

The Swanwick Standard

Thursday, August 18, 2017

Weather: Fabulous

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Swanwick's most popular free newspaper

TWO-YEAR STRUGGLE CULMINATES IN SUCCESS

by Karin Bachmann

A childhood dream has become true for Swanwick delegate Val Penny, when publisher Crooked Cat offered her a four-year-deal on the basis of her debut novel.

With the byline "Hunter by name, hunter by nature", Val's creation, DI Hunter Wilson, is sure to become another star on the firmament of Scottish crimesolving protagonists.

The path to publication wasn't easy. It took the writer with Californian roots two years to complete the book. As the Scottish Police Force underwent a change in their organisation in 2013, which left a big gap in research resources, Val decided to set the first two parts in the planned series before those changes. By the time the third book will go to its planning stage, Val will be able to resort to the by then accumulated pool of resource material.

"Also, I didn't want to make the same mistake as Ian Rankin", Val confided in our reporter when asked how many books she planned for her series. "More than one crime per year is committed in Edinburgh. That should keep Hunter busy until his retirement."

"Hunter's Chase" will hit the shelves in January 2018. And Val hopes to follow suit with "Hunter's Revenge" for Christmas the same year.



LITTLE FACE WOMAN GIVEN THE WRONG BABY *By Maggie Bolton*



On Sunday evening Sophie Hannah told over 280 delegates at the Swanwick Writers' School that the inspiration for her first crime novel 'Little Face', came from her own experience. The story centres round a woman, whose claim that that her baby has been switched for another, is disbelieved by everyone, including her husband. Sophie says that, being given the wrong baby after a C-section, gave her the idea. But why did this writer of poetry and humour, turn to crime? With some difficulty, it seems. She nearly gave up the idea.

I'LL JUST HAVE ONE LAST TRY AT WRITING A CRIME NOVEL.

Deciding to have 'one last go at writing crime fiction, it was through the high-handed actions of her agent, whom she describes as 'a total oddball, but effective' she was launched on the road to success. As well as her psychological crime thrillers, Sophie has, with the blessing of Agatha Christie's

family, brought Hercule Poirot back to life. Asked if she had similar plans for Miss Marple, Agatha Christie's other famous detective character, Sophie said she thought she would leave that for someone else.

Sophie Hannah's funny, entertaining and informative talk was well received by an enthusiastic audience and her book signing was a total sell out. However, she has arranged to send books to those who missed out.

Editorial

It's always exciting to be part of the creation of something new. But it's scary too, as you can't help wondering if your new baby will be a success. So it's a delight to see how, in only its second issue, the Swanwick Standard has flourished. We've been fortunate to bring you a wonderful range of stories about the adventures of an extraordinary number of talented writers, by a great team of dedicated news-hounds.

It's quite an achievement to master the basics of journalism in just a couple of hours. But the Swanwick Standard news team of 2017 have done exactly that. I'm very proud of the results, and of what the paper means to the reporters and their fellow writers in helping to chronicle another magnificent year for our dear Swanwick.

Simon Hall
Executive Editor,
The Swanwick
Standard, August
2017.

It's a Sign! Prose Night Sold Out

By Elizabeth Hopkinson

Keen Swanwickers were queuing to sign up for the inaugural Prose Open Mic before the list had even gone on the notice board, organiser Jen Wilson told the Standard.

Delegates were waiting by the board when she arrived with the list on Sunday morning, Jen said. All in all, 22 people signed up to read their short fiction, with names overflowing the printed box.

The event on Monday night in the Main Conference Hall began with performances by this year's 1st prize winners, Alexandra McDermott and Nicola Keller.

Co-host Maggie Cobbett read a short introduction to the winning stories, *Breakdown* and *The Song Weaver*, and also wielded the bell and egg timer, to keep delegates within their allotted 5 minute slot.

Performances were still going strong after last orders at the bar, with topics as diverse as first kisses, Irish immigrants in New York, and demonic heralds of the Apocalypse.

"It's been a roaring success," said Jen.



Star Falls Again

by Andy Cain

The stars are out in force again as Billy engages in more adventures of the generational kind as he braves on to solve the mystery of the iron bracelet. STAR FOUND is the second part of STAR STONE trilogy – part one emerged in the form of STAR FALL created by Richard Hensley in which the Lewisham schoolboy finds an ancient bracelet on a cleared bombsite in Canterbury in the summer of 1942. The bracelet's unique powers lead to some strange encounters, including a date with MI5 who want the bracelet for themselves.

Star Stone is set against a background of the dark ages, World War 2 and our future unstable sun – humankind must seek a new home. Enscorced in the bracelet, is the power of the ribbons. Billy is dragged through time and space to find love across the millennia with Gail in the 29th Century. He rescues her from capture for her bracelet.

Unsung Heroes by Maggie Cobbett

In the sunshine outside the Derbyshire Suite one afternoon, I chanced upon two cheerful gents willing to chat for a few minutes. A familiar figure to Swanwickers is Steve, a real Mr Fixit.

Responsible amongst many other things for setting up the halls, fixing the audiovisual equipment and revarnishing acres of flooring, Steve also has to round up stray sheep and cows from time to time. He has been at The Hayes for eleven years. Eddie has been cleaning the windows for twenty-six, bringing a sparkle to each outside pane as well as the inside ones in corridors and walkways. He reckons that there are at least a thousand of them and spoke ruefully of having to scrape off with a blade the sticky palm prints of visitors' children unable to resist a shiny surface.

Steve's job has its moments too. He recalled a pair of vicars who, ignoring his advice that the covered walkway was too narrow, tried with predictable results to carry the tree they had just bought up to the Chapel. Then there were the whisky loving Irish nuns... Maybe he and Eddie should get together and write a book!



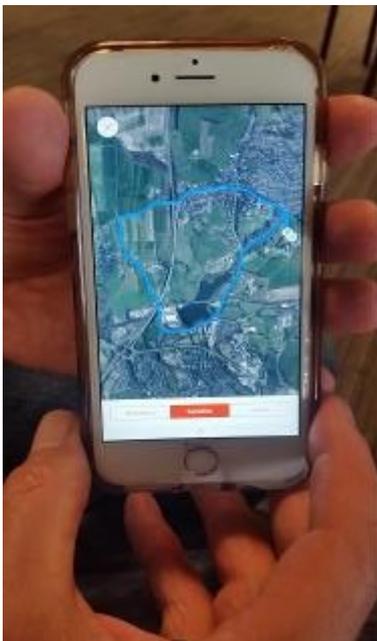
Links Between Walking & Writing

By Kathryn Aalto

What is it about walking and running that makes it so satisfying to thinking and writing?

Since at least Greek philosophers, writers have discovered a deep connection between walking, thinking, and writing.

William Wordsworth -- whose poetry is filled with jaunts up mountains, through forests, and along public roads -- walked 180,000 miles in his lifetime. Henry David Thoreau professed that his health and spirits required "sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields" for at least four hours a day.



Emerging and published authors attending Swanwick Writers' School put these parallels into action. Regular runners lace up their running shoes to pound pavement and public footpaths in the town and country surrounding the Hayes Conference Centre.

"Running is a meditation," said novelist Lance Greenfield to a breathless Swanwick Standard reporter. "When you wake up, you have story ideas. Running clarifies them. I put sentences and ideas into my running cadence and it puts my thoughts in order."

The link between the two begins with changes to our chemistry. When we move, the heart pumps faster, circulating blood and oxygen to muscles, organs -- including the brain. Even with a gentle morning jaunt -- like the daily 15-minute jog taken by tutor Bridget Holding around her village in southern France -- people perform better on tests of memory and attention. Regular exercise promotes new connections between brain cells.

"The open air and the tingle of exercise enlivens my mind as much as my body," explained tutor, runner, and author Simon Hall.

Whether writers run 10 miles through the golden fields of barley at sunrise or take a gentle walk around the lake at Swanwick, physical terrain invites the brain to review, revise and reflect upon its own landscapes.

For 2017 The Hayes installed the news self-service system which has been unanimously acclaimed by delegates at the Writers' Summer School. Options have included up to six desserts, ample cream, a large bowl of fruit and gluten free cake and vegetarian jelly.

Several visitors complimented the management on the abundance of food and several worried about waste. A member of serving staff, who wished to be anonymous, told us that unused wrapped butter pats had to be thrown away, because the staff could not know how long the butter had been out of the chiller cabinets so Health and Safety required butter pats out of the chiller should be thrown away.

Former manager Julie, this year with Pink hair, sold jewellery. Standard rooms in the main building in the ground floor corridor nicknamed 'the Titanic' will be converted to en suite. Come back next year.

Angela Lansbury

A First for Swanwick Chapel

Remembering Katy Clarke *By Christina Martin*

Past president Katy Clarke was remembered at the ancient night prayer service known as Compline. New to the Swanwick programme, the service was scheduled for ten o'clock Monday night in the chapel.

Delegates left candles in the chapel during the day, to be lit in the service as a record of their thoughts and remembrances of Katy.

Monday night saw twelve candles alight in the semi-darkness of the chapel. Short prayers were read together. Participant Jolanta Bradley spoke afterwards of how 'peaceful and tranquil' it was, finding the experience 'very moving'.

'I wouldn't have missed it for the world', said former Swanwick President Diana Wimbs. 'I just had a sense of peace as soon as I came in. A sense of togetherness, of being joined together in peace, love and the communion of writers'.

Swanwicker Maria Dorman described it as 'a reminder of the spiritual element of Swanwick' and felt inspired by how it 'represented the community'.

The service will be repeated in the chapel on Thursday night.



Candles at the night prayer service.

Photo by Diana Wimbs.

Chasing Unicorns With Katy *by Kate McCormick*

Katy Clarke touched the lives of everyone she met. And this Christmas, a book will be published in memory of the long-time supporter and former Chair of Swanwick, raising money for the Devon Hospice where she died earlier this year.

"I am deeply moved, as I know my daughter Katy would be too," said her mother, Moira Gibson. "I'm so pleased that Rowcroft Hospice is going to benefit. Katy was so well cared for there. Thank you."



Katy's friends all have their own favourite stories from time spent with her. Her presence has been felt this year in a special edition of the Swanwick newsletter in June; in Tea with Katy on Monday; in the candles lit in the chapel; and in Virtual Swanwick, a parallel online gathering invented by Katy for school members unable to attend the real thing.

Katy's daughter, Karen, has designed the cover for *Chasing Unicorns*; her sister Maggie Kay has written a moving piece 'Celebrating Sisterhood'; and there will be a reprinted article from Katy herself. Other contributions will include pieces from Swanwickers past and present on the themes of unicorns, family, Scotland and writing, all of which were very important to Katy.

Chasing Unicorns will be out in November, both as an ebook and in paperback. Anyone wishing to contribute to the anthology should email [Kate McCormick](mailto:Kate.McCormick@swanwick.org) before the end of August.

Silence and Solitude at Swanwick

By Joyce Janes

Everyone talks of Meditation by the Lake, Unwind your Mind in the Chapel, but does anyone know about the Labyrinth?

Well yes, people do, I've asked them.

'Oh, it's near the chapel.'

'Yes, it's lovely.'

When I ask if they use it, no one I spoke to did.

It's Saturday and Swanwick is alive with writers.

You're ready for action, the air is buzzing with excitement and expectation as like-minded authors mingle, rekindle friendships, chat and network.

You highlight workshops in the programme, anxious to take full advantage. This is your time.

But by midweek you can reach a point when your brain feels like scrambled egg, your energy levels drop and, despite endless supplies of tea and cake, you desperately need someone to turn the volume down.

What about when it all gets too much?

That's when you need the peace and tranquillity of the Labyrinth. It's a haven of solitude, a walking meditation - food for the soul.



Non Fiction Romance at Swanwick

By Tiggy Hayes

Romance is not just found between the pages produced by Swanwick writers. In 2016, Aussie Jascinta McDonald 24, travelled halfway round the world to attend the annual writers' school and picked up more than literary tips. En-route to Swanwick she stopped in London long enough to encounter Guillaume a French lad staying at the same venue. Croissants led to dinner, and a revision of her journey home to include a visit to France.

"As he walked in, I went red and couldn't speak; he sat near me began talking" she said. They fell in love. Turning the page on 2016, Jascinta left home, her job, sold her car and waved goodbye to her mother, to start a new chapter of her life in Versailles with her French hero Guillaume.

Jascinta first read about Swanwick when googling literary schools and decided to book; on reading the small print she realised it took place in England. Never having travelled alone she boarded a plane and spent a few days in London before immersing herself in prose and text.

A year on Jascinta has returned to the school that changed her life so dramatically. Unable to find work in France she is concentrating on her writing and has had two stories picked up by The Australian Times Anthologies. Jascinta is hoping that this year's trip to Swanwick will help with her fantasy novel writing as "my French is hopeless; it goes in one ear and out the other."



13 – Lucky for Some *by Joan Harthan*

'The Earth moved for me and Aileen.'

If you thought thirteen was unlucky – think again. Fourteen delegates piled into bed together at Swanwick Writers' Summer School, and thirteen of them were women. Dennis Bryant, (a 41 year veteran of the school) was the man involved. The incident occurred three years ago but Dennis is hoping for a repeat performance this year.

'The staff at Hayes Conference Centre were very good in 2014,' he told me, *'They removed the broken bed at no cost to either myself or the ladies involved.'*

This week, on Monday evening, he invited ten ladies to his room but, disappointingly, a few men gate crashed the party and the bed did not succumb to their shenanigans, and nor did the ladies,

'It's all just a bit of fun,' said one participating octogenarian.

We hear he has invited another sixteen ladies to his room party on Thursday night. The Conference Centre, having got wind of this, have placed a skip outside Lakeside to accommodate the anticipated broken bed. Anyone interested in attending the event should contact Dennis through the Noticeboard that is not in The Vinery.

Battling Brontophobia

By Jennifer Wilson

There was indeed the threat of thunder in the Hayes' Main Conference Hall on Sunday night, at the annual Swanwick General Knowledge Quiz. It was cheers all round from the Yellows and Whites, who, despite being collectively stumped by not knowing Brontophobia is the fear of thunder, stormed to victory.

They pulled ahead at the end of Round 4, and navigated the True/False round to claim their prize, a glittering goody bag of sensational tionery.

There were tense moments throughout as teams mentally totted up their triumphs, but despite a few collective groans of disbelief when realising they were wrong, all teams were in good spirits at the end.

Quiz Mistress Joy Bounds declared her delight that "a good time had been had by all," as teams filed out, some to their beds, but as many back to the bar.

The successful Yellows and Whites comprised three defending winners from 2016, one other yellow and one white badger.



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Desmond Bear Disappears From the Hayes Retired Inspector Called in to Investigate

By Fiona McFadzean

Once again The Hayes Conference Centre is under investigation as Mr Desmond Bear goes missing from the Teddy Bear's picnic, held by the side of the Lake. The alarm was raised by his carer, Miss Francesca, aged 45 and two halves, who had dashed to get help when she discovered his absence. Having run all the way from Lakeside Miss Francesca collapsed on the lawn, unable to utter a word until the treasure, Miss Lesdes, a chunk over 40, threw a glass of water over her. Miss Francesca was then able to gasp "I turned my back for one Minute. In that short time Desmond had gone.



The Hayes Duty Manager urged the solvers of crime attending the Writers' Summer School, Michael O'Byrne, aged 102, Kate B, womanly coy about her age, and Simon Hall, of indeterminate age, to name a few, to do something. All three were discussing who should take charge when Mr Phil Collins, a member of the Committee, age unknown, intervened. "No, No, No," he cried, "All of you could be suspects. We must call in the Proper Police." It was then that Alferton Constabulary recalled Inspector Morose to take over the case, assisted, as usual, by P.C. World.

Members of the public who may have seen Desmond should be very, very careful!!

Journey with my Wheelchair in Swanwick

By Elizabeth Frost

"They don't use this room very much," said our guide after showing us the Derbyshire Hall at Swanwick on our introductory tour. The following morning, after wheeling down to meditation down by the lake, I discovered that the courses I wanted to attend were right at the top of the hilly campus, in the Derbyshire Hall, and at the bottom in the Tissington Room. My journey in my self-propelled wheelchair to these venues was a challenge, particularly as the lift to the DH wasn't working.

"Would you mind giving me a push up the hill?" I asked another delegate.

"No problem at all," was his friendly reply.

It was downhill all the way onwards to the Tissington Room. "Do you free-wheel down here?" someone asked me.

"Freewheel?!" I said in alarm, "Have you any idea how fast a freewheeling wheelchair goes – and I don't even have brakes!"

Safely down, and the lecture over, it was time to tackle the uphill journey for a double shot cappuccino. "Where there's a will, there's a way," I told myself, secure in the knowledge that all this upper body exercise would benefit my swimming enormously. And it was only lunchtime. By the end of one day at Swanwick, I had more exercise than I normally have in a week!



Martin Brown Interviews Steve Hartley, Children's Author



I was nervous about interviewing a world renowned author so I chose Steve Hartley instead. He has knocked out a few children's books and presents himself as a proper author. I enter his hotel suite and, having read his work, am surprised by his confidence.

MB: What do you write?

SH: Children's books but now I'm writing an adult sitcom about a hair dresser's that is going out of business.

MB: Oh, I've written that already.

SH: Have you? Is it any good?

MB: No, it was a bad idea.

SH: Well maybe I'm writing it better.

MB: Hmm, Do you want a co-author?

SH: I'm writing with someone else already. Too many cooks would spoil the broth don't you think?

MB: Not if one of them is me.

MB: As a children's writer do you write with dry felt-tip pens or colouring pencils whose lead is broken?

SH: No I use modern technology

MB: In Lancashire?

SH: Yes.

MB: If you don't use colour pencils then you're not a proper children's author.

SH: If that's the criterion then I'm not a proper children's author, but I-

MB: (Writes 'Children's author admits he's a phoney'). What question would you least like to be asked?

SH: Would you like to spend another ten minutes being interviewed right now?

MB: I'm not going to ask that.

SH: Then maybe something personal which I'm not going to answer.

MB: Could you ask yourself that question in the silence of that Crayola mind of yours and just give us the answer?

SH: (Pauses) 'It was never proved.'

MB: Hmm. Have you got any secrets you can share with us?

SH: Underneath it all I'm probably a very disturbed man.

MB: Preferably secrets our readers don't already know.

SH:

MB: What's your favourite verb?

SH: !#*;*!! hell!

MB: Is that a verb?

SH: No, sorry. I can't answer that question.

MB: Who would win a fight between all of the vowels?

SH: Alright then, A is too indecisive. Es are quite positive (Note to self - potential drugs link to earlier 'not proven' answer. Also, Steve was born in Manchester - ?Relevant?). I is personal. I would win because it's all about me, so there's more invested in I. O is just naff. I don't really care much for you.

MB: So you think I would win a fight between U and I?

SH: Yes.

MB: I'm glad we've got that sorted. We need a photo, can we take a bathie together?

SH: What's a bathie?

MB: A selfie in the bath? It's a thing.

SH: That's not going to happen.

MB: What are you selling this week?

SH: My books and myself as a serious writer.

MB: I'll just write 'books' down. What is your best book?

SH: Oliver Fibbs And The Clash of the Mega-Robots.

MB: Can I have a free copy to review?

I am ushered from the hotel room. The author clearly has potential and should be considered one to watch - by readers and the police. A review of his book will appear in the Swanwick Standard when the book appears in the post. My thanks go to Steve and his team of personal assistants.

BBC Correspondent Simon Hall Besieged by Aspiring Journalists

By Tiggy Hayes

During a condensed course on journalism at the Swanwick Writers' Annual Conference, students wishing to show their skill and accuracy in taking photos left their chairs and surrounded the podium of their tutor Simon Hall. Unable to maintain any further calm Simon admitted this was an occupational hazard as "it happens all the time, red carpets, Hollywood, I just get used to it."

The encircling happened at the end of the first day of lectures as hot tired delegates; in need of freshening up before the evening activities; were invited to practice capturing their articles on smart phones.

Mr Hall had just informed his class that there was homework to be done before the next lecture, and the photos taken should be according to the rule of thirds. A lack of suitable background caused them to turn on their tutor and start filming.

The students were creating the articles for the Swanwick Standard; the paper covering news, events and rumours from the week at the annual writing school. The Standard was the brainchild of Mr Hall in 2016.



Connecting the Past

By Tiggy Hayes



Timing and a chance comment by writer David Anthony initiated strange and nostalgic memories as he visited Derbyshire's Golden Valley Light Railway. He met Ernie Bradley, who now volunteers at the railway, and had worked with both David's father Arthur and his grandfather Bob.

David's family had come from Derby, about 15 miles away, many years previously. Both his father and Grandfather, although now dead, had both worked on the railways at the Derby Locomotive Works. Arthur had been a fitter-turner and Bob a riveter. Ernie had been a painter at the time. David remembered many friends of his father who Ernie knew and they both recalled the annual Children's Christmas party at the Railway Institute's canteen. David, had taken the opportunity of a free

afternoon from Swanwick Writing School to visit the narrow-gauge line. As his visit drew to an end, he climbed the steps to the signal box at the same time Ernie arrived to lock up. Explaining that his father had worked for the railway hence his interest, Ernie asked his name and the connections were made.

"I feel so nostalgic and to think that he probably came to our house when I was a child has made me well up inside. What an amazing afternoon"

David is now hoping to change track and write a historical saga based on a railway family.

Buskers' Night Goes Stadium Level at Swanwick *By Elizabeth Frost*

Buskers Night at Swanwick has become so popular that it has graduated from the smaller venues to the main conference hall. As Mark Iveson, who started the event, said, "We have gone stadium!" Guitars and music have long been a sideshow at this



writers' course. Host John Lamont remembers bringing his guitar with him 18 years ago and sitting by the lake with regulars Andy Cain, Phil Collins (sorry, not the Phil Collins!), and other like-minded musicians. When Mark Iveson arrived as an aspiring writer at Swanwick nine years ago, he also brought his guitar with him. "I figured that if things didn't work out, at least I could sit by the lake and play," he said. Little did he realise where this would lead when he started the Buskers' Night four years ago.

The 2017 event on the evening of Tuesday 15th August didn't disappoint. Debonaire in white tuxedo and black bow tie, Dennis Bryan was a polished compere with a store of jokes to tell between introductions.

With around 20 musicians and singers performing, the audience were treated to a wide variety of talent ranging from an instrumental on a tiny accordion, to parody re-writes about writers set to Jungle Book's "I wanna be Like You" and the brilliant duet about the NHS sung to various tunes from the Sound of Music. For some numbers, the room rocked with uncontrollable laughter, then during a sensitive folk song, or the delightful unaccompanied rendition of Perry Como's 'A, You're Adorable', you could hear a pin drop, and a few times audience participation was encouraged. Altogether, a great evening's entertainment.

Beyond Swanwick – An insight into the lives of five Swanwick students

As a 'white badger', I have been astounded by how friendly everybody at Swanwick has been. I have really enjoyed getting to meet new people and finding out about them. Here are just a few of the wonderful people that I have met this week that make up the Swanwick community, and a glimpse of their lives beyond Swanwick.

Tessa

I met Tessa in the lounge before the Cathy Cassidy talk; she first came to Swanwick in 1999, but this is her first time back since her partner, whom she met here in 2001, passed away. Beyond writing, Tessa enjoys art and has recently become interested in church architecture – she enthusiastically tells me that Litchfield Cathedral, where she volunteers, is the only cathedral in the country to boast three spires. I ask Tessa what her greatest achievement in life is and she pauses for a moment, looking far away, before slowly saying, "Staying sane... does that sound too dramatic?" I assure her that it doesn't and she continues, "Really, just maintaining my core belief in life."



Paul



I got chatting to Paul, a second-time Swanwicker, over breakfast one morning, and again after the Cathy Cassidy talk. Paul is from Stockport; he has been married for 42 years and has two adopted children. He tells me about his writing, which began with science fiction and has now changed to Victorian crime fiction, with a recent book deal secured for his story that features a Methodist police constable. This brings us on to talking about faith and Paul looks around the conference hall where we are sitting, "I've got a funny relationship with this place," he says, telling me that he's attended The Hayes for Methodist conferences a number of times, "I look at it and I think, 'this is home!'". Beyond writing, Paul has spent 30 years as a Methodist preacher and has also run for Parliament twice. I'm intrigued to hear that he bought a narrowboat when he retired and has plans for it, "Part of my problem," he laughs, "is that I have rather grandiose schemes... and also that I get rather far down the line to executing them!"

Sophie

Sophie is one of this year's TopWrite students. She is originally from the Cotswolds and is currently studying for her Masters in Creative Writing at Oxford Brookes University. I ask Sophie when she began writing, "I always wrote when I was little, one of the first stories I wrote was 'When Katie went shopping', which was about one of my dolls," she laughs. Sophie studied music as an undergraduate and plays the guitar, she also enjoys writing songs. As part of her degree, Sophie studied for a semester at the prestigious Sarah Lawrence College in New York, where, amongst other things, she studied poetry. When I ask Sophie what her greatest achievement is she pauses for a moment and tells me that it was going to Sarah Lawrence, "I went on my own," she says, "I used to walk around Manhattan and just go into open mics on my own." Between graduating and beginning her Masters, Sophie worked in the press office for the police, and she was inspired to take up her pen in earnest after attending a one-day writing course in her native Cotswolds.



Alexandra



Beyond Swanwick, Alexandra, a TopWrite attendee and also the winner of this year's short story competition, works as a pastry chef. She wanted to be a chef since the age of 10, "When I graduated from high school, I went into pastry school!" she tells me. I ask what her favorite thing to bake is, "I love cake decorating. I like some of the really hard, tricky things like croissants, but mostly I love really big layer cakes that you have to decorate," She laughs, "making donuts is one of the most exciting things you can possibly do!". Alex-

andra, who types her stories on a typewriter rather than a computer, wrote her first short story for a school assignment when she was 16, "I'm completely hooked on writing!" she exclaims, as she tells me about her love of writing historical fiction. Alexandra also, perhaps precitably, loves recipe books and has already self-published a cookbook of heritage recipes. This remarkable project was squeezed into just nine months, when she not only wrote and researched the content, but also tested out the recipes, designed the book and took the photographs, "Did eating come into it at all?" I ask and she laughs, telling me that her sister and brother were involved with a Gilbert and Sullivan play at the time, and took the test products to their rehearsals. Alexandra is originally from the United States, but with her father in the forces, she has racked up an impressive list of countries that she has lived in, including Spain, Canada, England, and Germany, in addition to several different states of America. She is currently living in Buckinghamshire.

Judy

Judy, a former contestant on The X-Factor, lives in Pontefract but is originally from Sheffield. At the age of 18, she moved to Madrid for a couple of years before returning to England, "My parents wanted me to come back, so I did, thinking I would go back and I didn't." In Spain, Judy looked after children and taught English and Spanish and she now works as an holistic therapist and a creative writing teacher. "I have a diverse life." Judy tells me, and this turns out to be quite the understatement as she tells me about how she has worked backstage at music festivals and concerts as a therapist for some of the top names in the music industry, including the Foo Fighters, Beyonce, Rihanna, Jay-Z and Scouting for Girls. Judy also works in a Young Offenders Institution, teaching creative writing to a group of under-18 boys, who have been detained for "fairly serious" crimes. Judy was responsible for the introduction of creative writing at the institution when she began working there two years ago. She tells me it is challenging work, "Some of them don't have any level of education so I do things like graphic novels... I also do journaling with them, which is interesting. I have a good relationship with them- humour is vital, and compassion."



See you next year for the 70th Anniversary 11—17 August 2018

www.swanwickwritersschool.org.uk