

Verulam Writers' Circle

Edition 1

NEWSLETTER

July 2009

News in brief...

- VWC newsletter launched to critical acclaim – we hope
- Accusations of cruelty to lemmings in latest Toby Frost novel
- AGM stops short of drunken debauchery
- Close up on VWC member!

Welcome to the First Edition of the VWC Newsletter

And congratulations to Steve Barley and his team for putting it together so quickly.

Every two months this newsletter will appear in your mailbox bringing you news, views and interviews from in and around VWC in a friendly, readable and concise form. It will also be a gentle nudge, reminding you what is coming up both inside and outside the circle.

But maybe its chief value is not what it can bring to you but what you can bring to it. We need reporters. If you want to volunteer please contact Steve (writer@stevenbarley.com). Writing for the newsletter will hone your ability to write to a tight word count and even tighter deadline. Both of which mean I must stop waffling and get this copy in right now!

Nick Cook, (President, Verulam Writers' Circle)



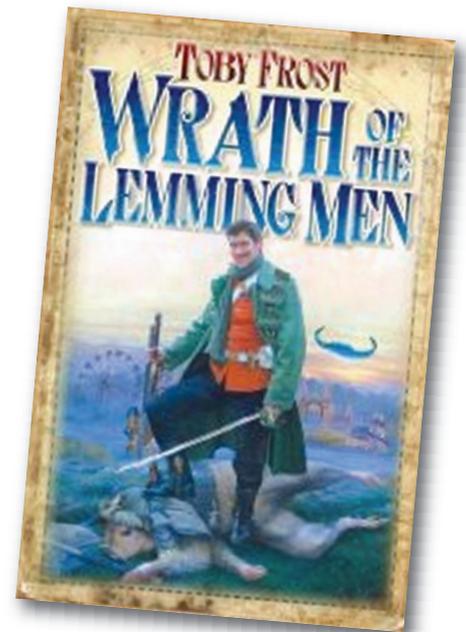
Wrath of the Lemming Men Leaps Off Shelves

Hot on the heroic heels of *Space Captain Smith* and *God Emperor of Didcot* comes (VWC Secretary) Toby Frost's third instalment in the *Chronicles of Isambard Smith* – *Wrath of the Lemming Men*.

This time the British Space Empire faces a new threat in the form of the lemming-people of Yull, ruthless enemies who attack without mercy, fear or any concept of self preservation. At the call of their war god, the Yull have turned on the Empire, hell bent on conquest and destruction in their rush towards the cliffs of destiny. Smith and his crew must defend the Empire and civilise the stuffing out of a horde of bloodthirsty lemming-men.

If you like your sci-fi fast and furious, yet all wrapped up by teatime - with more stiff upper lips than a mortuary - then this is the book for you. Grab your copy now from Myrmidon Books Ltd. Just don't read it near a cliff!

Steve Barley



When It All Went Brilliantly Write!



When Lesley Eames received confirmation of a place at the annual Conference of the Romantic Novelists' Association, together with details of this year's challenge for the Elizabeth Goudge Trophy, she thought she might 'knock something together'.

On Saturday, 11th July, I witnessed her astonishment at being awarded the glittering prize.

The trophy was well-deserved. Lesley was runner-up last year and has had a

staggering sixty six short stories accepted for magazine publication with earnings now into five figures. She is a hard-working and exceptionally bright lawyer with a bubbly personality who never stops pushing herself to achieve success through her love of writing.

The Elizabeth Goudge Trophy is awarded for the best novel beginning. This year, the theme was 'an email gone astray'. Lesley submitted the opening to her story *It All Went Horribly Wrong* - but clearly it all went spectacularly right!

Extract from Jenny Barden's VWC Blog entry

From Flying Saucers to Flying the VWC Flag For The Last Time

Although a cliché, 'human dynamo' aptly describes John Spencer, outgoing Verulam Writers' Circle Chairman.

In 1987 he wrote the first of 30 books on UFOs and the paranormal while running a successful accountancy business. One, co-authored with his wife Anne, was a best seller. Asked about their collaboration, he said 'I'd write a paragraph. She cut it down to a word. We then agreed on a tight sentence.'

As if this wasn't enough, John exhibits his own paintings, is an expert photographer, cycles each day to the gym, swims and, for relaxation, roars around Harpenden on his Honda CBF 600.

John first joined Verulam Writers to 'learn to write fiction'. Instead he became a popular chairman, serving seven years whereas most only last two or three. He is only resigning now because he wants to discuss his own work, something he felt unable to do whilst Chairman.

But he hasn't quite let go. John will now take over as Treasurer and also Chair VWC's Get Writing 2010 Conference.

Asked what he thought was the most important attribute for a Chairman he replied, 'a light touch'. Appropriate, perhaps, for a human dynamo.

Janet Baldey

Journalist Ian Cundell Scoops VWC Chairmanship at AGM

Newly-elected VWC Chairman, Ian Cundell, describes the circle as, 'A group of people who take writing very seriously, but do not - on the whole - make the mistake of being too serious about it.'

Journalist, webmaster, PR chap and analyst, Ian describes himself as 'shy' - claiming that expressing an opinion is harder than it looks, but he does admit he seems to be good at it!

Ian believes the role of a Chairman is, '...to create an environment where inexperienced writers can become experienced writers, experienced writers can become confident writers and confident writers can become published writers.'

As for the strengths of VWC: Ian says, 'We sometimes give tougher critiques than expected...but they're always constructive and, in the end, those people who stick the course appreciate it.'

Ian is a lover of opinions and a believer in debate, on which he believes the Circle thrives. His advice to members is, 'Read as much as you can, as often as you can and be open to new influences.'

The full interview can be found online at <http://www.ifshakespeare.co.uk/>

Mark Clementson

Website Focus – www.vwc.org.uk

This week we're giving you ten good reasons to visit the VWC website:

1. Find out where and when we meet and how to contact us
2. Catch up on the latest VWC news
3. Check our regular programme of events
4. Visit our 'If Shakespeare' blog
5. Socialise with fellow writers
6. Receive MSS critiques in our secure Members Only section (free to all existing members)
7. Read our Tips & Tricks section which provides practical writing advice
8. Learn about our exciting Get Writing 2010 conference and see pictures from past events
9. Find out what VWC writers are doing via our handy links to writers' own websites
10. Learn more about VWC's 51 year history of success





Writer's Notebook



For a spotlight on writing groups, events or information from outside the circle:

Tring Writers' Circle

It's probably better to start with what we're not! Not fancy, not Booker Prize winners, not high falutin'... you get the picture. We're a small and friendly group of writers who share an interest in writing. Writing can be a lonely business, so it's good to get together, get some feedback, test ideas and practice different writing techniques.

We meet weekly to encourage each other in our writing by sharing our work, trying new writing exercises and offering constructive criticism (with the emphasis on constructive!). Each

week we focus on different elements of writing, some weeks we have guest speakers and there are regular manuscript evenings. There is absolutely no obligation to read work out loud or to do the homework projects, but some of us find we only write under pressure! The most important thing is that we enjoy our writing and have fun with it.

We meet most Wednesday evenings between 8 and 10pm at the Red Cross hall, using the back entrance and the small meeting room.

For further information and programme, contact: **Jules Wake** on 01442 828681 (mobile: 07986 903401) or email us at tringwriterscircle@ntlworld.com

New Recruit – Sandra Norval

WVC's latest recruit, Sandra Norval, is an accountant and recent Environmental Studies graduate. Sandra somehow manages to write short stories, articles and novels as well as keep up her interests in photography, conservation work and canoeing.

Writing off and on since the age of 8, she is also a member of the Hertford Writers' Circle and is enrolled on a

Writers' Bureau home study course.

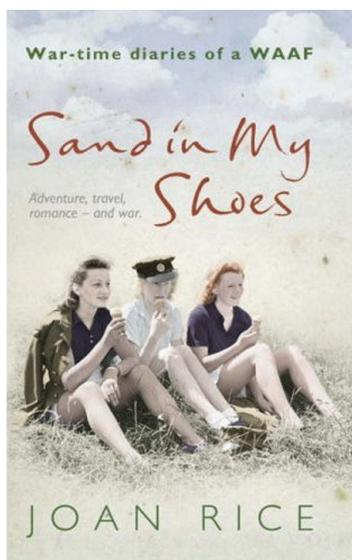
Sandra's first article, 'Don't Revere the Peer' was published in *The View From Here* magazine and her short story, 'Coffee Shop' can be found on the *Shortbreadstories* website. Novels-wise, her works-in-progress are: 'Invasions'- the initial part of a trilogy



which combines her interests in fantasy and conservation; and 'Libertine' - a dark tale of angels and vampires. Sandra plans to complete one of these before searching for an agent.

Sandra attended *Get Writing 2009* and loved it so much she joined our circle! She thinks we encourage new writers and wanted to participate in the many feedback opportunities we offer. Sandra's website is www.sandranorval.co.uk

Cheryl Alleyne



Joan Rice (Aug, 1919 – May, 2009)

Sadly, Joan Rice, life member and one of the Circle's founders died in May aged 89.

I last saw her in 2006 when her war diaries, covering the time she served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), had just been published as *Sand in my Shoes*. Her granddaughter Eva Rice, the novelist, had discovered them and recognised their worth immediately. Joan had always wanted to write.

Tim the lyricist, Jonathan who writes sports books, and her youngest son

Andrew grew up to the sound of Joan hammering away at her typewriter on the kitchen table in her Harpenden home. Her sense of humour percolated through everything she wrote, fact or fiction, for a wide range of publications including *Punch*, *The Guardian* and *The Times*.

Further information about Joan's life is available on the Times website, www.timesonline.co.uk, and her book is published by HarperPress.

Jean Gardner

'Get Writing' 2010

After the sell-out success of GW09, plans are now well under way for VWC's next all-day writing conference to be held on Saturday, 20th February 2010. Our aim is to go even bigger and better, and thanks to the University of Hertfordshire we have use of the excellent facilities at the plush de Havilland Campus on the outskirts of Hatfield.

With more of everything that worked well at our last conference, we will be striving to provide an irresistible formula: an exciting mix of talks, workshops, and opportunities to meet authors and leaders in the world of publishing, with an emphasis on the business as well as the pleasure of writing.

Our cast list is already glittering. Here are a few of those who have already expressed an interest in coming:

Literary agents: John Jarrold, Philip Patterson (Marjacq Scripts).

Leading editor: Simon Taylor (Transworld, Random House – one of the few editors left who can place a book with any number of imprints).

Acclaimed literary author: Salley Vickers (HarperCollins).

Commercial authors: Conn Iggulden (*Dangerous Book for Boys*), possibly Philippa Gregory (*The Other Boleyn Girl*), Adele Geras (90 books to her credit), Judith Lennox (best selling romantic novelist), Vanessa Gebbie (prizewinning short story writer), Imran Ahmad (possibly 'the funniest writer ever'), Jan Jones and Melanie Hilton (who runs the RNA New Writers' Award), and perhaps crime writer Mark Billingham as well – the list just keeps growing!

Be sure to put the date in your diaries, and watch this newsletter for information on how to book your place early.

Jenny Barden

'I always write a good first line, but I have trouble in writing the others' - Moliere

If you wish to join our newsletter mailing list, contribute an item, or learn more about our website, or VWC's events then email the Editor at:

writer@stevenbarley.com

A Little Humour

This week it's our 'Alternative Writing Dictionary':

Chapter Breakdown – Stress caused by squeezing 18 chapters into 18 paragraphs

Epilogue – When one ending isn't good enough

Limited Omniscience – When men try to write romantic fiction

Misery-Lit – Any email, txt or letter from your mother-in-law

Quotation marks – Cosy conversation between singles or couples, but not both.

Suspense – When a publisher leaves you hanging

The Newsletter With No Name

I hope you enjoyed reading this newsletter, but like any new arrival it needs a name. It's your newsletter, so it only seems fair to ask you to name it. Therefore get your thinking caps on for our *Newsletter Naming Competition*.

We need a title that is short and pithy enough for us to use in subsequent editions. Remember that non-members read our newsletter so your ideas must be clean and make sense to all. Other than that, have as many goes as you want. Either add them to a list we'll stick on the wall at our first session in September, or go online to our members' area and add your ideas to a discussion thread I'll open to kick things off. Attendees at the first meeting will vote to determine the winning name.

And finally, I wish you all a glorious summer, but make sure you save some time to write!

Steve Barley (Editor)