

## Belated August News!

latest news from Diane Wordsworth's newsletter



Image by kalhh from Pixabay

Welcome to September!

September is my favourite time in my working year. I think it dates back to school and college when the new year always started in September. I always used an academic mid-year diary too.

Not only is it the time of autumn fruits, it's also the time for new projects, or new schedules.

### **Moving house**

In case you haven't already seen it on the blog or on Facebook, we picked up the keys for the new house on Saturday, coming home from our holiday a day early to do so.

We haven't actually moved in yet, as we still have the old house for the next 3 weeks. We have been over there to do some gardening, though, and there's a garage full of rubbish we're having collected this evening or tomorrow – not *our* rubbish...

All of the sifting through properties, searching for suitable houses, arranging viewings and generally chasing at every turn has all made a bit of a dent in my own work and production. This means I'm behind on quite a few things and I'll have to reschedule much of it.

## Northumberland

We also had a holiday in the midst of all of this, although we did find a lovely cottage in a beautiful part of the country, where both the cat and the dog were welcome, and where there was a private and secure back garden and a safe and private vehicular/pedestrian access away from the busy main road.

Here are some of the poet's pictures (all © Ian Wordsworth):



Our cottage was the first section on the left on this range of buildings - the first two sets of windows.



Edlingham Castle was just a few minutes away from our cottage.





A few minutes in the other direction, we found Cragside.



Further afield, we drove to Berwick-upon-Tweed, and continued on into the Scottish borders.



This is the memorial monument to the Battle of Flodden, overlooking the fields where 10,000 Scottish soldiers, including their king, died.



Bamburgh Castle.





Beautiful Lindisfarne Castle on Holy Island.

More pictures may be shared on the blog over the coming weeks.

### **Camp NaNo**

I didn't finish Camp NaNo this year, which I was disappointed about, and with us still moving house for the next 3 weeks, arranging stuff in one and cleaning the other, I may not get back to this until at least October. I do still intend on completing all of the stories, and I will still put them into an anthology.

The regular NaNo starts again in November and I hope to have a project lined up for that.

### **Other work**

In the meantime, I have Book 11 to ghostwrite for one client and another book to edit for another client. We also have to arrange the internet so that the gap between it being turned off at the old house and being turned on again at the new house is as short as possible.

The poet and I will be sharing an office again in the new house. I'm really looking forward to that as we've been a bit isolated when he's worked from home.

### **The new garden**

I have a weekly blog post entitled 'The Portable Garden This Week', and that will be continuing once we've moved everything over. There will be additions, though, as the new garden has fruit trees and fruit bushes and lots of space for our raised beds and patio pots. We're also thinking of investing in a chiminea to heat the patio.

So, lots of stuff happening over here. Hopefully September's real newsletter will be on time at the end of the month...

---

## **Here's your free short story**



# Wordsworth Shorts

- Diane Wordsworth -

## alexandra's ragtag band

### alexandra's ragtag band

Toby the black Labrador was easy to see in his hi-vis bright yellow harness and jacket. So that he wasn't mistaken for a guide dog for the blind, the word POLICE was emblazoned across the back of the dog coat in silver-grey luminous capital letters. Many passengers using the railway station still wanted to pet and stroke him. It was easy to forget that he was actually working and he carried out his duties admirably on that Friday evening at King's Cross Station in London.

Toby had been trained to sniff out drugs and explosives and was part of a four-man (or woman) two-dog team.

~~~

The seven members of Alexandra's Ragtag Band lounged untidily amongst their luggage and their instruments on the cold, tiled station floor. Normally they'd be busking or jamming in such a busy environment, but today they were tired and all jammed out. They'd been away for four days, had worked for most of that time, and they'd had a long journey home on the Harwich boat train - and they still weren't home yet.

They'd had a great time entertaining passengers in the restaurant car or ambling along to the music through the carriages, and that was how they'd earned their passage. On the ferry too.

The band competition they'd taken part in, in Haarlem, had been fantastic. They'd done a good job coming fifth out of so many entrants. No prize money this time but a lot of fun and some good exposure for them. They'd already been booked to go back in the summer and another venue was contacting them in the next few days. But now the trip was catching up on them and they were tired.

"Uh-oh," warned Alex, after whom the band was named. "Here come the sniffer police." She wasn't really called Alexandra, just plain old Alex, but nobody checked. She played the trumpet.

"And it looks as though he's coming this way," agreed Manjit, the only other female of the group. She played banjo.

"Who's got it this time?" hissed Brian, the unlikely but Mohican punk who played snare drum.

"I do," replied Leon the hippy. He played the tuba.

With Jonah the giant Jamaican on big bass drum, Neil the wannabe gigolo on slide trombone, and Arabian Imran on, rather surprisingly, piano-accordion, they really did make a motley crew. But as that band name was already taken, of a fashion, the raggle-taggle band of oddballs had instead decided on a parody of Irving Berlin's Alexander's Ragtime Band. The new name suited them and they had all, in fact, been born and bred in England – apart from gigolo Neil who was born in Scotland but brought up in England.

"Don't look him in the eye," said Alex quietly, and they all instead began to rummage through their luggage. But it was too late. Toby the black Labrador sniffer dog with POLICE emblazoned across his back homed straight in on Leon the hippy's hard tuba case.

Leon went quietly, glancing quickly at the others. He knew they'd be waiting for him when he came back.

~~~

The room they took him to was white and cold and clinical. The police tried to look disinterested while the station security staff tried to look fierce. There were two of each, and Toby who received a biscuit and a quick chuck behind the ears as he sat patiently and thumped his tail on the floor.

While the male security officer checked his passport and asked the questions, the female security officer emptied the contents of the tuba case onto a table and examined each item one-by-one. She wasn't interested in his other luggage because Toby hadn't been interested either, which was just as well as it was mostly dirty laundry.

And so the perfunctory staccato questioning began. Leon tried not to sound too rehearsed but made sure to give more information than less in his replies to speed things along a bit.

"Where are you travelling today, Mister... uh..." he checked the name on the passport.

"Leon. It's Leon," said Leon. "I'm on my way home."

"Where is home?"

"We're waiting for the connection to Doncaster. The last one was cancelled and the next one's running late."

"Where have you been?"

Leon resisted pointing out that the security guard had all of his travel itinerary along with his passport. "Haarlem. In Holland."

"What was your business in the Netherlands?"

Leon glanced across at his tuba that the female security guard was patiently dismantling where she could, but he resisted... "We were in a band competition."

"How did you get from Haarlem to King's Cross?"

"We came via Amsterdam and the Hook of Holland and caught the boat train from Harwich."

"Surely it would be easier to fly from Schipol to Doncaster?"

"No, they decided not to fly that route from Robin Hood Airport in the end. We'd have to come in to Humberside or Manchester instead."

"But that would still be quicker than coming through London."

"Yes, but it's cheaper by train and we work our passage. That way it costs us nothing in the end, and we get paid."

"How did you do in the competition?"

"We came fifth. Out of forty-five."

The security guard raised an eyebrow and looked impressed for a moment. But he seemed to be all out of questions and the female security guard seemed to have exhausted all avenues with the tuba case. Leon tried not to get annoyed that someone else had mauled his instrument, but he knew it would be covered with fingerprints by now.

The security guard turned towards the security guardette.

"What did you find?"

"Nothing," she said, indicating the table in front of her. Even the x-ray machine had remained idle. The tuba was in as many pieces as it broke down to for cleaning purposes, she'd opened a small bottle of Brasso, a green cleaning cloth covered with smudges lay spread out next to the Brasso, a pair of ladies gardening gloves (pink, flowery) were next to that, and there were a few mini sheets of music.

"There must be something," said Mister Security, but Miss Security simply shrugged her shoulders and shook her head.

There was nothing.

Mister Security looked across to Toby's handler. "Can the dog come and identify what it was he could smell?"

The policeman nodded and fetched Toby to the table. Toby panted happily, wagged his tail twice, and woofed quietly at the gloves.

"Thank you," said the security man, and Toby and his handler resumed their place alongside the police woman. Toby received another treat.

"Can you tell me, Mister... uh..." said the security guard.

"Leon," reminded Leon, helpfully.

"Er... yes, why do you have a pair of gardening gloves in your case?"

"They're for when I'm polishing the brass. They save me getting fingerprints everywhere." He glanced pointedly at the security woman, who didn't even have the good grace to blush.

"But these are gardening gloves. Ladies gardening gloves."

"Yes, they're much cheaper than the white polishing gloves and those came free on the front of a gardening magazine."

"Do you also use them for gardening?"

Leon thought for a moment. "Yes, actually... I think I did use those... when I fertilised the grass. The fertiliser grains burn my skin, so I used the gloves when I scattered it."

Tony's handler cleared his throat.

"Yes?" said the security guard.

"What kind of fertiliser do you use, Sir?"

"Bone meal. Fish, blood and bone."

"Ah." The policeman looked at the security guard. "Could we have a word?"

Mister Security smiled unsmilingly as he excused himself and the police officer. When they returned, Miss Security was told to put everything back, Leon was given his passport and travel itinerary, and he was told he could go.



"We're sorry to have detained you, Mister... uh... Sir."

~~~

As expected the rest of Leon's band mates were waiting for him.

"All okay?" asked Jonah the giant Jamaican.

"All okay," grinned Leon.

"Come on, then. Our train's on platform seven."

And the unlikely raggle-taggle group of oddballs finally completed the last leg of their journey home.

~~~

Two days later, on Sunday, the band met up again, this time at the bandstand in Rotherham's Rosehill Park. They were fully-garbed out in the band's livery of black trousers, black waistcoats with red shiny satin back panels, fluorescent turquoise shiny satin shirts, and sparkly black bowler hats with turquoise and red shiny satin ribbon around the rims.

Alex's hair was already short, but Manjit pinned hers into a neat little bun, Brian hid his Mohican under his hat, and Leon tied his beaded braids into a ponytail.

They were ready to entertain Rotherham on this sunny Sunday afternoon.

"Okay," said Manjit on banjo. "Who has the Dutch beers?"

"Me," said Jonah the giant Jamaican on big bass drum. "Who has the 'cakes'?"

"Me," said Alex on trumpet, after whom the band was named. "Who has the 'smokes'?"

"Me," said Neil the wannabe gigolo on slide trombone.

"And whose turn is it next time to carry the decoy through customs?" asked Leon the hippy on tuba.

"Mine," said Arabian Imran who, rather surprisingly, played piano-accordion.

"Perfect," said Brian the unlikely punk who played snare drum.

"We don't get stopped that often, thankfully," said Alex. "But when we do, that bone meal certainly confuses the dogs."

They all grinned at each other and then Alexandra's Ragtag Band began to tune-up.

the end

---

**Diane Wordsworth**

Doncaster, England

This email was sent to {{contact.EMAIL}}  
You've received it because you've subscribed to our newsletter.

[Unsubscribe](#)

