

Editor's Desk

Welcome to this issue of *The Write Place*.

Despite the continuing recession and the complete lack of

summer that we've been experiencing (especially here in the North West) there's definitely a more buoyant feel in Britain at the moment. I don't know whether it's the razzmatazz generated by the Olympic games, or the fact that the summer holiday silly season is upon us, but everyone I talk to at the moment seems more optimistic. And whether you loved the opening ceremony for the Olympics or were disapproving of its 'quirkiness' (seems to be the word of the moment) I was really glad to see that our press got behind it with enthusiasm and praise. Too often, as a nation, we forget to give ourselves a pat on the back when it's well deserved.

And talking about well-deserved praise, let's look at some of the successes that Writers Bureau students have had over the past few months.



Diana Nadin
Director of Studies

Student Successes

Rebecca P says:

Just thought I'd let you know that I am only £10 from having earned back my course money, and have not completed the course yet or, in fact, done very much writing at all recently. This is how I did it: £200 for a true life story in Chat magazine, involving a phone interview and a couple of pictures; £60 for a filler (50 words plus photo) in Take a Break – the time it took to write a very short email; £25 for a sponsored blog post – I was contacted by an insurance company on the email address I have on my blog, asked to write a post including a link to their company. 10 minutes' work... £20 for a 100-word case study for a parenting magazine – in fact I contacted this mag with a pitch for a full length feature, but the features editor said she was already working on a feature on the same subject, but would I like to give her 100 words for my experience... Of course I said yes, and my original feature idea is being polished up ready to be pitched to another magazine.

Michael R says:

Hi everybody, I have finally had an article published in Fortean Times called 'Encounter with Mothman' and I've self published a book. The book is called 'Into the Darkness, a collection of six short horror stories, by Michael Riddell' which is available in either paperback or kindle on amazon. I'm currently working on a second book for amazon and will continue my studies with the WB, there's just something about seeing your name in print that keeps you working on more material, it's such a wonderful feeling.

Looking at the Lighter Side of Life

Sandra W says:

I entered a competition last year – 100 word story – and although I didn't win, my story has today been published as one of the commended entries. It's only a small success but it is nice seeing something you've written published, especially when they include your photo. You can find it on

www.readersdigest.co.uk/readers-digest-main/100-word-story-new-story-every-day

Tracey G says:

Hello I have a story published today on an American website which publishes a read-aloud story a day for children. It's called Blackbird and Owl and if you are interested you can read it following this link

www.knowonder.com/2012/07/09/blackbird-and-owl/ I would recommend submitting to them if you are interested in writing for children. Payment isn't huge (I got \$25 for this one) but it's all good exposure and I'm thrilled to see my story out there!

Congratulations to all four of you! Over the past few issues I've included success stories that have appeared on our forum, but if any of you have had success with your writing, and would like to share it, please email me (dianan@writersbureau.com) with the details and you can join the 'hall of fame' in the next issue!

Looking at the lighter side of life

In addition to success stories in the student forum we also have a section entitled 'Have a laugh' where students can tell jokes. It's not for the faint hearted. Some will make you groan, some will make you feel bemused, I can assure you, but one or two are good. Thanks to Bruna D for the joke below – and if you trawl through you'll find more of Bruna's that will definitely make you smile!

Before the 2001 inauguration of President George Bush, he was invited to a "get acquainted" tour of the White House.

After drinking several glasses of iced tea, he asked outgoing President Bill Clinton if he could use his personal bathroom.

When he entered Clinton's private toilet, he was astonished to see that President Clinton had a solid gold urinal!

That afternoon, George told his wife, Laura, about the urinal.

Later, when Laura had lunch with Hillary at her tour of the White House, she told Hillary how impressed George had been at his discovery of the fact that, in his private bathroom, the President had a gold urinal.

That evening, when Bill and Hillary were getting ready for bed, Hillary smiled, and said to Bill: "I found out who dirtied your saxophone..."

Five Minute Interview

A Writer's Life!

Our Five Minute Interview this issue is with Alison Chisholm, poet, workshop leader, broadcaster, competition adjudicator and

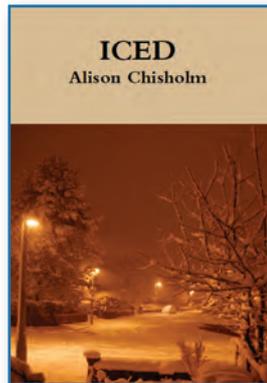
Writers Bureau tutor. So over to Alison, to find out where her inspiration as a poet comes from and any tips she may have for aspiring versifiers.

At what age did you first decide that you wanted to be a poet and what triggered this?

I can't remember a time when I didn't want to be a poet, but I was a very slow starter when it came to actually writing anything. As a small child who couldn't yet read, my first poetry book was a source of wonder. A gift from an uncle (who died when I was seven, yet had a profound effect on my life through this present) was a copy of Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*. These small, neat patterns of words, so different from the patterns in story books, created something complete and painted a picture in my mind. In school I loved it when the teacher told us to write a poem for homework instead of the usual essay, and as a girl guide I always made up the scurrilous camp fire songs about the goings-on around the camp. I was eighteen the first time I sat down with the deliberate aim of writing *The Poem*. It was abysmal ... but the buzz of writing it has never left me.

Can a poet afford to 'give up the day job' in these difficult times?

A poet can't afford to give up the day job in affluent times, never mind during the current



financial crisis! Most people start writing poetry around the day job, and few manage to ditch the nine-to-five in order to do nothing but write. It would be very difficult to live on the tiny fees for the odd publication or broadcasting success, and high-paying competition wins are totally unpredictable. Many publications offer nothing more than a free copy of the book or magazine to contributors. The ones who do don't have bottomless purses. The best thing you can hope for is to be involved in poetry-related activities that provide an income. Even the most successful poets eke out their earnings by tutoring, writing about poetry, adjudicating, giving workshops, talks and readings, and so on. A handful of poets could probably manage to give up the day job; but very few.

Do you have a writing routine, or are you very flexible about the way you work?

My working and domestic life make it difficult for me to have a regular routine; but I try to cultivate the habit of seeing everything that happens in life in the context of the poem it could inspire. I used to write late into the night, but the older I get the less sense things make when they were written in the 'wee small hours.' So I try to work late mornings and into the afternoon. I'm flexible enough, however, to ensure I don't miss a deadline, and if I have to, I'll work all through the night to avoid this. If I have nothing urgent to do, I always choose to write poetry over prose; but I'm aware that the prose pays the bills.

As a WB tutor, if you could give one vital piece of advice to students, what would it be?

Please can I change this to three tips? They're all important!

Nearer Home

- (1) Read. Read voraciously within and about your chosen genre. Read for the sheer joy of it, and then read the poems – or whatever – analytically, working out why the editor who published them couldn't resist them. Consider how you can adapt the techniques demonstrated to produce your own poems.
- (2) Write in complete grammatical sentences, using main verbs. Then when you want to move away from traditional grammar on a rare occasion, you can do so effectively.
- (3) Revise thoroughly, and then revise again, and again, and again. Keep working on a poem until you look at it on at least two consecutive occasions and find there's no further improvement you can make.

Rhyming forms or free verse – what is your preference and why?

As a reader, I enjoy both equally. As a writer, I try to let the poem choose, keeping my mind open to the dynamics of different forms. Some poems dictate their own form straight away. Others try out a number of patterns before they find the one that suits their content. To answer the question ... I don't really have a preference. Both have their own delights and challenges.

If you wish to hear Alison talking about writing poetry visit <http://www.writersbureau.com/writing/video-writingpoetry.htm> and Writers Bureau has a course *The Art of Writing Poetry* (www.writersbureau.com/courses/poetry-writing/) which has been written for us by Alison. Anyone considering honing their skills should check this out.

Nearer Home

This month's staff profile focuses on Shelley Bowers, whose name you might recognise as editor of our ever-popular ezine, E-Zee Writer. Shelley says:



Shelley Bowers

Where do I start? At the beginning is the logical place I suppose, and that would be when I joined The Writers Bureau over seven years ago. I started off in Student Services, helping students, from all over the world, with queries about the courses. I also tried my best to resolve any other problems they might have. Then I was offered the position of editor for our free monthly e-zine – E-Zee Writer. I jumped at the chance and have loved this part of my job ever since. So when the role of copywriter was offered to me about three years ago, I was hardly going to turn it down. Now, as well as editing E-Zee Writer, I spend my time writing our weekly blogs, copywriting for our websites and producing articles for other websites, writing press releases and popping into the Student Community forums to see what's going on. And I'm not quite sure how, but I still find time to fit in a bit of Student Services too.

Those of you who aren't already familiar with E-Zee Writer can read the current and back issues and subscribe for future issues at www.writersbureau.com/e-zee-writer/. There's always a great article – usually written by one of our tutors – to help you improve your writing skills, plus interesting websites, plenty of inspiration and Shelley's own quirky (there's that word again!) recommendations.

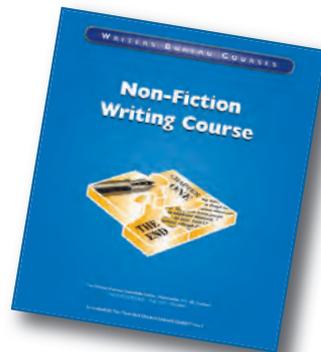
Competition Time

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Our 2012 Short Story Competition closed on 30th June and I know that the adjudicator – Iain Pattison – has just finished choosing the top four who will be receiving cash prizes. These will be announced by mid-September, so keep checking on our competition website at www.wbcompetition.com/ In the meantime, our 2012 Poetry Competition is now open and you can enter online at the same address or download an entry form and post your poem to us.



Also, our monthly competition for August is now accepting entries. In order to win a Non-fiction Writing Course (www.writersbureau.com/courses/non-fiction-writing/) all



you need to do is review an event you've visited in 50 words or less. For full details of what's required and how to enter visit www.writersbureau.com/writing/monthly-competition.htm. Congratulations go to our July winner, Katarina Zeravica from Zambia who has won herself a Biographies, Memoirs and Family History Writing Course.

Miscellany

Welcome to another new tutor – Linda Lewis, who also writes as Catherine Howard. Amongst her many writing talents she

specialises in short fiction and if you'd like to know more about Linda – and her tips for selling your stories – she provided a guest post for my blog recently which can be read at www.writersbureau.com/blog/writing-break-fiction-feast/2012/07/

Special Offers

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Special Offer
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In Conclusion

That brings us to the end of our round-up of what's going on at the Writers Bureau, but until the next issue, you can keep up-to-date by joining the Student Forum, or following us on Facebook and Twitter.

If you have any queries about your course, just contact studentservices@writersbureau.com and if you've any comments or suggestions regarding this newsletter I'd love to hear from you – dianan@writersbureau.com. So, until next time...