



## February 2016

**“We few, we happy few, we band of brothers...”**  
**(Henry V)**

...Add “sisters” and Shakespeare’s depiction of the remnants of the English army at Agincourt in 1415 could be said to fit – er, our AWC in Keighley in 2016.

Granted our numbers have not been reduced by disease or the sword and an imminent physical engagement with the French appears unlikely – though an electoral battle concerning our Continental neighbours is quite another matter! No, what we now share I feel (if rather fancifully) with Henry V’s stricken army is an *esprit de corps*, if you’ll pardon my using a *French* expression.

Our numbers are undeniably down but surely our tails are up? The decline in attendance has halted, with about ten members (out of a pool of fifteen or so active ones) turning up for each of the last several meetings. Moreover our “happy band” not only includes three who joined last year but quite probably (fingers crossed) another trio who will sign up shortly. There has also recently been a surge in the flow of contributions sent to me – hence my being able to assemble this newsletter only two months after the last one.

Of course there are still issues: we now have no formal committee to manage our Circle although three former committee members (myself, Peter Morrison and Chris Manners) have continued to put together and chair meetings for several months now – so maybe we don't need a formal "management structure" as such? An exception to this is the role of treasurer – as the responsibility for handling your money should surely be clearly defined.

This is a timely moment to remember that Chris Manners will be stepping down as treasurer this year. The labour involved in this role is not particularly arduous and it would surely be a great pity if AWC were to fold just for want of a treasurer! YOU could do it, I'm sure! (or maybe we have to look at rotating this necessary duty between us – switching every year for example?).

I'm cautiously optimistic about our future but, as ever, comments, feedback, criticism and suggestions are all welcome – nay, eagerly sought – as are contributions to the next newsletter.

**Neil Wilson**

*At our January meeting Eugenie Normanton introduced us to "cinquains" – five lines of verse with two syllables in the first line, four in the second line, six in the third, eight in the fourth and just two in the final, fifth line. Part of her tuition follows:*

Here, I've taken one word, "spitting", and used it in conjunction with some of the senses – smell, taste, sight and hearing – to get four very different scenarios (in, I promise you, a five minute loo break at Caerleon!)

Spitting,  
Sizzling gently,  
Savoury aroma  
Rises to meet my morning nose –  
Bacon!

Spitting,  
Hissing fury  
Of rising fur, arched back;  
Suddenly three times her right size...  
Scared mog!

Spitting  
out loud curses  
He's heading my way now;  
Weaving, lurching, clenched fists flailing  
Quick – run!

Spitting  
Over black stones,  
The rising water foams;  
A calmly flowing stream no more  
Flash flood!

**Charlotte Clarkson** – in recent times a winner of our Children's Writing competition – responded to Eugenie's invitation to compose our own cinquains with this splendidly atmospheric one:

Snow falls  
A white fog curls  
The snarling wind whistles  
Icicles glow bright in the sun  
Winter!

*Eugenie also encouraged us to write haikus, the Japanese poems of 17 syllables that have five syllables in the first and last lines and seven in the second.....*

### **Chris Manners**

How white the paper  
Ruled over in parallel;  
The ink does not flow.

### **Neil Wilson**

Is this a poem  
Of Japanese origin  
Or simply scribble?

Cardiac arrest -  
Defibrillate or perish!  
Shocking manoeuvre.

*And we also learned at that January meeting about “haibuns” – combinations of haikus and prose...*

### **Marie Caltieri**

Moors, purple in hue  
Heather covered softly glow  
In fading daylight.

And here I sit, warm and comfortable in my car and gaze, as daylight fades and moon and stars reflect the purple all around. Far in the distance I can see the hills which in my youth I climbed till on the tops I stood, seeking for breath, yet glad, victorious. But now I'm old and can but look with longing heart. Yet in my dreams I stride again across the heathery moors, now gone because it's dark.

The beauty vanished.  
Lost. Yet still in dreams I see  
Hills, my lovely hills.

*And yet another part of that same January meeting was the task set of writing prose – of any genre – for ten minutes or so, starting with the phrase “She had sat for well over two hours” taken from the start of a Wilbur Smith novel . .*

## **Chris Manners**

She had sat for well over two hours without moving in the high-roofed studio with the tall north-facing windows.

‘Can I get down for a bit?’ she asked without moving her lips. ‘Only, my bum’s gone numb and I’ve got pins and needles in my leg.’

Salvatore said nothing. Might not even have heard her. Just kept jabbing his paintbrush furiously at the canvas on the easel in front of him.

‘And my feet are cold and I need the lav.’

More furious jabbing.

‘It’s alright for you,’ she said. ‘You’ve got clothes on. Look at me, mother naked in my birthday suit. My goosebumps have got goosebumps.’

She wanted to rub her hands together and hug herself for warmth, but that would mean breaking the pose and there was nothing so much guaranteed to send him into one of his rages as that. He might throw her out, and her clothes afterwards, and she would be condemned to spend all eternity as an unfinished masterpiece.

Finally, he looked up.

‘The artist,’ he said, ‘his eye. He sees it all. One of your eyebrows is higher than the other.’

## **Future Meetings**

March 8<sup>th</sup>: Members evening, for which please bring along two poems or passages of prose (or four short poems) that resonate with you - whether because of their content or how they are written or inspire you - to read out. If you happen to know – or have researched – a little about the authors and how they came to write your favourite passages or poems then do tell us. A contrasting alternative would be to choose writing that

you HATE, although I realise you may have disposed of the worst examples!

Of course your attendance will still be welcome if you only dig out one piece – or even none.

## **Subscriptions**

These are now due. Chris Manners is sorry he could not attend our February meeting and so wasn't able to collect all those cheques or cash you had brought but asks if you would do so in March – even if he's not there (in which case I can gather it all safely in he says!)... £25 if “you're still slaving away at work”, as he describes it, and £20 if you're not in work or - like me – are retired and (allegedly) idle!

## **We'd really love to hear from YOU...**

...with copy for these newsletters, whether your piece is a just a few lines of prose or poetry, a complete short story, a quote, indeed any news of literary information or interest, as well as any tips on writing or reading etc *you* have found useful . Subject matter entirely up to you but could be *yourself* (don't be shy!) - in that a potted autobiography of your literary life (interests, ambitions, achievements and so on) would be of interest to other members. Such a description can be as brief – or long! – as you wish. And if a novel (or any other book) has so fired your imagination that it has burnt its way into your soul (excuse hyperbole) let us know via a review of it.

## **And Finally...**

### **Hot Air (by Anon)**

A man in a hot air balloon realised he was lost. He reduced altitude and spotted a man below. He descended a bit more and shouted: “Excuse me, can you help? I promised a friend I would meet him an hour ago but I don't know where I am.”

The man below replied “You're in a hot air balloon about ten metres above the ground, at between 40 and 41 degrees north latitude and 59 and 60 degrees west longitude.”

“You must be a scientist” said the balloonist.

“I am,” replied the man, “how did you know that?”

“Well, everything you have told me is probably technically correct but I’ve no idea what to make of your information so I’m still lost. You haven’t told me anything I want to hear so you’ve been no help at all. If anything you’ve delayed me with your drivel.”

“Ah, you must be a politician then!”

“I am – but how did you know?”

“Because you don’t know where you are or where you’re going and you’ve risen to where you are by means of lots of hot air. Moreover you’ve made a promise that you’ve no idea how to keep and you expect people below you to solve your problems. The fact is you are in exactly the same position as you were before we met but somehow it’s suddenly all my fault.”