

VERACITY

The Magazine from Verulam Writers

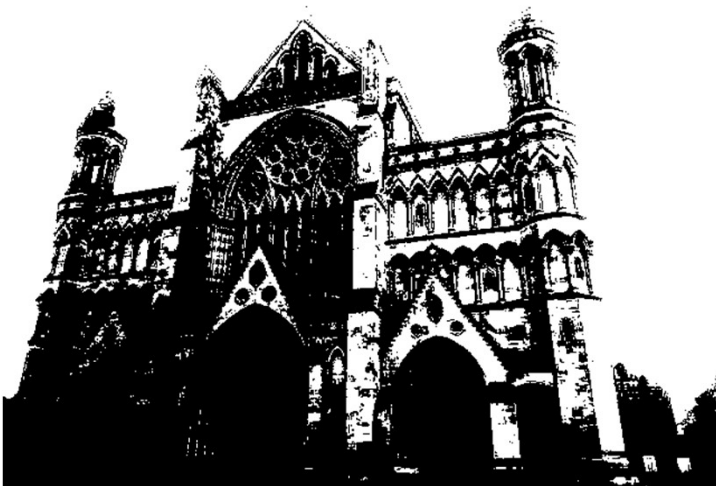


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Autumn 2024

FRIGHTFULLY GOOD TO BE BACK!



2024 is drawing towards its demise at last. Darkness and chill surround us as we humble storytellers gather round to let our imaginations run wild in our ecclesiastical sanctuary, with the dead watching on just outside the walls!

But don't let any of that scare you! The year is all too fresh and alive for Verulam Writers. Although we've been absent for a good month and a half over a pleasant summer, we had an excellent sendoff at the summer party, with everyone in good spirits and chatting as best they can while consuming some excellent food.

Only 2 months into our 2024/25 year, we have had an entertaining night voting for the David Gibson cup competition winner. (He shall be revealed later). We've even picked up no less than 3 new members, who I shall not name for sensitivity's sake but still wholeheartedly welcome to the fold.

All this year's events may be viewed on the event listings section of the Verulam Writers' website (www.verulamwriters.org) as soon as they are confirmed. Also, there's no such thing as too much interest, so keep reminding all keen writers you know who are 18 and over that non-members are welcome at any meeting for £3. This goes up to £5 for workshops and talks.

This time, in VERACITY...

- Clare schools us on **epic verse!**
- Mike brings us into **focus!**
- **Graves both dry and watery!**
- Ray's punctuation class reaches a **full stop!**

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From the Editor...

Hi, everyone. I'm very sorry if you hoped to read up on recent events sooner. I've just had the considerable pleasure of visiting Canada to see my newborn niece Willow! Trust me, that was quite a milestone.

As for the past four months, at the risk of repeating myself, they've only intermittently supplied Verulam Writers with memory fuel given our six-week slump, but we're firing on all cylinders now!

What will the coming year bring, eh? I myself am looking forward to Tina's dialogue workshop and guest speaker Becky Alexander before Christmas, not to mention the adjudication of the Lisbeth Philips Competition. Then, in the New Year, we'll have more exciting workshops, the President's competition and the annual quiz.

Future newsletters will cover all these and more. For now, I hope you enjoy these articles kindly provided by our members. Happy Halloween!

Robert Paterson, Editor

VWVeracityEditor@gmail.com

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From the Chair...

By the now Co-chair of Verulam Writers, Philip Mitchell.



We've just begun our Verulam Writers 2024-2025 season, and at this time of year, my mind always turns to conkers. As their leaves brown, horse chestnut trees shed their hard and glossy seeds, sometimes on to unsuspecting passers-by, who might be unlucky enough to be struck by a conker's spikey case. Yes, it's happened to me, but I didn't notice any lasting damage.

As a child, I spent hours collecting conkers with my brother. We were fortunate enough to live in an area awash with horse chestnut trees. There was an enormous one by the church. Three on the village green. Plenty more in the nearby wood, but the wood was a bit creepy.

We'd load our supermarket carrier bags full of conkers and we'd struggle to carry them home. Occasionally, the bags would split and we'd determinedly scoop them up into a spare bag. Once home, we'd make a pile of them in the garden.

Unlike many children, we didn't use them for conker fights. We just collected them for the sake of having massive amounts of conkers. Sure, there were some beauties, but it was the sheer volume of conkers which interested us. However, I did plant an enormous, attractive conker at the end of the garden. The resulting sapling eventually turned into a strong, young tree before my mum hacked it down when I'd left home and paved over the spot. I'll never forgive her.

I now collect conkers with my son, mainly to give to his grandma, who places them round her house to keep away spiders. I don't think that particular old wife's tale holds true given the number of cobwebs hanging from the corners of her ceiling.

Anyway, to get back on track, I've mentioned conkers for a reason. I can't help but draw parallels between conkers and the life of a writer. Just as conkers endure the elements to emerge triumphantly from their spiky shells, we writers face our own challenges in the pursuit of creativity.

A conker's tough, spiky shell protects it from the outside world. Similarly, writers may build emotional barriers to shield themselves from criticism and self-doubt. This protective layer can be both a blessing and a curse. It guards us against negativity, but can prevent us from openly sharing our work. We must always try to break free from our shells and expose our true, glossy selves.

When conkers fall from their trees, they face being trampled or overlooked. Writers, too, experience setbacks—rejections, writer's block, and crippling moments of self-doubt. Each fall feels like a blow, but failure is always an opportunity to grow. Just as conkers will sprout anew, we writers can learn from our experiences and rise stronger.

In conker fights, players try to smash each other's conkers to pieces. This competitive spirit can be found in the writing world, where the saturated marketplace means writers often feel pitted against one another. However, just as conker competitors often enjoy sharing their tips for picking the best conkers and fighting technique, writers can support each other. Embracing your writing group community transforms competition into camaraderie, fostering an environment where creativity thrives.

Continued overleaf

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From the Chair, Page 2

Finally, the joy of collecting conkers is similar to the satisfaction of completing a piece of writing. After enduring the struggles, the moment of completion is sweet. We must take the time to celebrate our achievements, no matter how small. Each completed story or poem is a conker in its own right, a triumph of perseverance and creativity.

As we navigate the ups and downs of our craft, let's remember to embrace our inner conker—tough on the outside and full of potential within. And, when you next see a conker, pick it up, feel its smoothness, and notice how the light dances off its gleaming surface, and take a moment to reflect on your writing journey and the amazing strength you have to keep going.

Happy writing.

Philip Mitchell (who writes as Steven Mitchell)

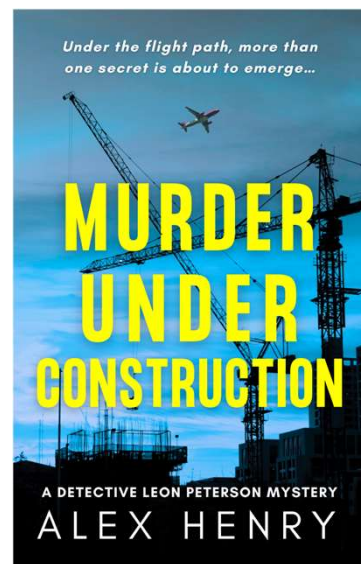
Co-chairperson of Verulam Writers



STOP PRESS!

Anne Ellis (using her pen name J.L. Merrow) is one of the co-writers of Alex Henry's new murder mystery novel, *Murder Under Construction*. It's just been published as an eBook and may be purchased at this link if you're interested.

[Murder Under Construction | Universal Book Links Help You Find Books at Your Favorite Store!](#)



The Howard Linskey Competition

By Robert Paterson

The 2023/24 Howard Linskey adjudication holds the honour of being the last great official event of the last Verulam Writers year. The contest may appear to have a narrow scope, given that the only requirement is to write a crime story, but time and again our members show a vast breadth of imagination in the ways they interpret that theme. What's more, Howard himself was once again back to judge the winning entries. He openly commended the high standard of the stories and the strength of the characters in them.

The adjudication night fell on Wednesday 19th June. As he reviewed the stories, Howard couldn't help but notice how many contained malevolent female characters! Arguably the worst was Kadie in Anne Ellis's story, *Beware of the Bear*, who deals out a gruesome death to a man who could be more intransigent than evil. Joan Crooks and Steve Seaton's co-written story, *A Ghost of a Chance*, focusses on the spirit of a man named Morten who was murdered by his paramour Diana, although his widow Priscilla isn't any more admirable. More redeemable characters include Emily from Philip Mitchell's entry *No Point Crying Over Spilt Coffee*, and my own titular antagonist in *Nancy, Who I Never Knew*. Both perform foul deeds, but do still have a conscience that governs them.

Not all the stories were set in modern times. The entry *Traitor's Lament* featured characters and a setting similar to those of a space opera. Clare Lehovsky's entry *Germanicus et Piso* was set in Roman times. Dave Weaver's entry *Mother's Day* and Tina Shaw's entry *A Wasted Life* had more relatable settings. But what were the winning entries?

It was Joan and Steve who raised the most eyebrows that night, not only getting third place for *A Ghost of A Chance*, but also winning the Gnome De Plume for their pseudonym, Penny Forum. Anne received second place for *Beware of the Bear*. However, it was Cecile Keen who got the first prize, for her metaphysical thriller full of twists, which you can read on the next page.

Robert



A Stab For A Life

Cecile Keen's winning entry for the 2024 Howard Linskey Competition

The yearly passing of snowy clouds had not changed who I turn to. Standing in front of my parents and my son's grave, I ask Mum, like I had always done in times of happiness and in times of sorrow. Her voice rises from deep beneath the ground, clear and wise, but for my ears only.

"No, it has nothing to do with you. Children do not die in retribution for their parents' sins. You have done no harm my darling Daughter, neither has his Dad."

"But if we did nothing to warrant it, how can we make sense of his loss?"

"Maybe there is nothing to understand."

"There must be, Mum. There is a million of things we could, should have done to protect our son."

"No darling. Guilt will only poison you slowly from the inside."

I disregard her warning:

"I have failed my own son and he paid the highest of prices. We could have picked him up from school, checked who his friends were, trust him less, be stricter, keep him at home, teach him to defend himself..."

Mum interrupts me:

"You are not to blame for this other lad's actions. He decided to carry a knife, not you. He decided to use it, not you. And he decided to run away to his death, not you."

"We made the mistake to believe that sort of thing only happened in the news, far away from us. We thought evil would never find our tiny and peaceful part of the world. We, no one else. We made that mistake."

She stays quiet and leaves me waiting in the cold wind that sweeps the graves, inscribed with names I have known since childhood. That what it's like inhabiting a small town. You know the living and you know the dead. Neighbours in life and in eternity: parents and grandparents of schoolfriends, the doctor who looked after three generations of my family and the teacher who taught me to read and write. They and many others are here, resting forever on the top of the hill by the old church, that has kept its beautiful stained-glass windows but has closed its doors for being unsafe. It is the tallest grave of them all. It can be seen from anywhere in the town that lies at the feet of the hill. Even buildings made of the strongest stones eventually die but they never ever do so in their youth. They only die when they are too old to withstand time.

Mum speaks again:

"He helped seven people to live, it is important you remember that."

"Yes, he would be proud of this. Seven is not an insignificant number, is it Mum?"

"No, it isn't."

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A Stab For A Life, Page 2

"It is the same number of knife wounds. A stab for a life. Maybe that's the way it works. How many lives would deem his departure worthwhile?"

She ignores my question to try and reassure me instead:

"We will look after our grandson. I promise you, he is not alone. We are together until you and his Dad join us."

She stays quiet and leaves me waiting in the cold wind that sweeps the graves, inscribed with names I have known since childhood. That what it's like inhabiting a small town. You know the living and you know the dead. Neighbours in life and in eternity: parents and grandparents of schoolfriends, the doctor who looked after three generations of my family and the teacher who taught me to read and write. They and many others are here, resting forever on the top of the hill by the old church, that has kept its beautiful stained-glass windows but has closed its doors for being unsafe. It is the tallest grave of them all. It can be seen from anywhere in the town that lies at the feet of the hill. Even buildings made of the strongest stones eventually die but they never ever do so in their youth. They only die when they are too old to withstand time.

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"We will look after our grandson. I promise you; he is not alone. We are together until you and his Dad join us."

"Could I not take his place now, Mum please? There must be someone up there you can talk to?"

"No, it isn't your time yet, darling."

"But it wasn't his either. It is not the natural way of things".

"I know but you still have some happiness to enjoy. You and his Dad, you are both strong".

"I don't want it. I am ready to go for him to come back. There is no joy on earth without my boy."

She remains silent again. Flowers have already started to fade. I pick up a few that have fallen on the marble and put them in a bucket to empty in the compost bin by the entrance gate.

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A Stab For A Life, Page 3

"Mum?" I call.

"Yes, my darling?"

"Shall I ask God? Perhaps he can sort it out."

"Sort what out?"

"Swap him with me. If God is the giver of life, can He not also take it away to regift it?"

"Perhaps."

"Which God should I ask? There are so many. I am not sure which one to believe in anymore. What if I choose the wrong one?"

"Ask the one closest to your heart, my darling."

"I have no heart left, Mum. It has crumbled a bit more with every day spent in the hospital, slowly losing its shape and its beat. Whatever remained of my heart burnt away in tears four days ago at the funeral."

I move a few flowerpots to free some room and sit down. My right hand reaches my son's name on the midnight blue marble headstone. No nightmare would be so cruel to take advantage of my sleep and write his name before mine on the stone. My eyes are closed but I am not blind. My fingers follow and read the carving. With the contour of each letter, I see the shape of his smile, the colour of his eyes and the sunshine in his hair. I will never see my handsome son aged. He is and always will be 15, as fine as he was on his last day.

"Mum, did he suffer much?"

"The surgeon explained he collapsed with the first wound. So perhaps a little bit but just for a few seconds," she replies softly, with all the inner tenderness and love a mother has to soothe her daughter's sorrow.

"Do you know why the lad did it?"

"Would knowing make a difference?"

"Probably not. My son is gone whatever the reason."

"Try and be patient, darling. The police will tell you everything."

"There must be some sort of reckoning since the lad died when running away. Surely this is deserved fate!"

"If that was the case, the truck driver would also be here with us."

"What do you mean by 'also here with us'? Is the lad with you?"

"Yes, my darling, he is."

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A Stab For A Life, Page 4

"My son's killer is up there with you and him. How? Why?" I scream with rage.

"Because Here is no place for fury. No red, no flames, no burns. Everything is white, pure and calm. That's what forgiveness looks like."

"I cannot forgive my son's murderer. I have thought about it but with my heart gone, there is not enough goodness left in me."

"Forgiveness is not one big solitary act. You are still capable of compassion. Small kind gestures for others can also help you through."

She lets me absorb what she has just said before asking:

"Take a look further down the cemetery, darling. Who can you see?"

"Oh Mum, no, she is far away but it is her, his mother."

"Yes, it is her. Do you think she is crying?"

"I cannot see well from here but almost certainly. She's kneeling down and stroking the grave."

I think for a moment, retrieving memories from the past:

"Do you remember we were in the same class for five years? We went on the same school trips and to the same birthday parties."

"Yes, just like your two boys," Mum reminds me. *"Would you say your grief is deeper than hers?"*

I take time to reply:

"Her son's death came after taking someone else's life. My son's death saved others."

"Are your tears less painful for it or easier to wipe?"

"We both lost our boys."

"That's right, my love," she says in a tone that tells me she won't speak anymore till my next visit.

The lad's mother is still here. My legs take command of my body, walking me slowly towards her. She has not seen me yet and I watch her for a short while. She is immobile, lying on the grave, arms opened as if hugging her son. I too tried to hold on for a last hug for hours and hours but stopped myself from doing so again, in fear of falling into an abyss of despair.

I approach and call her by her name. We were friends once. She turns her head towards me, her face swollen with the redness of continuous cry. She doesn't say anything but accept my hand to help her get up, then keeps it firmly into hers. Her head finds refuge on my shoulder as she weeps quietly. There is no need for words. Here we are, just two mothers.

Cecile

VERACITY

Changing Writing

By John Spencer

If you enjoyed that story and feel like writing your own, you'll find this article very useful, especially if your preferred genre is non-fiction.

I have been a very successful non-fiction writer. My agent told me I sold almost 750,000 books over about a fifteen-year period, but many years ago. I gave up that writing for various reasons and decided to move to writing fiction.

It has taken many years and I only recently launched a novel self published, but with four more ready to publish over the coming period.

Was the change easy?

No, no, no.

I gave myself six months to learn the new discipline, and it took many years.

Some of the rules about the changes I will set out shortly, but it is worth remembering a few fundamentals:

Firstly, if it is to be widely read and appreciated, then either style of book has to be exciting to read, and keep the reader turning the page. Some non-fiction, technical works, highly descriptive accounts, are often not widely read, and may only be used by a small number of specific people, but the majority are not so. Take 'Hero – the Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia' by Michael Korda. It is very much non-fiction, a wonderful description of the man who was a British Intelligence Officer who fought alongside Arab guerrilla forces in the Middle East during the First World War. But it is also an exciting read of his strengths and weaknesses.

Secondly, either writing must (usually, anyway) be realistic. In the case of non-fiction people generally want to know what something is genuinely about, In the case of fiction in one sense the more extraordinary or outlandish perhaps the better ... BUT ... once you have constructed your world, or your scenario, your writing should be realistic within that world so that your readers can get themselves into that world and live there while they are reading.



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Changing Writing, page 2

Thirdly they must both be entertaining. People generally prefer to enjoy what they are reading, fiction or non-fiction. Fiction doesn't work at all if it is not entertaining, it just gets boring. Non-fiction can theoretically be either, boring or entertaining. But you will have a lot more positive response if you write it in an entertaining and exciting way. One example of that were the many, many stories of the late Diana, Princess of Wales. Generally speaking these accounts, written or visual, were factual but the best of them were put together in an entertaining way made them much easier to get to grips with.

A few of the basic rules to consider:

- 1. Show, don't tell.** This is the classic rule (though often overstated). For example, you can describe *The Bridge over the River Kwai* in probably a handful of clear facts, but far better to describe what it meant to those building it, and those destroying it. Far better to understand the fears and agony of those who were there. And those feelings should be demonstrated how they felt, what they feared, and so on.
- 2. Use all the senses.** In non-fiction you can enhance the writing and the descriptions using all the senses, but you can get the message across by description alone. Not so in fiction though; the reader needs not just to know where s/he is and what is happening but should be immersed in it. When you are walking through a park you can smell the flowers, feel the heat or the cold in the air, hear the sounds of the grass cutting or the distant traffic. All the senses are needed in fiction.
- 3. Dialogue.** In non-fiction dialogue is generally reserved for quotes or specific descriptions. But in fiction it gives the opportunity for your protagonists to describe their feelings and moods. To make their feelings known to the reader, and to distinguish between what the protagonists think and feel and what is shown only to the reader, behind the protagonists' backs so to speak.
- 4. Dream.** Fiction gives you the chance to dream and see your own images, non-fiction should not do either; it is important to get to the reality. When you describe a completely non-existent world in a non-existent galaxy you provide your reader with a chance to feel something only they can feel, in their own way, with their own moods and experiences. That would not be helpful in almost any non-fiction.

John



From Page to Screen

By Sam Ellis

It's not just John who has some good advice for putting pen to paper. Here are Sam's Top Tips for screenwriting!

Bringing your story to life on screen may seem like an impossible task. It's certainly not easy, but I'm here to tell you it's not impossible. However, in my opinion, there are a few critical points you should consider if you want to make it happen...

Format Your Script Properly*

In an industry full of mystery I can tell you one thing for sure; if your screenplay isn't formatted correctly, it's heading straight to the reject pile. Fact.

It's surprising how many new (and old) writers overlook this crucial step, but if you take the time to follow the simple, readily available formatting rules you'll already be ahead of the game.

Screenplays must follow a specific format, and while this might feel restrictive at first, it's actually a huge benefit for writers. It gives you clear guidelines, making the process smoother for you and, more importantly, for the script readers. Remember, readers often face a mountain of submissions, so anything that makes their job easier will work in your favour. Proper formatting shows you understand the industry standard and can replicate it again and again.

The last thing you want is for your script to stand out for the wrong reasons, so follow the formatting rules.

** Note: I won't go into the specifics of formatting here, but plenty of resources online can help, including programs that do most of the work for you. My personal favorite is Celtx.*

The Writer is NOT the Director

"Show, don't tell" isn't just good advice for writers - it's an absolutely unbreakable rule in screenwriting. Film is a visual and auditory medium, so always write with that in mind.

As the screenwriter, you're not directing actors on how to deliver lines, nor are you delving into the inner thoughts of characters. Your job is to create a framework for those emotions and actions to emerge naturally. If an actor can convey the same message with a look, cut the dialogue and trust the actor.

To use a simple analogy: you're providing the canvas with a rough sketch, and many other collaborators will come along to complete the painting. They may end up creating something different than you envisioned, and that's okay.

From Page to Screen, page 2

It's Called Show *BUSINESS!*

Showbusiness is just that—a business. It's crucial to be professional not only in how you deal with people but also in your writing habits. Meet deadlines, collaborate when possible, and always maintain a professional attitude, even when faced with rejection.

Rejections are inevitable, but how you handle them can speak volumes. Always be polite and professional; sometimes a rejection is an opportunity to show how easy you are to work with.

Understanding the business side is just as important as honing your writing. Stay up-to-date with what's popular in TV and film. What genres are trending? Which platforms are leading in viewership or content spending? A little research each week can keep you informed. Dedicate a few hours a month to trade press and industry research to stay ahead.

Be Realistic

Where do you see your work? If your vision is a gritty, sex-and-violence-filled drama, don't expect it to land a primetime slot on BBC1.

Also, temper your expectations. If you're a first-time writer with little industry experience, securing a big budget right away is unlikely. Be patient and realistic.

Book vs Screenplay

Many successful films and TV shows started as books. There's a well-known story about *Dances With Wolves* writer Michael Blake. He originally wrote it as a spec script, but it was repeatedly rejected. Kevin Costner suggested he turn it into a novel instead, and after doing so, Costner bought the rights. The result? Seven Academy Awards...

Know What to Do

So, you've finished your script—what now? The reality is, unless you have existing industry relationships, you'll probably need an agent. Don't entertain the idea of sending an unsolicited script to a studio; the sheer number of submissions floating around is staggering. Without proper representation, it's nearly impossible to get your script seen. So focus your attention on agents. Look out for industry events or open submissions.

Sam

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Dis. Tract.

By Mike Spurgeon

How do writers avoid distraction?

What! Just what is he doing? I had it all planned out and now he's off in a completely different direction. Absolutely, totally the wrong way, avoiding my carefully engineered meeting with the woman set to change their lives.

It had all started so well. Last night I read through my previous work and went to sleep hoping that my overnight creations would marinade into a delicious sauce ready to pour forth into the morning's endeavours. Now with an early start, my favourite mug filled with tea, the words failed to splash onto the page, ready sprinkled with correct punctuation. Sadly, my hopes were dashed; what I had written just wasn't right.

It's down to my main character, who is generally likeable, witty, clever, assured and ethically sound. All the things I would love to be, and he says the right thing in a pithy way at the appropriate time; coming up with phrases that I wish I could conjure up in the moment but only ever occur the next morning.

Despite being terrified of failure, an impending deadline has long ceased to get the creative juices flowing. Instead, the brain warily starts an internal dialogue as to whether I want to put myself through impending pain. For me, deadlines aren't so much a motivator as an existential crisis wrapped in a guilt blanket, peppered with a healthy dose of panic and topped with shame.

I assume that this natural for an aspiring writer with a slight touch of ADHD—a delightful combination of overthinking and underachieving. Writing is something I want to do, but strangely once I start, something I find numerous ways to avoid.

The wandering mind comes into its own, like wildebeest migrating vast distances across the Serengeti, it can cover huge distances on a great journey taking one far away from the initial starting point. A slight itch leads to a scratch, and then more scratching, which begs the question "why does scratching feel so good?". And that is what Google is for... and that research leads to... and... and...

It's like knowing you need to drink water, but your brain keeps insisting, "Maybe another tea? Or perhaps another quick review of YouTube?" The task is right in front of me, waiting to be tackled, but somehow, I manage to perform a series of elaborate mental gymnastics to avoid it. Suddenly, everything else becomes far more interesting or urgent. That tax return I've neglected for months? It's now critical. The dishwasher needs unloading right now, and I'm convinced that if I don't reorganize my desk this instant, my creativity will be forever stunted by misaligned paperclips.


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So, how can I break free from the shackles of distraction? Here's my approach:

First, block out some time and promise yourself you will do nothing but write. For me, this is most effective first thing before breakfast. My internal pact is not to eat or do anything other than write. As breakfast is my favourite meal of the day this is a significant motivator and form of self-bribery.

Second, I remind myself that whatever I'm writing doesn't have to be perfect; but it does have to exist. If I can at least move the story on then it can be shaped, edited and crafted to form a finished product. Several times, I've seen in various places that the secret of writing is re-writing. This is so true.

Third, I use a basic kitchen timer to set a short period of time to just write. The amount of time depends on how I am feeling, if I am anxious and unsettled (this particularly applies to a new piece) then I know that the timer might have to be set to just 5 minutes however if I am working with a project that has progressed and I am happier with then I will set the timer for 20 minutes. 



The writing I do at this stage is only pen and paper with very little thought for punctuation. Going back to decide on adding a comma stops the flow of words and puts a brake on the creative engines of the mind. The intention is to move the story on within a time that is short enough to prevent distractions from taking over but long enough to get me fully immersed once more into the story so that I begin to be carried along by it.

The reason I do this with paper and pen is that computers offer too many dangerously distracting possibilities such as "research", which is often an excuse not to engage with the story. I am indebted to Phillip Mitchell, the current chair of the Verulam Writers for this invaluable tip.

Often when the timer goes, I will still be writing, back into the story, playing with the characters, ideas flowing and the plot progressing. This is writing happiness.

Back to where we began, my main character was heading in the wrong direction. However, with a little happiness, it's so much easier to deal with negative things like not making enough progress with your story. You might even accept that when your main character decides to become a transvestite thief, it was an interesting twist that even you hadn't seen coming, when he does meet the woman who will change his life there will be a lot to unpick and I even got there with misaligned paperclips.

Mike

Note; This article was written before it was announced Mandy Carter would co-chair with Philip Mitchell. [ed.]

Grocers Apostrophe's; Part 3

By Ray Wilkinson

INTRODUCTION

Last time we looked at the use grammar and punctuation, both properly and improperly. Now, in the third and final article in the series and avoiding words that don't exist.

(It's hard to believe it happens, but I'm sure it does! [ed.]

DEPENDENT DEPENDANTS

Some words have similar meanings and similar, but not identical spelling, but are used differently. Using the words above as an example, *dependent* is an adjective or preposition and *dependant* is a noun – so a *dependant* would be *dependent* on someone or something. To say something is *dependant* on something else is incorrect – you should use *dependent* instead. Note that US English is different in this respect, with *dependent* being widely used for both.

A similar confusion applies to some other pairs of words, such as *every day* and *everyday*, which even applies to major retailers ('*Ikea – the Wonderful Everyday*' or the oft-seen '*Open Everyday*' on store fronts). *Everyday* is an adjective, and shouldn't be used as a noun, despite Ikea's misuse.

Some words have different meanings and spellings, but are often interchanged, such as *discrete* and *discreet*. *Discrete* means distinct or finite, whereas *discreet* means showing prudence or self-restraint. Principal and principle are often confused – principal is the first or highest, such as a *College Principal*, whereas a principle is a basic truth or assumption, such as *back to first principles*. Principal can also be used as an adjective (*the principal dancer*), but principle is only a noun.

SINGULARS AND PLURALS

Whether something is singular or plural is usually blatantly obvious, either from the word itself or the context. However, there are a few uses that are less clear. The words *either*, *neither* and *each* are almost always used in the singular, even though they apply to more than one item. The phrase '*neither John nor Tom were there*' is incorrect, and the phrase should be written '*neither John nor Tom **was** there.*' Similarly, '*each person raised their heads when the gun went off*' implies that each person has more than one head.

I often see '*the latter*' applied to mean '*the last*.' *Latter* is specifically the **second of two** items, whereas *last* should be used where there are more than two items in the list.

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Grocers Apostrophe's Part 3, Page 2

NON-EXISTENT WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

A few words are appearing, especially on social media, that are combinations of words but do not exist as a compound. Perhaps *alot* and *ahold* might be included in the OED at some point, but for the time being they aren't. Another fashion that is appearing – amongst younger people, primarily – is the expression '*Could of,*' rather than the correct '*Could have.*' It might be fine to use this in dialogue, in the right context, but definitely not in text outside of it. As an aside, there is no verb '*to not,*' only a split infinitive.

I was recently 'onboarded' onto some system or other, and objected strongly. Some may think it's a nice word, but I take the view there are enough ways to express most processes, so I don't think there's a reason to make up a new word for it.

THE EVOLVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

English, whether UK or US, is constantly changing, and many words evolve continuously. This is inevitable, but we shouldn't accept every change without challenge. A couple of examples come to mind:

Massive is a lovely word, one that you can really get some expression into. It's commonly used to mean *very large*, but it doesn't mean that at all. The actual meaning is '*of great mass,*' which is more related to *heavy* than *large*, so '*a massive hole*' is meaningless.

The word *regularly* is often assumed to be synonymous with *frequently*, but they definitely don't mean the same. I have a birthday regularly, but not frequently (though too frequently to be happy about). The advice given during covid to '*wash your hands regularly*' could have been heeded by washing them once a week, at 9am on Sunday, or at noon on the first day of every month. I settled for washing them frequently and not worrying how regularly I was doing so.

FINALLY...

I hope this series of articles has been useful, and not too tedious. It may even help you to win that competition or see your work in print. Poorly written work that is grammatically correct won't do either of these, but at least getting the grammar and punctuation right may prevent your work failing for avoidable reasons.

Thank you, Ray, for your good advice throughout this year. [ed.]

Public or Private Writing?

By Robert Paterson

I asked Verulam Writers members their views on how publicly they like to write. Do they write better in the privacy of their own home, or is writing in a public environment more stimulating? Have they no preference?

This is what they said.

Philip Mitchell

I love writing in coffee shops. The constant parade of caffeine seekers and their chatter, the rush of steam from the milk frother, the clink of cups. Sometimes there are dogs. With music on low in my headphones, I'm bathed in a sort of white noise, and my writing flows.

Wendy Turner

Preference on writing:

At home, in a solitary, self-catering environment although my trusty notebook and jottings make frequent appearances almost anywhere.

Sam Ellis

I prefer working indoors, where I can maintain a controlled environment. I find being outside too distracting, but indoors, I can regulate the temperature, lighting, and other factors to minimise interruptions and stay focused. A former tutor once told me she was so particular about her writing conditions that even the draft from her poorly-fitted windows needed to hit her at the right angle. I can completely relate!

Mandy Carter

I write wherever the muse takes me! On the train, in bed, at my desk, whilst I'm cooking... The benefits of using my phone as my writing tool!

Yvonne Moxley

I write in front of a blank wall and can't do it any other way. I'm too nosey. I'd be more interested in what's happening around me than what's happening on the page.

But hang about! That's not all Mandy has to say on the subject! Turn the page and see what's there...

Mandy Carter On Writing



I have a personal question to ask. And I completely understand if you'd rather not share. But how do you like to do it? On your own or in a group maybe? At a desk, or whilst in bed? Several times a day or intense long sessions once a week? Perhaps you're like me - and prefer to use an electronic handheld device. Honestly, I don't know how some people manage to write entire novels using only a notepad and pen.

OK - whilst some of you drag your mind out of gutter (you saucy lot) - I should clarify. I am of course talking about your preferences for writing. What do you use and where do you find is the most lucrative place to write? I'm a mobile phone and bed type of girl. Probably because I've been using some sort of handheld device - be it a Blackberry or iPhone - for the best part of 20 years now, so my thumbs are damn good at typing out an epic missive at speed. Though I don't know why I get most inspired to write whilst I'm in bed - I'm writing this at 10.30pm on a Sunday night, having pyjama-ed myself up, slapped some age defying cream on my face and trying to download all of my thoughts about this article in a matter of minutes before I really need to sleep. (Apparently, I have a kindred spirit in Truman Capote, who used to prefer writing whilst lying down - though I can only imagine it was far more difficult to do this with the big yellow legal pads he liked to use, rather than my dinky phone).

I like to think that using my phone makes me structured and gives me the opportunity to write wherever the muse takes me (buses, cars, coffee shops, at my desk at work... oops) - and I think the fact that I generally write blogs and articles means that this medium is well suited for quick bursts of activity. I'm not sure I could write a novel on it though - and if I did, I'd definitely need an app with more structure than humble old Notes. The downside is that I do have hundreds of half started articles (sometimes with just one or two words that I've jotted down in a fit of inspiration - only to forget quite quickly what on earth they actually mean).

I was told on a creative writing course, that I should always carry a small note pad and pen, to make notes as and when I come up with ideas, phrases and dialogue that I want to use in my writing. And whilst I did try this for a while, my biggest issue with notepads is one that I'm sure many can relate to. You just can't bring yourself to crack the spine of that pretty and expensive notepad you've just purchased, and to spoil it by scrawling half thought out ideas, in a handwriting that always starts off legible before descending into wild GP prescription territory. I also know that this specific notebook won't be the only one you have. Oh no, it will be one of many, pristine pads, cluttering up shelves - waiting to be written in but instead merely added to as your notebook addiction grows.

Computers - and more specifically laptops - are now the more usual way of settling down to compose your latest blockbuster. There is a plethora of online tools that one can invest in to keep you on the straight and narrow - and laptops obviously come with the portability that we all so love and need in these techy times.

Mandy Carter On Writing, page 2

However, if like me, you also have the attention span of a gnat (thank you social media), anything that connects to the internet is also going to be wildly distracting, so it's with huge curiosity that I've been looking at the Free Write*. First brought to my attention by the wonderful Dawn O'Porter, the Free Write is an electronic device that only allows you to type. With a small screen allowing you to see just 3 or so lines of text, your documents sync wirelessly to the cloud and you're free from the distraction of websites, emails, notifications and anything else you may decide to spend your time on. Having recently bought myself a jail box for my phone, the thought of being able to write free from modern day distractions is quite liberating.



Maybe though, we should take some inspiration from those writers who actually know what they are talking about.

1. Jack Kerouac famously wrote his work "On the Road" in a series of notebooks before typing it out on one continuous reel of paper over a period of 3 weeks (on a good old-fashioned typewriter one presumes - and with that the constant fear of mistakes that can't easily be rectified).
2. Vladimir Nabokov, the author of "Lolita" composed his work on index cards, which allowed him to rearrange scenes easily. A technique that James Joyce also embraced - though his index cards were huge scraps of cardboard.
3. Note pads in cafes and a typewriter was famously the preference of JK Rowling whilst she created the world of Harry Potter.
4. Whereas Twain, Hemingway and Gaiman all preferred the classic fountain pen (or "fountain pain" after all that writing). And many of these authors sought the solitude of garden rooms, writing sheds or libraries, as their writing place of choice.

With Maya Angelou renting out hotel rooms to be creative (taking along a bottle of sherry, deck of cards and a bible) and Agatha Christie coming up with her plots in the bathtub, I think it's safe to say that anything goes when it comes to writing tools and places to do the work in. I guess the most important thing is that you're doing the damn work in the first place!

Thanks to Phil for some inspiration and encouragement for this article!

*check it out at www.getfreewrite.com

Mandy

Epic Poetry in the Modern Age

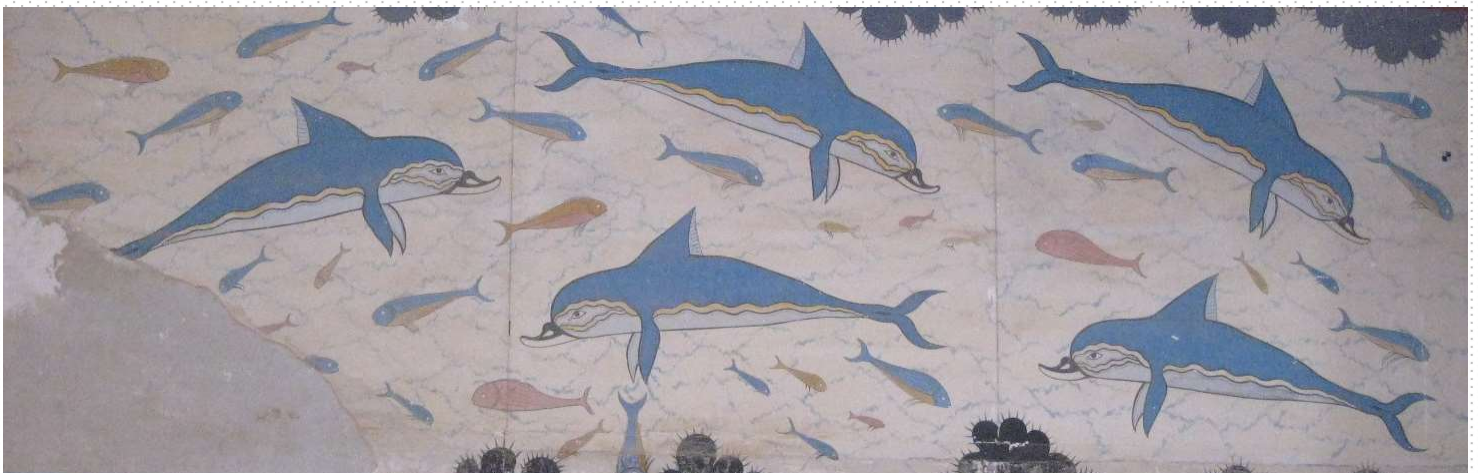
By Clare Lehovsky

Do the epic poems of the ancient world have a place in the world today? Clare thinks so!

For this edition of *Veracity*, I'll be discussing the idea of Epic Poetry in the Modern Age. Since both Judith Foster and I have published long poems on Amazon, I thought it would be appropriate to look at the epic poetry tradition. An epic poem can be typically defined as a lengthy narrative poem about the deeds of extraordinary characters who deal with gods or other forces, resulting in a foundation story for future generations to enjoy.

From the grandiose poems of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, inspired by an epic siege of the city of Troy in 1250 BC written by Homer, to a didactic five-book epic on fishing named the *Halieutica*, written by second-century Greco-Roman poet Oppian, and Virgil's *Aeneid*, another intimidating epic narrating the journey of the hero Aeneas from the fall of Troy to the foundation of early Rome, there is no easy way to start on this quest of explaining the dawn of epic poetry in the modern age. We could just as easily start with *Beowulf*, an Old English epic poem written in the tradition of Germanic heroic legend which consists of 3,182 alliterative lines. Or the Epic of Gilgamesh from ancient Mesopotamia, based on its literary history. Similarly, we could go further into the looking glass of the genre of "epic poetry" and start from Lord Byron's *Don Juan*, or Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in semi-modern times.

There are so many epic poems from so many cultures which I haven't mentioned here or barely know about that it's already taken up practically half of this article. I recently enjoyed reading Derek Walcott's *Omeros*, an epic poem published in 1990 based on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, set in the Caribbean. That is classified as an epic poem in the "modern age." I want to stress is however we try and classify an "epic poem," it is an interchangeable and ever-evolving literary genre.



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Epic Poetry in the Modern Age, page 2

As an example, see the beginning of Homer's Iliad:

“Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus’ son Achilleus/and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the Achaians/hurled in their multitudes to the house of Hades strong souls/of heroes, but gave their bodies to the delicate feasting/of dogs, of all birds, and the will of Zeus was accomplished/since that time when first there stood in division of conflict/Atreus’ son the lord of men and brilliant Achilleus.”

Compare with *Omeros* (1990) from the point of view of one of the main characters, a fisherman Philoctete:

“This is how, one sunrise, we cut down them canoes.”/ Philoctete smiles for the tourists, who try taking his soul with their cameras. “Once wind bring the news/to the laurier-cannelles, their leaves start shaking the minute the axe of sunlight hit the cedars,/because they could see the axes in our own eyes...”

I wrote a long poem and self-published it this year, *By the River*, not expecting it to join this cohort of fascinating literature, but because I had a story and it made sense to write it into poetry from prose at the time. Therefore it was really a pleasant accident that I wrote *By the River* the way it was. I am by no means an expert in writing the “epic poem” nor do I know everything about how it is meant to be written in the “modern age.” For me, it was about getting the story of the She-Wolf and her relationship with Romulus and Remus across. I enjoyed the process of paying tribute to Virgil, one of my favourite ancient authors, which is what many poets and authors have done over the centuries. I found it easier to use an already established story such as the She-Wolf, make her my hero of the poem and include a revenge-cycle, which mapped out the events easily and established an ending before it began.



Epic Poetry in the Modern Age, page 3

As demonstrated in Beowulf, there needs to be a hero and a quest, which can be seen in other forms of literature such as Tolkien's works and Rowling. So, I'm not going to tell you how to write a story, which is what you already know. Judith Foster published *Achilles the Changeling*, based on the life and decisions of Achilles, a "what if" long poem based on his decision to turn his back on the Greeks during the Trojan War and go home to an alternative way of life that the gods offered. So, I don't think it is how a poem or a story is classified; what is really important is in what medium your story is going to be told. The epic poem in the modern age is always evolving, there are lots of ways you can tell your story, in another language, another rhythm, another format. To me, I can't really define "Epic Poetry in the Modern Age" in one article. The basic structure stands – a hero, an adventure, possibly a villain but there doesn't have to be. It could be just a long poem on an idea close to your heart, not a collection of poetry, but a long poem with a continuous storyline. After that, it is up to you as to how you write it.

The epic poem has changed so much from its dawning and it will change again in 2024 and onwards. There are various examples of modern epic poems which I have yet to read, and I will definitely add to my reading list, such as *Heart X-Rays*, reviewed as an epic poem that is "grounded in poetic tradition, yet it stretches the boundaries of that tradition". To me, this is what makes epic poetry really exciting and I can't wait to see what happens next. All I know is that I enjoy writing poetry in long form and I would like to continue working on this technique for as long as I am able. It's a different type of challenge, but it's worth it.

Clare



Deep and Dark

The Judging of the David Gibson Cup 2024

By Robert Paterson

Suzanne Stanton had won the David Gibson Cup with a story on the theme “Schadenfreude”. This permitted her to select this year’s theme and she chose...

“Something in the Water.”

It was a theme that generated a lot of clever entries with a lot of different perspectives. On Wednesday 2nd October, for only the second time in St Stephen’s Church Hall, we laid out all 14 entries on tables and voted to select the best. Someone even joined that very night in order to enter!

Some of the entries were fantastical. One popular entry focussed on witchcraft and a woman who is convinced her sister was wrongly executed for it. Another incorporated two aquanauts exploring the seas underneath the ice cap of Jupiter’s moon Europa, searching of life.

Other entries were more grounded in reality. One was focussed around the last rites of an elderly Maori gentleman. Then there was an apocryphal story about the writing of Deep Purple’s song *Smoke on the Water*, followed by a tale about a father and son making the best of their holiday, and a historical story about a Pharaoh of Ancient Egypt watching his nation fall to the Romans.

Most intriguing of all, a few of the stories appeared at first to be fantastical but weren’t. In one, a boy wrongly believes his grandmother’s attack of senile dementia to be proof she’s a werewolf! Another concerned a false sighting of a new Nessie that starts a media sensation. Two tales threw huge curveballs; an American making tea badly was made to sound like a creature feature, while a strange proliferation of red hair in a maternity ward’s babies turns out not to be pollution, but the a plot of a sneaky sperm donor!

Sadly, there’s only one winner in the David Gibson. While voting was very widely spread, it was Dave Weaver’s fantastical saga, *The Thing in the Water*, that got most votes from members. Mandy Carter, meanwhile, won the Gnome de Plume for her pen name Walter E. Grave.



Now, turn the page and let’s see if you agree if Dave’s entry was a worthy winner!

Robert

The Thing in the Water

Winning entry for the David Gibson Cup 2024

By David Weaver

It had been a strange enough case to appear in the local paper at the time; 'Twelve-year-old Boy Saved From Watery Death'. The local polis boat had found him floating on the loch's placid surface some hours after he was reported missing from the tourist launch. Luckily, it had been a full moon that night.

The locals had muttered into their long fishermen beards as the officers brought him ashore, wrapped him in a thick towel and gently placed his shaking young body in the back of their patrol car while its violent red light flashed round the boatsheds and wharfs. He'd regained enough composure by then to explain how he'd toppled into the water whilst trying to view some object below the loch's dark expanse. He couldn't remember what the object had been though, nor explain how he'd survived whilst he couldn't even swim. His hysterical parents didn't care; their boy was miraculously safe and that was all that mattered.

But the ordeal had its long-term consequences. In his late teens he'd become troubled by the incident, in his mid-twenties obsessed. Now at thirty-two it appeared to have affected his whole life. He'd neither made male friends he trusted nor indeed managed any form of meaningful relationship with the opposite sex. And at night he would dream of the thing that had saved him, supporting his small freezing body until the sun sank low, the moon arose and his rescuers had frightened it away. The memory was fuzzy yet still haunted him.

He'd earned some considerable savings by living frugally and being good at his job. He would use that money to find out exactly what had happened. He booked an expensive session with a psychiatrist.

"I want you to completely relax and concentrate on my finger." The digit moved slowly across his field of vision. "You are sleepy. You are regressing to a young man, now a child. You are twelve years old again, floating in the water. It's twilight and you are very cold and scared. You struggle to stay afloat. Then something happens. Tell me..."

He heard his own voice intone as if from far away. "She comes to me."

"Who comes?"

"The girl in the water."

"What girl, who is she, why is she there?"

"I...don't know." But she had been beautiful he now realised, a fairy princess of the deep. She'd held his head and calmed his panic. Then that sound had begun, high-pitched and ethereal. He felt its vibration lift him up above the water, like he was hovering on top of it.

The Thing in the Water, Page 2

She was singing to him.

A click of the fingers awoke him from the trance. He'd finally remembered her, the thing in the water. And now he could never forget.

He researched the phenomenon. Always a practical man, he looked for an explanation in legends from the mists of time; Selkies and Mermaids, Huldra and Sirens. Mythical creatures from ancient history that had driven men insane, just as she was now driving him. But she had stayed with him, rescued him! She was good not evil. He realised he had been in love with her from the very first, that no female could ever take her place whilst she existed in this world.

The old fisherman was adamant. He would not take him out on the loch at full moon. The waterway was deep; it had dangerous tides, maybe an outlet to the distant sea. Things came and went when the water was at its highest. Like tonight for instance...

"But you don't understand!" That was the whole point. He'd done his research.

"I do, laddie. And I know exactly who you are. That's how she gets 'em."

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Don't you...?"

He followed the old guy to the pub. When he was sure the man was drunk enough he retraced his steps back to the quay. The ramshackle ketch was tied up but it was an easy enough job to untangle the rope and start the battered old engine. And then he was in the middle of the loch with a full moon rising above its dark protecting hills. He cut the power and let the boat drift.

For a long while there was nothing, then a gentle ripple announced her arrival. He bent over, as he had those many years ago, to see the image below. No longer a fairy princess, he found himself staring at a beautiful sensuous Queen, her long silver tresses fanning out from her exquisite countenance across the water. She smiled up at him in recognition.

Then she rolled onto her back and too late he saw the wiry insect-like pincers reaching up for his throat. They cut in deep then dragged his body over the side and down into the depths. His last thought, as he struggled in vain for his life, was the old fisherman's warning to him:

'She always throws the little 'un's back, laddie.'

What We're Reading (and What We Think!)

Clare Lehovksy is listening to... **Clytemnestra** by Costanza Casati

I read Casati's second book, *Babylonia*, first for a review. I actually found her second book better than the first one, although maybe I am fussier about Greco-Roman mythology than Babylonian. Casati writes really well in both.

Clytemnestra is about the early life of Clytemnestra from Greek mythology, as well as the events surrounding her life and that of her family, including her sister Helen, later on the famous Helen of Troy. Clytemnestra is famous in her own right and I've only just started this version of her story, so have yet to pass judgement on how she is presented in opposition or in tandem with Aeschylus' *Oresteia*.

Pauline O'Connor is reading... **Mother Naked** by Glen James Brown

Durham, 1434. The titular minstrel (incongruously, a man) tells the tale of the Fell Wraith to an audience of the city's most influential people. 40 years before, this hideous spirit slaughtered the residents of the village of Segerston. Yet this man's tale may not be a story, but an analogy for the poor and downtrodden in the previous century; a time marred by the Black Death and several other ominous events.

Mother Naked is an engrossing book combining humour, horror, and hierarchy. The tale wound through privilege, religion and class but never lost its grip. I loved it and highly recommend this tale of monsters and wraiths for Halloween.

Sam Ellis is reading... **The Story of My Life** by Helen Keller

An extraordinary book by an extraordinary lady. Helen's vivid descriptions of navigating the world without sight or sound are profoundly humbling and her candid portrayals of her temper tantrums feels raw and authentic. She never sugarcoats her situation or her frustrations, which makes her unique story all the more relatable. I must admit, the latter part, where she praises her many friends and their virtues, felt less relevant to me, but up until that point the book was absolutely brilliant.

Philip Mitchell is reading... **The Bee Sting** by Paul Murray

Set in modern Ireland, *The Bee Sting* tells the story of the O'Reilly family as they deal with the ups and downs of life. The story shifts between the past and present, showing how tough times shape who we are. I love Murray's highly readable style, which perfectly blends humour, wisdom and heartache. Thought-provoking long after you finish reading. Highly recommended!

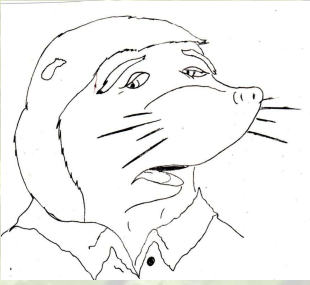
The Wind in the Willows

By Kenneth Grahame

A review by Judith Foster

The book was first published in 1908.

My edition, its 93rd, is dated 1950.



It was considered a children's book, and I certainly read it before the age of ten. But its appeal must have been to a wider audience than children, in spite of the fact that almost all its characters are talking animals. They dress and behave as adult humans, live in human interiors, and draw on human resources for food and equipment.

When I first read it, I was told I would not enjoy the chapter entitled *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*. Indeed, I first read it about three months ago and understood why. It is a lyrical return to the age of mythical Greece, a curious insertion in a children's book. There is another curious chapter, *Wayfarers All*, in which the contented, riverside Water Rat is tempted to become a wanderer in the world.

Why these two chapters? Perhaps the date of publication gives a clue. The centuries of worldwide exploration were over, the century of colonisation and the British diaspora was past, continental Europe was closing in, and the British adventurer could look to few fresh woods and pastures new.



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The Wind in the Willows, A review by Judith Foster; Page 2

In fact, looked at overall, the whole book is about the desire to escape and explore: Mole leaves his underground comfort and becomes a River Mole, Toad is constantly itching to be somewhere else, more quickly, even the baby otter goes adventuring. One thinks of John Masefield, his eyes always on the horizon, Richard Garnet's *Where Corals Lie*, *Ships of Arcady* by Francis Ledwidge, the fascinating *Lavender Pond* by C. Fox Smith and the archetypal *Wander Thirst* by Gerald Gould.

In the end, all of Kenneth Grahame's characters come home to their slippers and their pipes, comfortable, but maybe not rid of their wish for the larger stage.

Perhaps, after all, it is not a children's book, but exists on two levels. The atmosphere is calm, full of peaceful and contemplative delights, adult longings and unfulfillment. The violence of the last chapter is quite out of keeping, as is the conversion of the georgic Badger to war-leader. Is it a squint forward to a future of war?

Judith

VERACITY

VERULAM WRITERS 2024 COMPETITION WINNERS

FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	GNOME
David Gibson Cup Topic: Something in the Water (set by Suzanne Stanton) Adjudication Date: 2 nd October 2024			
David Weaver	Only one winner, I'm afraid!		Alex Craig (aka Kirsten Swore)
Lisbeth Phillips Plate Competition Topic: A Historic Moment (set by Sam Ellis) Adjudication Date: 29 th November 2023			
Judith Foster	Austin Guest	Alex Craig	Austin Guest (aka Mandy Lifeboats)
President's Competition Topic: Impersonation (set by Judith Foster) Adjudication Date: 20 th March 2024			
Ben Bergonzi	Tina Shaw	Mike Spurgeon	Cecile Keen (aka Noah Lott)
Crystal Decanter Competition Topic: Star (set by Barbara Billington) Adjudication Date: 1 st May 2024			
Philip Mitchell	Dave Weaver	Tina Shaw	Philip Mitchell (aka Ian Ter-Stella)
Howard Linskey Competition Topic: Crime Adjudication Date: 19 th June 2024			
Cecile Keen	Anne Ellis	Steve Seaton and Joan Crooks	Steve and Joan again (aka Penny Forum)

Information Resources and Contact



The VW Website www.verulamwriters.org

Contains information about our upcoming meetings, competitions, events, etc.

This newsletter may be found there too!

verulamwritersevents@hotmail.co.uk Here you can register your interest for **volunteering at events** and submit a piece to our website's **Writing by our Members** section. We will post it for you. One piece per member.

VWPublicity@gmail.com For any **events you know of** and would like publicised.

VWVeracityEditor@gmail.com For **articles for this newsletter** and any **feedback** you have for the editor.

Members' Forum This section of the website is for members' **discussions on writing, sharing work** for feedback and **making suggestions** about the Writing Group. Any member with an e-mail address and paid-up membership can join. We'll need to check your membership and validate your account afterwards, but that's a mere technicality and should take us two days maximum!

Venue Address St Stephen's Church Hall, 1 Watling Street, St Albans, Herts., AL1 2PT. We meet at 8PM on the first, third and, if possible, fifth Wednesday of every month except August. Check the website just in case, because the church sometimes has to allocate us different evenings.

The editor would like to thank all of the contributors to this edition,
and all editions of VERACITY.

Our next meeting will be on
Wednesday 6th November at **St
Stephen's Church Hall.**

For more details please visit
<https://www.verulamwriters.org/>

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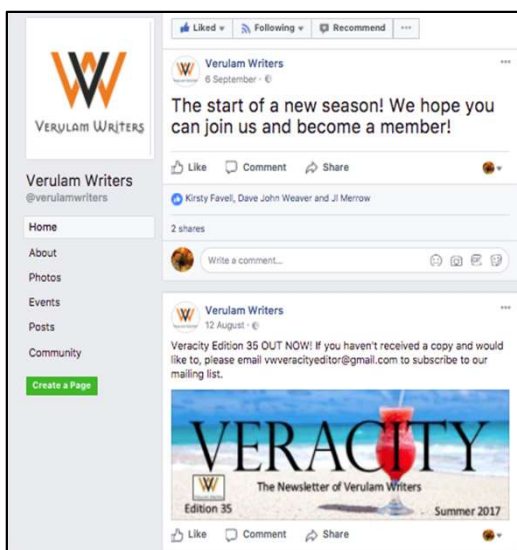
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Please do use these pages as VW members. Just keep the posts writing-related and don't feed the trolls!