

# VERACITY

The Newsletter from Verulam Writers



Edition 40

Spring 2019



***“CONGRATULATIONS ON 65 YEARS” – SIR TIM RICE***

## From the Editor...

Hello and welcome to another edition of VERACITY – the newsletter by Verulam Writers about all things writing.

This is a very special edition in honour of **Verulam Writers** turning **65**. I'm delighted that so many previous members of the group have written for this edition (look out for the 'My VW' articles), and how each has expressed in their own way exactly how much Verulam Writers has meant to them.

In very exciting news, we are delighted to be hosting our first ever **Local Writers' Showcase** – an event where local writers, members of Verulam Writers or not, can read out work, listen to others and enjoy some drinks and nibbles. This is on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30pm at Oxfam Bookshop (8-10 Catherine Street, St Albans, AL3 ). If you could like to put your name down to read then email [verulamwritersevents@outlook.com](mailto:verulamwritersevents@outlook.com) Admission is free but all donations to our generous hosts, Oxfam, are welcome.

In this edition you'll also find tips on creating convincing characters, making the unbelievable believable, and a very important writing skill – *showing* not *telling*.

I hope you enjoy this special edition, and here's to 65 more wonderful years!

Sam Ellis, Editor  
[VWVeracityEditor@gmail.com](mailto:VWVeracityEditor@gmail.com)

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present a...

## Local Writers' Showcase

St Albans and Hertfordshire writers will entertain you with their work



**Oxfam Bookshop**

8-10 Catherine St, St Albans, AL3 5BX

**Free admission and refreshments**

Donations to Oxfam gratefully received

If you are interested in reading out your work at this or future events  
please email [verulamwritersevents@outlook.com](mailto:verulamwritersevents@outlook.com)

**support your local literary scene**

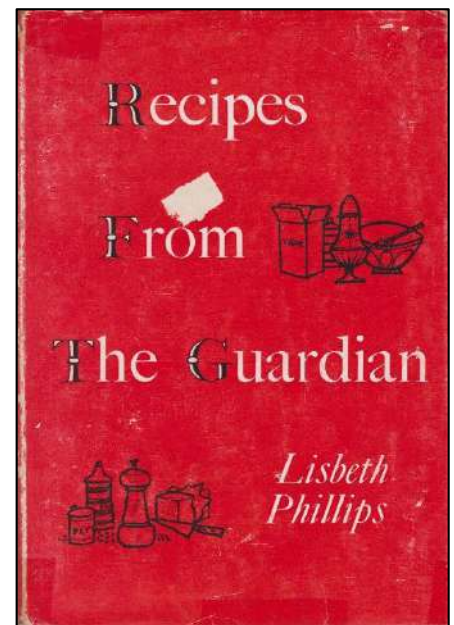
## Verulam Writers: The Early Years

*The editor goes on a quest to find out more about Verulam Writers.*

**With the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Verulam Writers looming, I wanted to find out more about the history of the group. What I found out about us storytellers is quite a story in itself.**

In September 1953 a new weekly evening course was introduced at the St Albans College of Further Education entitled 'Writing for Pleasure'. English tutor Philip Heather (later deputy headmaster of St Albans School) was hired to lead the course by the principal of the college, Donald Newman. Ten students duly signed up.

The course was not a success as numbers dwindled, and by December the course had shut down. But one student's enthusiasm proved to be formidable. With the support of Philip Heather this one student invited the remaining and keen colleagues to her home in Radlett to continue their studies. That student's name was Lisbeth Phillips. As one article says, "...if any one person could be credited with getting the Writers' Circle rolling, it is Lisbeth Phillips." With Lisbeth's drive and Philip's support The Verulam Writers Circle was born.



Lisbeth was an accomplished writer in the field of cooking. She was a Cordon Bleu cook and had sold recipe articles to The Guardian newspaper, leading her to publish a book *Recipes from The Guardian*. By accounts she was a great source of encouragement to other members and was elected vice-president, but sadly Lisbeth died prematurely. The Lisbeth Phillips Competition was set up in her honour and continues to this day. While now a factual writing competition, it began with the apt theme of 'food glorious food'.

Before long the homes of members were not large enough to support the growing numbers, so The Verulam Writer's Circle moved to the Mayor's Parlour of the Town Hall, today the St Albans Museum and Gallery. By the 1970s they had moved to the St Albans College of Building in what is now Oaklands College, before finding a home at St Michael's Church Hall.

The programme of events from the early days is similar to that of today. Manuscript evenings, talks about writing by professionals in their field and competition nights all took place. The success book was also present and non-members had to pay an attendance fee – though this was originally 15 pence compared with a few pounds today. There was also a 'silly evening' where writers were encouraged to bring something comedic.

As with today's members, some early members found great success. Past members include fiction



editor Muriel Miller, freelance writer Bernard Dumbleton, novelist Keith Ellis, playwright Allan Prior, playwright Willis Hall, novelist Eileen Elias, greeting-card writer Albert Morton, author Frank Ferneyhough and novelist and radio writer Joan Rice. Backing for the group had come from Arthur Swinson, journalist, novelist and script writer – another person who, like Lisbeth, was generous with support.

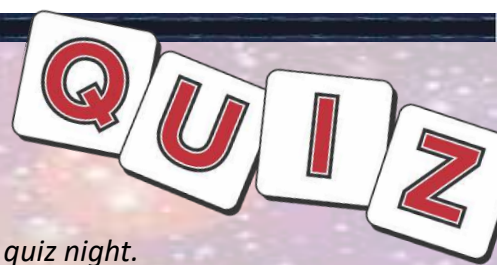
While the early days of the group were undoubtedly very different, the similarities are striking. In one article the aims were described as “To bring would-be writers together, to help and stimulate each other by the exchange of ideas, experience, constructive criticism and encouragement.” As true of Verulam Writers in 1953 as it is today.

#### Sources:

- Ferneyhough, Frank, ‘Success Story of Hertfordshire Writers’, *Hertfordshire Countryside* June 1974, pg. 18-19.
- Cooper, Robin, ‘Writing around the Circle’, *Hertfordshire Countryside* May 1984 pg. 32-33.

With thanks to Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies.

## Third Time’s a Charm!



*Verulam Writers’ resident quizmaster Robert Paterson on the annual quiz night.*

It’s always a pleasure to organise and run the annual Verulam Writers’ quiz and the evening of Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2019 marked my third year as quiz master. This year, three teams of roughly four members apiece took part. I can’t say where everyone else was. Maybe they weren’t feeling clever that night!

In previous years audio rounds had been a pain to organise, so I left those out this time. The VW Committee had also pleaded that I make the quiz more focussed on literature, given that we’re a writers’ group. While I took this into account, variety *is* the spice of life, so I made sure rounds and questions remained tied into other subjects, even those with a literary theme. As follows...

### ROUND 1

#### THREE-TWO-ONE WITTY DITTIES

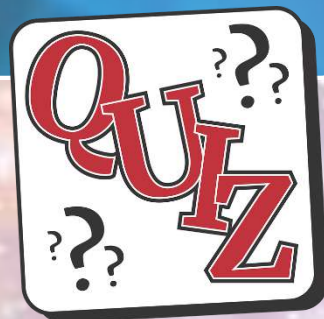
Contestants had to guess five-letter words from clues hidden in short poems. I was kinder than Ted Rogers in that I posted the poems on the wall, so teams could refer to them later.

### ROUND 2

#### ADAPTATIONS

This was questions about film or television adaptations of books.





## ROUND 3

## WHO WROTE WHAT?

Self-explanatory; just name the author of a novel or series of books (comparatively easy, so they told me).

## ROUND 4

## HISTORY

Contestants guessed the year when a book was first published by an historical event that happened the same year.

## ROUND 5

## CONNECTIONS

In previous years I had asked four general knowledge questions whose answers had a literary connection. This year, it was four literary questions with a connection based in a different subject!

## ROUND 6

## NEXT LINES

I quoted a line from a poem, so that teams could guess the next line, the title and the poet's name (quite challenging, they said later).

## ROUND 7

## BLOCKBUSTERS GOLD RUN

Ten of the trademark green and gold hexagons were posted on the wall. Each contained an abbreviation. Contestants had to decipher what each abbreviation meant from the clues I gave them.

## PICTURE ROUND

## (ONGOING UNTIL THE END)

Inspired by a popular series of greeting cards, I created ten rows of picture clues from which teams had to decipher the names of famous people. Some were very straightforward, while others were more obscure, or required specialist knowledge, such as geography, foreign languages, even Disney movies!

In the end, the winning team was Dave Weaver's team, Super Wolf Moon, and each of the four members won a special book of brain-teasing puzzles.

Once again, those who took part said they had genuinely had fun. Next year, the committee thinks we may host the quiz in the spring rather than the winter and provide refreshments, in the hopes of drawing a larger crowd.

I say the more the merrier!

See you next year, everyone.





## Verulam Writers 2018/2019 Competition Winners

First	Second	Third	Gnome
<b>David Gibson Cup</b> <b>Topic:</b> An Object that Changes Lives <b>Adjudication Date:</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2018			
Claire Morgan	N/A	N/A	Michael (aka Sue Pine)
<b>Lisbeth Phillips Competition</b> <b>Topic:</b> Revolutionary Thoughts <b>Adjudication Date:</b> 28 <sup>th</sup> November 2018			
Dave Weaver	Phillip Mitchell	N/A	Phillip Mitchell (aka Trey Flick-Light)
<b>President's Competition</b> <b>Topic:</b> A Ghost Story <b>Adjudication Date:</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2019			
Oscar Windsor-Smith	Sam Ellis	Phillip Mitchell	Tina Shaw (aka Sue Tibble)
<b>Crystal Decanter Competition</b> <b>Topic:</b> Print the Legend <b>Adjudication Date:</b> 15 <sup>th</sup> May 2019			
TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
<b>Howard Linskey Competition</b> <b>Topic:</b> TBC <b>Adjudication Date:</b> 26 <sup>th</sup> June 2019			
TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

## My VW - Gillian Thornton

*Former Verulam Writers' President Gillian Thornton recalls her early days as a member.*

### **A career as a writer? Me?**

When I first enrolled on 'Frank's class' in September 1974, I saw the two-term evening class at St Albans College simply as the fulfilment of a schoolgirl ambition to write. I never in my wildest imagination saw it as the start of a new career. I was just 21, fresh out of college, and getting to grips with my first paid job as a bilingual PA in London's West End. My career path, I thought, was set.

Fast forward to the present and I've been a self-employed freelance writer for nearly 40 years, learning on the job and reinventing myself whenever the opportunity arose. When my children were small, I wrote on childcare and parenting. When they started school, I moved into celebrity interviews and corporate communications. And 20 years ago, I began to concentrate on travel with an emphasis on France. All without a word of formal training.

A former Board member of the British Guild of Travel Writers, I now sell to women's magazines, travel titles and an award-winning travel website

for the over-50s. I've even won the odd award myself. But none of it would have happened without St Albans literary legend Frank Ferneyhough, railway buff and one-time speech writer for Dr Beeching. Nor without the support and camaraderie of the Verulam Writers Circle which I joined, very nervously, in the late '70s.

I was proud to have notched up the first sale of Frank's group that year, thanks to his approaching an editor friend who bought my article about life as a bilingual PA for his glossy careers magazine. I'd written it for homework because it was the only thing I thought I could write from my rather pathetic list of ideas, but the job was new, the Common Market was on the horizon, and Frank saw an opening for his youngest pupil.

Another small sale followed and at the end of the two terms, Frank urged me – and a couple of other 'chosen ones' – to join the Verulam Writers Circle as his guest at one of their fortnightly meetings. Anyone who has toured the exhibition spaces at the new St



Albans Museum & Gallery will know the grand Georgian ballroom with its sparkling chandeliers and views down St Peter's Street, but when I walked in there for the first time that autumn evening, I was met with the huge Council table and a sea of unfamiliar faces. All older than me and all, I imagined, wildly successful writers.

They weren't all selling regularly of course – the Circle was, and has always been, a lovely mix of the amateur and semi-professional – but it took a while for me to realise that and feel at home. But everyone was friendly, some took me





under their wing, and many went on to be long-term friends.

Muriel Millar was renowned for her short stories, going on to become fiction editor at IPC magazines, now re-incarnated as Time Inc, whilst her partner Bernard Dumbleton was, I believe, a technical editor. Wheathampstead resident Eileen Elias became the acclaimed author of two books of childhood memories (and hosted the most wonderful Hallowe'en parties at her rambling house with a staircase at each end!). And people talked of Joan Rice, mother of Sir Tim, who was then living overseas but was later to become a great friend, right up until her death a few years ago.

It's hard to remember how

many people met together in the Council chamber, though I'm thinking around 30. Several of them had been products of Frank's St Albans class, a class that I ended up teaching just a few years later in Harpenden, at his instigation of course. He was never happier than making opportunities for his prodigies. It's a feeling I was to understand in the years that followed as my own star pupil, VWC member Jean Gardener, went on to write articles and books of her own.

Like many writers, I've always been a bit of a hoarder but when Sam asked me to write this article, I was surprised to find how much I had kept from those early VWC days. Among several competition entries and accompanying adjudication notes, I found a travel article on

France, awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> place by Joan Rice, in 1982, and an interview with Sir Tim, also placed second by Betty Puttick, St Albans-based writer of local ghost books and women's magazine fiction.

After a few years, I was asked to do a stint on the committee, acting as Secretary to Cuffley-based Chairman, Mary Rensten, who was also deeply involved with the Society of Women Writers and Journalists. She urged me to join the SWWJ too and, to my delight, I also unearthed forgotten manuscripts and correspondence relating to three competition wins, one of which earned me a place at their summer school.

By that stage, I was giving talks to other writers' groups about freelance article writing, frequently drawing on examples of Circle members' success. Between them, they provided a constant stream of inspiration, everyone doing something different. In those days, it was easier to sell fact than fiction, a situation that's now swung the other way, given the decline in print outlets and the rise in e-books and blogging.

Deep in the files, I found press cuttings too. A mention in the *Herts Ad* for myself and another of Frank's students in

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the Class of '75. Once a PR, always a PR, he never missed an opportunity to publicise his class, his pupils and the Circle. There's a photo too of a much younger me, holding up copies of my one and only book. A monthly contributor to *Writers News and Writing Magazine* from issue one in 1989 until 2010, I was commissioned to produce *Successful Article Writing* as part of their library of hardback instructional books.



Published in 1993, it is long since obsolete, so I was amazed this January to receive a PLR payment of ...£1.70!

Frank died in 1994, many years after he had bestowed the role of VWC President on me, and after more than a decade, I passed the title on to Nick Cook. Today I'm proud to be an Honorary Life Member, although many newer members probably have no idea! I owe Verulam Writers a huge debt and remain at their service at any time – all you have to do is ask!

[www.travelwriters.co.uk/gillianthornton](http://www.travelwriters.co.uk/gillianthornton)

## Verulam Writers Making Waves

*Phillip Mitchell takes to the airwaves.*

I was invited on to Radio Verulam 92.6FM to talk to DJs Nick Hazel and Ruth Farenga about Verulam Writers and the Local Writers' Showcase.

We chatted about the benefits of joining Verulam Writers and what people could look forward to at the forthcoming local writers' event at St Albans Oxfam Bookshop. They're always keen to speak to local writers, so if you have a new book out, or something else interesting to talk about, then contact them and get yourself on the airwaves.





## Creating Convincing Characters Workshop

*Chair of Verulam Writers Lesley Eames on her workshop about how to create characters.*

**As a creative writing tutor and mentor, as well as a writer of published short stories and novels, I have analysed many stories over many years and was delighted to share some of the things I've learned with Verulam Writers in a workshop.**

We began by looking at some well-known characters to understand that perfect people make for dull reading. Compelling characters have flaws. Indeed, Jane Austen carried the flaws of Lizzie Bennett and Fitzwilliam Darcy into her title – *Pride and Prejudice*.



In creating characters we can look at the present, the past and the future of their lives:

- The present – age, gender, ethnicity, education/job, social class, family situation, home, tastes, interests, body language, speech...
- The past – the circumstances and events that have shaped our character and made them what they are.
- The future – their hopes, dreams, expectations, plans, fears, barriers to moving forward... Of course, the story may take our character in a different direction and this in itself can help to build tension.

Having worked out basic information about our character, we can consider how we might dig deeper into their head and heart.

Possibilities include:

- Interviewing our character. This doesn't need to be an interview about the story but about everyday matters.
- Walking around in our character's shoes. What does our character think of what we see and hear?
- Go shopping as if we're our character. What does our character think of the items for sale, the prices, the other shoppers, the person on the till?
- Read a newspaper or watch television as if we're our character.

Much if not most of what emerges won't come into the story, but we'll have gained insight into our character and this will bring authenticity and roundedness to the way they think, feel, act and react.

We talked about engaging the senses and pretending to *be* our character when we're writing about them instead of just watching them in our mind's eye. How does it *feel*





to taste sea air for the first time or to hear enemy soldiers approaching? What are our physical as well as our intellectual and emotional responses?

We then looked at the relationship between character and plot, and how they influence each other. Stories with no character development can feel dull. The way our character is shaped by what happens in the story – what they learn and how they change – gives a story interest and purpose. This development, often known as a character arc, can be summed up in ‘change’ words – gains confidence, learns to trust, learns to let go, comes to realise...

Sometimes the change can be dramatic. Sometimes it can be small. Our character might be the catalyst for changing another character or the reader’s perceptions.

Moving on to technical issues, we considered how we might ensure that the character we have created in our heads is the character who comes across to the reader. We considered *tell* (what we tell the reader) and *show* (what our character thinks, feels, says and acts and how other characters interact with them and talk about them).

Dialogue is an important part of characterisation, of course. Dialogue ‘essentials’ include:

- Using it to move the plot along and/or to show character.
- Ensuring characters speak *in* character with the dialogue representing their personality and circumstances.
- Using contractions such as *I’ll* instead of *I will* unless there’s a reason for not using them.
- Not overusing or underusing dialogue tags such as *Fred said* and considering other signals to identify who’s speaking such as linking a speech to an action.
- Using adverbs and accents sparingly.
- Not using words such as *Oh*, *Yes*, *No* and *Well* unless they add value.

Finally, we considered the questions we might ask ourselves once we’ve finished our first draft of a story, including:

- Do we have the right character ‘owning’ the story or parts of it?
- Do we have the right balance of focus across the characters? Has one character come to dominate? Has another fallen by the wayside?
- Does every character serve a purpose?
- Does each step in our characters’ journey through the story serve a purpose?
- Are our characters well fleshed-out or mere clichés and stereotypes?
- Will our characters engage the reader?
- Have we made our characters sufficiently distinct from each other?
- Have we introduced them in a way that won’t confuse the reader?
- 

Having already engaged in writing exercises during the course of the workshop, we all rushed home to write some more (except for the people who sneaked off to the pub).

## The 2019 President's Competition

Gerwin de Boer on one of VW's most important competitions of the year.

**When I heard the theme of Verulam Writers annual President's Competition was 'Ghost Stories' I could not help but attend in spirit. I did not have to travel far to St Michael's church hall. Six feet up and across the yard.**



Last year's winner, Barbara Cooper, adjudicated the competition alongside John Spencer, the President. Eleven brave writers had held up that dark mirror to reflect on the afterlife. Their stories were imaginative, haunting, scary, grim, and even humorous. I will not reveal which ones were the most accurately. That would spoil a truly once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Barbara and John provided a brief summary of all the stories, before announcing their winners: Third prize went to Phil Mitchell's *Walk on By*. A story

that teaches us ghosts can be stalkers, and murderers, and soapy foam in the shower. Or are they merely desperate for company? Perhaps death is not enough to stop us from being human.

Sam Ellis' *The Pilot* was the runner-up. His was a story of bad weather, an emergency landing, an eerie village, haunting laughter, and waiting for the eternal fog to lift.

*Earth Whispers* by Oscar Windsor-Smith won first prize. Teenage violence and a lack of police funding form the backdrop for a tale that climaxed when the writer revealed the identity of the ghost. Coming in at under 400 words, well below the 1000-word limit, Oscar's story shows that a successful story, like a well-lived life, is not defined by its length.

The writers then read out all the competition entries, confronting the audience with cow ghosts, texting ghosts, dead boyfriends, dog ghosts, emancipating ghosts, Neanderthal ghosts, and, perhaps most frighteningly of all, children who refuse to go to bed.

Afterwards, a few writers had a drink at The Six Bells, and others went home. Left alone with their thoughts, staring at their pints or bedroom ceilings, I am sure all wondered how hard it would be to reach out from the afterlife. To touch something. To be heard. To write an article for Veracity...



*The spookiest prize of all went to Tina Shaw (aka Sue Tibble).*

## Special Guest Visit - Richard Foreman

Robert Paterson *on our special guest night.*

**On 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019, Verulam Writers was proud to welcome Mr Richard Foreman, publishing agent for Sharpe Books, as a guest speaker.**

20 years' experience in the publishing trade has given Richard an inside view of numerous significant changes in his world. When he started his career, the trade was at a peak. Inspiring modern book store chains were just emerging and giving the printed word an exciting new image.

This boom time has since diminished, as digital media has challenged and damaged the traditional publishing industry. Now eBooks offer an easier way into publishing for new authors, particularly self-published ones. Yet one fact hasn't changed; good publicity is the best way to ensure plenty of downloads. Aspiring authors must have a good plan for publicity from the start. They must carefully choose what groups they promote the work to and what websites or publications to advertise with.

Richard helped to give the circle an insider's advice on the administration and legislation of publication terms. He passed on advice about finding the right publishing agent, preparing to speak to them and getting reasonable terms on a publishing contract. He also advised the circle on what to state in your covering letter and the importance of good working relationships with people you work with. This includes illustrators and publicists as well as agents.

Interestingly, Richard urged aspiring authors to have *patience*. This doesn't just apply to persistence in selling your work or finding an agent. It applies to how well your work sells. Many books only generate the best sales once word of their quality gets around, so don't get too disheartened if you have poor sales at first.

Since there's not enough room to add all the good advice Richard gave us, here's his top ten tips in no particular order.

1. Read around whatever genre you wish to write in. Don't be afraid to diversify, but be careful of writing funny novels. Humour is hard to sustain in print.





2. Set a target for how much you intend to write in a given period and stick to it.
3. Having a whole novel ready is better than just a few chapters.
4. Prepare a blurb for the story. Take your cue from other novels in the genre.
5. Read the submission guidelines on agency websites carefully before sending your manuscript in.
6. Reveal any twists in the plot to your agent, even though might not want to!
7. Give publishers a month or so to reply (if they've promised they'll do so!).
8. If they say no, don't get annoyed. Take account of any advice given and treat criticism constructively.
9. If they do say yes, try using a blog to publicise your work. Social media, while useful, isn't nearly as effective.
10. And finally, that dear old chestnut of the acting world... Don't give up the day job, darling!

## In the News...

Verulam Writers was in the local newspaper, The Herts Advertiser, in an article about the Local Writers Showcase evening and to raise awareness of our 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



## My VW - The Circle Lines

*Verulam Writers' own Nick Cook.*

**"You sound quite young"**

**Four words that hooked me. They were spoken by Colleen Richardson in 1988 when I telephoned a number pinned on a notice pinned up in Hemel Hempstead library. A notice advertising Verulam Writers' Circle.**

Even then I had reached an age where such a comment was welcome (even more welcome now but far less likely).

The venue was the same as now (St Michael's Church Hall) but the circle was very different. It was mainly female, and the success book revealed a highly developed ability to sell articles to women's magazines.

The brightest star in those days was its then president, Gillian Thornton. With ebullient efficiency she turned every aspect of her life into prose. As a young mother she wrote about looking after new babies, later about the joys (or not) of toddlers and later still the angst of teenage years. She



interviewed celebrities such as Keith Floyd, Barbara Cartland and Jeffrey Archer. She wrote a series of articles on building and DIY a topic on which she admits her initial ignorance was total. This proved no barrier. "If you don't know about it, find out" was her cheerful motto.

Gillian was always willing to help others. She was even able to suggest a market for an article on a Paignton Zoo initiative to sell paperweights consisting of elephant poo encased in plastic.



This generosity makes VWC so valuable. Jonathan Pinnock subscribed to *Freelance Informer* a magazine catering for IT specialists like himself. He noticed that magazine had an editor with highly eclectic tastes that were by no means limited to IT. Jonathan therefore recommended *Freelance Informer* as a potential market for VWC members. As a result, for two or three glorious years during the 1990s *Freelance Informer* became in effect VWC's house magazine. Many members attribute their first sales to Jonathan's generosity. None had anything to do with IT. One even covered the Boston Disaster of 1919 when a tank burst releasing a molasses



tsunami wreaking havoc throughout the city. The only connection I could see between this article and computer technology was the treacle-like speed of my internet.

The circle has been lucky over the years in its committee. I remember John Pattison from the 1990s. A retired council worker with a sense of humour drier than the Sahara he would chair meetings smoking his pipe beside an increasingly asphyxiated secretary. I will never forget one article he wrote – about a young lady who decided to give up eating. It concluded with a single wry sentence.

“Just as she was getting the hang of it she died.”

John was followed by Lynn Cramphorne. To attract new members, she ran a short story competition in conjunction with a local newspaper. The story had to begin with the lines “St Albans was not as I remembered it”. I was privileged to be one of the judges. Two entries stood out way above all the rest.

One was about a soldier returning home from war, walking through the streets of St Albans. Only he turned out to be no longer a soldier, just a confused old man in his pyjamas and dressing gown.



The other story was about fairground roustabout, a borderline villain walking through St Albans to his more successful brother's house. We learn at the end that he is returning to donate bone marrow to him.

Both stories were packed with emotion. I remember my surprise when I learned that they were written by the same person – somebody called Lesley Eames. You may have heard of her!

Lesley joined and became chairperson. Over the years committee members (e.g. John Pattison, Dave Weaver, Jonathan Pinnock, Toby Frost, Anne Ellis, John Spencer) and the general membership has provided inspiration with successes ranging from sci-fi to UFOs to gay fiction.

Which brings me, alas, to me. “Could have done better” I suspect is what a headmaster may have concluded on a school report. But I would like to mention that it was me that put the case to the committee for this newsletter. Not that I can take any credit for actually making it happen. Jenny Barden named it, Steve Barley (assisted by Dave Weaver on graphics) and Sam Ellis provided and provide inspired editing. Not to mention the contributors.

Writing is a lonely business. This makes writing circles such as VWC vital. I for one would certainly like to thank circle for many of the happiest years of my life.

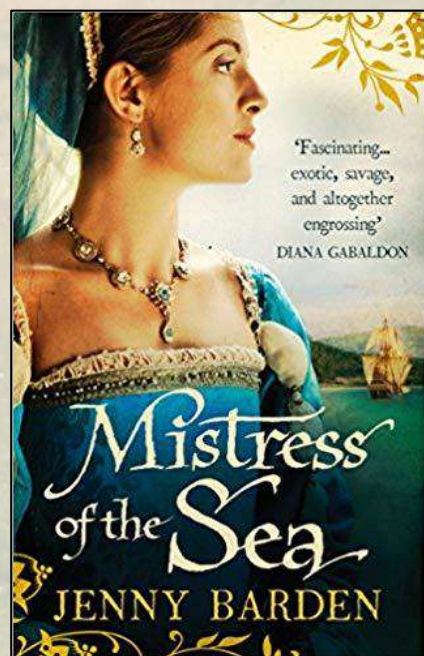


## My VW - Looking Back, Looking Forward

Jenny Barden *reflects on her days at Verulam Writers.*

**This morning I welcomed twin lambs into the world, and with seven born already, around twelve more to come, plus six calves and three expected, assorted goslings, ducklings and chicks, life is burgeoning here on the farm. I write this in my garden on a sunny Spring day, looking out over the Dorset countryside with the sweet scent of grass in the air, and life feels good. I've got over the trauma of**

moving into an unheated farmhouse in mid-winter, the roof has been repaired that used to provide a rain shower in the hall, and I no longer see



six foot high nettles outside the windows. My husband now drives a tractor skilfully (after a learning curve involving the demolition of three walls), and I can castrate a bull with a rubber band in a trice. It's only taken five years to switch from suburbia to muck spreading and get everything more or less under control. No complaints though; I know I've been fortunate. In part, looking back, that contentment is down to the VWC, and the table on which I write is a reminder of what needs doing and pleasures ahead.

Thanks to the VWC, I achieved what I set out to do when I

first joined many years ago: finished a novel and got it published. Back then this meant signing with an agent and traditional publisher, which eventually I did after being initiated into accepting criticism thanks to weekly sessions at St Michael's Church Hall and the VWC's online forum. Like most initiates I passed through stages of shock, outrage, indignation and humiliation, but in the end took on board just how helpful those objective opinions could be. Equally helpful were the bonds formed with fellow writers, the camaraderie and support, the chance to participate in conferences leading to the co-ordination of



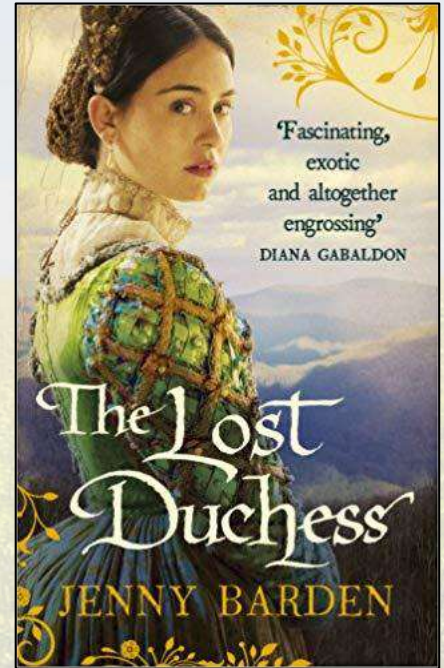
Get Writing, joining the Romantic Novelists' Association and Historical Novel Society, then co-ordinating conferences for the RNA and HNS. All of this was invaluable when it came to submitting my work to publishers and showing the foundations for an author profile. I couldn't have got going without you.

We had a lot of fun together. I look back over random memories of tying up balloons in sub-zero temperatures outside Fleetville School, readings under the watchful gaze of the skeleton at the White Hart, laughing raucously at excerpts from Toby Frost's *Space Captain Smith*, feeling that my mind was exploding after complex offerings from Jon Pinnock, being overawed by

the magical lyricism of Tim Blinko or the thought-provoking work of John Spencer, and many more besides. I miss you, VWC. Life may be idyllic here (when it's not raining), but it's not the same without you.

As for what's next, I've an Elizabethan thriller in the making: think *Shardlake* crossed with *The Favourite*, and if I could only stop those pesky horses from knocking down the rails, the troughs from leaking and DEFRA sending me forms, then it'd be finished in a jiffy. Or maybe I should just say to hell with all that and imagine I've got the last chapter to read to the VWC next week!

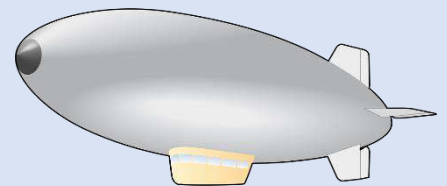
Happy anniversary, VWC – 65 years and still not showing a wrinkle!



*Mistress of The Sea* and *The Lost Duchess* by Jenny Barden are published by Ebury Press, Penguin Random House.

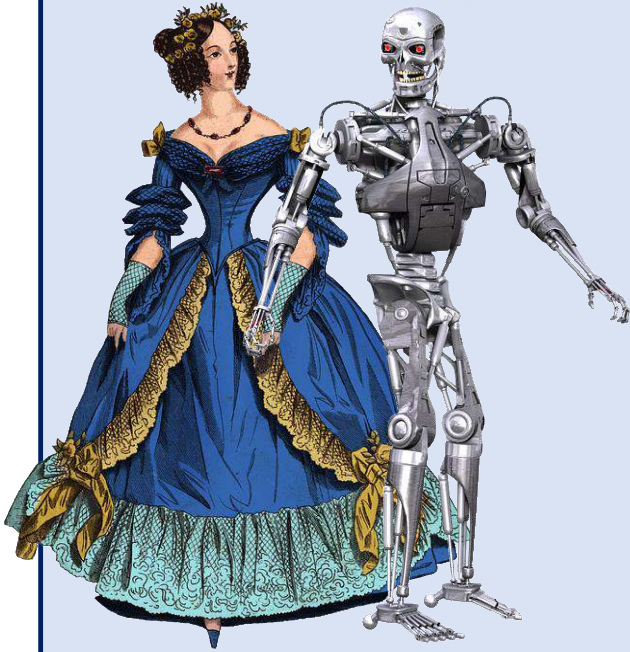
## Making the Unbelievable Believable

Phil Mitchell *believes in the believable...*



**In this era, it feels like it's never been truer that fact is stranger than fiction. Almost daily, I think, 'You couldn't make this up.' Real life is weird. In real life, people behave strangely and inexplicable events occur all the time, but in fiction there must be logic to the way a character acts, or why these bizarre things happen, to make your story believable.**

The joy of fiction is that your characters can do anything, like transform into Marmite when they sneeze or inflate like a Zeppelin when they puff out their cheeks, but the world in which these characters live must make it possible to do that. Set the scene right and you can do anything. If, on



## *Love at first sight*

page three-hundred of your Victorian Romance novel, full of authentic historical detail, a handsome man from the future, complete with a robot arm, suddenly arrives to sweep the heroine off her feet, your reader will be perplexed, cheated, and may write you a strongly worded Tweet or Amazon review. But if you set the scene right and foreshadow his arrival—maybe she has dreams of this handsome man, you hint that time travel has happened before in this world, or your book's subtitle is 'he travelled through time to find love' - then your time traveller will seem perfectly natural.

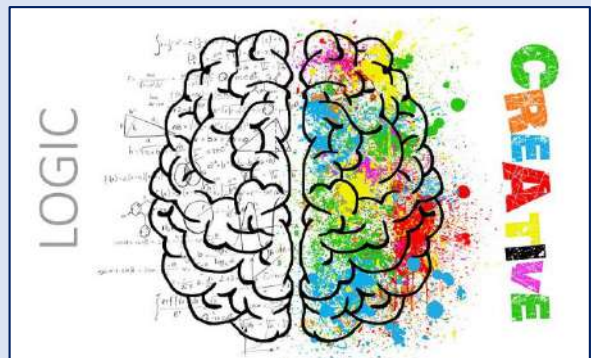
I often find myself saying, 'It's a small world,' when I bump into someone I know who I didn't expect to see, but it isn't, really. The chances that my favourite school dinner lady would choose to holiday in the same place as my family, hundreds of miles from where we lived, at the same time, and be in the static caravan next to us in a wooded park with dozens of

of similar static caravans are tiny. But this happened to me. If this event occurred in fiction, I probably wouldn't believe it. It's too much of a coincidence, unless, the dinner lady was stalking me (come to think of it, the dinner lady did have the cold, thousand-yard stare of a psychopath). It's usually a good idea to use coincidence sparingly in your fiction.

Remember, your reader must identify with the characters. To make them believable, the reader has to be able to engage, have some empathy with them, know what it's like to be them, if only for a moment. Your character might live on a planet a million light years away, they may resemble a jug with bendy legs, but they still hurt, love, get angry, laugh. Let the reader understand the character's motivation and they can do anything you want them to do.

And finally, characters must behave consistently. The reader can't be led to think the character will do one thing and then do something else. If it's important to have an unrealistic scene, then have your characters openly state that something is hard to believe and get them to explain why it is believable.

If your aim is to shock, surprise, or create a magnificent twist, then write anything you want to write, don't listen to my advice, just be aware of the effect it will have on your reader. Is it surprise or is it disbelief? Is it believable or unbelievable?





## My VW – My Most Memorable Moments

Steve Barley *counts down his most memorable moments from VW.*

When Sam asked me to look back at memorable moments from my Verulam membership, I immediately thought of those *TV's Best Comedies/Bloopers/Cartoons/Insert Anything Here* shows. You know the ones – where minor celebs comment on short clips because it's 'fun!' Certainly not because a programme that reviews other programmes can use classic TV footage for free. Apparently that's termed 'fair use', if not of our licence fee.

As I don't know any 'youthful' celebs, you're stuck with a review panel of one – yours truly – as I present... drum roll please... Steve's **Memorable And Really Trite Individually Examined Snippets**. A fairly random title, but I think it's sweet.

In no particular, except for reverse order:

**Number 5\*** – Having confused Michael with Peter – bless, indeed, canonise 'em both - I remember turning up late for my first ever Wednesday formal meeting. My trepidation at not knowing the format, the people, or the welcome I'd receive increased as I stumbled into a room

occupied with writers that really did like to form a Circle. I needn't have worried as the welcome was immediate, the atmosphere light, and the quality of the writing, the critique and support was excellent. I stayed for a bit, twelve years or so, and would advise anyone to keep going back... especially for the choccie biscuits.



*Steve's SMARTIES*

**Number 4** – Braving to read out my work for the first time... and all the times later, whether at formal meetings or open mics, was hugely nerve-wracking yet always rewarding. Whilst the constructive critique was gratefully received, the moments of pure joy for me were when people laughed at my work – as no one did that unless it was intended!

**Number 3** – Getting VW's re-launched newsletter off the ground with Dave Weaver back in July 2009 was memorable after Nick Cook 'volunteered me' to become its editor. It only became known as *Veracity* in edition number two after Jenny Barden won a competition to name it. Ten years on, and now under Sam's tutelage, it is bigger and better than ever.

# VERACITY

**Number 2** – A key stand out moment was in the car park at the University of Hertfordshire on a positively bracing February morning back in 2010. Holding pink balloons and a big arrow on a stick – one of my many glamorous jobs that day – I helped direct delegates to our first super-sized writing conference. The event was hard work but amazing.

And finally... cue the Pearl & Dean intro music...

**Number 1** – The highlight of my time at Verulam Writers has to be winning short story competitions. After all, isn't that one of the key reasons we're here? Not to win per se, but to receive the accolade that our words are worth reading in the eyes of people we respect and who know about such things. I've lost far more than I've won but as memories go, the latter are deservedly in my first place.

*\*there were 50 but that's editing for you!*



Veracity – first edition! July 2009

## Dates for your Diary! Upcoming Meetings



**1<sup>st</sup> May**

- **Manuscript**
- **Deadline for the Crystal Decanter Competition**

**15<sup>th</sup> May**

- **Adjudication of the Crystal Decanter Competition**
- **Setting of the Howard Linskey Competition**

**29<sup>th</sup> May**

- **Manuscript**

**12<sup>th</sup> June**

- **Guest Night**
- **Deadline for the Howard Linskey Competition**

**26<sup>th</sup> June**

- **Adjudication of the Howard Linskey Competition**

**10<sup>th</sup> July**

- **Manuscript**

**24<sup>th</sup> July**

- **End of Season Party**





on



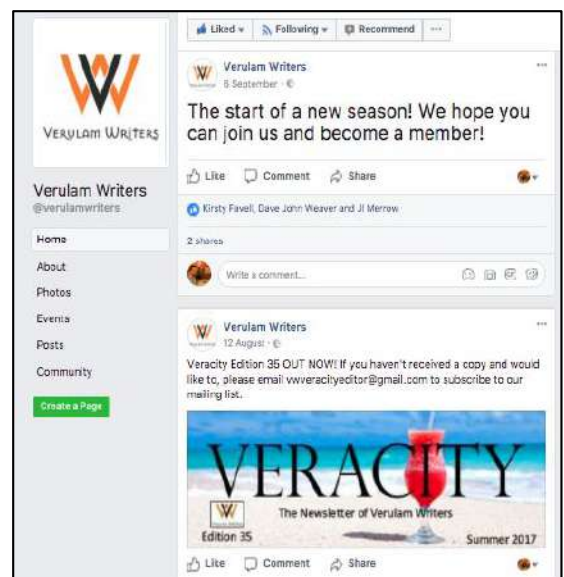
## @verulamwriters

Do you have some writing news such as an event or publication of an article or book?

- **Visited a website that could be a good resource for other writers?**
- **Like to find out more about the VW?**
- **Seen a good quote?**

Then head to @verulamwriters on **facebook!**

We'd like to encourage all members to visit and use our Facebook page. It's full of news from the VW and a great way to stay connected! As long as posts are writing-related and appropriate, we'd love you to post too!





## The Story of the Stories – A One-Day Course at Oaklands College

*Join Verulam Writer Nick Cook for a one-day course on Greek myths.*

How much of what we write today will still be read in 3,000 years' time? No matter how good we are the odds against must be colossal. But Greek mythology managed just that. The obstacles were huge. They included the collapse of Rome, Christian anti-pagan antagonism, the Arab conquest of much of the ancient world and the sheer amount of labour required to make new copies as the old ones rotted away.

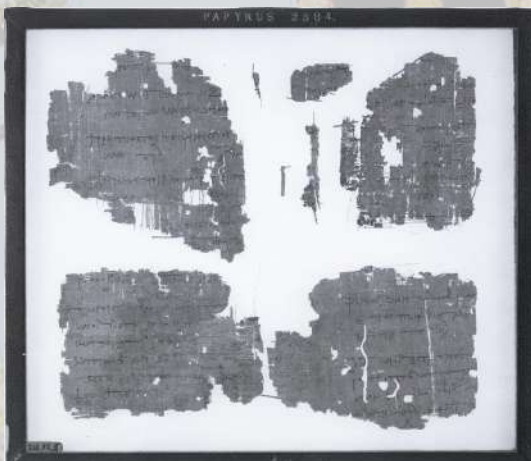


Despite all these obstacles the Greek myths are still very much alive and kicking. Not only are they still read but they continuously inspire new stories and poems, films, paintings, sculptors and art. Even Coronation Street's cantankerous grandmother brilliantly played by Maureen Lipman has a dog named after Cerebus, keeper of the gates of Hades.

In many ways the story of the stories is even more amazing than the stories themselves. These stories will be the focus of a one-day Saturday Course at Oaklands College in St Albans on 15 June 2019. If you are interested, please contact the College on 01727 737 000 quoting course code CL237C1P

### New Newsletter – *Wine Dark Sea and ...*

Fascinated by storytelling from long ago? If so you need **Wine Dark Sea and Sacred Shrine**. I have launched this quarterly newsletter to provide readers with information about Greek myths and their culture, archaeology and history.



If you think this would be of interest to you please contact me at [mr.nickcook@googlemail.com](mailto:mr.nickcook@googlemail.com) and I will put you on the mailing list. Please also contact me on this email if you would like more info on the Saturday course.

*Ancient Greek manuscript on papyrus (2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> Century) British Museum Database.*

## Show Not Tell

Anne Ellis on one of writing's trickiest skills.

It's one of the first things we learn as writers: *show* the reader, don't *tell* them. But what does it actually mean, and why is it so important?

The idea of *show not tell* is to create a more vivid, dramatic picture for the reader by involving as many of their senses as possible. This makes them empathise more strongly with the POV character, and care more deeply about what's happening in the story—both of which are vital for persuading the reader to read on.

But what does it mean in practice?

Consider the following sentence: *Rebecca was terrified.*

It tells you what the character is feeling, but it doesn't exactly make you feel for her. Now consider an alternative:

*Rebecca's heart pounded, and her hands were shaking as she wiped her palms on her jeans. Her head was spinning, and she was on the verge of throwing up.*

Note that I haven't used particularly original imagery here — but even so, doesn't this make you feel for her more? We've all experienced fear at one point or another in our lives. The aim of *show not tell* is to tap into the reader's experience, and use it to create empathy with the character.

We can go further: instead of the bland, *someone was coming along the path after her*, try this:

*Gravel crunched behind her, and her chest tightened with an icy band. She was being followed.*



This allows us to hear what Rebecca hears, and feel what she feels—and only then do we have the deduction: someone's after her. Giving the sense impressions first—or instead of—the deduction heightens the impact on the reader. In fact, we could probably leave that last sentence out altogether; it's pretty clear what's happening. This is a case where we need to **trust the reader** to work out what's going on.

Notice that I didn't use any **sensory words** in the above example. I could have written the following: *She **heard** gravel crunch behind her, and **felt** an icy band around her chest.*



*Rebecca was terrified...*

# VERACITY

If you compare the two, you should find that the first example has more impact. Sensory words can be distancing—they emphasize that the experience is happening to the character and not to the reader.



The previous examples relate to an action scene, but we can also use *show not tell* to heighten the effect of a more static, peaceful scene that also evokes an emotional response.

Consider this: *I loved walking in the woods alone. It was relaxing.*

To *show* this, instead of *tell* it, we need to consider just what it is about solitary walks in the forest that the character finds so relaxing. What do woods provide? Peace, quiet, shade, a connection with nature. Think also about what might be left behind, when entering the forest.

Now try this: *Once in the woods, the glaring sunlight was muted to a dappled green, and the sweat cooled on my neck and back. There was no rumble of traffic from the road, no choking exhaust fumes—only the fresh, earthy scent kicked up by my feet and the chirpings and rustlings of birds and small animals. Nobody was making demands of me. The tight band around my forehead eased.*

## Show While Telling

You may have a character who, for story reasons, has to recount some information to another (although try to avoid, “As you know, Bob...”!). This may look like you’re *telling* the reader the information, but in fact, you can also *show* a lot about the characters — both the one telling, and the one(s) listening — by the choice of words, body language, etc. Consider carefully whose POV to put this scene in: is the revelation more important to the speaker, or to the listener? Whoever it’s more important to should ideally be the one whose emotional response is clearer to the reader. Unless of course you’re concealing that response for plot reasons!

## When to *tell*, and not *show*.

All rules are made to be broken. Some passages are better told than shown. If you’re flashing back to an important bit of information that the reader needs to know *now*, extended passages of sensory input and physical response in the past can slow the present scene down — although arguably, if it’s that important a scene, it might be better to show it earlier on in the story.

A mundane journey needed to get your character from A to B without incident is better told than shown. Likewise, a passage of uneventful time would be very boring for the reader to experience as the character is presumed to have done.

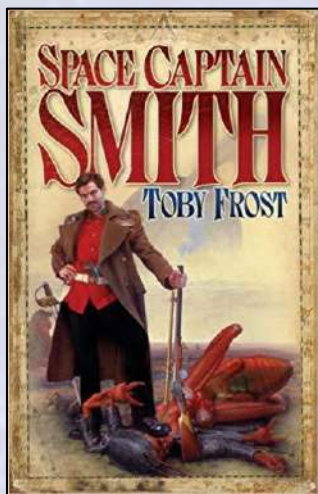
**Basically: if it’s important, show it—don’t tell it!**



## My VW – Toby Frost

*Author Toby Frost on his time at Verulam Writers.*

A very long time ago – at least ten years back, and maybe closer to 15 – I was watching a friend of mine play bass with a band in St Albans. I happened to be sitting under a noticeboard in the pub, advertising all sorts of local events. One of them was for Verulam Writers Circle. At that point, I'd been writing for a few years, and joining a writing group seemed like the natural thing to do.



I went along to my first meeting, which, I think, was held in the basement of the house of one of the members. I read out a bit of a work in progress, which I considered to be a piece of finely-crafted prose poetry. I was horrified when one lady suggested that it might be overwritten! Nonetheless, I kept on going, and now eight books that I wrote are in print: seven traditionally-published, and one self-published.

Although I was appalled at the time to be told that my work was anything other than genius, that was the start of an important lesson, vital to getting published. A musician who can't play will be found out very quickly, as the rest of the band he practices in will tell him. However, a writer could produce dozens of books – and have them all rejected by publishers – without knowing what's wrong with them. That's where a writer needs the sort of skilled, constructive criticism (and helpful advice) that a good

writing group provides. It's fine for your friends and family to tell you that your book is great, but the kind of technical assistance that a writing group can supply – how to write plots, develop characters, create convincing dialogue and so on – is hard to find elsewhere.

VWC wasn't purely geared towards publication, but its members sought to produce work that was of publishable standard. That pursuit of professionalism was really important. In the meetings, members pooled knowledge and views about dozens of different sorts of book, from romance to health and safety. It was always interesting to go to meetings and see what new ideas people had come up with, and what progress others had made. Those people who succeeded learned to accept and evaluate comments and not just to keep on writing (which is hard enough sometimes) but also to improve.

During my time at VWC, my novel *Space Captain Smith* was published by Myrmidon Books. I found a literary agent, and ended up writing a sequence of six Smith books. I've just self-published a fantasy story named *Up To The Throne*, and I'm working on its sequel right now.

I can't say whether I would ever have got published without VWC, but I think it would have taken a lot longer. The experience of meeting other writers and sharing advice with them has been invaluable. I hope that VWC keeps going for many more years, and helps many more writers as it's helped me.





## The Verulam Writers' Block *The Verulam Writers Showcase*

**Tina Shaw**, a member of VW for around 10 years, likes writing about the 1950s, especially the small social changes which have taken place. I wonder how many the readers can spot. There are at least fifteen.

### Ice Cream For George

The clock in the High Street had just finished chiming 12 when Alfred emerged from the bank, buttoning his overcoat against the March wind.

'Oh, there you are,' Mabel greeted him, jiggling Betty up and down in the pram as she began to make snuffling noises which usually preceded a major crying fit.

He gave Mabel a quick peck on the cheek, glancing round furtively, as if he were afraid one of his colleagues might catch him in the act of being met by his wife in his lunch hour.

'I've not got long,' he informed her. 'Mr. Turner is a stickler for punctuality.'

'An hour; you've got an hour,' Mabel replied. 'Time to buy George's present and eat our sandwiches.'

'All right but let's hurry. We can't be seen eating in the street.'

Alfred set off in the direction of the park, with Mabel scurrying along behind him. 'I can't keep up,' she wailed. 'Here, you push Betty.'

Alfred looked round horrified, whilst Betty chuckled winsomely at him and threw her teddy onto the pavement. He held the pram gingerly, at arm's length, whilst Mabel bent to retrieve the mangled bear. 'Go on,' she urged him. 'It won't bite.'

He looked round again, checking for onlookers, before racing ahead, steering wildly through the park gates with one hand, whilst Betty squealed with delight.

'Over by the bandstand,' Mabel directed him. 'It won't be so windy under there.'

They found a dry seat and she brought out a bottle for Betty, wrapped in a muslin to keep it warm. The child lay back, sucking contentedly. Next, she fetched out a brown paper bag and handed it to Alfred. He undid the greaseproof paper and inspected the sandwiches, wishing he could have gone across to the café for poached egg on toast, like he did every other day.

'It's fish paste, your favourite.' She informed him, 'and there's tea in the flask.'

He grunted his disapproval.

She flushed defensively. 'We need extra money this week to buy George his present.'

'I don't know why he needs a present.' Alfred mumbled. 'He's got plenty of toys at home and they'll give him ice cream after the operation.'

'He's only allowed to take one soft toy to the hospital.' She countered. 'You know he's a bit scared.'



Alfred shrugged. 'Loads of kids have their tonsils out. He'll be home in a few days.'

Mabel finished her sandwiches in silence. The kids were her responsibility and once Alfred had handed over the housekeeping, she would make the decisions about how it was spent. They tidied away the lunch and she passed Betty a rusk, ignoring Alfred's disapproving look. The High Street clock chimed the quarter to the hour as they reached the window of the toy shop.

'He wants that toy gun.' She said, pointing to a small metal pistol, poised on top of a pile of boxes.

'Why ever does he want that?' Alfred asked.

'I've no idea,' she replied. 'I said he could choose, as long as it didn't cost too much.'

'He'd be better with a book, or colouring pencils. He won't be able to rush about playing shooting games after the operation.'

She nodded. 'It's what he wanted.'

They left Betty in the pram outside the shop and went in. It was quite dark inside and jammed full of boxes of toys and games. The shopkeeper emerged from behind the counter and limped over to them.

'What can I do for you?' He stuttered out the words.

'The gun,' Alfred took charge. 'The one in the window. How much is it?'

The man leaned in painfully and pulled out the item from the window space. 'This one?'

Alfred nodded.

'3/6d.' Said the man.

Mabel let out a gasp. 'Oh, I thought the label said 2/6d.' She fished around in her purse. 'I need to make sure we have enough for the bus fare to the hospital tomorrow.' She whispered to Alfred.

'Hospital,' the man queried. 'Who is going in hospital?'

Alfred, embarrassed, muttered. 'It's nothing; just tonsils.'

The man pointed down at his leg. 'Hospitals! Not nothing. Never nothing. 2/6d is fine. Go on. I'll put it in a bag.'

They were about to refuse when a woman stuck her head round the shop door. 'Your baby's crying dearie. Think she wants her Mam.'

They turned to go, mumbling their thanks, clutching George's precious gun. Betty had woken up, covered in rusk and demanding attention. Mabel stowed George's present at the bottom of the pram as the High Street clock struck the hour. Alfred managed a hasty 'goodbye' and rushed across the road back into the bank. Mabel hurried off home, just time to unpack the shopping, and change Betty's nappy before setting off to collect George from school. She had warned the teacher that he might be a little worried about the operation, so it was no surprise, when she met him at the gate, to learn that 'Miss wanted to speak to her.' She parked the



pram in the corner of the playground and went inside. Memories of her own schooldays, of slates, and inky hands, and standing in the corner, always hovered in the background when George's teacher asked to see her. He wasn't especially naughty, but he seemed to suffer from a vivid imagination which led to complaints of too much time spent staring out of the window instead of doing his sums. Today had apparently been one of those days, along with a fight in the playground at lunchtime with his best friend Johnny, with George refusing to explain why he had hit the other boy. Since they could make no progress questioning him, Mabel was permitted to take him home, with a suggestion from the teacher that his father have a word with him about not getting into fights.

Mabel, reluctant to further chastise her anxious child, decided to turn a blind eye and they walked home chatting about comics, trying to catch Betty's teddy every time she threw it out of the pram. When they got home she showed George his little suitcase, all packed ready to take to the hospital the next day and on the bed next to it the paper bag from the toy shop.

'Did you really get it?' George asked, his eyes shining. He pulled off the wrapping paper and flung his arms round his Mum. 'Thanks; thank you. Now I will be safe in hospital, 'cos I can shoot them, even though Johnny said I will be dead.'

Mabel sat him down on the bed and put her arm round him. 'You are not going to die. You are having a little operation, like lots of children. You will be asleep when it happens and then you'll wake up and have some ice cream. You won't be dead.'

'Johnny said his cousin had an operation and he ended up dead.'

She hugged him tight. 'Don't be silly. I expect Johnny's cousin had a very bad illness, quite different to you. Now come on. I have to get Daddy's tea ready. You go down and listen to *Children's Hour* and play with Betty for a bit.'

George slept with the gun under his pillow and only woke once with a nightmare which was soon pacified. Alfred gave him a big hug before going off to work and told him to 'be a brave boy.' Mabel's next door neighbour had offered to look after Betty, so they set off on the bus, clutching George's little suitcase complete with teddy bear and toy gun. She warned George that the nurses might not let him keep the gun under his pillow but he insisted on bringing it 'to make sure he didn't die.'

He was in a small ward with three other children and Mabel carefully stowed his few possessions into the bedside locker, whilst George got into his pyjamas. He was to have the operation that evening and after she and the other mothers had settled their children into their beds, the nurses came round and hustled them out.

'You can ring tomorrow morning' they were all told, 'after 10 o'clock, but no visiting until at least the following day.'

She spent a restless night and was glad when it was time to go out to the phone box to ring the hospital. They assured her that George's operation went well but she caught the edge of disapproval in the nurses' voice.

'Is he having his ice cream?' She asked.

There was a pause. 'Matron won't allow it.' Came the stern reply.

'But, don't all the children...' She stuttered.

'They have to do as they are told,' the nurse replied. Frightening people with a toy gun is not the sort of behaviour which is rewarded with treats.'



## A Special Message

As mentioned in some of the articles in this edition, a former member of Verulam Writers was Joan Rice, mother of Sir Time Rice, long-time collaborator with Andrew Lloyd Webber and writer of *Evita*, *Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*, *Chess* and Disney's *Aladdin*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Lion King*.

Tim found out about our 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary and sent a message of congratulation:

*I remember one or two of [my mother's] friends in the Writers' Circle which she greatly enjoyed attending. I am delighted it is still going strong. Congratulations on 65 years.*

Thank you Sir Tim! Here's to 65 more years!

## The Crystal Decanter Competition

The next VW competition is the Crystal Decanter competition on the theme of '**Legends, Myths or Falsehoods**'.



**Word limit:** 1,500 words

**Entry fee:** £2.50

**Deadline:** 1<sup>st</sup> May

**Adjudication :** 15<sup>th</sup> May

Open to all fully paid-up members of Verulam Writers.

## About Us

Verulam Writers meet fortnightly on Wednesday evenings at 8pm in St Michael's Church Hall, St Albans, AL3 4SL. Informal gatherings are held every other week in a local pub. To find out more and for a full list of events, visit the VW website at: [www.verulamwriterscircle.org.uk](http://www.verulamwriterscircle.org.uk)

## Get Involved

If you would like to write for VERACITY (we'd love to have you!) or have any comments or feedback please email the editor Sam Ellis at [VWVeracityEditor@gmail.com](mailto:VWVeracityEditor@gmail.com)

## Publicity

If you have anything you'd like to publicise (a new publication, an event etc.) then we'd love to hear about it at: [VWPublicity@gmail.com](mailto:VWPublicity@gmail.com)

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

**Wishing Verulam Writers a very...**

