

PROFESSIONAL WRITING NEWS

March 2007

Radio drama scales the heights

Leading radio dramatist and producer Paul Dodgson has spent a week helping a small team of Professional Writing students script and produce a half-hour radio drama, Silent Heights.

Paul, whose recent work includes the critically acclaimed Radio Four series *Bejeman's Women*, gave the students a basic scenario – a block of flats whose residents have to deal with anti-social neighbours – and asked them to develop characters and plot from this.

Each student wrote a monologue for the character they'd created, and these were then intercut into a final script that was recorded by professional actors, using the sound studio at University College Falmouth's state-of-the-art Media Centre. The last day was spent editing the recordings with the help of UCF's resident sound engineer.

The project was an exceptionally rich learning experience for all who took part, with one member of the writing team, Tim Warren, describing it as "one of the most enjoyable and rewarding weeks of my life so far". You can download a podcast of the finished ensemble piece from the student-produced webzine bloc-online.com.

First-person first

Current MA student Sara Barrett has had a long first-person article published in the Saturday Guardian's 'Family' section – her first feature in a national newspaper.

The piece took the form of a letter written to a relative who had taken her own life, meditating on the ripples that had spread out from this event over the years.

Sara was surprised to find that her work

had not been cut or otherwise edited for publication. Course leader and features tutor Christina Bunce sees this as a tribute to the skill with which the extraordinarily moving piece was written, rather than a reflection of the idleness of Guardian subs.

Second-degree Burns

Should auld acquaintance be forgot? MA student David Bate thought not...

Having moved to Falmouth from his native Edinburgh, David decided to make sure that Scotland's best-loved poet did not go unremembered on 25 January by laying on a Burns Night dinner for Professional Writing students and staff.



A cup of kindness yet: David Bate toasts the haggis.

By a stroke of remarkable fortune, David's brother is a professional chef who now works at one of Cornwall's finest restaurants. Under his expert supervision a superb meal was served up, complete with cullen skink, neeps and tatties, and – to the consternation of some who had led a gastronomically sheltered existence – a prime haggis, ceremoniously piped in as tradition demands. Lassies were wittily toasted before replying in kind, and various diners added their musical and poetic talents to this heady brew of an evening.

Where are they now?

In which we track down Profwriting alumni, to the ends of the earth if necessary...

Über-lad **Mark Spence** (2004-5) has been appointed Deputy Features Editor of *Nuts*, Britain's biggest-selling men's magazine. Mark's first encounter with the world of celebrity sex tips and mud-wrestling babes was on a placement to the magazine while on the MA course at Falmouth. "They sent me on a photo-shoot, where I found myself surrounded by half-naked models offering me cups of coffee," he recalls fondly. "I knew immediately that this was the publication I wanted to work for." In the last eighteen months Mark has been dispatched to cover stories all over the world, from Russia to Vietnam.

In the business-writing arena, **Nathan Midgley** is working as a writer, researcher and content editor at brand communications agency The Fish Can Sing, where he recently contributed to *Creative World*, an imaginative look into the media future that was widely picked up by the UK press. Meanwhile, **Sam Bowhay** (2004-05) is relishing her job at Ink Copywriters in Bath. "The boys (as I call them) are giving me lots of interesting jobs to do," she reports, "and I'm even managing to find them new clients." And **Helen Ward** (2005-6) has been taking on freelance work with companies and agencies including up-and-coming design outfit Brandlab in Falmouth, which over the next few months will be working in collaboration with Professional Writing students on a website to showcase the town as a hotbed of creative talent.

The enterprising **Beccy Matthews** (2003-4) continues to co-manage Penzance-based Verve Publishing and edit two widely distributed magazines for film-goers – *Big Screen* and *Movie Magic*. Beccy's Spin a Yarn Clothing Company has also been generating multiple column inches, locally and nationally, by bringing an unusual form of writing to the fore – t-shirts embossed with Cornish phrases and their English translations. *Madderdo'ee?* (does it matter?) and *Pidduldowndidda* (it's pouring with rain), for instance.

"Spin a Yarn is about expressing pride in the Cornish identity in a fresh and humorous way" says Beccy. To which we

can only say *proper job* (that strikes us as a favourable proposition).

In other news, **Daniel Crockett** (2004-5) has been writing on surf-related topics for numerous magazines and websites, and is also running *thisrichtapestry.com*, which brings together photography and writing created in Cornwall, Australia and London. And **Josie Hickin** (2003-4) has been appointed Literature Promotions Officer for Dorset County Council Libraries and Arts Service in Dorchester.

Practising what they teach

MA tutor **Philip Marsden's** latest book, *The Chains of Heaven* (Harper Perennial), is both a luminous account of his travels in Ethiopia and a meditation on the meaning of travel itself. "Ethiopia bred in me the conviction that if there is a wider purpose to our life, it is to understand the world, to seek out its diversity, to celebrate its heroes and its wonders – in short, to witness it," he writes.

On his highly entertaining 'James and the Blue Cat' blog, visiting lecturer and Green Wing writer **James Henry** reports: "Currently I have quite a lot on. I am supposed to be writing the second draft of my superhero movie, my BBC drama thing, the sitcom thing that had guns in it, but now hasn't, and another children's book." James is also helping to adapt the first series of Green Wing for US television.

Tutor **Bill Greenwell** featured alongside poets including Seamus Heaney on the 2006 shortlist for the Forward Prize for poetry.

A new stage version of tutor **Derrek Hines's** widely acclaimed poetic adaptation of *Gilgamesh* (Chatto) is being toured nationally by Cambridge-based theatre group Classworks. A large party of Professional Writing staff and students were at the opening night to lend moral support to Derrek on what is always a nerve-racking occasion for any writer.

The amazingly prolific **Susie Marriott**, who teaches the Professional Writing course's Non-Fiction unit, is taking two new books to the London Book Fair in April – *The Celtic Handbook* (MQ Publishing) and *1001 Ways to Relax* (Dorling Kindersley). But where did she find time to try them all?