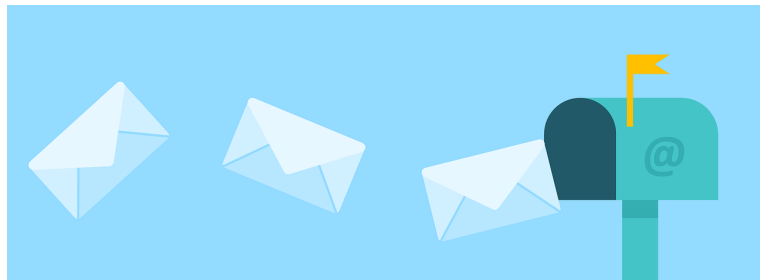


August News 2024



From Diane Wordsworth <diane@dianewordsworth.com>
To Diane <diane@dianewordsworth.com>
Date 19-08-2024 7:34 pm



August News 2024

Hello friends, it's been a while!

Welcome to the new look newsletter. I'm not actually yet certain how different it looks to the previous one, but it's a start.

It's also been a while since the last newsletter, and I understand that when I shifted to the Octopus platform, I accidentally sent out the initial welcome email again, along with the same bonus short story. My profuse apologies, and thanks to all of you who hung in there. Thanks too to those of you who brought it to my attention.

what I've been up to...

For the past couple of months I've been doing client editing work in a bid to clear the decks so I can start work on the next WORDS WORTH READING, which will be out before the beginning of October. I'm also rushing through a few short stories that will appear in the bookazine first and then as standalones. If you've been reading the blog you'll know why I'm foregoing the novella for the next issue in favour of these short stories.

Recently I've been planning a new novella, STEVIE BECK AND THE HAUNTED HOUSE HOTEL, which was going to be the October bookazine novella. That's now been put to one side so I can concentrate on finishing THE SECRET OF WHITEHORSE FARM, A NETTIE CAMPBELL COSY MYSTERY in time for the February issue of WORDS WORTH READING.

I'll be ramping up the self-publishing again in the coming months because I've decided not to pursue the traditional route, again for reasons explained on the blog. But first, I have to clear that editing work.

In the meantime, here's how our recent touring holiday went, with pictures from both of us.

Diane

our recent touring holiday...



Blackmore Camping & Caravanning Club Site, Greater Malvern

At the end of July we finished work at noon on the Friday and headed off down south towards the Midlands. Malvern was our first destination and we'd received a phone call from the Friday morning asking us to get there a bit earlier than we'd planned. So my work went in a work bag and came with us and off we went. We didn't even have time to do any shopping on the way.

The campsite was 126 miles away and it was going to take us

the best part of 3 hours.

We did make it in good time, though. Our pitch was nice, the site was secure, and we were set-up in no time at all. At about 9pm I carried on with my work, editing for a client, frantically trying to catch up on the 2 hours I'd lost. I gave up trying to connect to the site wi-fi and used my phone as a hotspot and by 11:30pm the author had her file back for checking.



Minehead Camping & Caravanning Club Site, Somerset



The site advertised itself as being 450 yards from a bus stop, which we thought was great. What they omitted to also advertise was the fact the buses only ran from Tuesday to Friday. Our first full day was Saturday. But we needed

provisions and the 'well-stocked shop' on site didn't even have any milk. We had to go into town.

We called an Uber to take us into Greater Malvern, and we were dropped off at the bottom of the town just as it started to pour with rain. We were able to nip in and out of shops as we walked to the top of the town so we could take in some of the stunning views in between the rain. But we didn't take any pictures.

We had a lovely lunch, did some shopping, and tried to call an Uber to take us back. But there was No Signal. No matter where we walked, carrying a heavy shopping bag each, we couldn't get a signal. So we headed towards the railway station where I was certain there would be a taxi rank.



Higher Town, Minehead



The closer we got to the station, the further it seemed to be away. In the end the poet left me on a bench with the shopping while he continued on to the station. I was sat there for about 15 minutes before he came back, but he was indeed in a taxi and we were whisked back to the site.

We'd only chosen to visit Greater Malvern when they were having their annual Pride event. There was also a music festival on in the town that week as well as a food festival at the Three Counties Showground.

We spent the Sunday on site, and were off again Monday morning, heading further south to Somerset.



Amusement arcade, Minehead



Minehead Beach, Somerset



Minehead Harbour, Somerset

Our second campsite was 117 miles away from the first one, but the heatwave that was forecast arrived the same day. Traffic was almost at a standstill on the M5 and the sun was on my side. The whole time. By the time we reached the site, I felt as though I had sun-stroke and the campervan smelled as though the brakes or the clutch had burned through.

The view was stunning, but our pitch was the worst one on the entire field for the view. They also put us right next to a giant ants' nest, and when we complained they said, 'They only live for a day. They'll be gone by tomorrow!' Oh, well that's all right then. Not.

We discovered that our fridge had stopped working during the very hot drive and we'd lost almost everything in there, from frozen peas to fresh milk. And our pitch was on a slope that we couldn't fix with chocks either. Not happy. Site wi-fi was okay, though. But that was about it because they didn't even advertise a 'well-stocked shop', let alone have a shop at all.



Hereford Camping & Caravanning Site, Tarrington – if Carlsberg did campsites...



On the Tuesday we decided to walk down the hill to the town of Minehead. It was a lovely walk, sheltered from the hot sun by thick tree cover. We saw llamas, alpacas, and a dog. A very Guard Dog, who shouted at us while he wagged his tail but didn't want us to pass.

So we stood still and chatted to him, which he was also happy enough about. His human came to tell him to leave us alone,

and we had a chat about the history of the track we were walking down. We continued our walk and discovered something I didn't even know was in Minehead, and after all the years I had holidays in that neck of the woods too.

We stumbled upon Higher Town, a lovely olde worlde part of the town with thatched cottages and cobbled streets.

Waiting for a bus, Hereford



Hereford city centre

Down in the town we walked along the front and the poet got himself a pot of coins to feed the amusement arcade. I was so tired after our walk downhill, I just wanted an ice cream or a drink or a sit down or something, or I would have fed coins into the amusement arcade too. I think he was a bit disappointed that I didn't feel like doing that.

We bought a few more provisions, walked to the harbour, and had our main meal in a pub there. Then we called a taxi to take us back up the hill. Going down it was bad enough. The descent had been 683ft in 80+ degree F heat, and I don't like hills that go up in any case. So we called a taxi and went back.

The plan on Wednesday had been to go on the steam railway for the day. But it was still very hot and we were tired and aching after our big walk downhill the day before. It was just as well we didn't go anywhere, because at 11:50am the site manager came and asked us if we knew we were leaving that day.



Private quarters adjacent to the cathedral



The beautiful River Wye

Now, I was sure I'd booked each site for 3 nights, but when I checked our confirmation email, I'd only booked 2 nights in Somerset for some reason. The site manager did go to see if she had any room that night, but I called ahead to our 3rd site to see if they could fit us in. I didn't like the Somerset site anyway, despite the view, and I kept my fingers crossed that it all went the right way.

Fortunately, she didn't have any vacancies and the Hereford site did. So we packed up and left, even managing to get away bang on noon. Our next site, in Hereford, was another 113 miles away and we chose to cross the Severn estuary rather than go all the way back up the M5. There was less than 10 minutes in it, both ways had traffic, but the other side of the river was more scenic.



The Hereford Bull

In no way did we feel cheated out of a third night in Somerset. The Hereford site was probably the best site we've been to this year. It really did have a well-stocked shop, even though it didn't advertise one, and it really did have a bus stop within about 350 yards – and a bus even stopped at it. There was also a large fishing lake there, but sadly the poet didn't have any gear with him to partake.

BUT... if Carlsberg did campsites...this would probably be it.



Ledbury



On Thursday we caught the bus into Hereford, where we spent some time in the city, wandering the streets, visiting the cathedral, eating ice cream on the banks of the river. We did some grocery shopping and got a taxi from the railway station back to the hotel as we'd just missed the return bus and the next one was in 2 hours.



Ledbury



On Friday, we caught the bus the other way, into Ledbury, a pretty little market town that had everything we needed. We had a look around, took some pictures, had something to eat, and did some more shopping.

Because the fridge was broken, we couldn't buy a lot of fresh food that would quickly spoil in the heatwave. So we had to

shop every day. And on Friday, we caught the bus back to the campsite as well.

For the rest of our holiday we just chilled and hung out at the campsite. It was beautifully located in lovely surroundings and we were able to buy milk, drinks and other snacks from the shop. We only had one day at home to turnaround our washing and get some shopping, and then we were off to Ireland.

More about that next time.



Ledbury

Don't forget, you can read my (week) daily blog [here](#), access the full newsletter archive to date [here](#), and *Words Worth Reading* magazine [here](#).

Here's your next story!

Wordsworth Shorts



- Diane Wordsworth -

the complete angler

The fishing season was about to start again and the Belshaw family found it the main topic of conversation at breakfast.

"I suppose that means we'll be fending for ourselves again at the weekend," joked daughter Sarah.

"No more lifts on Saturdays to cricket," teased Harry, the eldest of the two boys. "And we have an important game this weekend too."

"Don't worry, son," harrumphed Peter, who was really old enough to know better. "I'll be there to cheer you on."

Only the youngest, Davey, seemed truly happy at the prospect. "Leave Mum alone!" he defended. "She does enough for all of us the rest of the week. She's entitled to a day off –"

"But every *week*?" asked Peter, his dad. "It's most weeks from now until next March."

"That's right!" agreed Sarah, enjoying the light-hearted family banter. "Honestly, Mum, you can be so selfish!"

"Selfish?" said Jenny. "I'm here every day of the week cooking, cleaning, mending, washing clothes. The beds don't make themselves and, last time I looked, we didn't have a Hoover fairy."

She knew they were all only teasing, but it still narked her a little that they couldn't be more... *supportive*.

"Not one of you chips in to help. You leave everything to good old muggins."

"But you *are* here all the time," reasoned Harry. "You don't have anything else to do." He winked at his dad. "And fishing's meant to be a man's game anyway."

"Yes," said Sarah. "It's so embarrassing having a mother who

goes *fishing*. I have to tell my friends you're meeting Great Aunt Dora in Timbuktu for the day –"

"And they believe *that*?!" asked Jenny.

"I think it's cool," said Davey quietly. "And I can't wait until I can go too."

"You'll never get your wheelchair down the bank," laughed Harry.

"Harry!" admonished both of his parents at the exact same time.

"I was only kidding," grinned Harry, ruffling his brother's hair, who didn't seem that bothered as he tucked into toast and Marmite.

"The kids might have a point, Jen," said Peter Belshaw finally. "I mean, can we really afford it this year?"

"Number one," replied Jenny, ticking the item off on her index finger. "It's the only thing I do for myself. The *ONLY* thing. And number two," she said, ticking her middle finger, "It costs twenty-five pounds. If that. I think you'll find that most other wives are considerably more high maintenance than that."

"But we're saving up to take Davey to America for his operation –"

Hmm, maybe her husband had a point. But it was only one day a week. "Perhaps you'd prefer it if I went to the hairdresser every week instead of washing it myself. Perhaps you'd prefer it if I needed the latest fashions to wear at the school gate. Perhaps you'd prefer it if I liked a bottle of wine every night. I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't dye my hair, I don't require a Chelsea tractor in which to do the weekly shopping. I fish. And I look after you lot."

Sarah opened her mouth to speak but was silenced by another glare from her mother.

"One more word and I'm off to live with Great Aunt Dora in Timbuktu," said Jenny. And the family burst into a fit of giggles until she chucked a cushion at them.

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The opening of the new fishing season was greeted with a massive three-day festival and competition sponsored by one of the biggest local tackle manufacturers. First prize was a 16m pole worth more than £3,500.

Jenny sighed. She'd love a brand new pole of her own for a change, instead of using second-hand or borrowed all of the time, but she knew she could never afford one, and she didn't often win a match. Never mind, she'd enjoy the day sitting on the riverbank, watching the water, battling wits with fish. None of

the family had ever come to encourage her, but they'd only be a distraction. Even little Davey. She preferred it that way, as did many of her angling chums.

The claxon went, marking the start of the contest, and silence descended along the banks of the river. The exhibition ground behind the anglers buzzed softly with visitors, but that was more like white noise for the men and women fishing, and quite calming, actually. Jenny caught a little roach very early on and popped him into her keep net. In a competition like this one on a river where weights weren't generally great, every tiddler counted, and several more followed.

As the sky clouded over and fat drops of rain began to fall, news trickled along the bank that a pike was stealing fish while anglers were reeling them in. Jenny hoped that someone would catch the pike and force it into a sulk before it reached her. They weren't allowed to keep the pike if they caught it, but pike usually lose interest anyway once they've been caught and go and skulk in the shallows in shock for a while.

A journalist bobbed along the bank too, homing in on the more famous anglers for a quick word and a short snap. He didn't recognise Jenny's name on her board but he did hesitate for a while. Jenny concentrated on the water, staring ahead, but as she reeled in another slightly bigger fish, she heard the shutter go on the journalist's camera and smiled to herself. He'd just bagged himself a bit of a novelty. But Jenny knew he'd see other female anglers further down the bank, some of whom had even been on telly.

She was still chuckling quietly to herself when she realised she was actually doing quite well. Probably about ten pound or so, but not bad for a river, and not bad for a woman. The pike must have given her a wide berth, or kept to its own swim.

The river darkened and swelled under the purple cloudy sky and some of the fair-weather anglers started to pack up.

"How have you done?" Jenny asked one of her neighbours.

He shook his head. Not very good," he replied, packing away some of his gear. "I've not caught anywhere near as many as you have," and Jenny bristled slightly with pride. "I'll try again tomorrow."

Jenny would have liked to come back the next day but she'd had her weekly fun. She was content.

As she reeled in her first big catch of the day another one of the early finishers paused pushing his trolley to watch her. When the small carp was safely netted he said: "You've caught more than me in just that one fish."

"Really?" said Jenny. The fish only weighed about four pounds and was just one of her haul. Maybe, just maybe... but she didn't allow herself to go there. Not yet.

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The finishing claxon sounded and three teams of lads with scales made their way along the riverbank. They weighed Jenny's catch – fourteen pounds. That was a good weight, she realised, especially when it won her the section and then the women's match of the day. But when it beat the men's results too, she was delighted and whooped accordingly. AND she'd won that brand new pole. "Whoop!" she repeated.

At the award ceremony all of the runners-up in all categories accepted tackle and cheques for their prizes. But when it came to Jenny's turn, she was asked if she wanted the pole or the cash equivalent. What a quandary. However, it didn't take her long to make up her mind. There was no contest.

"I'll take the cash, please," she said, only a little disappointed at not getting the pole. Three thousand five hundred pounds would go a long way to paying for Davey's trip to America, and she told the journalist so too.

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Back home Peter Belshaw was overjoyed. "See," he said. "I told you all we should let your mum enjoy her little hobby," he grinned, giving his wife a hug. She hadn't told them how she'd opted for a cash prize instead of a pole.

Sarah chucked a cushion at him but Harry tackled him to the floor while Davey giggled his head off.

"And we're going back to the festival with her tomorrow too," announced their dad when he came up for air. "As a family."

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The next morning the Belshaw family returned to the riverbank, sticking to the paths for the most part to accommodate Davey's motorised wheelchair. They played hook-a-duck at one of the stalls, Harry won Sarah a giant teddy bear at the shooting range, and they ate hotdogs and pancakes.

"It's Jenny, isn't it?" said a voice behind them. "Jenny Belshaw?"

"Yes," said Jenny, spinning around to see Tim Avery, owner of the tackle company who were sponsoring the three-day event.

"Congratulations on your win yesterday."

"Thank you."

"I would have liked to have chatted with you but you dashed off in such a hurry."

"Yes, sorry. My family were expecting me home," she

explained, sweeping her arm to demonstrate them to him.

"That's okay, we understand," grinned Tim Avery. "And this must be your youngest?" he asked, indicating Davey.

"Er, yes. How did you know?"

"That journalist told me your story, after you'd dashed off."

"Oh," said Jenny, not really sure what else to say.

"And look," said Tim, clearing his throat noisily. "If it's all the same to you, we'd like to give you another prize. We'd like you to accept a fishing pole as well as the cash."

"Oh, er, well... I couldn't really –"

"Nonsense! Of course you can. It's not the same one as yesterday's. We raffled that one off in the end. But if you'd like to accept a different model? It's not as valuable, but still worth almost two thousand pounds..."

He waited expectantly, but Jenny's mouth opened and closed several times with nothing coming out – rather like the fish she caught. And so her husband replied on her behalf, as the penny dropped.

"She'd like to accept, thank you very much."

"Splendid, splendid," said Tim Avery. And they all shook hands and followed him to the tackle tent.

THE END



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