



CampNaNo Newsletter #1



(Image courtesy of National Novel Writing Month)

Latest news

Hey {{ contact.FIRSTNAME | default : "there" }}, I hope you've had a great June.

I have news! And here's why you'll be getting not one newsletter in July, but four!

I've decided to do July's CampNaNo this year. I'm doing a weekly update, but only newsletter subscribers will be seeing these weekly updates. You'll also still get a free short story with this issue, as it's coming out at the end of June, and you'll get another one at the end of July. Once it's over, the newsletter will go back to being monthly.

Here's your first update, which is actually a pre-update. You'll find your free short story for June at the end.

Enjoy! And have a terrific week.

Note: This CampNaNo update will only be going out to newsletter subscribers. In the future, it will be published as a book, perhaps with some more working details. I'll send it out every week, but subscribers will still get a free short story at the end of each month.

CampNaNo

On Tuesday 21 June, I was reminded about CampNaNo. This usually happens twice a year, in April and in July. I missed April this year (April was a stupid month, if you remember), and it completely slipped my

mind. However, when I saw this reminder, I thought why not?

The first thing I did was go and collect all of the badges, banners and logos. The banner on this post, and for the rest of the posts this month, is actually the Facebook banner. I'll use the profile badge on, well, my profiles on Twitter and Facebook.

Decision time

Of course, I had no idea at this point what I'd actually do for Camp in July, I didn't really want to visit Catch the Rainbow or The Fool again, and I didn't want to restart The Beast Within. I also didn't have a Toni & Bart novella prepped. So what could I do?

I'd recently written more than 9,000 words in one day for the ghostwriting client GW1, and in the past I've written more than 16,000 words in one day, although that one did include a 'ghost' session (i.e. working through the night on top of throughout the day). But I thought, if I could write those kinds of numbers for clients, why couldn't I have a go at 2,000 words a day for myself?

The next thing I mulled over was the publishing schedule I'm currently in the middle of. My stock of stories is starting to run a little dry and I'm having to write new ones. So why didn't I write a collection of short stories for Camp this year?

As I need to bump up my short story writing again (I'm starting to run out of ones I made earlier), I thought perhaps I could use the time to concentrate on some new short stories. I really enjoyed writing the ones I've written recently from scratch. They reminded me of when and why I started to write in the first place.

I thought 10 short stories would be a good target to aim at, but would I go for 50,000 words or would I go for 25,000 words? As I have to write around 40,000 words for my ghostwriting each month, I did actually think that without taking the month off ghostwriting then 50,000 might be too much. It would mean 10 short stories of 5,000 words, but still...

So I decided to go for 10 short stories of 2,500 words each, = 25,000 words. And that gives me a (week)day target of 1,250 words per day.

Prep work

Once all of that was sorted out, and as soon as I had a window of time in my schedule, I sat down and worked out what these 10 stories would be. I already do a lot of date work so that anything I write and/or publish is quite topical. I already have several existing series on the go.

Whenever I'm stuck for something to write, I just choose one of these series. That means a lot of the hard work is already done, such as character, setting, theme, etc.

The next thing I did was go into my schedule (ClickUp) and work out when I was going to do what. I'm cheating a bit, by writing some of the outlines ahead of time. But the actual writing will take place between Monday 4 July and Friday 29 July. I'll also do some second drafts during July as I want to send at least two stories off on their travels, and time's running out for those.

I think only the last 2 stories will be polished during the first week of

August.



Making a cover

The next thing I did was hop over to Canva to have a noodle with covers. I came up with a selection at first, but between us, the poet and I both agreed on the same one.

At the same time I fired off a quick query to NaNoWriMo about using their name.

I already knew that we're not supposed to use their logo on any merchandise that we put up for sale, but I wondered what the legal stance was about using their name within the body of the text.

They came back to me less than 2 days later and said that I was welcome to use both their name within the text *and* their logo on the anthology. Well, that was a bonus!

That means the book is going to be called: *Around the Campfire: 10 short stories from CampNaNo*. It's still a Wordsworth Collection, but every one of the stories will be brand-new, and that, of course, will give me fodder to both send them out to magazines and publish them as standalone Wordsworth Shorts (once whoever buys them – if anyone buys any – has used them). Prep work Once all of that was sorted out, and as soon as I had a window of time in my schedule, I sat down and worked out what these 10 stories would be. I already do a lot of date work so that anything I write and/or publish is quite topical. I already have several existing series on the go.

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The short stories

Here, then, are the 10 short story ideas I've decided to go with:

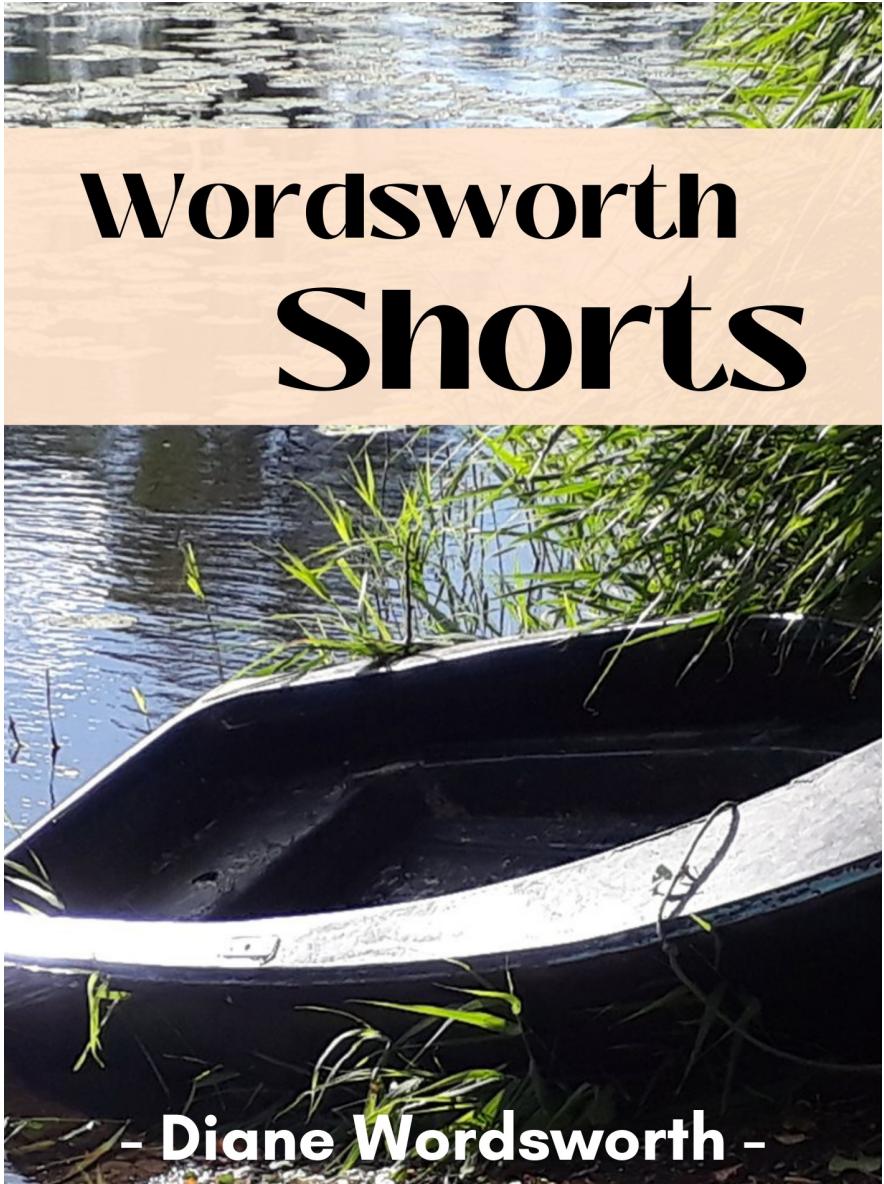
1. *Around the Campfire* (because I had to have one that was the same title as the anthology – it'll be based on those 2 chaps on the cover)
2. *Harvey's Festival* (this one will be going out to *My Weekly* first; it's already brainstormed and outlined)
3. *Bramble Jelly* (this one will also be going out to *My Weekly* first; it's already brainstormed and outlined)
4. *Silver Darlings* (this one will also be going out to *My Weekly* first)
5. *Fireworks at Killiecrankie: a short story from Killiecrankie*
6. *The Last Pirate of Penzance*
7. *Killer Queen: a Marcie Craig short story*
8. *A Guy for Penny*
9. *The Curse of Tutankhamen: a Toni & Bart short story*
10. *The Kite Festival: a Molly's clan short story* (this is the *first* one that will be going to *My Weekly* first, so it's the first one to be written; it's already brainstormed and outlined)

I'm not necessarily writing them in the order here as, like I say, there are some that need to be written first so they can go off and earn their keep. But this is what the final anthology will look like.

Will you be joining CampNaNo this year? Let me know how you're getting along if you are.

This content has not been reviewed by National Novel Writing Month. For more information, please visit nanowrimo.org.

Here's this month's free short story



Wordsworth Shorts

- Diane Wordsworth -

the mystery of woolley dam

The Mystery of Woolley Dam is one I was inspired to write when we moved to a house that had an overgrown fishing lake at the end of the lane. The cover photo is one I took myself from one of the poet's fishing venues.

The Mystery of Woolley Dam

When the Dobsons moved into their new home, Colin was delighted to discover an overgrown lake at the end of his lane – an otherwise no-through road.

"It must belong to someone," he told his wife Liz over a cup of tea. "It looks as though it used to be managed, but how long ago is anybody's guess."

"You'll have to Google it," she replied, placing a saucer of biscuits on the arm of his chair – garibaldis, one of his favourites. "Or ask some of your fishing chums." She sat down next to him on the settee, nursing her own cup of tea and biscuits. "But I'd bet it's something to do with that big house up there." She meant the riding centre on the other side of the main road. Local rumours had the buildings down as belonging to a famous gymkhana family who lived nearby. "They seem to own everything else."

This was true, agreed Colin to himself. The family even owned the house he'd been forced to move into so that he could be nearer to work.

After their snack, Colin fired up the computer and navigated to Google. A few clicks later, he swivelled on the chair to face his wife.

"You're right," he said. "That equestrian family do own the lake. But the local authority owns the angling rights."

"You're registered to fish with them, aren't you?" asked Liz.

"I used to be, but I let it lapse. I'll see if it's worth re-joining."

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At the weekend, Colin walked up to the lake to see if there were any fish in it. The closer he got to it, though, the more overgrown the lane became. He tripped on some old brambles that pulled at his trouser leg. An old angling club sign had fallen away from the tree it had been nailed to and lay rusting on the ground. Above where the sign had been was a crudely-painted hand-written sign warning 'tresspasses' to 'KEEP OUT'. There were similar hand-made hand-painted semi-literate signs nailed to other trees, fences and gates, all saying things like 'PRIVITE', 'TRESSPASSES WILL BE PROSSICUTIED' and 'NO FISHIN'. And along one particularly scraggy length of hedgerow, Colin could see barbed wire.

"I'm sure that's illegal on a public right of way," he mused out loud.

After he'd been walking for a few minutes, sometimes stumbling in potholes or over stones, he noticed a small clearing up ahead. He was sure there was a car parked there too. As he neared the vehicle he could see that it wasn't a clearing at all but, in fact, what used to be a small car park, big enough for about a dozen cars. But

it was as overgrown as the path that wound its way around the lake. He could, however, see a fellow camped out on the opposite bank. He looked as though he were fishing.

That must be the owner of the car, he thought, picking his way along what was left of the path. As he went, he fell down more than one hole allowed to deteriorate and grow bigger. He narrowly avoided falling into the murky stream that fed the lake as he crossed both of the dilapidated footbridges. And he kept his short-sleeved arms high above his head to avoid being stung by the Triffid-like nettles that lined the path and strangled the wild garlic.

"How're you doing?" he asked the lone angler when he finally reached his bivouac.

"Not so bad," replied the man, not taking his eyes off the end of his pole.

"Many in?" asked Colin.

Without moving a muscle, the man replied again. "A few perch, the odd roach and some small skimmers. I've caught about twenty or so today, but it's not as good as it used to be."

"I thought there might be some carp in at least," said Colin. "It looks like a good carp lake."

"Aye, there's a few left. Some fancy ones that stay at the other end. But you can't get up there now. The path is so overgrown and they've been fly-tipping. You can't get through -"

Colin waited patiently and with admiration while the man landed a fish. Only a tiddler, but a fish all the same. And when he released it and resumed his position watching the end of his tip, Colin continued.

"I'm surprised the local authority bother paying for this if there are no decent fish."

"Is that who runs it?" asked the man, totally oblivious to the fact that he'd just as good as admitted he was fishing without a permit.

'NO DAY TICKETS' screamed the signs. 'PRIVITE MEMBERS ONLY'.

Oh dear.

Not that it mattered much to Colin. He wasn't the bailiff and he wasn't even a member yet of the angling club, let alone on the committee. Nevertheless, he did feel his hackles rise anyway, and he made a mental note to see how many others might fish here over the coming weeks without a valid permit. It was, after all, completely off-circuit and not on any beaten track. Colin certainly couldn't remember seeing any competitions advertised here, or any results in the local newspapers.

Woolley Dam, that's what it was called. And Colin couldn't recall hearing the name before. No wonder it was

a lake he hadn't even known was here.

Colin quietly observed the statue-like angler for a few minutes more, then bid him 'tight lines' before attempting to get through to the other side of the lake. He had a fancy to see if he could find some of those 'fancy carp', but the 'path' was indeed impassable. The area smelt of stagnant water, rotting vegetation and rank fish, so he gave up and turned back towards home.

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For the next few days, as he dallied over sending off for his new angling book, he pumped the locals for more information - in the pub, at the petrol station, in the post office, on the farm...

"Too much fly-tipping," said one.

"Too many pikies," said another.

"Place has been abandoned for years," said a third.
"I'd forgotten it was still there."

"They're putting poison down. Don't take your dog for a walk there."

"Used to be a lovely little spot," said an elderly man. "Little shop there used to sell snacks and sandwiches. It's where I courted our lass. We used to be able to row boats out onto the watter."

Colin couldn't imagine a snack bar up there at all. Did he mean a trailer that sold beef burgers?

"Oh no," said the chap. "Proper plumbed in, like, with foundations and everything. Car park anorl. It was demolished years ago."

"I wouldn't go up there," advised one of the neighbours. "There are no fish in there thanks to after-dark poachers. They've taken all the carp and then they *eat* them," he shuddered. As a coarse fisherman, Colin shuddered too. British people simply didn't *eat* carp.

And finally, when he actually spoke to the local angling club, the news was bleak there too.

"Yes, we've heard that what the mergansers haven't taken the owner's netted and taken out. We're thinking of letting it lapse. You're right, there's no point in paying for fishing rights if there are no fish in there to fish."

"Actually," interrupted Colin, "I doubt very much that it's been netted. It doesn't look as though anything has been that close for years. It's totally overgrown. Who told you that?"

"I think it was the landowner's gamekeeper. Told one of our lads he was wasting his time as his boss had ordered it netting."

"Nah," said Colin. "And some of the local anglers have no problem catching skimmers. They say they've seen carp in there too. Ornamental carp."

"Hmm," said the voice at the end of the phone.

"That's interesting. How do you feel about showing one of our bailiffs the place? We'd be keen to get it back into use if there are fish in there."

And so Colin arranged for the bailiff and the landowner to visit the lake and see what could be done.

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"I'm most frightfully sorry," said the Ponsonby-Smythe fellow from the equestrian property. "We had no idea it was so badly in need of maintenance. We employ a man, don't you know, to keep it all under control and have done for years. It was so frightfully sad, you see. His wife ran away with one of our stable lads - stable girls, actually - and we felt sort of obliged."

"Well," said the bailiff, removing his tweed baseball cap to scratch his thatch. "It looks as though you've been paying him to do nothing."

They'd brought tools with them, but as they hacked their way through the very heavy undergrowth, a scruffy man in a flat cap, dirty jacket, and trousers held up with string approached them, pointing a shotgun right at them.

"Gerrorf my land," he growled.

"Er, I say, old chap," said Ponsonby-Smythe. "I think you'll find this is *my* land."

"Sorry, sir," said the scruff, uncocking his gun, placing it over one arm, and then docking his brow at the squire. "Didn't recognise you there, sir -"

"No. And quite clearly you haven't done a damned thing we've been paying you to do. I'd say your days here are numbered, old chap."

"Ee can't do that," blustered the tramp, priming and aiming his gun at them once more.

Colin felt something stir in his lower gut... he'd never had a shotgun pointed at him before, let alone twice.

"You have two shots and there are three of us, all much younger and fitter than you, man," said the bailiff.

"So just put the gun down, old chap. There's a good fellow," said Ponsonby-Smythe.

Colin, amazed at the total calm the other two men were displaying, was bricking it.

"Come on, man," said the bailiff. "Let us through to inspect the fish at least."

"No fish in there," said the old man. "Watter's too polluted -"

Yet another made-up tale, sighed Colin. Someone didn't want anyone coming anywhere near Woolley Dam, and Colin thought he'd just found out who.

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Reluctantly the old man let them through to 'inspect the fish'. Afterwards, the bailiff and the landowner agreed to

share the financial burden of restoring and maintaining the lake again, and Colin was asked if he'd like to be the site bailiff, which he agreed to straight away, even forgetting to run it by his wife first in the excitement.

However, Woolley Dam as an active fishery was not to be for some while yet, as it turned out. For on the very first day of restoration, the mini-machinery was moved in and dredging begun. And the first thing to be dragged up from the depths was what turned out to be a woman's body. And she'd clearly been there for a very long time.

The area was cordoned off as a police crime scene, and a manhunt begun. For the former gamekeeper of Mister Ponsonby-Smythe had sloped off and disappeared from the face of the earth. Perhaps his wife hadn't run off with one of the stable lads after all - or even one of the stable girls...

the end

Diane Wordsworth

Doncaster, England

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