



# PROFESSIONAL WRITING NEWS

December 2008

## Cometh the hour, cometh the boy...

**A** former MA Professional Writing student has landed a contract with a leading international publisher for a non-fiction book based on a project started while on the course.

*21st Century Boy* charts Gareth May's action-packed quest to discover the meaning of modern manhood, and will be published by Square Peg, an imprint of Random House, in 2009.

The idea came to Gareth when a burst tyre revealed the stark truth that "I was clueless about pretty much every skill that I perceived to be key to coming of age as a modern man."

To remedy this situation, he decided to personally tackle all those things that young men need to know but nobody ever bothers to actually tell them – everything from how to get served at a busy bar to how to remove a bra with one hand – and then share his hard-won wisdom with the world via a website, [www.21st-century-boy.co.uk](http://www.21st-century-boy.co.uk).

### Waxing intimate

Pretty soon, the site was notching up thousands of hits a month from people eager to watch videos of Gareth demonstrating the art of intimate waxing or learn the secret of how to impress your girlfriend's parents.

Urged by staff on the Professional Writing course not to let things rest there, Gareth issued a press release about the site. This was picked up by *The Independent*, who commissioned him to write a feature in August.

Gareth takes up the story: "After the Indy piece I got some radio interviews, was contacted by an agent at MBA and then by the end of that week – within five days of the piece being published – I was on the phone to Rosemary Davidson, editorial



Holding up a mirror to modern manhood: Gareth May

director of Square Peg, about the possibility of a book. About a month later I was signed, for rather a decent amount of money."

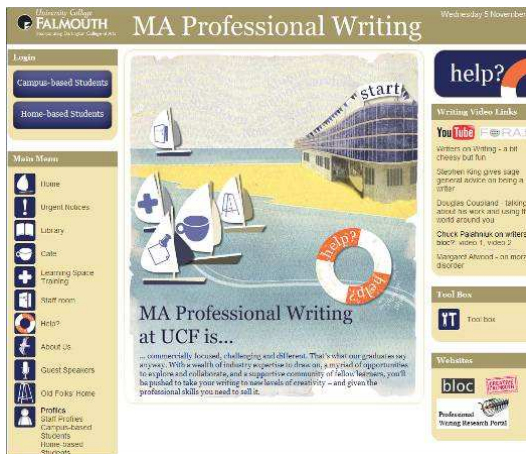
Gareth's book is in the best possible hands with Davidson, who is not only a rising star of the publishing world but also a best-selling writer herself, having co-authored *The Great Big Glorious Book for Girls*.

In an email thanking staff on the course for their support, Gareth writes: "Without your persistence and more than generous advice, I'd be nowhere near where I am today."

## MA counts down to lift-off into cyberspace

**A**s the old year draws to an end, a new beginning is imminent in Falmouth. January 2009 sees the launch of an online version of the MA Professional Writing course.

The part-time course runs over two years and is aimed at people who'd like to develop commercially focused writing skills while continuing to work or look after families. It will be taught using a varied mix of activities including online seminars, telephone tutorials and video-streamed talks by leading authors, literary agents and other media-industry experts.



The main web interface for the new online MA in Professional Writing

The MA course team has worked hard to make sure that home-learning students feel part of a supportive community and can engage fully with student publishing projects such as the award-winning webzine bloc-online.com.

A colourful course website features a 'café' area where students can socialise, as well as forums for critiquing each other's work and links to an array of online tools and resources.

### Real-world projects

As with the full-time MA, students will be encouraged to engage with the real-world media industry via collaborative projects and work placements, and for some there will be the possibility of developing writing-related projects in connection with their current jobs.

"We think the combination of flexibility and commercial focus makes this unique among writing courses in the UK, and we're delighted to be able to open it up to talented writers who'd find it impossible study full-time," says course leader Christina Bunce.

"The online course will be just as challenging and will use the same successful model for developing writing skills and professional knowledge. But being able to spread the work over two years, and to do it in their own time at home, will make it much more feasible for many people."

Readers interested in a sneak preview of the course can check it out at <http://professionalwriting.falmouth.ac.uk>.

A few places are still available for January.

## Where are they now?

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

**Sarah Oliver** (2006-7) has been appointed editor of celebrity gossip website [myparkmag.co.uk](http://myparkmag.co.uk). Unfortunately, she wasn't there in time to cover one of the more fabulous items of the silly season: the news that Tory leader David Cameron had booked into a Cornish holiday home cursed by a notorious 16<sup>th</sup> century witch. The story of Mother Ivy's wrath over a spoiled cargo of pilchards and its sinister consequences had been uncovered by a team of Professional Writing students as part of a research project and posted on the website of one of their number, **Luke Richards**. It was spotted there by a Press Association hack and in no time was making national headlines.

**Holly Wicks** (2006-7) has scripted a short film, *Pernickety*, that wowed audiences at this year's Cornwall Film Festival after premiering at the Glastonbury Festival. In other screen news, **Ruth Underwood** (2005-06) is working as a script editor on *Taggart*.

Professional Writing staff and alumni gathered recently to celebrate the launch of **Elfrea Lockley's** first book at Falmouth's finest independent bookstore, The Falmouth Bookseller.



Elfrea Lockley (centre) with course leader Christina Bunce and non-fiction tutor Susannah Marriott

Published by Octopus, *Things to Do Now You're a Mum* is a light-hearted look at how motherhood can open doors to a myriad of new experiences. "Does that include writing a book?" we asked the author. "Perhaps it should have done," says Frea, mother of ten-year-old Oz. "But not all mums are lucky enough to have the expert advice that I've been able to draw on."