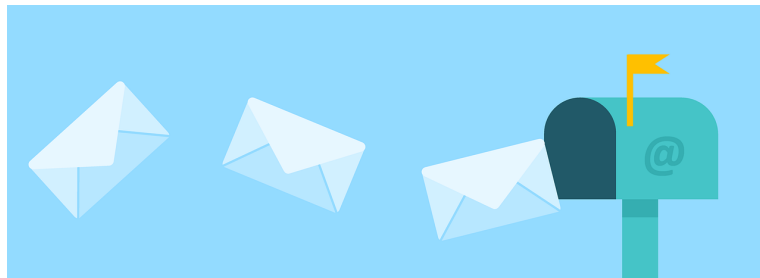


September News 2024



From Diane Wordsworth <diane@dianewordsworth.com>
To Diane <diane@dianewordsworth.com>
Date 27-09-2024 2:49 pm



September News 2024

Hello friends! How are we all?

Welcome to the September newsletter.

I found out how to add columns to the newsletter, so this month's looks a bit more interesting. I've also made the images smaller so they don't take forever to render or get stuck somewhere between here and there.

I'm toying with adding alt text to the images in case they don't fully load, so you at least know what should be displaying. And I changed the size of the font, because the last one was HUGE.

Let me know if you have any problems opening the newsletter or viewing any of the pictures. Also let me know if the text is too big or too small.

I know there's a web link for the newsletter, but I haven't yet found out how to add it to the newsletter it belongs to. For now, use the links on the website, linked to below. But remember, these links are secret and for subscribers only!

what I've been up to...

August was really busy in that we had a trip to Ireland, and my sister and I were still trying to wrap-up the Probate issues that had been dragging on since June 2023.

Everyone tells us it can take longer than that, but ours was apparently straightforward. I'd hate to think how long folk have to wait if there's even a slight complication.

In the end, Probate was finally completed, which was a massive relief. Suddenly I had time back again and was able to reclaim my life!

More on the Ireland trip below.

I did three big jobs in August. First of all I revived the newsletter. Secondly, I collated some of my more recent story sales and started work on Words Worth Reading Issue One, also more on which below, and I cleared a big editing job for a client.

Two smaller jobs, but quite important all the same, were closing down the SECRET SUGARHOLIC blog and reviving the OUR GARDEN THIS WEEK blog. I've since decided that I'll probably close down the garden blog too. Since we've had the camper van, we've chosen to go out and about in that if we have a free weekend rather than spend time in the garden.

We've had 2 weekends away in the van since my last newsletter. First we went to Mablethorpe, on the Lincolnshire coast, then we went to Cayton, between Filey and Scarborough on the North Yorkshire coast. Grand-doggy #1 came with us to Cayton and had a lovely time swimming in the sea. We didn't take any pictures, because we were there to relax and recharge.

All being well, we'll manage at least another weekend away before the next newsletter.

Diane

Words Worth Reading Issue One...

Words Worth Reading Issue One was published 2 weeks ago, on Monday 9 September.

It was supposed to be published back in January, but I didn't get my finger out and write a full-length novella in time.

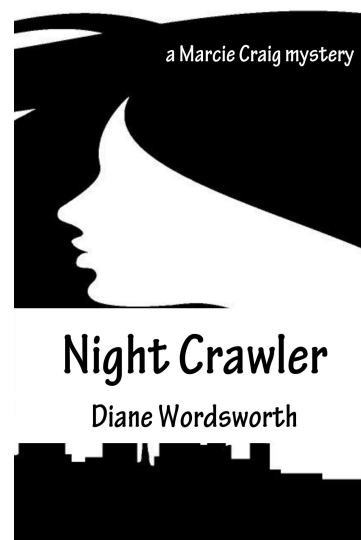
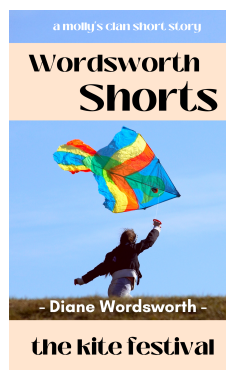
Future issues should include a novella as well as an excerpt



from a novel. But I wanted to get my stories out there before anyone else did, so this one only contains short stories and the excerpt.

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

stories in this issue...





Ireland...

(all pictures © Ian Wordsworth, apart from the one of him...)



Blarney Castle, County Cork

We were away for the end of July on a touring holiday. We came home for one day, and then we were off again, this time to Ireland. The poet had some business meetings there and I was going along for the ride. I did, however, take some work with me.

We didn't encounter any problems in the airport and we grabbed a load of poly bags that were better than the ones we had. We have to fill these bags with liquids and ointments, each one in less than 100ml/100g packaging.



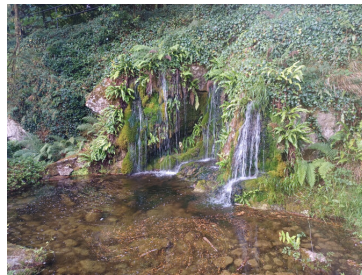
(L to R) statue of paperboy,
performance location spot,
Rory Gallagher memorial

The flight set off on time, but it wasn't the greatest. It was a bit bumpy and we had a terrible landing. We got there in one piece, though, which was something.

Our hotel was lovely with everything we needed. It was a bit out of town, but there was a small retail park about 10 minutes away where we could buy snacks for the room and anything else we needed. The poet only had a short walk a bit further to get to work and while he was out I cleared an editing job and I started a proofreading job.



Blarney Castle, County Cork



Magic Pool, Blarney Castle

On our first day we arrived early enough to nip into Cork, where we explored the city a little and walked along the river for a while. In particular, the poet wanted me to take a picture of him at the Rory Gallagher memorial.

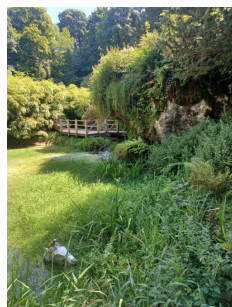
We went back to the hotel for our evening meal, forgetting that we were supposed to have booked a table. They squeezed us in, though. We spent the second evening in the hotel too, but on the third day we went back into Cork. After 2 nights eating hotel cuisine, we wanted a change.

Blarney Castle, County Cork



This time we ate at an Italian restaurant and we found an olde worlde sweet shop where we bought some sweets (candy). The following day was Friday and the poet still had three meetings before he was finished. He joined one of them from our room and two of them in the foyer after we checked out of the hotel.

Then we called an Uber and went on an excursion. We'd chosen Blarney Castle in County Cork as it was only half an hour away. We didn't have time to explore the entire thing, but we had a good taster. There were lots and lots of coach trips at Blarney and most of the passengers wanted to climb to the top of Blarney Castle to kiss the Blarney Stone.



(L to R) sculpture in foreground,
Seven Sisters Stone Circle,
Blarney Castle



The queue was too long for us to join it and, anyway, I didn't want to be kissing any stones I might catch germs from! The poet would have given it a go had I not found out that the stone came from Bannockburn after the lord of the manor went to support Robert the Bruce in his defeat against the English.

Instead, we chose to explore the beautiful grounds filled with follies, like magic pools, mystical rocks, stone circles, and quite a few sculptures. Blarney Castle was originally a hunting lodge, so it wasn't really a fortress. The mystical rock we saw was the Dolmen Megolith, and while there's a sign nearby extolling the mysteries, I think it's just another folly, put there to entertain.



(L to R) Dolmen Megolith, piper at Blarney Castle, another sculpture

We got back to the hotel in good time to catch another Uber to the airport, where our flight was delayed by 30 minutes. It was a much better flight than the one coming, though, and a wonderful landing in comparison.

I loved Cork, and Blarney in particular. Perhaps one day we'll go back in the camper van...

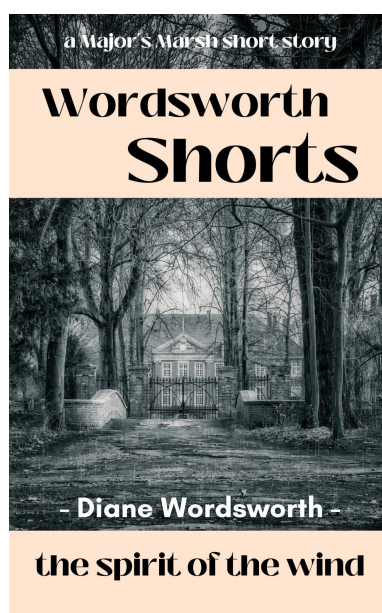


gypsy caravans, Blarney Castle

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](#). The garden blog can be found [here](#). And all of my books can be bought [here](#).

here's your next story...



Father O'Rourke was a chirpy fellow. He was well-fed, well-rounded and well into his sixties. He was also a popular character in this tiny hamlet in Kent, and the villagers were always calling on him to perform one service or another.

Tonight it was the turn of the McMahons, newcomers to the village but also the new landlord and his wife at the local pub.

The old priest sprinkled holy water at various intervals around the public bar in the Queen's Arms. Taking care not to splash any on the antique rosewood furniture, he muttered constantly to himself.

"I don't know," he chuntered. "Never had any complaints before..." a splash at the door, "... Old Ned's a friendly ghost... first time in thirty years I've ever been asked to exorcise him..."

"What was that?" interrupted Bernadette McMahon, a pretty young thing only recently married. "What did you say, Father?"

"Oh nothing, nothing," he replied. "Just a little prayer," then under his breath: "I pray Ned doesn't turn up tonight."

Bernadette and Patrick McMahon hadn't been in Major's Marsh long. Newly wed and newly qualified, they'd been sent to the sleepy hamlet on trial to run the Queen's Arms, an old coaching house owned by the brewery.

Patrick was great fun. He got on well with the locals and everyone liked him. Everyone liked his young wife too, she was just a little 'odd' at times.

Still, they both did a good job, it was nice to have a young couple around the place and she kept herself to herself – until Pat let slip the story of Old Ned that is.

"And he managed the pub for forty-five years..." he told her one evening. "He was so happy here during his life that when he died he chose to stick around..."

"Oh don't be daft," interrupted his wife. "There's no such thing as ghosts."

"But he's here—"

"How do you know? Has anyone ever seen him?"

"No but—"

"Has anyone ever heard him?"

"No but—"

"Well then. I rest my case."

"But they know he's here. He loves the place so much he keeps an eye on it, looks after it – and the people who live and work here.

"One year they discovered a fire had started in the kitchen," he continued. "It had been doused with water while everyone was asleep. Another time a burglar was shut in the cellar until morning even though no one had locked the door.

"I tell you he's here."

"Well," she said finally when she could get a word in. "If you believe it so much we'll get the local priest in to remove him."

"You can't do that."

"Why not?"

"Because he's a friendly ghost."

"Rubbish," she retorted. "No such thing as a friendly ghost."

"You just said there was no such thing as ghosts," but she didn't hear him as she was already halfway up the stairs to bed.

Bernadette made the necessary arrangements the very next day and the Queen's Arms was granted a bar extension one night in October so the exorcism could take place.

Father O'Rourke didn't really want the job, but Mrs McMahon had her mind made up and would have gone outside the village if he'd refused. He thought that Ned would understand if it was someone he knew and stay away. So the old priest did his duty and turned up with all his bits and bobs.

They waited for three hours. Pat got fed up and went to bed but couldn't sleep. Ned didn't turn up much to Father O'Rourke's relief and Bernadette's satisfaction.

"See," she cried. "I told him there were no such things as ghosts."

Father O'Rourke collected together his things. "I'm sorry you've had a wasted journey, Father. Would you like a cup of coffee – or something stronger perhaps?"

"No thank you, Mrs McMahon," he replied glancing at the grandfather clock. "Three o'clock is well past my bedtime. I'll see you on Sunday though?"

"Oh yes, I'll be there," she walked with him to the door. "I'm sorry Pat won't be there too."

"That's all right," he said patting her hand. "Your husband has the faith, that's good enough for me."

"Goodnight Father, and thanks."

"Goodnight my child. God bless."

Bernadette closed the old, heavy door behind the old heavy man and slid the bolt home.

The noise echoed around the empty room as the fire collapsed for the night. She unplugged the fruit machines and Wurlitzer juke box, switched off the few lights that were still on and made her way to bed.

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The following evening a new fire danced brightly in the hearth. The wall lights were on low and the grandfather clock ticked steadily. Ale flowed freely and everyone talked about everything except the failed exorcism of the early hours. The locals were quite fond of Old Ned and didn't really want to think about what might have been.

"It's blowin' up for a bit of a storm out there," said Tom the grocer as he burst through the door. "I'll have my usual please, Pat," and he warmed his backside on the open fire.

"I'm sure it'll blow over," said Jack. He ran the Post Office. "They haven't forecast anything."

"That's just it," laughed Tom. "They don't know what to forecast so they don't bother."

"All the same, it's getting very dark out there."

"Well," said Pat. "It does get late early these days you know. Get



some beer down you an' ye'll be fine." He chuckled softly at his own awful joke, serving the drinks quite cheerfully. It had gone cold out – always good for business. Most people would far rather sit by a real fire supping real ale than stay at home running up their own electric bills.

By nine-thirty the bar had filled up nicely. Bernadette joined her husband pulling pints.

Soon the cosy front room at the Queen's Arms was heaving with bodies, all catching up on the news and gossip, which was much the same as on previous evenings, oblivious to the storm that was starting to rage outside.

Suddenly, the lights went out, the juke box – quiet though it was – wound down to a halt and the pumps failed.

"Who switched off the fruit machine?" someone wailed.

"S'all right," said Pat. "Stay where you are. I'll fetch some candles."

"But what're we going to drink?" asked someone else.

"We've plenty of canned and bottled stuff," assured Bernadette, amused by some people's sense of priority. "There might even be a keg or two in the basement." She soon got the drinks going again.

The pale firelight flickered, reflecting in thirty-or-so faces while Pat placed the candles strategically around the room. It looked so warm and friendly that Bernadette considered doing it more often. It didn't take long to entertain the villagers. Jack's wife, Beattie, sat herself down at the old upright and tinkled away at the worn piano keys until strains of *Side by Side* and *The Birdie Song* drifted out and along the lane above the sound of the wind.

Bernadette thought she could hear someone slowly clapping outside, but when she went to see, there was no one there and the noise stopped. She served a few more drinks but when Pat heard it too she decided to investigate. "Probably the TV aerial or washing line flapping in the wind," she said as she walked around the bar counter.

"Here, I'll come with you," said Pat wiping his hands.

"You stay here and look after the customers. I shan't be long."

She left the joviality behind and peered around the front door into the darkness. Two huge oaks flanked the house. The wind had stripped bare any solitary leaves intent on surviving the autumn. The trees swayed precariously, their uppermost branches brushing the slates on the coaching house roof. They leaned dangerously into the building.

Shadows danced around the bottom of the trees until her eyes got used to the dark. Then she stepped out into the storm to see what, if anything, had worked itself loose. But she found nothing. A rather windswept and slightly wet Bernadette checked her watch and went back in to call time just as the power came back on.

"She timed that right, Pat," said Tom. "Goodnight to you both."

"Night, Tom."

"Don't forget that fruit machine owes me money. Goodnight."

"See you tomorrow," said Jack finishing his pint and collecting his wife from the piano stool.

"Yeah, g'night," said Bernadette locking up behind them all. "We'll

have taken a penny or two tonight," she said to her husband.

"Yes, and the electric bill won't be too high either."

They pulled the plugs, washed the glasses, turned off the lights and extinguished the candles. Both too tired to clear up completely after the previous night's escapade, they made their way to bed. In fact, they were both so tired they slept through the rest of the storm.

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Bernadette and Patrick awoke the following morning to the sound of excited chatter outside and the huge brass knocker against the heavy front door.

"What is it?" called Bernadette jumping out of bed and throwing on her dressing gown. Pat did the same and together they stumbled down the stairs. On opening the front door they were greeted by half the village.

"What's up?" asked Pat squinting in the winter morning sunshine. The wind had dropped now.

"You're lucky to be alive," said Tom stepping down off the doorstep.

"Surprised it didn't wake you earlier," said Jack.

"Are you all right?" asked Beattie.

"Why?" asked Pat. "What's happened?"

"The two oaks," said Tom pointing. "They should have fallen onto the inn."

"But they went two completely different directions," continued Jack.

"They fell against the incline."

"It's a miracle," said Beattie. "They should have fallen onto the inn."

Pat and Bernadette stepped out into the sharp October air, pulling their dressing gowns around them. Indeed the two trees had fallen away from the house. Bernadette remembered watching them leaning over the house the previous evening. It was true, they should have fallen onto the inn.

"Jesus, Mary an' Joseph," exclaimed Bernadette crossing herself. "It really is a miracle."

"Actually," said Father O'Rourke pushing his way through from the back of the crowd. "Much as I'd like to believe it, I don't think it was a miracle."

"What makes you say that?" asked Pat.

"The trees were both chopped."

"You mean someone tried to kill us?"

"On the contrary. It probably saved your lives."

"But who would do such a thing?"

Everyone exchanged looks but no one replied.

"I thought I heard a strange noise last night," said Bernadette.

"Yes, but there was no one there," answered her husband.

"Then it must have been Old Ned," said Father O'Rourke. "Planted those trees himself. Must have broken his heart to do that, but at least the inn was saved." He was in a world of his own. "And to think I tried to exorcise him," he finished sadly, shaking his head.

At first this statement was met with stunned silence. But then, as if it

were the most natural explanation in the world, the villagers bade the McMahons good morning and went about their business discussing something about Sevenoaks in Kent being flattened during the night.

"There's no such thing as ghosts," said Bernadette as she stomped back into the house.

Patrick exchanged a wink with the old man, followed his wife and closed the door.

THE END



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