

### Subject Association

Last year, in this report, I very deliberately described NAWE as Subject Association for Creative Writing. Our self-recognition in fulfilling that role has now been formally endorsed by our membership of the Council for Subject Associations, and we look forward to playing a full part in the Council's work. There are, in particular, some opportunities to engage with new teacher development plans that we feel would make excellent use of NAWE's core strengths. I should like to highlight some of those strengths - as well as some new services.

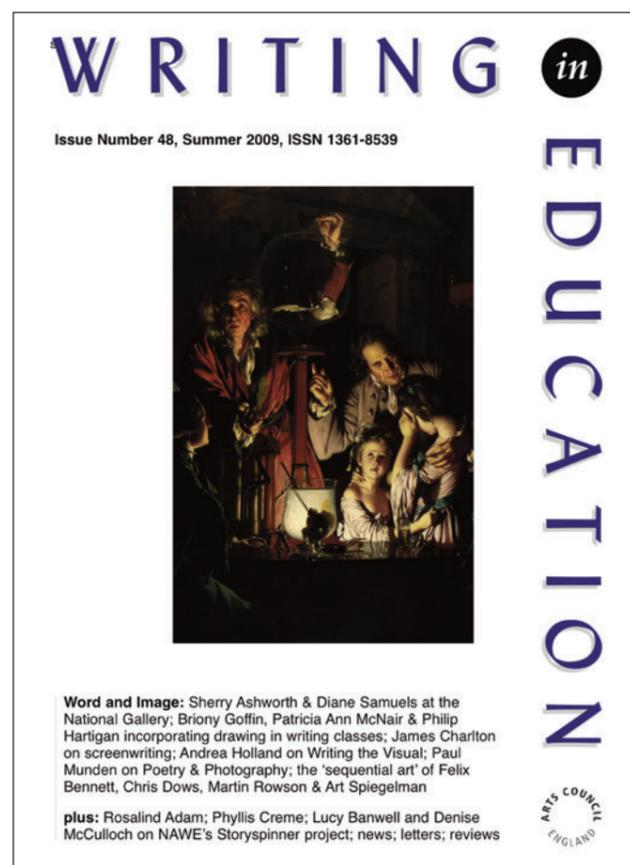
### Practicalities

Over the past month, our membership has surged over the 1000 mark. It is rewarding, naturally, to see such an increase; for a while it had appeared that 1000 was as much a barrier as an achievement. The increase is undoubtedly due in part to the new provision of Public Liability Insurance that we have included with the new Professional Membership subscription. We have always sought to recruit members on the basis that they were committed to our mission - to 'further knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of Creative Writing and to support good practice in its teaching and learning at all levels'. We have never wanted anyone to join simply, for instance, because they needed a disclosure from the CRB. We are however committed to providing whatever services are necessary to professional writers working in education, and we are pleased to have made things so very much cheaper for those members who need to be insured. If writers do approach us in the first instance wanting to take advantage of such a scheme, they are clearly serious about preparing themselves in a professional manner, and we hope that they are therefore likely to appreciate the many more interesting things that NAWE has to offer.

### The NAWE Journal, *Writing in Education*

This coming year will see the publication of the 50th edition of our journal (in addition to the 11 issues of NAWE News that preceded it). For members wishing to

make use of the collected articles that we have published, and especially those more recent members who do not own the complete back catalogue in print, there is the online Archive where all 600+ contributions are available. Having recently featured articles by members who had - independently and unknown to each other - run workshops in the National Gallery focusing on the very same painting (by Joseph Wright of



Derby, and depicted above), it was very satisfying to receive a large order for copies of the magazine from the National Gallery itself. The whole story seemed to me to be a perfect example of how NAWE operates at its best: individual members sharing their experience in a way that not only informs the whole sector but replenishes the very environments in which they work.

**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.**

## The NAWE Conference

Our conference is a vibrant, social gathering of writers and their colleagues - the essential UK event for all those involved in the teaching of writing, enabling members to share their experience of teaching writing at all levels and to address current issues. This year, owing to the large number of persuasive proposals, we expanded the conference yet again, to include workshops and presentations on the Friday afternoon - a record number (46) of 'events within the event'. We are continuing to look for venues that enable us to create the necessary atmosphere for such a 'big conversation', and with early November now well established as the date.

## Professional Development

The NAWE retreat provides a rather different but complementary experience to the conference. For those who devote so much of their energy to assisting others, the retreat offers a much needed space in which to recall the primacy of their personal practice as writers in education. The range of our seminars has again expanded, focusing not only on schools but also work in museums and galleries, and on public art commissions. Some of this has been in partnership with universities, and we have also been pleased to contribute to HE creative writing programmes and PGCE courses. Our two new services, offering Professional Development Planning and Reader Feedback on work in progress, have both proved increasingly popular.

## Writing in Schools

Our research, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, reached its conclusion this year and we look forward to sharing the full findings in a specific publication. It is good to be in touch with similar projects, such as the one being run by New Writing North. Hopefully these separate initiatives will gain shared momentum and inform how Arts Council England supports writers in schools in the future. What we ourselves have learned about *what works well and why* is invaluable.

## Higher Education

Our Directory of Creative Writing Courses has been updated and improved over the summer. The listing is now alphabetically by institution with all associated courses grouped together, from BA through to PhD. This is a unique resource for prospective students - and anyone researching the provision of creative writing in HE. No other listing (e.g. UCAS) does anything remotely similar. I am convinced that such a knowledge base is crucial to the development of any other work across the sector, and this major improvement to our online resources is a significant step forward in supporting the many other ambitions for the Network.

## International links

Our partner organizations abroad, notably AWP (the Association of Writers and Writing Programmes) in the US and AAWP in Australia, are focused (certainly more than NAWE) on Higher Education, but not exclusively so. At AWP there is now a regular strand of the conference for WITS - Writers in (the) Schools, and we are joining their panel in Denver in 2010, sharing our experiences of using new media technology to teach, learn, publish, and create stronger communities.



An expectant space: the NAWE Conference swiftly becomes a vibrant, social gathering of writers and their colleagues - the essential UK event for all those involved in the teaching of writing.

The NAWE retreat provides a rather different but complementary experience. In the voices of participants:

*Brilliant – I learned that once freed from everyday constraints I can be both productive and relaxed. The workshops were stimulating and I found it a pleasure to take part.*

*It gave me (quite literally) acres of space and solitude to crack on with developing my novel-in-progress, taking it all at my own pace, plus the opportunity to share a taste of it with peers and get their much-valued feedback.*

*It was useful to network with others who teach in the same field, as it can often feel a lonely existence. I also found the guest writer's workshop really helpful, because (a) it's a refreshing change to be a participant as opposed to tutor/facilitator, (b) it's helpful to experience and learn from others' methodologies and (c) later in the week I used one of the exercises with the protagonist from my novel and exposed more of their character.*

## Other arenas

Further to our consultation commission last year, we are now moving forward in developing new structures of support for young writers. These are aimed primarily at writers in Yorkshire, but the online resources will undoubtedly benefit young writers nationwide. All developments are being steered by young people themselves but the new website will be integrated with NAWE's overall management of information for writers of all ages and ambitions.

## Literaturetraining

This year literaturetraining has been part of the working group set up by Creative & Cultural Skills to produce a literature workforce development plan. We have been involved in discussions about the development of a new literature development agency in the South West and belong to a new writer development network in Scotland, convened by the Scottish Book Trust. We have contributed to various writers' events and for the first time delivered one-to-one appointments and a 'Getting to where you want to be' workshop at the Winchester Writers' Conference - all of which were well received.

We have published several new briefings: using the internet for marketing; time management; planning a project and funding it (all co-commissioned with Litfest) and the creative art of blogging (co-commissioned with NALD) - all of which are available as free downloads. We are working with other partners on 'getting started' factsheets aimed at writers interested in working in schools, the community, and on writing in health and social care settings.

As part of our work supporting university creative writing programmes, we have commissioned follow-up case studies from those who wrote about their experiences of studying creative writing for NAWE back in 2004. We are also developing resource materials to help undergraduate and postgraduate students think about how they might use their creative writing degree, working with the English Subject Centre and, we hope, AGCAS. We are also managing a careers development day for creative writing MA and PhD graduates in Scotland, funded by the Scottish Arts Council, and have helped to programme three English Subject Centre seminars for creative writing lecturers.

Our website, [www.literaturetraining.com](http://www.literaturetraining.com), continues to consolidate its position as a valued and trusted first stop shop for writers and literature professionals looking for information on professional development, and our fortnightly e-bulletin is now received by over 4,000 subscribers. Literaturetraining is managed by Philippa Johnston with Fiona Firth responsible for information management.

Important change, however, is afoot...

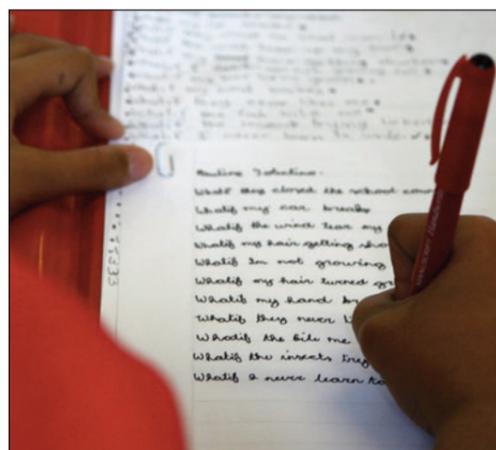
Literaturetraining has evolved over the years both in its remit and structure, and it continues to do so. The name itself has already changed once (from the seriously unwieldy 'New Writing and Literature Consortium') and we are poised to make another change in the near future, aiming for something still snappier - and more properly descriptive of what we offer. It is currently described as a wing of NAWE run in conjunction with certain partners

with a specific remit for providing information and advice on professional development for the literature sector. From next year it will be -

### The Writer's Compass

From Spring 2010, The Writer's Compass will be accessible both from the existing literaturetraining.com URL but also as a distinctive part of the NAWE site - the part that will offer free information and guidance on all aspects of professional development for writers, not just within 'education'. At the same time, the Members Only part of the NAWE site will also be further developed, so that the two parts provide distinct but complementary services. The Writer's Compass will also feature as the regular central insert within the NAWE Journal.

Why 'Compass'? Well, the service is more than mere information (though that itself is invaluable). Feedback from those who subscribe to the literaturetraining bulletin shows that we offer a genuinely trusted service, and so 'compass' has been chosen with a sense of pride thought not, we hope, hubris. Expect a gleaming new logo any moment now...



### A Directory of 'Practitioners'

The artscape directory will also be brought in line with the new website structure. It has been a positive venture, involving other artists in our listing, and while Creative Partnerships continue to advertise for 'creative practitioners' rather than specific artists, we feel that a mixed directory is useful. But with various regional options now available, it is clearly best for us to concentrate on representing writers. We will continue to feature related artists who work alongside writers in schools and other settings, but our priority will be to serve our members, those writers whose commitment to - and experience in - educational work is clear. Like The Writer's Compass, our directory is a trusted resource - in this case for schools; an easy and trusted means of engaging the best writers to run workshops or residencies.

### Organizations and Individuals

I should like to thank our Management Committee, especially Maggie Butt as Chair, our HE Committee, and our staff, all of whom work on a freelance basis - particularly this year Liz Fincham, who has steered the Writers in Schools research programme during what for her personally has been the most difficult time, and to Nick Owen, whose work on that project is not quite done (I imagine he is collating those vast quantities of data even now).

Thanks are also due to: Clare Mallorie - who has been exceptionally busy on account of the new insurance and membership arrangements, not to mention increased dealings with the CRB; Anne Caldwell for taking our

Professional Development Programme in adventurous new directions; Hilary Jenkins for co-ordinating the growing HE Network; and to Gill Greaves for running our conference. From hereon, Philippa Johnston and Fiona Firth, responsible for The Writer's Compass, will be fully part of the team. Many thanks to them - not least for helping us adjust to the new arrangements.

As the changes to literaturetraining are made, we wish to underline the importance

of those partner organizations who were originally a 'consortium'. We will continue to liaise closely and find new ground on which to work on specific projects. In the meantime I should like to thank Academi, Apples & Snakes, Lapidus, NALD, Renaissance One, Scottish Book Trust and Survivor's Poetry for their support. There are, of course, many other organizations with which we work closely; space here prohibits mention of them all, but they are highlighted on a regular basis both in the journal and on the website. On a personal note, I should also like to thank Jonathan Meth of writernet for his considerable input. We were sorry to see writernet forced to close its business this summer, relieved though to know that its website and considerable resources are being archived by the British Library.

*Paul Munden, October 2009*



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