Write On
NOVEMBER
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OCTOBER REPORT

The first speaker welcomed to our Annual Writers' Day was Murray Fisher. We were very grateful to Murray for stepping in at short notice when our original speaker, Margaret Mills, had to withdraw. Murray has had an unusual journey into writing. He studied fine art, focusing on portraiture, but realising this area of art would not earn him a living, he moved into graphic design. From there he became involved in music, starting up his own record label. Music led him into film making and scriptwriting, and he has now published his first book, a sci-fi adventure for children called 'Underlings: The Spark Engine'.

Given his own diverse background, Murray asked his audience what other interests, besides writing, they have. Both Sam Hammerson and Brian Hughes spoke about their own past and present busy lives, which involve many different activities. Murray said he has designed websites and carried out other design and illustration tasks, and found his training in art and design helped him distil complex brand images into visual clarity. His film work also called upon the skills he had built up to manage areas such as props, costumes, colours, set design and characters. He said screenplays should enable the reader to 'see' the film.

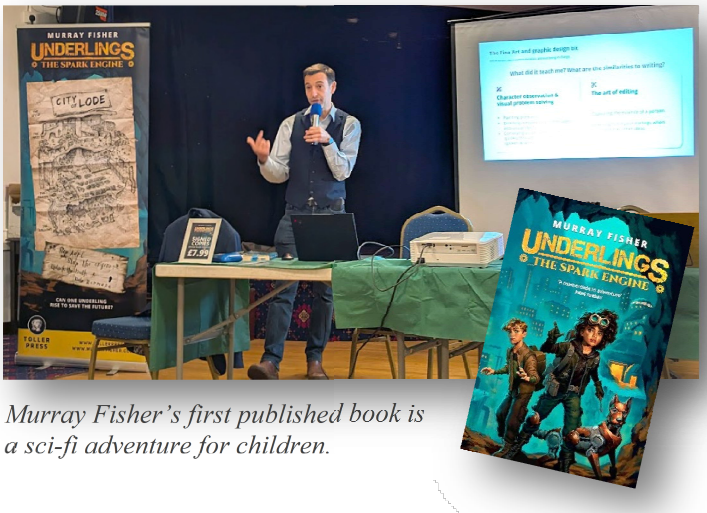
After reading an extract from his book, Murray described how, with the help of a graphic designer friend, and the drawings of the characters in his book, AI was employed to create a short animation. He hopes the animation will serve as a trailer for a potential full-length film, should a film producer be interested in purchasing the rights. When asked, Murray told us the film cost around £2,000 to produce and is available on YouTube. It seems quite an impressive achievement for those who do not posses those skills. Visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5VN6hC_VLg&t=7s

Murray also set a short writing exercise for us, in which we had to decide on a character with a problem, how he/she deals with it and how it is resolved.

Murray was a very interesting and engaging speaker who introduced us to some modern day approaches about how to expand upon conventional writing.

Julie Gowers

NOVEMBER MEETING
MEMBERS' SHOWCASE



Murray Fisher's first published book is a sci-fi adventure for children.

JANET HOWSON

We learned last month that Janet Howson had passed away. Janet was a published author and a long time and popular member of the Circle. Her presence at meetings will be greatly missed. She was a talented writer and an engaging person who contributed in many different ways to the Circle over the years. She attended Circle meetings regularly, read at the Members' Showcase sessions, and often entered the Circle's two annual competitions.

In 2025, Janet was thrilled to receive first place in the Jack Kendall Competition for fiction with her story, 'Eleanor Rigby'. She had been placed in past BWC competitions but had not come first before. Her entry, based on the Beatles song, Eleanor Rigby, transformed the lyrics into a story. Janet wrote on Facebook, 'The theme was to take the lyrics of a song either by The Beatles, Abba or Ed Sheeran and write a fiction story of a maximum of 500 words. My story was called Eleanor Rigby – the wonderful Beatles' song that always made me want to cry. I read it out at the meeting and received the Rose Bowl, certificate and £50 cheque.

A card of condolence was sent to Janet's family on behalf of Brentwood Writers Circle members.

NANCY MEGGS NON - FICTION COMPETITION

Entries are due today. Hand your scripts to Michele Feneley

WRITERS' QUOTES

"A professional writer is an amateur who didn't quit."
Richard Bach

ATTENDANCE FOR OCTOBER: 28 members; 2 guests = 30

Our second speaker of the day was best-selling author, Erica James, who has written 27 books in 30 years. She was interviewed about her writing career by Chair, Helen Finch. Erica's books focus on family dynamics, relationships and personal reinvention but she doesn't consider herself a romance author. Her novels are mostly contemporary, with a brief foray into history and WW2. Her writing journey began when she attended a writing course in Yorkshire. The group was instructed to write the first page of a novel and Erica stayed up until 2.00 am writing hers but the next day, as she listened to others read theirs, she became increasingly despondent. The tutor, realising how she felt, ended the day before she had to read her piece. Erica was prepared to leave but the tutor persuaded her to stay and as the course progressed she wrote more. At a second course she attended the tutor used her writing to demonstrate what was wrong. Talking to the tutor afterwards, she took her advice and completed what she had begun on the first course, and that became her first published book, 'A Breath of Fresh Air'.

Erica was fortunate to find an agent who saw something in her work. She'd sent off three chapters without writing the rest of the story, so she was surprised to get a message asking her to phone. The agent loved her work and wanted more. Her work rhythm had begun: marketing one book, another being published and writing the next.

Erica says she always takes note of feedback. One reader found an error in a book and was most vociferous when pointing it out, but was mollified when Erica thanked her for bringing it to her attention. She doesn't read reviews anymore, but does remember one awful comment. She went outside, looked at her new BMW, and let it go.

Erica has a few rituals: a new set of bone China cups for each book, a red pen for proofreading, using the same font and sending the book to the publisher as individual chapters. Erica gave some advice; always have cliff-hangers at the end of chapters, stick to deadlines - they make you complete your first drafts, and know your audience.

Colin Taylor, Derek Davies, Alison Wingfield and Julie Gowers

OUR PROGRESS

HELEN FINCH – Regular Moulsham Time article, Beachcombing Magazine, Article for embroidery magazine for 2027 (US), Awaiting book draft, Film scriptwriting.

SYLVIA KENT – Usual three articles in Essex Press. Working with British Library.

DONNA BURKERT – Submitted first 5,000 words of novel to Bath Children's Book Competition.

PETER GURTON – My vampire story 'Abbey' is now available as an Audiobook on Audible, Apple Books and Amazon. Just search for TG Trouper. I have received a publishing date for my Children's book 'Brian the space cat' . It will be released on November the 2nd. Completed the final edit of a stand-alone drama, 'The Hive'. It's now with my proof reader.

JULIE GOWERS – Read 'The Missed Opportunity' at The Great Dane, East Preston, West Sussex.

Erica's novel, 'Gardens of Delight' won the prestigious Romantic Novel of the Year Award in 2006.

Inspired by Murray Fisher's example of using AI, **Dennis Stoner** experimented with a free creative AI tool called Dola, introduced to him by another author already using AI to create book trailers. He entered: *generate me a book cover for a book titled 'BEINGS: The Primal Cut'* and he supplied the photo he used for the original. He forgot to enter the author's name, but the result is quite striking for free, and only five second's work! It costs Dennis up to £200 to get his book cover designed by a human being.

BRENTWOOD ARTS COUNCIL

Brentwood Writers Circle is a member of Brentwood Arts Council

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY – 2026/27

December 5th Christmas Party
Winners of the Nancy Meggs Non-Fiction Competition read their entries.
Sale of members' published work.

January 9th – Writers' Showcase
Members read their tales of the supernatural by candlelight.
Launch of the Jack Kendall fiction competition.

February 6th – Speaker (TBA)

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