

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Starting with the good, I am delighted to announce that NAWE will be a partner in one of the two new projects benefiting from Arts Council England's Creative Writing in Schools Fund. The Creative Writing Education Hub will be led by Bath Spa University, in conjunction with NAWE and Bath Festivals. Anne Caldwell, Deputy Director, led on this work, and is to be congratulated. More detail follows overleaf.

Also good (and equally important) is that our membership has increased – to nearly 1800. I recall a time (2008) when 1000 was our target; for 2000 to be coming into range is remarkable. The healthy income generated, however, is still frustratingly short of covering our core costs. We build in a contribution to these costs in every new project that we deliver, but there is inevitably a limit to that. As a result, the balancing of our budget remains difficult.

Thanks to the dedication of the staff, over and above their contracted hours, these difficulties are currently in hand; it's a manageable "bad". The far worse news comes despite all our efforts. The government's decision to scrap the Creative Writing A Level, even after a vast amount of positive evidence about its value had been lodged, is politics at its most pernicious and willfully ill-informed. We are of course fighting the decision as best we can, but it is hard to envisage a positive result.

Outrageous as it is, we somehow have to ride the disappointment and forge on with those projects within our control. Our growing membership is a clear sign that, whatever damage the current government might inflict on education as a whole, there is a committed community of writers and teachers supporting young (and older) people in their creative explorations and personal development – whether in schools, universities or the wider community – with NAWE in support of the endeavour as a whole.

Internationalism

Part of NAWE's strength is its interaction with the other leading national associations. Our conference this year



welcomes members of the European, American and Australasian bodies. NAWE members took part in the EACWP Symposium in Madrid, and the AWP Conference in Minneapolis, where UK universities were promoted via the NAWE booth. In Los Angeles next year a similar representation will be made, offering an exceptionally economical means for distance learning and PhD programmes in particular to be publicized.

NAWE is the Subject Association for Creative Writing, aiming to further knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of Creative Writing and to support good practice in its teaching and learning at all levels.



@NaweWriters

Publications

This year saw the first publication of our new peer-reviewed journal of Creative Writing research, *Writing in Practice*. There was a notably high proportion of international contributions, which is at once pleasing yet surprising; given the clamour for the journal's introduction from UK quarters, the low level of UK submissions is hard to understand. The editors wish to clarify that doctoral work is very much welcome, e.g. excerpts from Creative Writing PhD theses that combine original creative and critical elements. As we prepare to publish the second issue, and announce the call for submissions to the third, I should like to thank Maggie Butt for all her work in establishing the journal, in her role as Chair of NAWE's Higher Education Committee. Maggie is stepping down from that position, and until next year's elections, Harry Whitehead will act as Editor, with Celia Brayfield chairing the committee. I should also like to thank other members of the committee – and the wider NAWE membership – who have contributed so much to the now imminent Creative Writing Subject Benchmark to be published by the QAA.

Our longer-standing publication, *Writing in Education*, has benefited from new members of the editorial team. George Green, Tom MacAndrew and Carolyn Jess-Cooke have been editors this year, and further members will come into play in 2016. We have also been pleased to see such a variety of new voices being published, with school teachers as well as university lecturers and professional writers contributing. Articles have featured writing in prisons, writing workshops for the visually impaired and teaching writing in Kurdistan, amongst many other topics.

Working with Galleries

While various existing partnerships continued (e.g. Poetry by Heart), our major new partnership project this year was run with engage, the national organization for gallery education, with support from the Max Reinhardt Literacy Awards. The project, which will run again next year, enabled young people from a variety of schools to write imaginatively in response to visual arts collections. The legacy of resources for teachers and writers that came out of this pilot year are available via the NAWE website, and we should like to thank the innovative work of the writers involved: Mac Dunlop, Claire Collison and Mike Garry who worked with Falmouth Art Gallery, Kettle's Yard and Manchester City Art Gallery respectively. The next phase of the project will build on this success and enable more residencies to take place in other venues in the UK, bringing further NAWE member-writers into play.



Creative Writing

The NAWE Handbook for Teachers

Teachers as Writers, Students as Writers

The NAWE Handbook for Teachers, launched at the conference and available for purchase as an e-book via the NAWE website, was intended primarily as a resource for those teaching the Creative Writing A Level. It was however conceived as having an even wider application, and the demise of the A Level was not cause to cancel publication, quite the opposite. Teachers will have even greater need for support in keeping their classrooms creative.

NAWE's work in supporting teachers included another Skill Sharing Symposium this year, run in conjunction with First Story, the Poetry Society and the University of Bolton. Valuable as these symposiums have been, demonstrating the professionalism of work in the field, they have also been hard to finance and difficult to promote. We are therefore especially excited to be taking such work forward within a new, high-profile and well-funded partnership: The Creative Writing Education Hub.

This is a three year programme in the South West, co-ordinated by Bath Spa University and funded as part of the Arts Council's new structural fund to support this work. NAWE will lead on aspects of dissemination, including a new set of resources developed in conjunction with teachers, a major conference, and a special edition of the NAWE magazine, distributed beyond the membership. Much of the work will focus on developing teachers' own skills as practising writers. Also of particular note is the aim to create a new and fully validated professional Master's qualification in Creative Writing Education. It has been a long-held NAWE ambition to see such a qualification introduced, so it is heartily welcomed. We have worked most productively with Bath Spa University's Creative Writing Programme in the past, and look forward to working too with the University's Institute of Education on this project. It is encouraging that the project will build on a properly recognized history of work, experience and expertise. Too often the exciting new projects attracting new money make no such acknowledgement and simply cover old ground as a result. We shall do better.

Turning a New Page

Thanks to investment from Creative Scotland, our work supporting the professional development of Scotland's writers has continued this year with a national conference for aspiring television writers and regional events and activity around creative collaboration.

In October, a packed house of 65 writers from across Scotland gathered together in Glasgow for ScreenWrite: Breaking into Television Writing, an industry-focused day of talks, panel sessions and workshops exploring the rewards and challenges of writing drama and comedy for UK television today. The aim was to offer writers wanting to pursue a career in television the opportunity to get the inside track on the realities of working in this exciting and competitive industry and, to this end, we gathered together a line-up of leading industry practitioners – commissioners, development executives, producers, agents and screenwriters. To deliver the event, we teamed up with Glasgow Caledonian University, Screen Academy Scotland at Edinburgh's Napier University and the University of the West of Scotland, all of which have thriving screenwriting programmes. We also enjoyed ongoing support from the Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA) and the Scottish Book Trust. We are still compiling the formal evaluation but the feedback on the day was hugely positive. "Fantastic screenwriting event – not just great inspiration but also hard-ass realism and practicalities" posted one writer on Facebook the following day.

In September, we joined forces with the Creative Arts Business Network (CABN) to present an event on a rather more modest scale, The Power of Creative Collaboration. Eighteen creatives from a range of backgrounds came to Galashiels in the Scottish Borders, some enjoying their first trip on the newly opened Borders Railway, to hear writer Ken Cockburn and choreographer Claire Pencak talk about the role that collaboration plays in their work and to share experiences and ideas. The evening proved to be a great success, with animated conversations going on late into the night, suggesting that this is a model that could be usefully replicated elsewhere. In the meantime, we plan to commission a resource around creative collaboration, which will be available on the NAWE website in due course.

As in previous years, Philippa Johnston managed the project on our behalf, for which we owe her many thanks.

Needless to say, we are keen to run similar projects – and expand NAWE's work generally – in other parts of the UK.

Myths of the Near Future

As NAWE's operation this year has become even more "virtual", individual staff have operated with even greater autonomy. Wes Brown, in charge of the Young Writers' Hub, assembled a bid to Arts Council England to take the Hub to the next level, and I'm delighted that the bid was successful. It offers particular new membership benefits to young writers, at the core of which is *Myths*, a journal of new writing by under 25s. These young writers have the opportunity to co-edit the publication with Wes, who guides them through the process, from the call for submissions to proofreading, marketing and organizing a launch event. The new funding has made possible a printed compendium of the online issues, extending the publication's reach, and making it an even more desirable and useful outlet for young writers.

The new development of the Hub includes an interactive, safe, curated space where young writers can share work, news and questions, and have their posts tagged with user-generated profiles that link to their blogs and social media. Wes will be providing writing prompts, challenges and feedback to help young writers to improve their work. In addition, when young writers engaging with the Hub are ready to seek professional publication and representation, we have a bursary fund to provide them with editorial and manuscript appraisal services from The Literary Consultancy.

The Hub is now also a registered Arts Award Centre and we will be offering courses for young people at Bronze, Silver and Gold levels of the award. Through Arts Award, young people gain a nationally recognized qualification enabling them to progress into further education and employment.

Wes of course continues to maintain information on the NAWE website as a whole and produce the weekly e-bulletin, for which all members are I know most grateful.

The NAWE Team

Linked to redevelopments of the Young Writers' Hub, we undertook some minor improvements to the rest of the NAWE site. The most significant changes were to the system itself, largely invisible but of considerable potential impact to the efficiency of the organization: Clare Mallorie, as administrator, is now able to issue personalized membership subscription renewal invoices by email rather than our old system of posting paper invoices. Although we have had an initial outlay in programming costs, this new invoicing system will save NAWE money in the long run, both in postage and

administrative hours, and we think it will be popular with members. The growth in our

membership is due in no small part to Clare's tireless efforts to date, and we hope the new system will make her work less burdensome. Chasing overdue subscriptions is not a favourite task, and if all members could be prompt with their payments, a considerable further amount of time, energy (and therefore money) could be saved.

I should like to repeat my thanks to all the other members of staff, Wes Brown, Philippa Johnston, and also Gill Greaves and Griselda Goldsbrough who have managed the NAWE work contracted with Poetry by Heart. Special thanks go to Anne Caldwell, who is moving on having done such an excellent job as Deputy Director.

My thanks go too to the outgoing NAWE Management Committee, and to Liz Cashdan, as Chair, who has also supported the editorial team of *Writing in Education*, and ran the retreat for NAWE members at Ty Newydd together with Christine Hollywood from Lapidus.

A new Committee will be announced at the AGM within the Durham Conference, with information posted straight afterwards on the NAWE website.

Paul Munden, November 2015



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