



Society of Medical Writers

Newsletter November 2017

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Dear Fellow Writers,

Now that the clocks have gone back you will have to come back into the warmth of your home an hour earlier, so giving you more time to compose that copy for *The Writer*!

You may already have submitted prose or poetry for this summer's competition which did not win a prize but that certainly does not mean it's not worthy of a place in our journal, so do send it to me for consideration of being published. There's lots more of course you can write, in all manner of genres and headings. Here are just a few thoughts to tickle your inspiration:

Have you a deeply felt point of view or conviction? **Opinion Piece** would be an ideal place to express it.

You will surely recall a book that made a strong impression on you, even still resonating after many years. **Books that stick** is the ideal place to tell us about it.

You most definitely will have encountered patients who you remember well, for a variety of reasons. Share your memories of them under our heading of **Memorable Patients**.

To compose a comprehensive book review takes quite a long time (as I know very well!) but many books can be summed up in just a few lines and help guide others to what you've found a good - or indeed bad! - read. Our **Mini book reviews** column is the perfect slot for these.

You don't have to be a musician to contribute to **Musical Notes**. This is the place to tell us about your experiences listening to music or inform us about a composer, a choir, an orchestra, a rock group or whatever ... and of course those of you who are musicians could explain your experiences and thoughts too.

You will all have travelled, some to exotic distant lands that merit waxing lyrical about but Britain has many intriguing destinations that are well worthy of your telling us about... for our **Going Places** section.

So get thinking/scribbling/typing and send me your copy - by end of November please!

This year's **Autumn Symposium** was held in the Prince Rupert hotel in Shrewsbury from October 6th to 8th and superbly organised by Julian Randall. The fine weather we enjoyed that weekend matched the success of one of the very best SOMW meetings of recent years. Andrew Pattison told us much about the Darwins of Shrewsbury; Andrew Peters stunned us with his inspirational photography and verse; Dorothy Crowther brought us up to date on the desperate deprivation in Sierra Leone post Ebola; local story-teller Sally Tonge entertained us with her dynamic rendering of tales and her enthusing us to do the same; and Professor Bernard Knight enthralled us, not only with his account of scriptwriting for the forensic scientist television series *The Expert*, but how he came to write some fifty novels and thirteen textbooks as well! In addition there were workshops and particularly accomplished prose, poetry and musical entertainment by SOMW members after dinner on the Saturday. A full report on this meeting will be included in the winter issue of *The Writer*.

Our **summer writing competition** was judged by the aforesaid Andrew Peters (for poetry) and Sally Tonge (for prose) and the following results announced at Shrewsbury:

Non-Fiction:

- Winner:** *The King's Speech and the Stigma of the Stammer* by Selwyn Goodacre
Runner-up: *Post Ebola Visit to Rokel, Sierra Leone June 2017* by Dorothy Crowther
Highly Commended: *Two Dorothys* by Dorothy Crowther

Fiction:

- Winner:** *A Mere Coincidence* by Neil Wilson
Runner-up: *Dear Child* by Moira Brimacombe
Highly Commended: *The View* by Jeanette Cayley

Poetry:

- Winner:** *A World Apart* by Jim Brockbank
Runner-up: *Headache Weather* by Jeanette Cayley
Highly Commended: *The Beech Tree* by Teresa Black

Wilfred Hopkins Award: Awarded jointly to Teresa Black and Neil Wilson

Congratulations to all of the above, whose work will feature in the next *The Writer*. Entries are now sought of course for the **Winter Competition**, with a deadline of January 30th. An entry form for this can be found on the society's website or in the back pages of the journal.

Next year's one-day **Spring Meeting**, on April 18th at the Art Workers' Guild in London, as before, is on the theme of "Getting Published" and is already looking a cracker! Mary Anderson has already signed up Christopher Fielden and Tim Albert. The former hosts a highly informative website – see www.christopherfielden.com/writing-challenges/ -- which offers lots of advice and guidance on the craft of writing, getting published and lists many writing competitions. The latter many of you will remember as an accomplished "Effective Writing" tutor who, amongst many other assignments, edited the BMA News Review. He has written a very candid, interesting (and well-written of course!) account of his life and varied journalistic career in his memoir *Mostly We Had It Good*, which I have reviewed for *The Writer*. He will not only be talking about that but also leading a writing workshop.

The next *The Writer* will also include a resume of the **AGM**, held during the Shrewsbury meeting, the minutes of which will also be posted on the SOMW website. In brief your current committee was re-elected unchanged and is trialling holding virtual meetings (of the committee) on-line; our financial position is quite good though our long-standing need to recruit more members remains; and there was discussion about the pros and cons of increasing the value of the prizes for our competitions and advertising them more for non-members.

Sadly we have to report the deaths of long-standing GPWA/SOMW members Keith Barnard, Alan Brighthouse, Donald McDonald and Gordon Sharrard, but on a happier note wish Harold Selcon a belated (May 31st) Happy 90th Birthday. He continues to contribute splendidly well-researched and written articles for *The Writer*. Indeed two of these will appear in the next issue.

Finally, you'll have noticed the different typefaces used in this newsletter. This echoes the last *The Writer* in which our energetic typesetter Julian Randall sought to freshen up its pages with a change to mainly Arial Narrow, also used for the first two pages of this newsletter, and Tahoma, as used for pages 3 and 4. Feedback was sought on these changes. Those who have so far responded mostly preferred the Arial narrow option (which economises on space well) but we'd like to hear from many more members so do please let us – any of the editors – know your views on this.

Neil Wilson