outside in the warm rays of the sun to enjoy an open-air bath. When you went into the garden before you were able to walk, the grass was as high as yourself. That year we planted a lawn and growing along its sides were runner beans and tomatoes which you took a liking to, biting a mouthful then putting it down. What delight you had in eating fresh produce from our garden, eating dirt and pulling up plants.

When you were one year old, virtually on your birthday, you started to walk on your own. All this time you were and still are, very much a reason for our being alive. The pleasure and happiness that we derive from your growing has been so great. I can give examples that occurred every day: a cheeky smile, your temper, you could even be shy and so on.

There were many "first time" I recall, like the first time when you ate chocolate, you covered yourself in it. The same thing would happen with cream cakes. Then there was the time you managed to open the Bisto tin and got covered top to bottom.

I recall Madelyn beginning to get the idea that the potty is used for toilet, being rewarded with a biscuit every time it was used. There was the time we went up for a bath as usual and Madelyn came running out of the bathroom when both feet went from under her. She gave everyone a good laugh. But when she cried, I gave her a hug and was forgiven with a kiss.

Sunday morning another mug of mine was sent flying across the lawn towards the path. Then crash – my third mug was broken.

Another Addition to the Family

Evelyn Riley Harper, sister to Madelyn, was born on the 28th of April, 1979 at 10:50 am. She gave her Mum a rough time. Babies are never beautiful and Evelyn was no exception to the rule. Actually, she was very much like Grand Dad Harper. So now we are a family of four. Some months later, Evelyn had a cold, the doctor prescribing nose drops and syrup-like medicine. As usual, Madelyn could not get to sleep easily. On Saturday, we went to Bury-St-Edmunds, Woolpit and Elmswell. (central Suffolk)

On Saturday and Sunday the lights went out and we needed to call the electricity emergency service out to fix this. Then the electricity went out again so we had to go through the whole procedure again.

Our Day Out Together

Sunday the first of July, we went to the Sudbury mammoth rally to see the traction engines, tractors, cars, planes and motorbikes as well as the fun-fair, all the stalls, horses ploughing and the hunt. The army had come along to put on a good show. I expect they had their eyes on security. The weather was good. It cost £3 per adult with children free, or at least until get to the side stalls which were selling ice-cream at 23p and candy floss for 20p. We did try to win a Teddy Bear but were unlucky. When the Traction Engines, all bright and gleaming in the sunlight, blew their whistles, we were caught off guard (we often were), so they made us jump. Madelyn nearly jumped out of her skin a couple of times. Then, of course, there were tears but all in all, everyone had a wonderful day. Grace bought Evelyn some clothes and Madelyn a toy ironing board and a clothes-dryer.

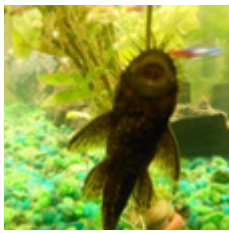
- To be continued

Animal Tales

Tropical Fish by Pam P. (Pam's Fish Pictures)

I read with interest Colyn's account of his pet fish. He is so right in saying there isn't an easier and more interesting hobby than fish-keeping. I have a tank of colourful and pretty fish in the sitting room. When TV is rubbish (when is it not), we both just watch the fish...but it is not always like this.

I breed Bristle-nosed Catfish, ugly creatures but I love them. They are peaceful fish if they are in a community tank but do not do so well as their



food is so different from other fish. They live on algae, so they are good for getting the algae off the aquarium glass. They also eat lettuce but only the darker outside leaves of the ordinary round lettuce. The

leaves should be weighted down with aquatic lead and special clips which have suckers that stick to the glass. Most times the lettuce floats to the top. As Bristles are bottom feeders, you must put enough lead on the lettuce to keep it down. Bristles eat cucumber but this clouds the water so it can only be left in for about 2 hours. Spinach is also on the menu. At £1 a bag sold in supermarkets primarily for humans, this means more than half the bag doesn't have stalks. So the big leaves have to be folded over and tied in bunches well secured with aquatic lead. At least once a week, my Bristles have pellets specially made for catfish. To top it off, each night about 10pm they have algae wafers. As they are mainly night feeders, the lights go off.

The Bristles courtship, reproduction and rearing of their young is interesting as well. The male (Boris) cleans a place of his choice where the eggs will be dropped by his mate (Betty). Boris uses the bogwood log which Bristles will chew on.

When he thinks it is clean enough, he fetches Betty and if she approves, she drops her eggs. Boris then covers them with his body and fans them continuously until the fry are born. Betty has no more to do with them. Boris never leaves the eggs in the daytime. He comes out at night for a quick snack and then resumes his duties. Once the fry hatch, poor Boris does his best to keep them under the log but they usually manage to avoid him and quite happily swim about or stick to the glass with their wee sucker mouths.

I am getting anything from 80 to 100 fry each time. When they are about 1" to 1 1/2" long, they are collected by a local company supplier who sell them on to retailers. The pet shops seem to like locally bred Bristles. About 6 weeks after they have all gone, the whole process starts up again. After 3 or 4 big batches, I take the bogwood out to give Boris and Betty a rest for 3 or 4 weeks.



Pam's Aquarium

Let's Not Do That Again by Isolde



I'm a big beautiful brindle girl with sleek contours and stunning dark amber eyes. Enthusiastically hopping up and down to greet people who we meet on walks, they excuse my rambunctious leaps and praise my lively attitude. Until recent events, I was just as ebullient when I went somewhere in the car. Not anymore. What happened to me last time was enough to put any dog off. Let me tell you about my trip to town. When it was time to leave, I jumped over the front seat into the back of our Fiat hatchback. And very shortly afterwards we were away.

The journey started with my usual nervous anticipation which brings on a bad case of needing to go. I paced around the back of the fiat uttering little distress calls to let my human know that I wasn't going to be able to hold it much longer. Just when I thought it was too late, she hurriedly pulled over into a big parking lot. Quickly clipping on my extendible lead, she opened the car door and made way for me to leap out. I rushed to the nearest patch of grass. Whew ! That was close.

I was willing to let this incident pass (bad pun) since I hadn't actually had "an accident" in the car. My human seemed to want to make up for the stress I'd experienced by taking me to Pets at Home. I just love wandering down the aisles sniffing treat packages and bags of dry kibble. Eying a particularly alluring rope tug, I let my human know that I really, really wanted it. She took it off the display shelf and held it out to me to sniff. I took as a sign that she wanted to play so I grabbed the rope in my teeth. Even though I tugged madly, she managed to wrench it out of my jaws and thereafter keep it out of my reach. That wasn't any fun.

I was just getting over the disappointment when the next thing happened. Much to my surprise as we rounded the end of the aisle I came face to face with a fairly good-sized Springer Spaniel. This monster made a hideous face at me while emitting a challenging growl. In a flash we were both at it, engaged in a noisy squabble, right there in the middle of the store. Our fight didn't last but a few seconds before determined human hands untangled and separated us. As you might have expected, that incident cut short our store-browsing excursion. And I was so looking forward to finding the aisle with the rawhide chews, pig ears, horns and hooves.

I was quickly ushered out to the car and told to stay where I was until my master returned. Naturally I felt quite shaken by my experience and being left alone - by myself - with nobody else - completely on my own - without anybody else with me - abandoned - oh God where was she anyway ? It seemed ages before my human finally returned (10 minutes is an eternity when you're a dog). I was sooo relieved to see her. I nuzzled the side of her face as she leaned over the front seat to pat me.

She'd brought the bag of "goodies" we'd picked out together from the pet store. My troubles vanished when I detected the scent of my most favourite treat in the world, a green turtle rice

bone! Even before she could take it out of the carrier bag, I stuck my nose in and plucked it out myself. Collapsing into my travel cushion and blanket, I began gnawing happily away on the turtle's head, the best place to begin. I was really going to enjoy this while we drove home. At least that is what I'd planned.

You guessed it. Not far down the road I started feeling queasy. All the twists and turns, uphill and downhill had upset my stomach. Up came all the green bits and pieces on to my blanket. Never mind that I wasn't feeling so good, I'm a tidy dog "clean in my kennel" and this mess just had to be taken care of right away. I launched into full tilt burying mode and tried desperately to nose the blanket underneath the cushion. It wasn't working and so I found myself with no where to stand or sit that didn't feel soiled to me. Oh dear.

My human pressed the button to open the passenger seat window, presumably to air the car out. The acidic smell was quite pungent. I thought it might be a nice distraction to stick my head out the window and to breathe in the countryside air. "That's better" I thought while the wind streamed past my face. Somehow my human had thought that I had brought my head back inside the car when I had not. She pressed the button to close the window. All of a sudden I felt the window pane pushing against my neck. When I realized that my head was trapped, I panicked. Thankfully, my human immediately noticed me struggling, frantically throwing my head and neck about. She reacted quickly, by pressing down on the button to release me.

If I'd thought the inside of the car was a scary place before all this, I was now totally convinced it was. Several hugs and numerous comforting words later, plus a short stroll in the forest near our house and my faith in life was pretty much restored. After dinner, we both retired for a relaxing evening stretched out on the sofa, under a duvet, watching television. My eyelids grew heavy and just before I nodded off to sleep I looked up at my human. "You know the car ride thing? Let's not do that again". I let out a big sigh. She smoothed my ears between her fingers and whispered "Don't worry Gypsy. We'll be fine next time."



OUR MEMBER PROFILE: JOHN H

So, John, it's great to discuss your interests with you. Our members are interested in hearing what garners your own interest in writing.

Can you start by telling us a bit about what writing has done for you? How is writing linked into your life?

From bi-polar introvert to creative confident poet, the bud lay dormant until I was given 2 years of special education. I was transformed (by this) from deep inwardness and shyness to an out-going, even bold individual, who is not afraid of criticism. In taking constructive criticism (from others), I learnt to not accept second best but to refine my work, as an individual who seeks to write with a flow and panache. Taking the advice of striking for perfection and learning techniques of basic overall delivery, public performance of my poetry has been transformed. Applying a "beat" such as iambic pentameter, the written word is like a blue-print for a verbal musical flow whereby the poet's model is transformed from cold print into a vibrant piece of live performance. The poet has painted a picture through the medium of words for an audience.

What excites or inspires you to write?

When a larger than everyday life event occurs, I try to give its theme, my own individual slant. (Depending on the circumstance) this ranges from remorse for a tragic occurrence to humour with a comic or satirical punch.

Can you talk a bit about your writing process and how your work comes to fruition?

I chose a theme of comedy or tragic narration and try to keep it original. I plan it out with a Start, Main Body and Conclusion. I'm economical with the story line; keeping the momentum going whilst avoiding verbose "red herrings". I avoid a dead-end or predictable ending which helps me overcome writer's block. Also, my characters are talented individuals whose personalities (for example, shy or cute) interact as a group.

What do you look for in a good piece of writing? What do you most value in a writer's work?

I look for imagery that paints a rich picture of an event. There should be an element of surprise. Even if an event is ordinary, a twist of the tale should add a bit of sparkle. I look for originality with a distinctive style and "pedigree" which sets a standard that seeks to thrill with "food for thought".

What are your other interests related to or outside of writing?

I like mathematics, forming a model with minimum clues towards one conclusion. Since I'm not Mensa (with egghead exuberance), I prefer coffee breaks without cryptic crosswords and I find sudoku masochistic. However, I love Cribbage and Chinese Patience card games.



**FIERCE STYLE: HOW TO BE
YOUR MOST FABULOUS SELF**

Review by Isolde

Author: Christian Siriano
Publisher: Grand Central Publishing
ISBN 978-0-446-54601-0 (hardback)

Finding Your Inner Ferocia



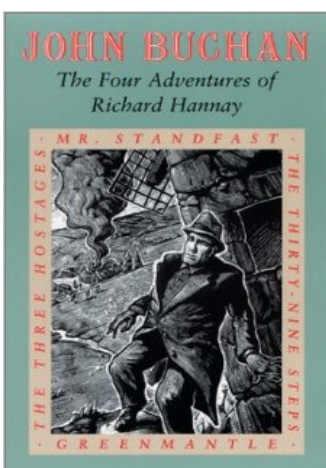
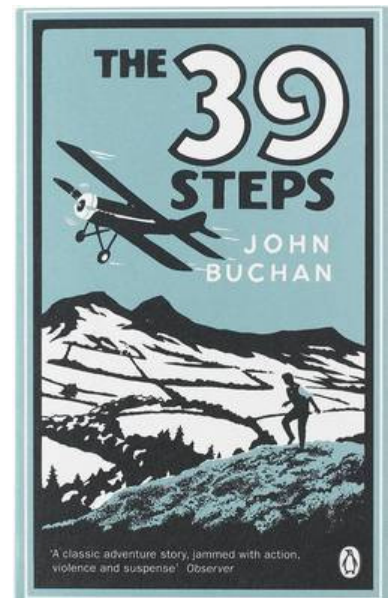
Having bought it on a whim, I discovered that this book really is fabulous. It's not just a case of creating a fab personal "look" with a quirky wardrobe. Au contraire ! He offers wonderful advice to anyone who needs to build his or her confidence in a competitive world where success is not easy. "Fierce Style" is definitely a "feel good about yourself" kind of inspirational guide. I would recommend this book to anyone wishing to develop a sense of pride in their accomplishments. Anyone trying to "find their stride" as they say, should read a page a day from Christian's book.

The Thirty-Nine Steps

Review by John H

John H shares with our readers that one of his favourite books which had an impact on him was John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. This novel was John's first adult fiction "home-reader" which features Richard Hannay, a mix of sleuth and detective, who tries to solve a mystery full of "red herrings". The plot includes exciting locations and final a twist in the tale where our hero out wits "the baddies".

Some Background Information on the book and the author: John Buchan wrote *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, an archetypal English spy thriller in the first months of the WWI. Working for the British War Propaganda Bureau, Buchan was well-versed in this Edwardian "shocker" or "dime novel". So, the outbreak of war across the Channel became the perfect inspiration for him to create a topical and thrilling tale of acute jeopardy involving British secrets, German spies and the sinister plotting of the Black Stone gang, a conspiracy hell-bent on fomenting a vicious global conflict.



Buchan's greatest contribution to this popular genre was to create in his protagonist, Richard Hannay, an appealing antihero, who in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, finds himself caught up in a high-octane international drama. Hannay has the resource, intelligence and daring to thwart a foreign attempt to drag Britain into war. The protagonist Hannay features in four more subsequent Buchan thrillers.

The book has never been out of print and has inspired many film and television adaptations: Alfred Hitchcock's liberty-taking 1935 version, starring Robert Donat and Madeleine Carroll, a female character absent from the novel; a 1959 colour remake; a 1978 version, with Robert Powell as Hannay, that sticks rather more faithfully to Buchan's text than Hitchcock; and finally a 2008 British television version, starring Rupert Penry-Jones.

Little Book of Stress (part of the Mini Squares Series)

Stuart & Linda MacFarlane (Authors)

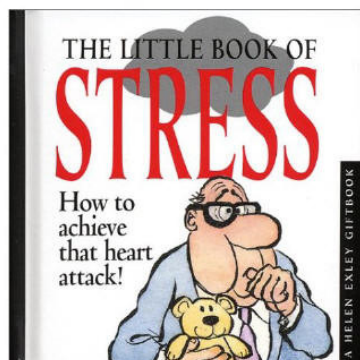
Helen Exley (Editor)

Publisher: Exley Publications Ltd (31 Oct. 1998)

ISBN-10: 1861870949

ISBN-13: 978-1861870940

Review by Maureen



This is a very amusing and curiously useful book that ironically gives us advice on how to become really stressed. Reading the little quotes and bits of advice are a fun way to realize that we, ourselves are causing our own stress by the way we think and act on those thoughts that needlessly drive us. The book has certainly shown me that we all do stressful things that we do not really need to do. The author's make good use of humour to help up see our error and I enjoy working out in my mind how not to do what they suggest to raise my blood pressure.

2 Excerpts from the book:

- ▶ Confuse-Us say (a pun on the wisdom of Confucius)
"60 seconds to cook, 60 minutes to buy"



Smart Reply:

When asked, at the airport, "Have you left your bags unattended?" reply politely, "Don't be stupid, at this airport anything not padlocked to your wrist gets stolen!" You will discover the resultant jovial interrogation and body search an excellent way to pass the hours waiting for departure.



STILL LIFE (2013)

FILM REVIEW by Graeme



Eddie Marsan and Uberto Pasolini at the 70th Venice International Film Festival

A drama written and directed by Uberto Pasolini & starring the always excellent Eddie Marsan and Joanne Froggatt.

The best film I have seen so far this year.

A friend suggested we see this film earlier this year and I am so glad she did. A film that makes you feel very emotional and thoughtful about life, family and friendships. There are funny moments in this film and the dynamic between the two leads is excellent. Eddie Marsan makes you feel empathy for his character.

Life for the unassuming John May has always revolved around his work for the local council in South London, which is to find the next of kin of those who have died alone. Profoundly dedicated to his work, he believes that everyone deserves a dignified exit, and so he writes eulogies and organizes funerals for those who wouldn't have them otherwise. But when a new case – an elderly alcoholic in a flat directly opposite his own – hits him harder than usual, particularly when being told he is being made redundant, he journeys outside London to track down the man's long-abandoned daughter. Against the odds, the two lonely souls are drawn to each other – and John's outlook starts to open to life's possibilities.



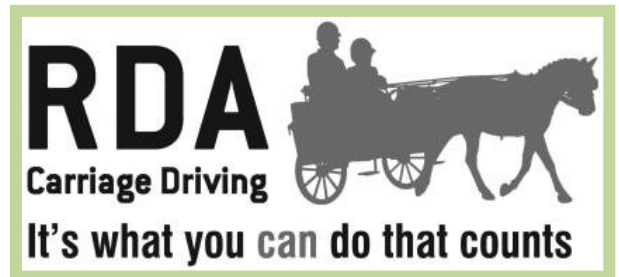
What's Happening

RIDING FOR THE DISABLED CARRIAGE DRIVING HELPER TRAINING DAY

Event Review by Isolde

All spring and summer in the Oban area, *Riding for the Disabled* drivers, assistants and students assemble once a week at Baravullin Beag for a fun-filled morning of carriage driving through the beautiful countryside. Though a good time is had by all, there is a more serious side to the whole endeavour. The organisation's chief aim is to provide disabled people with the opportunity to carriage drive in order to provide an activity which benefits their health and well-being, and to do this at the level of their ability, choice and ambition.

The local RDA member group in Benderloch has a good sized number of volunteers who assist in teams of four to provide carriage driving experience for individuals with a wide range of disabilities. Though prior knowledge or horses or disabilities is helpful to do volunteering, it's not necessary, as experienced coaches are glad to provide instruction. Safeguarding comes first here which includes a range of practices and procedures to create a safe environment for staff, volunteers and participants whether people or horses!



Before the season began on 15th April (after no sessions for disabled drivers during the winter months) all volunteers, of which I am one, were required to attend a day-long hands-on workshop to bring us all up to standard where correct practice and procedure are concerned. This "Helpers" training event was held 8th April. Among a variety of topics, we learned about correctly harnessing the horses (two lovely, hardworking souls, *Bramble* and *Red*), about bicycle road escorting of the carriages, about emergency procedures concentrating on quickly releasing the horse from the carriage during a mishap, and how to secure a wheelchair with occupant into the carriage. There is a lot to learn but well worth the time and effort. After completing my volunteer accreditation "green card" (checking off the boxes in the areas in which I now feel I have gained the skill) and having it co-signed by the head coach, I am ready for action. Thanks to the workshop, I felt confident for what is to come at the opening session of the season, attended by disabled student drivers. Looks like a fun and safe summer ahead.



The challenge competition

In this section are the brilliant entries for the *'Who Said That'* writing challenge [using alternatives to "said" in conversation]. If you feel inspired to have a go, we would love to hear from you. It's all about taking part and having fun. And maybe even winning the book voucher! The published pieces here will give you a better idea of what you can achieve within the brief. Details are on the back page to send your entries to. Pick up your pen and see where it takes you!



Who Said That?

I REALLY DON'T LIKE BROCCOLI - Entry by Norma

"I really don't like broccoli" mumbled John under his breath, grimacing at the taste of the nearly cold, horrid, green stuff and shuffling awkwardly in his chair.



"What did you say John?" questioned Granny, who peered at John over her reading glasses in exasperation with the cantankerous six year old, as he wriggled about obviously not wanting to eat his dinner.

"I hope you're not going to leave your dinner John" Granny pronounced. "I made it especially for you, so you could grow big and strong. You want to be a good footballer don't you young man? So eat up your vegetables!"

"Do I have to Granny?", moaned John. "I hate broccoli Granny. Can't I have pudding now please?"

Pursing her lips, Granny secretly smirked and whispered to John that if he ate one more mouthful he could have some ice-cream with a chocolate flake on top. "I am sure you would like that John, wouldn't you?"

As all six year old boys who detest broccoli do, John pushed the broccoli to the edge of his plate and somehow managed to (accidentally, on purpose) launch the horrible greenness on to the floor.

"John!" scolded Granny, "Naughty boy! May I remind you that some children in the world are starving and would be glad of a homemade meal?"

"I'm not starving Granny", grumbled John, "but I would like some ice-cream".

Granny, trying to look stern, moaned for a minute or two sensing a feeling of *deja vu*. She scolded her grandson again and reminded him about the importance of having something green in his diet. At this point John, who was poking a finger up his nose searching for something green, glazed over and thought about the chocolate flake and ice-cream.

"Well", bargained Granny, "If I give you a delicious ice-cream, will you promise to eat your broccoli next time you are here John?"

"Yes Granny!" exclaimed John, knowing full well he wouldn't eat broccoli at Granny's house.

Granny knowingly beamed. "Here you are then young man. Enjoy your treat."

"Thank you Granny. I love you", announced John. "This is the best ice-cream ever!"

Granny cleared away the plates and sighed. "You're just like your father after all", she proclaimed quietly.

"What was that you said Mum?" as a fine, well-made, tall young man strode into the kitchen to collect his son after work.

"Oh nothing Dear. How was work today?"

"Fine Mum, training is going well. The team is ready now for the big match on Saturday, so all is going to plan.

Granny smiled to herself. "Oh well", she thought.

MORE ENTRIES

Who Said That ? Entry by Keith

John and Jessica were in the middle of an argument.

"Why don't you love me?" he mumbled.

"I don't know" she remarked sharply.

"We used to get on so well" he reminded her.

"It's all changed" she announced.

"Oh dear" he moaned.

"You're not the same" she scolded.

"Really?" he grumbled

"Yes" she whispered.

"My God!" he exclaimed.

"Yes" she beamed.

"What shall we do?" he asked.

"Please yourself" she replied.

"Who said that?" John asked anxiously.

"I did" Jessica replied. "Now we'd better split."

"If you insist" he answered glumly.



Second entry by Irene A Short Scenario.....

TUESDAY EVENING

"What's up?" he ASKED, glancing up from his newspaper.

"Oh, it's nothing." I REPLIED. "It's just.....well....we've been set this challenge to see if we can write something creative without using the word "said" all the time. We have to try to use alternatives instead."

He REMARKED that it sounded like a fun challenge and returned to his reading.

WEDNESDAY MORNING

"Last night's conversation.....about that challenge?" he RECALLED. "Maybe I could help?"

I CHUCKLED, " Fat chance! You are not exactly good with words, are you?"

"Maybe not," he AGREED, "but it doesn't sound too difficult", and he OFFERED, " Maybe if we put our heads together.....?"

Politely but firmly I ANSWERED "No thank you." and ADDED, "This is my challenge and I'm doing it myself".

WEDNESDAY EVENING

"What's up?" he smiled knowingly.
"I'm stuck!" I SIGHED.

Two Entries from Irene

First entry by Irene A Rhyme....

"How are you?" he ASKED
"I'm well" she REPLIED
"How lovely to see you.
I thought you had died"

"Good sir" she REMARKED
"I have been quite ill"
"Why yes," he RECALLED
"With a cough and a chill".

"Indeed" she AGREED
With a delicate smile
"Take my arm" he OFFERED
"Let's walk for a while."

"Dear lady," he SIGHED
"I fear we must part"
She ANSWERED " Kind sir,
I fear for my heart".

She ADDED "Don't leave me.
I beg you to stay".
"It's over" he CHUCKLED
Then was gone right away.

**PLEASE NOTE. NOT TO CONFUSE YOU
BUT NEW ENTRIES HAVE A CHOICE OF
WORKING FROM ONE OF TWO LISTS.**

PLEASE DO ONE LIST: BLUE (OR) RED

*mumbled, remarked, reminded,
announced, moaned, scolded, grumbled,
whispered, exclaimed and beamed*

*replied, answered, agreed, offered,
recalled, asked, remarked, sighed,
added, chuckled*

WRITE-ON! Call for Submissions

If you have been reading the magazine and have thought about giving it a go, now is the time ! We are actively seeking your writing talent for our future issues.

Let's top last year!

Our members' contributions are what make *Write On* a resounding success. Let us know about your ideas and we would be happy to include them. Your ideas have shaped the magazine. All of your suggestions are valued by our 2 excellent editors, Graeme & Isolde.

The Categories Are Endless

We are open to just about anything you can possibly think of !!! So let your imagination run wild! *Write On* has poetry, limericks & puns, cartoons & comedy, short stories & travelogues, young reader activities & historic interest items, member interviews & book, film and event reviews. But there is room for much, much more.

Don't Be Shy.

Need some pointers on how to get started? We are there for you to supply some supportive suggestions. And as always, we offer you our keenest encouragement. We would love to hear from you.

We hope you continue to enjoy Write On & Keep the energy flowing!!!

Next Submission date August 31st

Alan Duncan
Distance Befriending Coordinator

Befrienders Highland

19 Church Street

Inverness

IV1 1DY

01463 235 675

Befrienders Highland Limited, a Scottish recognised charity (number SC029386) is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland (number 199867). Its registered office is C/O Ledingham Chalmers, Kintail House, Beechwood Business Park, Inverness IV2 3BW

