



OPEN AGE: NEW HORIZONS Members' Newsletter



Winter 2019 Issue No. 32

Look! All our own work!

The year 2018 is over. The nights are getting longer and colder. Now has got to be a good time to snuggle down with a good book of stories. But what stories? Which book?

The answer is *Open Age Creative Writing: The First Edition of Writings from Members*. Inside you'll find poems, a short play, autobiography, rewrites of familiar fairy tales and even a 21st century romance for old fashioned softies.

Something for everyone.

One of the great pleasures of this book is, as with all anthologies, the range of subject matter and voices. Some of the stories are as good examples of 'the short story' as you will find anywhere. Others show that authors need to work on their craft skills. All are interesting.

Read the book and you will come away with a very clear idea as to who we are and what Open Age is about. Read on, and you will be struck by just how much talent there is amongst us, and you may fall to wondering just how much goes completely untapped.

Ten years ago, the first Open Age creative writing class began at New Horizons. That first day, there was one student. The next week there were three.

Now, there are three tutors and six classes, one on the telephone for housebound learners.

Everything you read in *Open Age Creative Writing* was written last year (that's 2017–2018) but its publication also marks a kind of coming of age. It's the perfect answer to all those who have asked: what do you do? What kind of things do you write? The answer is here.

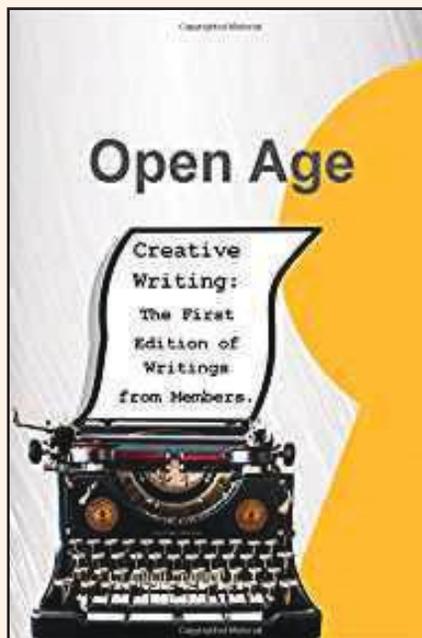
Next year, when we produce the second edition, we will all be in a different place. Meanwhile you can buy *Open Age Creative Writing: The First Edition of Writings from Members* from Amazon as a PAPERBACK for just £5 – Open Age will make about £1 per copy sold.

Or you can get it as an E-BOOK for only £3.50 (that's less than a large Vanilla Spice Latte at Starbucks – £3.55!) on which Open Age makes about £2 per copy sold.

A good book, chock full of interesting writing, at a great price and which helps your favourite charity into the bargain. Honestly, can you think of a good reason not to buy it?

Link for book: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1790804205>

Robert Silver



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RIP Peter Heyman

Peter Heyman was known to many Open Age: New Horizons regulars through his job of co-editing the newsletter – produced three times a year and printed or emailed to members – and through various courses and classes he took at our Chelsea centre.

So it was with profound shock and disbelief that we heard the tragic news that our friend had died suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart attack while on holiday in Argentina with his wife Jean.

Peter had no history of heart problems and was considered by those who knew him to be healthy and fit at the age of 75.

He was a keen golfer and semi-retired sports journalist, who wrote a golfing column for newspapers in Cornwall right up to the time of his death.

He and Jean flew to South America for a 16-day holiday towards the end of October, aiming for Patagonia and the Valdes Peninsula south of Buenos Aires where there is a variety of marine life to be studied via gentle walking and sightseeing.

The made-to-measure trip with Swoop Patagonia of Bristol involved flying to Argentina and then separating into different groups for different activities. Peter and Jean aimed to finish off the holiday by visiting the famous Iguazu Falls north of Buenos Aires, but it was not to be.

“We were having a wonderful holiday, but on November 9, a week before we were due back, Peter suddenly didn’t feel well,” said Jean. “He didn’t want to make a fuss, but five hours later he suddenly felt worse, and within a minute or two he died of heart failure.

“It happened peacefully and very suddenly. We were doing nothing over-strenuous, just short walks with a guide. Everyone was shocked and stunned.

“It was rather a nightmare getting his body cremated and going through all the legal hoops, but everyone was so kind. Our tour operator was a gem – I’ve never met



such kindness, and I could not have done it without them. Friends at home were sending texts and praying.”

A Thanksgiving Service for Peter’s life was held on Monday December 3 at St John the Evangelist church near his home in Blackheath, South East London. Among the many friends, neighbours and relatives who attended was his son Ben Heyman, who flew in for the service from Hong Kong where he had recently moved from Singapore.

Paying tribute to his father – described by colleagues as “a true gentleman” and “always gracious” – Ben said Peter’s great loves were travel and sport. Ben also read a message from his wife Christina in Hong Kong.

Two of Peter’s last contributions to the newsletter appear in this issue. For more information, email kayonhold@hotmail.co.uk, or text Kay on 07748 662213.

*Kay Shelley,
Newsletter co-editor*

Meet Jo – the Vampire Countess

Age is no drawback to active Open Age: New Horizons' members. Among them is Jo Cooklin, a former professional actress largely in films and TV until about 40 years ago, when she gave up acting to bring up her son.

She joined the Open Age: New Horizons Drama class over six years ago to see if, as she put it, "she could still do it". She certainly can! Her work with the class has given Jo her first experience of playing to a live audience, and of playing Shakespeare.

Elders Company

In December, she performed in the RADA Elders Company new drama *Of Blood*, in which she played one of the lead roles – the Vampire Countess. Some of her fellow actors in the NH Drama class went along to support her and said she was "terrific".



Elders Company is a resident theatre company for people over the age of 60 who are not professional actors. Sadly this looks like being the last production, as the project's funding has come to a close.

However, Jo is one of several members of the Drama class who are taking part in a community theatre project – developed at Saturday workshops – at the Bush Theatre on Friday 25 January, on the theme of 'Home'.

The Outsider

Several members of the class, including Jo, were also part of the community company acting as extras in a month-long professional production of *The Outsider* at the Print Room Coronet in Notting Hill in September.

Said tutor Carol Allen: "It was a really good learning experience, working with professional actors and undergoing a strenuous rehearsal period. They really enjoyed it."

Christmas party

Those who arrived early at the Open Age: New Horizons famous Christmas party on Friday 14 December may have seen the class give a performance of its own – "Shakespeare Revue" – which by all reports the audience enjoyed enormously.

Added Carol: "We were rehearsing like mad, as we now have only ten classes in the term. The class has expanded dramatically from last year and many of the new members were performing for the first time."

Lest we forget: service lives of WW1

Eight million people served Britain and the Commonwealth during World War 1 and the Imperial War Museum believes that each and every one of them deserves to be remembered.

In the centenary year of the ending of the 1914–18 conflict, the IWM set up a memorial to encourage the descendants, relatives and friends of these heroes to piece together life stories and experiences.

But it's not an exhibition as we know it. It's a permanent digital space on the internet, where anyone with memories to share can upload stories, images, facts and even printed records for posterity.

It also creates a unique record, because family members are sharing letters, extracts from books and information which have never before been revealed to the public.

Do you want to contribute to existing life stories? Or do you have any precious mementoes of someone that you would like to share? If so, go to www.livesofthefirstworldwar.org and read some of the fascinating files. Almost 145,000 people have already done it, uploading nearly 8 million life stories. There are links to Facebook and Twitter, and some users have included hashtags.

If you don't know who to look up, try the war poet Wilfred Edward Salter Owen, who was killed in France at the age of 25, one week before the signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918.

Formerly a second lieutenant in the British Army, Manchester Regiment, 5th Battalion, he was promoted to Lieutenant the day after his death. The following year, he was awarded the Military Cross for courage and leadership in storming enemy strongholds in October 1918.

Many memories from his family members

have been gathered on the site, including one piece from an old school friend and another from the war poet Siegfried Sassoon, with whom Owen had formed a close friendship in 1917.

Another war poet listed on the site is Rupert Chawner Brooke, whose most famous poem is perhaps 'The Soldier', written in 1914. It begins: "If I should die, think only this of me: that there's some corner of a foreign field that is for ever England."



Above: Rupert Brooke

Below: Wilfred Owen



Sub Lieutenant Brooke died in 1915 on board a French hospital ship moored near the island of Skyros, Greece, after developing sepsis from an infected mosquito bite. He died without seeing any action, but hygiene conditions were war-related.

If you want to create your own file, just register for free, follow the instructions, and start uploading your own material. One person who has trawled the site is Open Age: New Horizons quizzier Ted Waight, who says: "It's very interesting because these records are now in the public domain for everyone to see. Many people have already died without recording their experiences."

Ted, who served in the RAF from 1957–62, and lives in the Stoll veterans' home in Fulham, recently attended a talk given by the RAF Benevolent Fund, inviting people to help create a history of the RAF. He recommends also looking at their website <http://storylines.rafbf.org/> plus the British Legion website <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/remembrance/>

He adds: "These sites contain thousands of stories from 1914 to the present day, including the Cold War. The RAF wants to hear from more people, so that their stories can be recorded for posterity."

Kay Shelley

Hannah is our singing chef



Why is Hannah Munns so popular? It's not just because of her breezy and extrovert disposition which frequently leads her to burst into song, but also because of the range of tasty meals and stunning cakes she produces at the Orangery Café.

Perhaps it's not surprising that our friendly project manager got interested in food from an early age. Her father is Italian, and her grandmother in Bologna was a great cook.

Though raised in Surrey – she now lives in Croydon – Hannah regularly went to Italy for holidays as a child, and on every visit her “Nonna” would teach her how to make different pastas, soups, bread and pastries.

“I've always liked food, because I like science as well, and I think the two go hand in hand. I like trying new ideas and new flavours and getting people's feedback,” says Hannah, who has a 12-year-old daughter Sophia and a partner who is a buyer for Harrod's.

“I have NVQs in food hygiene and food safety, Levels 1, 2 and 3, and I've done courses in nutrition and the importance of healthy eating.”

Hannah trained as a chef at the Selsden Park Hotel, Surrey, after leaving school, and then worked in a nursery cooking for children

while Sophia was under school age.

She joined the Camden Society, which sent her for training at different venues, including the Olympic Park, Tooley Street, Edmonton, Bromley-by-Bow, and the busy Platform One cafe outside Clapham station, plus a hotel in Oxfordshire staffed by people with learning difficulties.

She arrived at New Horizons in Chelsea two years ago, and expected her stay to be temporary, until our previous Camden Society chef Simone decided not to return after maternity leave.

Hannah quickly became a great favourite with members, as well as with the trainees she supervises in the kitchen. The café has 20 spaces, but uses 23 staff on a rota basis.

“I love to be able to show my skills to people and better their opportunities. I like face-to-face contact, and I love people to appreciate what we do. The atmosphere here is amazing – this café has good vibes,” she says.

“It is a nice idea to bring together two charities, Open Age and the Camden Society, to work alongside one another and better the community.

“My job is to teach the trainees to pass their NVQs, gaining basic skills and independence. Some move on, but others stay with us because they enjoy what they do here.”

What about the singing? Hannah thinks that because she is dyslexic – as is her daughter – she became more interested in performing than writing as a child. Sophia has taken it further – she attends the Saturday performing arts school Stagecoach, and won a small role in the musical Annie in the West End.

“The two of us sing anything and everything, but we specialise in 80s music. Sophia has a lovely voice. My voice is more like cats screaming – but I love it anyway!”

If you want to learn to cook like Hannah, see forthcoming events on the back page.

Kay Shelley

Members displaced by shock closure

Open Age: New Horizons is losing a few of its members because of the planned closure of a care home run by nuns – leading some Kensington & Chelsea residents to seek alternative accommodation outside London.

St Wilfrid's care home for the elderly, run by The Daughters of the Cross in Tite Street, Chelsea, stands opposite the former home of Oscar Wilde, flanked by other blue plaques.

At a residents' meeting in September, each of the 25 residents was given a letter from the Provincial Superior of the order and Chairman of Trustees. It announced that St Wilfrid's would close on 31 March 2019, giving them six months to make alternative living arrangements.

On the St Wilfrid's website, the reasons given for closure are the challenges that face the care industry, the restrictions of the building and the home's low occupancy. The home is working with Kensington and Chelsea council in "finding suitable, alternative, high-quality accommodation."

The community of Sisters will continue to live at 29 Tite Street, which also houses the Central Offices of the charity, delivering services in 11 countries around the world. The Order came from Belgium but has been in Chelsea for some 150 years.

The oldest resident, Slovakia-born Rada Boam, aged 104, is a British subject. Her relatives were killed by the Nazis in the war because her late brother was a partisan.

Retired consultant ophthalmic surgeon Marion Handscombe, a long-time active



Top: John Spencer. Above: Marion Handscombe

member of Open Age: New Horizons now in her 80s, moved to St Wilfrid's two years ago after her husband died. She has now relocated to a home on the Isle of Wight near to her daughter Eleanor.

NH member and nonagenarian John Spencer, who has lived in the home for three years, said: "The sheer inconvenience of having to find a new home at age 90 and at short notice has been massive. Many people felt desperate, because they thought they would spend their last days there."

Historian and novelist John has featured in the NH newsletter more than once – his book *Battle for Crete* was reissued as a paperback, and more recently he completed his 100,000-word novel *Boat Song* about Bonnie Prince

Charlie and Prince Charles, after writing it on a computer in the care home library. He is still looking for a publisher, but has a literary agent.

He wrote to his local MP Greg Hands and others about the closure, and hoped to mount a challenge, but withdrew on medical advice. On 30 November John moved to the Gracewell home in Newbury, Berks, because he could not find anywhere in London. Though comfortable, he feels his new home is not ideal because of the cost, and because he still has links with London. He has put his name down for an Anglican convent home in Chiswick and plans to return to the capital, so he hopes to reappear at Open Age: New Horizons before too long.

Kay Shelley

Don't ever knock the NHS!

It's many more years ago than I care to remember that I last spent a night in hospital. I think I was seven years old and was there to have my tonsils and adenoids removed. I don't remember much about it, except for the disgusting-tasting pill they gave me to make me sleepy prior to anaesthetic and eating lots and lots of ice cream after the operation.

So it was with some trepidation that I was admitted to a place that I had not experienced as an in-patient for more than 60 years.

I need not have worried, even after the surgeon who was going to perform my minor operation explained that I could not have a local anaesthetic – as I would have preferred. It had to be a general one, as he needed me to be completely still so that he could accurately aim the laser beams that were going to sort my problem out.

The next thing I knew was waking up in the recovery room feeling a bit disorientated but otherwise fine. Then I was wheeled to my home for the next two nights – Florence Ward at Guy's Hospital.

My time was spent – only in minor discomfort – reading books and papers, with regular interruptions for blood pressure and temperature checks by the nurses. There were two things in particular that I noticed about these wonderful carers.

The first was that nothing was too much trouble, and if you wanted to know something they didn't instantly have the answer to, they would come back in five minutes with the information – despite having a myriad of other tasks. Their powers of concentration and memory were phenomenal.

The other was that almost all the nurses were of overseas extraction. Whether they came from various parts of Europe, Asia, Africa or the Caribbean, they all carried out their duties with professionalism and, most importantly, good humour. What would we do without these caring individuals who thankfully have made their home within our



Some of our NHS nurses

shores? I left after two days with nothing but admiration for the care I had received from them all, both doctors and nurses alike.

I know the service is not exactly free, as we all pay for it through our taxes. But it's no wonder that this excellent care, which is available to anyone free at source, is quite rightly the envy of the world. So anyone who wants to indulge in the usual complaints about the shortcomings of the NHS had better say that directly to my face – they may not get a polite reply!

Peter Heyman

..... Password trick

More and more people are using the internet – but it may come at a price. Many private individuals including criminals are very clever when it comes to cracking passwords.

We struggle to remember all the passwords we need. It is better not to use complicated capitals with @ or \$ signs, which make them impossible to remember.

String your secret favourite word together with the first letters of whichever site you are accessing, so you are in effect changing your password, but can remember it easily. For example, if you are going to your Facebook website, your password could be Face, plus your favourite word. Or string together three of your favourite words – you won't forget them!

Yonita Fairfax

Travel insurance for over-80s

Having been an avid traveller for business and pleasure throughout my life, I have always ensured that I have an adequate annual travel insurance policy in place. I have never previously had any problems obtaining this, through my bank or through an insurance company.

Imagine my horror when, just before my 80th birthday in August 2018, I was informed by my then current travel insurance company that they would be terminating my policy the day before my birthday, because they do not insure anyone over 80 years old.

Panicking, because I had already made extensive travel arrangements commencing in late July 2018, I consulted the internet in an effort to find an alternative company who would insure over-80s travellers. I opened up a hornet's nest!

My immediate intuition was to call Age UK and Saga. I can hardly believe that these institutions who specialise in services for retired and older people were charging exorbitant premiums. Age UK charged £1,250 for annual travel insurance for someone over 80 who did not have any medical conditions. Saga was quoting an even higher premium! Neither of these covered cruise holidays – this involved a heavy additional premium.

I trawled the internet, in an effort to find an affordable quote. I contacted no less than 23 insurance companies online, offering travel insurance for over 80's. However, trying to buy the policy on line is very difficult and I recommend that you phone the companies directly, telling them that you have had difficulty taking the policy out online, and they will talk you through everything, and still offer you the online rate, which is cheaper.

Do be prepared to spend at least 20 minutes speaking with each of the operatives, because they go through every

aspect of your requirements. It is essential that you pick a policy with the right level of cover and inclusions – a comprehensive policy should include: Loss of Baggage, Theft of Belongings, Cancellation of Holiday, Medical Treatment, Emergency Repatriation and Travel Disruption.

Although some companies offer travel insurance to passengers with existing medical conditions, there are some conditions that will not be covered, and some conditions for which they will require you to purchase additional cover.

Most annual and single policies cover

you for between 90 and 180 days, so you should check the details if you're planning a long break. If you are away for longer than this, you may need a long-stay policy. You will have to declare your geographic areas of travel, but it should be noted that travel to the USA and Canada

generate higher premiums.

After taking at least two weeks to compare quotes from a reduced list of six insurance companies, I can recommend that Insure and Go (tel: 0330 400 1227), with whom I have taken out my policy, and All Clear Travel Insurance, who have no age limit (tel: 0800 652 8087), offered the best options.

I found that some companies were unscrupulous, and in one instance I was told that if I commenced the policy a week before my 80th birthday, then the premium would be considerably less. However, that offer was from a company who charged a high level of premium in the first place.

As a guideline, I paid £285 premium for being a woman of 80 years old, with type 2 diabetes treated with tablets, for an annual worldwide (including USA) travel insurance policy.

If you would like me to assist further, please call me on: 07973 861646.

Sheila Newsum



Hedgehogs and foxes

Although the hedgehog population fell to half in 2014, people have helped by cutting holes in the bottom of fences, linking over 9,000 gardens since 2015, as part of the Hedgehog Street project.

Farmers are also being encouraged to plant strips of wild flowers down the middle of fields to provide food. Flowers encourage the insects that hedgehogs love to eat.

So there is some small evidence that the hedgehog population is having a slightly better time. But not much apparently, as the urban fox is on the prowl.

One journalist reports seeing foxes climb on his shed roof to rob bird food. They have become increasingly cheeky, will even come up to your front door, and have been spotted walking along roads during the day, having no fear of humans. They are no longer only night creatures.

In the early morning in many roads, they have been seen tearing rubbish bags open. It seems some will eat a mature hedgehog,



neighbourhood with their screaming and barking, like something out of a horror movie.

Despite their bad reputation and bad habits, it has to be said that at close quarters they are actually beautiful creatures. And although they seem to have adapted to living in close proximity to humans, they will always run away when approached directly.

Yonita Fairfax/Peter Heyman

Beware scams and thefts

Open Age: New Horizons member Sheila Newsum has drawn our attention to an auction scam going the rounds in Chelsea and other parts of London. She writes:

A company calling itself Chelsea Auction House has been putting cards through letterboxes around London, offering to give free-of-charge valuations for paintings, furniture, silver, jewellery and works of art.

Their paperwork appears to be very professional, and you can easily be misled. They take your goods away, saying that they will contact you with an estimate of their value, and in order that you can decide whether you wish to sell.

But having taken your goods, they fail to contact you again, and will probably have sold your goods without permission on the internet, on a site called Muck2Brass.

Chelsea Auction House is a scam run by an ex-convict, who was jailed for four years

at Southwark Crown Court in 2012 for a £3.5 million VAT Fraud. His criminal activities were unveiled by Channel 5's 'Cowboy Builders' programme. Information on this is available online on Google.

Since his release, he has started up this scam of pretending to be an auctioneer and robbing people of their valuables. The police in several boroughs are now involved. If you have been a victim of this scam, inform the police immediately.

Please feel free to contact Sheila if you wish to discuss further. Tel: 07973 861646, or email: events@huntersassociates.com

● Please note that there have been other recent thefts in King's Road, Chelsea. One member had her credit cards stolen in M&S, and another had her belongings taken while she was in the Peter Jones café. **KEEP YOUR VALUABLES CLOSE – AND TRUST NO-ONE.**

Safer learning

Your rights and responsibilities

You have the right to feel safe where you learn. Other people should not hurt or abuse you.

Your responsibilities are:

- to respect other people's rights to safety;
- not to hurt or abuse others; and
- not to threaten to hurt or abuse others.



Physical abuse

People should not touch you in a way that hurts.



Sexual abuse

People should not touch you or make you touch them in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable or upset.



Psychological or emotional abuse

People should not upset you by bullying or teasing you.



Financial, money or material abuse

People should not steal from you.



Neglect

If you have personal care support, people who are there to help you should not neglect you or ignore you.



Discrimination

People should not treat you badly because of your age, disability, gender, ethnicity, religion, or who you choose for your girlfriend or boyfriend.

What should you do if you think you are being hurt or abused?

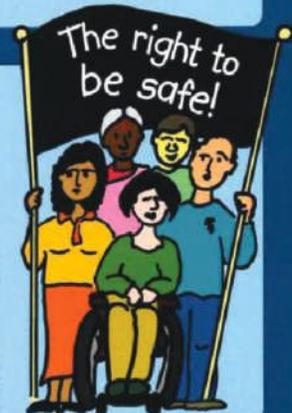
If you think you have been hurt or abused by another student or learner, member of staff or visitor, you should report this as soon as possible.

Tell a trusted member of staff what is happening or contact:

You can also contact:

- Samaritans – 08457 909090
- Victim Support – 0845 3030900

niace department for **education and skills**
promising adult learning creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence



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