

Twining appeal by Ballea Writers' Club



Ballea Writers' Club founder members, from left: Joe Kelly, Elaine Rhys-Davies and Mike Brady

New subscriber Elaine Rhys-Davies, Carrigaline, Co Cork, Ireland, contacted *Writers' News* to appeal for help on behalf of the fledgling Ballea Writers' Club.

'We formed our own writers' club, of twelve, after having gelled on a beginners' writing course,' writes Elaine.

'Our primary aim is to encourage writing but we are concerned that our inexperience could get us lost and would welcome suggestions from other writers' groups.

'In preparation we blagged a conference suite and established a library of "how to write" books.

'After just two sessions we have established a balanced format.

'In the first hour we look at a fundamental such as character construction and the second hour is spent appraising readings.

'Being in Ireland the following hours are adjourned to the pub, but this can be where some of the most fluid work is done.

'We would like to be mentored by or twinned with a writers' group abroad and are thus appealing to you, the readers of *Writers' News*, to write to us.

'Hopefully we will give as much as we take.'

Ballea Writers' Club meets on the second and fourth Monday of every month at Carrigaline Court Hotel, near Cork.

The group can be contacted by e-mail: balleawriters@gmail.com www.balleawriters.com

Writers' Round-up

Spotlight on... Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators

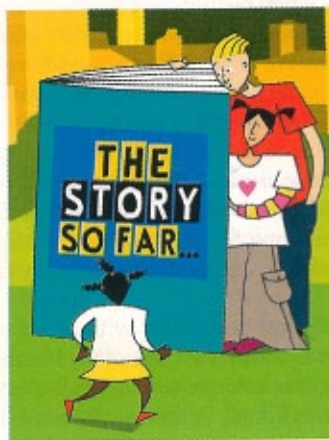
The Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators was formed in 1968 by a group of Los Angeles-based writers for children. Now the largest children's writing organisation in the world with 19,000 members worldwide, in over 70 regions, it has successfully lobbied for such issues as new copyright legislation, equitable treatment of authors and artists, and fair contract terms.

The SCBWI in Britain offers its members support, information and education at a local level. According to Natascha Biebow, regional advisor and chair of the organisation in Britain: 'The market has changed a lot over the past few years and there is an increased awareness and appreciation for children's books as a genre. At the moment, the focus is on fantasy and teenage fiction, but gradually, publishers are telling us about the need for good fiction for seven to nines. Retailers' changed buying policies and a growth in Internet and supermarket outlets have meant that picture books have been struggling in an increasingly competitive marketplace, but we are seeing a gradual resurgence.

'For writers and illustrators to be successful in children's book publishing, they need to be able to innovate,' added Natascha. 'Newcomers are competing against a wide range of already established, successful authors, so they need to have an original voice and style, strong storytelling skills, excellent market awareness and, above all, a willingness to work at their craft and persevere.'



Natascha Biebow



A selection of images from illustrator Amanda Lillywhite

The SCBWI provides members with the chance to network, develop their craft and to keep up to date on marketplace and publishing trends. They provide a variety of opportunities for members' professional development through a newsletter, online discussion group conferences, seminars, retreats, critique groups and other local events. Membership is £44 per year (full or associate) plus a one-time initiation fee of £8.50. Published authors join as full members, whilst all other members are associate members (until they are published). 'We believe everyone has something to contribute to the discussion about children's books and that even published writers/illustrators can learn from unpublished writers/illustrators and vice-versa,' said Natascha. 'After all, at the end of the day, everyone starts each project with a blank page.' Writers or illustrators who have been published in markets other than children's literature would be considered associate members.

Details: Sue Hyams, 56 Ackroyd Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 1DL; e-mail: membership@britishscbwi.org website: www.britishscbwi.org



An informal Cambridge writing group can beat the record of Yarm Writers' Group (*WN*, May) for the furthest commute to attend, according to member Julia Anderson. 'One of our members, Richard Errington, begins his journey from Utica, New York, near the Canadian border,' says Julia. 'He says goodbye to his girlfriend and drives 400 miles to his parents' home in Connecticut. (No doubt to pick up his clean washing!) His mother then drives him on the two-hour, 100-mile, journey to JFK airport where Richard boards a plane and flies

for between five to seven hours to Heathrow. He is met at Heathrow by fellow member, Louise Dobson, and driven 90 miles to her home in Cambridge. 'Once he has gotten over his jet lag, we hold our writing club, which Richard enjoys attending. He then picks up his car, which is garaged over here, and drives up to Leeds, 210 miles, where he is a second year student undertaking a creative writing degree.' Despite successfully navigating all those miles, Richard manages to get lost walking back from meetings at Julia's to his lodgings at Louise's, in the next street.

This is a regular *Writers' News* section devoted to writing and literary groups.

If your group has an event to publicise, needs to pick up tips from other groups, or wants to raise an issue affecting writers, this is the place for you.

Write to: **Writers' Round-Up**, *Writers' News*, 1st Floor, Victoria House, 143-145 The Headrow, Leeds LS1 5RL; e-mail: jtelfer@writersnews.co.uk Now also on: www.writersnews.co.uk