Spoilt by the warmth of an unexpected Indian summer, members of the Thurrock Writers’ Circle found themselves enjoying their last weekend in September in one of the few remaining truly peaceful enclaves in Thurrock: Davy Down. Sadly, we were not there to rest in the last rays of the summer sun, but to labour hard for our craft under the stern guidance of our chosen mentor, Stephanie Wilson.

**Down Davy Down**

Thurrock Writers’ Newsletter

October 2014

Day one started with the usual warm-ups before investigating persuasive writing styles, provoking the group to discover a wide range of things they wanted to change in modern society. Among other things: hoarding, bin collections, charity TV commercials and a curious pair of high-heeled shoes all came under fire, as members passionately, and not without a little humour, argued their cases. A break for lunch gave the opportunity, as welcome as it was brief, to enjoy the afternoon sunshine, before cracking on with the studies.

‘A lost cause.’

The post-lunch component of the day was taken up with the creation of an outline for a six-part drama, the focus of which was to be the village church of St Jude. (A saint selected for his patronage of hopeless cases and lost causes. It wasn’t clear if this was emblematic of the characters in the story or the members of the group.)

A cast of characters was created and from them storylines were developed until by the end of the day a fairly well fleshed out first episode was arrived at. It was a completely new challenge for the group to work together on a single project in this way, but one that the members rose to and acquitted themselves admirably. All resolved to continue with the project after the weekend and see it through to fruition. The leadership of Ms Wilson throughout the process was particularly useful: she acting as a conductor to the groups private ‘chamber orchestra’: constantly encouraging and guiding us through the piece, pointing the group in the right direction and allowing us to make our own way there. No doubt we had energy to go further but the first day had to end and it did so as it had started: bathed in warm sunshine.

It was all change on Sunday, except for the weather, which remained unseasonably glorious. However, prose was to be out and in its place we were to grapple with our poetic voices!

Having said that we briefly returned to prose as Stephanie challenged us to attempt different writing genres and to learn the value of the phrase ‘less is more’ by forcing us to write to a strict limit of only one hundred words. Tackling genres ranging from ‘documentary’ to ‘romance’ and ‘gothic’ to ‘comedy’ the group produced amazingly high quality results and demonstrated a clear understanding of the need for direct, uncluttered writing.

After a quick dalliance with opening hooks, we got down to the meat of the day and embarked on a journey through various poetic forms including acrostics, free verse, rhyming verse and shaped poems. The 2015 anthology will not be short of excellent poetry thanks to a single day’s work during that Indian summer.

Once again, Thurrock Writers’ Circle, to a man, have proved their skill. If only we could have a Writers’ Weekend every week.

**A Writer’s Progress**

Tina Thompson has once again been busy, not only finding time to appear on the radio to talk about her experiences dealing with epilepsy but also has written an article that will be published on the Epilepsy Society website blog.

The results of the summer competitions were revealed at the Davy Down Writing Weekend. Congratulations to those who were placed: listed below with the judge’s comments.

**Short Story Competition:** All wonderful pieces: it was really hard to choose the top three.

**1st Place – ‘For a Reason’.** I found I really cared for John and was devastated by the unexpected twist at the end.

**2nd Place – ‘Doris’**

A lovely story. Doris was an inspirational character.

**3rd Place – ‘Forget-me-knot’**

I never guessed what the knot was for.

**Poetry Competition:** There was amazing depth among the entries: so hard to pick a winner: even harder to choose a top three. I would class everyone as a winner: keep writing and improving.

**1st Place – ‘Do You Remember’**

This one made me cry, which is good, as the writer knew how to write to touch the heart of the reader, which is very important for a writer to interact with the reader.

**2nd Place – ‘Grangewood’**

Wonderfully effective imagery: I felt like I was there with the writer in the hospital. Saying so much with so few words.

**3rd Place – ‘Memories’**

A beautifully recounted life-story: so many experiences we all share.

**Carpe Diem**

**International Short Story Competition
'Gem Street- Beyond the Axis'**Competition Closes: midnight on 31st December 2014.Short List announced: Spring 2015. **Guest Judge: Best-selling author - Linda Kavanagh.** Shorter, leaner and vibrant works containing 5,000 words or less are welcome from new and previously published writers. Open to all genres except Children's, YA or Poetry. Submissions: €10.00 per entry. You may submit a maximum of 3 stories. Three stories will receive one of the Leonard A. Koval Memorial Prizes: 1st Place: €500; 2nd Place: €200; 3rd Place: €100

<http://www.labellopress.com/gem-street---competition.html>

**INTERNATIONAL POETRY & PROSE COMPETITION 2014**

**The seventh year of the SaveAs Writers’ Competition!**

There is no limit to the number of entries per person. The deadline for all poetry and prose entries is December 31st 2014. Prizes: 1st £100; 2nd £50; 3rd £30.

**Prose**: Short stories may have any theme Maximum 3000 words. Judge: Amy Sackville. Amy Sackville’s debut novel, The Still Point, won the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize. Her second novel, Orkney, won a Somerset Maugham Award in 2014. Amy teaches Creative Writing at the University of Kent.

**Poetry**: Poems are welcome on any subject, maximum 50 lines. Judge Helen Ivory: Waiting for Bluebeard is Helen Ivory’s fourth collection for Bloodaxe Books (May, 2013). She is editor of Ink Sweat & Tears and teaches for the University of East Anglia and the Writers’ Centre Norwich.

How to Enter: Entry fees - £3 per poem/story, £8 for three. Electronic copies must be sent to saveas@hotmail.co.uk and headed as either ‘Poetry’ or ‘Prose’. The winners will be announced at the Annual Awards Ceremony in March 2015.

<http://saveaswriters.co.uk/index.html>

**[Flash 500](http://www.flash500.com/index_files/flashfiction.htm)**

**[Flash Fiction Competition](http://www.flash500.com/index_files/flashfiction.htm)**

**Now in its fifth year**, this quarterly open-themed competition for fiction up to 500 words has closing dates of 31st March, 30th June, 30th September and 31st December.

**Entry fee:** £5 for one story, £8 for two stories

**Prizes:** £300 plus publication in ***Words with JAM***, £200 and £100

[**Humour Verse Competition**](http://www.flash500.com/index_files/humourverse.htm)

**Now in its fourth year,** any form of humour verse will be accepted, from a limerick to a poem of 32 lines.

This is also a quarterly competition with closing dates of 31st March, 30th June, 30th September and 31st December.

**Entry fee:** £3 for the first poem, £2.50 for each poem thereafter

**Prizes:** £150 plus publication in ***Words with JAM***, £100 and £50

For more information go to: <http://www.flash500.com/>

**Poet’s Corner**

**The Singer’s Lament – or – I Took My Voice to a Party**

I took my voice to a party

But nobody asked me to sing

I went to the pianist with my music

But he said

Hang on a bit old thing

The buffets all ready and there’re drinks flowing free

So let’s get in before it’s all gone

And then you’ll have time to sing your song.

I had a few drinks and was ready

Then a violin started to play

I clapped with the rest, and thought

Now time to give of my best

But the pianist had gone away.

I said “I belong to a choir,”

They said “Are you for hire?”

So I gave them a trill… they thought I was ill,

And they filled up my glass,

Said the feeling would pass,

We’re sure it won’t last.

The drinks seemed to go on forever,

The pianist was flat on the floor,

And if you can’t beat them, it’s better to join them,

Well isn’t that what parties are for?

I took my voice to a party,

But nobody asked me to sing.

So, I sank a few more, and made for the door,

And forgot the whole bloody thing.

Barbara Spencer

**The Small Print**

Find us online at: <http://thurrockwriterscircle.weebly.com/>

Newsletter submissions to: twcnewsletter@yahoo.co.uk

Poetry, Prose, News… anything wanted.

**The Last Word**

“A single conversation across the table with a wise man is better than ten years mere study of books.”

[Henry Wadsworth Longfellow](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/h/henry_wadsworth_longfello.html)