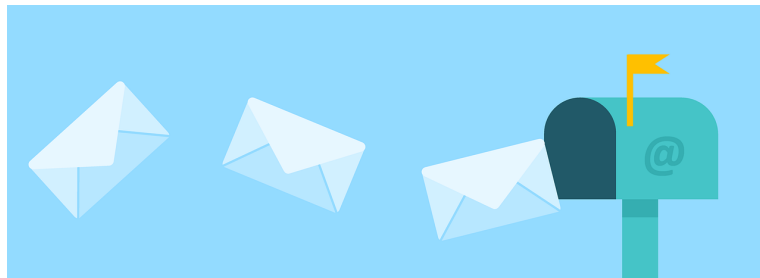


January 2025 News



From Diane Wordsworth <diane@dianewordsworth.com>
To Diane <diane@dianewordsworth.com>
Date 16-01-2025 1:01 pm



January 2025 News

Hello friends! New Year greetings to you all.

Welcome to the January newsletter.

I think I've fixed the font issues. Let me know if you need it to be bigger, clearer, whatever. I don't yet know how to include an online link within the newsletter, but I'm working on it.

what I've been up to...

September was the last time I sent out a newsletter. But not a lot has happened since then.

We didn't go away again in the van, but I did accompany hubby to Kent for a few days on business. Both dogs came to stay with us for a few days. And we had a full fortnight's holiday for Christmas.

We had a day out at a lovely place called Spurn Point. We're members of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust who have a big reserve there.

And we had a day out at Cleethorpes, where we were able to eat fish and chips inside the pier restaurant there for the first time ever. (Dogs aren't allowed on the pier, let alone in the restaurant, and we always had a dog.)

social media shake-up...

With the recent news regarding Meta and fact checking/fake profiles/etc, I've been reconsidering my social media presence.

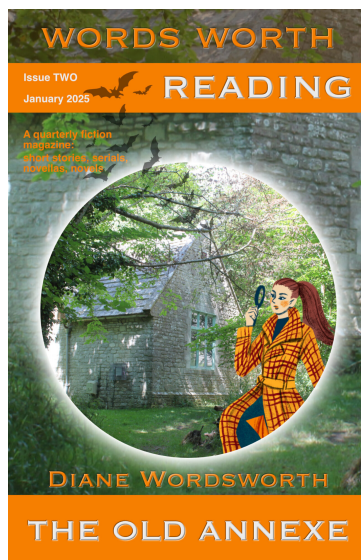
I've already wound down my Twitter/X, and will delete it completely once I've changed the back matter in all of my published books. I'll also be deleting my LinkedIn.

I'll be keeping both my Facebook writing page and my personal profile, but the latter will slowly be used less and less. I'm already deleting historic posts.

I love BlueSky, but I'm even starting to reconsider that.

I don't need social media. I have a website, a blog and a newsletter. But for now, I'll be keeping BlueSky, Facebook and Instagram.

Words Worth Reading Issue Two...



Words Worth Reading Issue Two will be published later this month.

The Secret of Whitehorse Farm was supposed to be the featured novella in this issue, but it isn't quite ready. The ending is a bit rushed and I couldn't get the 'secret' to work in just one story.

Instead, I've used a story I wrote for the great novella challenge (see below), *The Old Annexe*.

The bookazine cover is much more vibrant than the novelette cover...

A link to the pdf is FREE for subscribers and can be found below.

stories in this issue...



the great novella challenge...

In November I enrolled on a great novella challenge.

The challenge is to write a novella a month for a year. Word-count is 15,000 to 30,000 words, and we have to submit it to Dean Wesley Smith at WMG Publishing on the last day of each month.

I've already written two of these novellas, although I'd class anything under 20,000 words as a novelette. *A Mystery at Whitehorse Farm* came out at just over 22,000 words, and *The Old Annexe* came out at just over 15,000 words.

Fallen Angel is the one I'm currently working on, which is targeted to be 15,000 words. This will be a 3-act novelette and it will consist of 3 complete 5,000-word stories that feature the fallen angel of the title. Most of my stories are 4 acts.

Book 1 is still in need of some work, as I rushed the ending. I think *A Mystery at Whitehorse Farm* should really be at least 25,000 words and the rewriting should fix that.

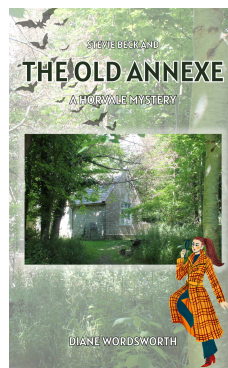
Once these stories have appeared in *Words Worth Reading*, they'll be published as standalones. Then they'll appear in a full collection, providing I hit the challenge. Finally, they'll go into their own series collections if they're part of a series.

Nettie Campbell is my new main character for the Whitehorse Farm stories. She's a vet who's afraid of horses...

Stevie Beck is my new main character for the, well, Stevie Beck stories, also known as my Horvale stories. She's a community reporter who wants to be an investigative reporter, but she also needs to protect her identity...

Gabby is my fallen angel. And she wants to organise Heaven...as in the trade union/collective bargaining meaning of the word. That's the word 'organise' and not the word 'Heaven'...

Let me know what you think of the covers.



to Patreon or not to Patreon...?

There's something else I've been thinking about, but it's very much still percolating in the back of my mind. I'm wondering whether to Patreon or not to Patreon.

The model I'm thinking of will start with a small monthly subscription of \$1/£1. For this, subscribers can just make a regular payment if they want to give me a bit of a boost, and they'll get access to advance content that otherwise may not be made public for several weeks. I may also make this a user-changeable voluntary amount.

The second tier will be for around \$5/£5. For this, subscribers will get everything in Tier 1 plus every single short story I publish as a standalone ebook.

The third tier will be for around \$10/£10. For this, subscribers will get everything in Tier 2 plus every single ebook I publish, fiction and non-fiction.

Some people have higher tiers to include things like podcasts, one-to-ones, Zoom meetings, etc. But I'm not even thinking about that yet.

Advance content will include non-fiction articles as I write them that will eventually lead to books, such as the writing ideas and other 'craft' articles. But I may also duplicate blog posts there.

I don't know. I'm still thinking about it, researching it.

The newsletter and the blog will both stay as they are, but I may work on a new lead magnet that will be exclusive to newsletter new sign-ups. Of course, once that's ready, it will also be made available existing newsletter subscribers too.

Let me know your thoughts, if you have any.

that's it for now...

That's all for now. Until next time...

Diane

links...

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](#). And all of my books can be bought [here](#).

here's your next story...



Stig arrived at the Southam's home, just in time for Christmas.

"What's that?" Molly asked of her eleven-year-old son.

"He's a stick insect," replied Toby.

"Yes, I can see that. But what is it doing here?"

"Miss asked for volunteers to look after the animals over the Christmas holiday."

"And you volunteered us, right?"

"Right."

"I see." Molly regained her composure. She couldn't very well send it back, could she? And it could have been worse: he could have brought home a nice cuddly rat, or a snake in a tank. "And what does it eat?" she asked, peering at the bright green creature through the ex-pickled egg jar. Someone had thoughtfully provided an ex-stocking leg for the lid too.

Toby put on his big, grown-up voice and recited what he had clearly learned in class.

"The stick insect eats the foliage of plants, shrubs and trees, usually at night. Privet will do."

"I see," said Molly again, picturing her prized privet being gnawed to shreds by this... insect... "Does it have a name?"

"Stig."

"Stig?"

"Yes. We couldn't make up our minds between 'Stick' or 'Twig', so we called him 'Stig' instead."

"And does 'Stig' have any friends?"

Toby frowned, shook his head, and took a deep breath. In that matter-of-fact voice of his, he recited from his lessons once more. "In some species the male is rare. So the female reproduces an exact replica of herself without mating."

Molly shook her head and laughed, while at the same time marveling at her son's knowledge. "We'll leave him on the windowsill then above the draining board, all right?" Toby nodded. "Just so long as you look after him."

"Oh I will," he agreed, though Molly wasn't so sure. After all, who looked after the stray kitten he had found one day? Who fed and cleaned out his rabbits? Who returned his slugs and snails and all sorts of other creatures to the safety of the garden when he tired of examining them in the kitchen? Molly did. "And keep it away from Petra. You know how she hates creepy crawlies."

On the day before Christmas Molly frantically rushed around the place trying to get ready for work. It was the busiest day of the year at the department store in town where she worked. Her ex-husband was coming to take the kids shopping. Toby was getting dressed in his room and Petra was hogging the bathroom, again.

"Petra! Will you get a move on in that bathroom," she screamed up the stairs to her sixteen-year-old daughter. "Some of us have to get to work."

"Okay, sorreee!" called Petra's voice from behind the locked door. Molly paused for a second to listen for the plug to be

pulled in the bath. Nothing.

She took a deep breath and busied herself around the kitchen: moving Toby's creatures back into the garden and disinfecting the worktop where they'd been; replacing the stocking lid on Toby's stick insect jar; emptying, cleaning and refilling Toby's kitten's litter tray; feeding Toby's rabbits...

"All yours," came Petra's voice through the open kitchen door. Molly had been so engrossed in *Toby's* chores she hadn't heard the bath water gushing down the waste pipe outside. "What time's Dad coming?" she asked, running down the stairs.

"In about five minutes," replied Molly, checking the hall clock while she ran up the stairs. The doorbell rang just as she opened the bathroom door and was greeted by her daughter's mess.

"Come on Toby," called Petra as she met their father on the doorstep. "Dad's waiting."

"Bye Mom," called Toby, tearing out of his room and down the stairs, two at a time.

"Bye Mom," shouted Petra, just before the door slammed behind them.

"Er... 'bye kids..." said Molly weakly.

She took a deep breath and busied herself around the bathroom: washing Petra's tidemark from around the bath; fishing Petra's long, dark hairs out of the plug hole; collecting Petra's soaking wet towels from the floor, the toilet, the sink, the bath (why she needed four, Molly didn't know); replacing the lids on bottles of Petra's cosmetics and wiping up the spillages. Her children lived like pigs, and Molly was going to be late.

She put the plug in and started to run her bath, but the hot water tap coughed and spluttered before dying completely. Molly groaned. Not only had Petra emptied the entire hot water tank, but Molly didn't have the time to wait while it filled up again and reheated.

Molly wasn't usually one for New Year resolutions, but this year things were going to be different.

On New Year's Morning Toby dashed up to Stig's jar clutching a handful of privet – and wailed.

"What's the matter with you, you big baby?" asked Petra spitefully.

"He's gone! Stig's gone." He darted around the kitchen hunting for his pet. "Miss will kill me."

"Perhaps you should have replaced the lid," suggested Molly gently. She was drinking a cup of tea and reading a magazine.

"I thought you'd do it."

"I'm on strike."

"You're doing what?"

"Mother's revolting," confirmed Petra, chuckling at her own joke. "Did you wash my cardigan, Mom?"

"Which one?"

"The blue mohair one."

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm on strike."

"You only went on strike yesterday. The cardigan's been on the draining board since Boxing Day."

"Did you wear it then?"

"No."

"So why did you want me to wash it?"

Petra sighed. "I tried it on a few times."

"But you didn't *wear* it?"

"No."

"So it isn't dirty."

"But I left it on the draining board."

"Then it will still be there, won't it?" Molly lifted her eyes from her magazine and watched her daughter snatch the cardigan up from the draining board and shrug into it. "If you wanted it washing that badly you should have done it yourself."

"But I couldn't put it in the washing machine. It has to be hand-washed."

"So?"

Petra tutted and turned to make some toast. Something caught Molly's eye and she returned her gaze to the magazine.

"Have you found that insect yet, Toby?" asked Molly.

"No," he wailed. "Oh where *is* he? I'd do anything to find him."

"Anything?" said Molly.

"Anything."

"Would you remember to replace his lid every time you feed him?" Toby nodded. "Would you look after your kitten and the rabbits?"

"Yes."

"And would you take all of your nasty little creatures back into the garden when you've finished with them?"

"Anything."

"Promise?"

"Promise."

"He's on Petra's back –"

Petra screamed and dropped the toast butter side down on the floor. "Get it off me!" she cried, frozen to the spot with terror.

"He won't hurt you," assured Toby, taking his time. He could see his pet was safe so was in no hurry.

"Just get it off me."

"What's it worth?"

"Anything."

"Anything?" said Molly.

"Anything," screamed Petra.

"Will you remember that there's more than you who needs the bathroom first thing in the morning?" Petra nodded, flexing and unflexing her fingers as two tears squeezed from her tightly

closed eyes. "And will you clean up after yourself when you've finished?"

"Yes."

"And will you stop bringing your clothes down to be washed when you've not even worn them?"

"Anything."

"Promise?"

"Yes, I promise. Now would you just get that thing off me, please."

Ooh, thought Molly. A 'please' too. She smiled and nodded at Toby who reached up and rescued Stig.

"Oh dear," he said.

"What?" said Petra.

"His leg's fallen off –"

"What?" she screamed.

"It's hanging off your cardigan –"

"Get it off me!" she cried.

"Don't worry, sis. It's a known fact that young stick insects can replace a leg if they lose one," he said matter-of-factly.

"He'll soon grow a new one –"

"Ugh," she said, dashing from the room, the bright green leg still dangling from the blue mohair.

On the day Toby went back to school Stig moved out. Molly was quite sad to see him go. He'd turned out to be a real friend. Petra, on the other hand, was ecstatic, and Toby would still see him every day at school. Of course, the children didn't keep their promises, but it had lasted for a few days at least.

No one could see the tiny, seed-like egg buried deep inside the blue mohair cardigan. If it remained there undisturbed, protected by its hard shell, in a year or two they would have their own little baby Stig – a perfect replica of her mother...



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