Children’s Wish is celebrating 25 years!

If you would like to join in the celebrations, book into Alex’s Presidential Ball - Saturday 21st November for more details go to: http://tangent-clubs.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/RTCW-Ball-Booking-form-pdf.pdf

Last year’s Farnborough (Kent) Tangent Chair, Penny Denby, recently become Chair of the national charity, PMRGCAuk. The charity was set up to support those who have the auto-immune illnesses polymyalgia rheumatica (PMR) and giant cell arteritis (GCA).

The charity aims also to raise awareness of the two diseases that affect at least 40,000 people each year in the UK and to encourage research into what causes inflammation of blood vessels and can make mobility difficult and painful.

More women than men and with an average age of early 70s are diagnosed although PMRGCAuk members include an increasing number of younger people. The causes of both illnesses are unknown and although it is not necessarily inherited Penny has had polymyalgia since 2011 and her mother had it for thirty years. Steroids are the most common treatment to keep pain and severe stiffness under control but getting off the steroids is a battle many face for years.

GCA undetected – GPs, because it’s relatively rare, don’t always recognise the symptoms – can rapidly cause blindness (visit www.PMRGCA.co.uk for more information).

So what can be done now to help those with PMR and GCA?

‘Everyone who belongs to a Tangent club understands the therapeutic value of spending time with other Tangent members,’ says Penny. ‘At the end of a stressful day the chance to laugh, chat and relax with friends can really lift how you feel.’

‘And that is what PMRGCAuk is aiming at with its local support group network all over the UK. Groups meet in cafes, hotels and community venues. They are often run by members of the charity who have or have had one of the illnesses.’

Penny is looking for volunteers with a little time on their hands who would like to help. And where better to look than Tangent – upbeat, caring and the best of friends? She says,

‘If you are interested in becoming a support group volunteer or if you would like to know about other ways to support PMRGCAuk please email polymyalgiaplus@gmail.com or call 0300 999 5090.’

‘If your Tangent is planning a fund-raising event and would like to know more about PMR or GCA we can send you an information pack about PMR and GCA of lightning speed! Monies raised will go towards supporting groups, running the helpline and educating the medical profession and the public.’

‘Finally – and most important of all – if you have PMR or GCA we would like to hear from you. If there is no support group near you we have a wonderful helpline 0300 111 5090 run by volunteers and an online forum at HealthUnlocked.’

Website: www.pmrgca.co.uk
Forum: healthunlocked.com/pmrgcauk
Helpline: 0300 111 5090
Email: polymyalgiaplus@gmail.com

NEW MEMBER BENEFITS WITH FRED. OLSEN

We are pleased to announce that The National Association of Tangent Clubs have teamed up with Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines to give you a fantastic 10% discount over and above offers currently in the market.*

Cruising to over 200 destinations Worldwide. Fred. Olsen have an amazing selection of cruises, travelling to some of the most beautiful, cultural, relaxing and scenic destinations in the world. Choose from a selection of winter cruises, mini cruises, world cruises, fly cruises and exotic cruises. We are sure there is a destination which is right for you and if you are travelling alone there are great deals for single travellers too.

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines
Bringing the world closer to you.

Rock online at www.fredolsencruises.com or call our reservations line 0800 0355 110

Don’t forget to quote your discount code TANGEN10 to redeem your discount.

*These terms and conditions are in addition to Fred. Olsen’s standard Terms and Conditions which are available on our website www.fredolsencruises.com and on request. Both must be read before booking. All prices quoted on this offer are inclusive of all taxes and are subject to availability. Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines may withdraw or amend this offer at any time. Offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer or special price. Images are not always representative of actual ships. Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines are not liable for typographical or other errors. Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines are members of ABTA. Bookings are made with Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines and not with the National Association of Tangent Clubs. All bookings are made by the National Association of Tangent Clubs on the client’s behalf. Fred. Olsen Cruise Worldwide Cruise and are subject to change and availability.
A successful end to the Marchesi Room Project

There was just cause to celebrate the Marchesi Room project in Cinema City, Norwich. The presentation of a picture of Louis Marchesi was made to commemorate the contributions made by Tangent and 41 Club towards the project to create the Marchesi Room which celebrates the birthplace of Round Table in 1927.

Attending the presentation were Tangent IPP Janice O’Neill, 41 Club Nat Sec Manny Martins, IPC Richard King of Round Table Norwich No 1 and Des Fulcher of Norwich 41 Club. Gay Martin attended on behalf of Cinema City.

The picture will be put on display at Marchesi House during the HYMs in October.

The Gift of Giving

We Make a Living by What We Get
We Make a Life by What We Give

Winston Churchill

So many of you give generously, and may wish to support Alex’s Presidential Charity, Round Table Children’s Wish. This is a special year for the charity as they celebrate 25 years of creating handcrafted wishes for children with life threatening illnesses.

For more information about how to contact Round Table Children’s Wish and find out about their fundraising activities go to:
http://www.rtctw.org/ you can also find them on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/rtchildrenswish

During her year, Alex has scaled the SS Great Britain and also jumped on Ilfracombe pier for RTCW.

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Dear Tangent Members

As I race towards the halfway point in my year as President, I am pleased to report that Tigger has become a well-travelled and accomplished fellow.

He has flown a plane on the way to visit the wonderful, if a little uncomplimentary, Joan Crabtree, no Joan I do not spend long in front of the mirror and on ‘the island’ he also rode an automated lawn mower.

He helped induct the wonderful Lynn Bennett into IAFF Tangent, there being speared by an arrow, raced down to Southend-on-Sea the next day and over to it’s ‘neighbour’ Bristol the next, where I scurried off the mast of the SS Great Britain, while he dismembered up down below with Rachel Durman. The slippery bane made no effort to assist me with directions, because apparently Southend and Bristol are on the other side of the country to each other!!

Onwards he played croquet, was exhausted by all the ladies up north at the lunch hosted by Otset and Harbury, raising a Fabulous £485 for RTCW, he then celebrated a 50th birthday with Lichfield 116, and a 25th with the gorgeous Jo Symons and Cheshire County 68.

He was no help at all as we were entertained by the Doris’ at our Charity Afternoon Tea, followed by a little sojourn around the right hand side of the country, at which I was very honoured to be invited to the Wednesday Costa Club with James Vossey and co, and Bouncy Bouncy didn’t even get an invite – so there!!

On a visit to COLTS, and after entertaining many bottles of wine Tigs then managed to drive a black taxi cab, and as a result, I believe the feds are in hot pursuit.

Lead by the brilliant Buckingham Tangent, Tigger joined in a rendition of the whole of Lena Zavaroni’s song ‘Ma He’s Making Eyes at Me’, before watching on, with thousands of others, at a safe distance, whilst I threw myself from Ilfracombe Pier, no thanks to Tigger, but many to those who managed to tag along and encounter much fun and friendship on the way.

After mixing with birds of prey at Wokingham, he was then tussled by the Penguin Justin Steen, whilst Drew and Moira Cochran gave us President’s the most wonderful weekend in Edinburgh (although I can say that the 41 Club President did manage to illegally procure an umbrella!!)

Ripley Tangent saw the neighbours hanging from the windows, enjoying the melodious tones of Kathleen Rose. At Bishop Stafford Tiggs found a new BF in the form of Lily, and is now keen to go camping with her and her grandma and ‘Coo’ Chris Smith. NSW saw us meeting many new friends, assisting Karen Winchcombe and RTCW, losing just one shoe, a bottle of Prosecco was!! And I apologise to the Lovely Moira Cochran, for the panic, but hope it was worthwhile.

A real highlight was wishing Mr President and his merry men a very happy birthday at Leeds Armouries, where again Tigger was no help, but a bottle of Rosecco was! And I apologise to the Lovely Lin Cooper, for the panic, but hope it was worthwhile.

Only yesterday I was honoured to Charter Yella Belly 943, and huge congratulations go to Liz Armouries, whilst Drew and Steve and the ‘Penguin’ Judi balanced on, with thousands of others, at a safe distance, whilst I threw myself from Ilfracombe Pier, no thanks to Tigger, but many to those who

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Only yesterday I was honoured to Charter Yella Belly 943, and huge congratulations go to Liz Balderston and the girls over in Boston, and yes Bumble the puppy did have a little chew on the tiger’s leg!!

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Janice's Jottings - the next chapter

I thought I would enjoy a quiet time after such a busy year as President but how wrong can one be? After the AGM in Harrogate, the Tangent Club International AGM in Cyprus & the LC AGM in Scotland we enjoyed the Welsh Regional Lunches. Then the preparations started for the NARC Half Year Meeting and the TCI Half Year Meeting.

Other events have been the 41 Club Council Weekend in Bristol & the RT Family Meeting in Marchesi House with Paula, our new VP plus the Gift Fair in Birmingham to look at gifts for her year as President.

The LC International AGM in Akureyri in the north of Iceland was wonderful. It was lovely to see the VP of TC, Anna and President of Agora, Kelly plus our own LC President Zoe and LCI President Chantess. The warmth shows just why we need to continue the driving of me (close to Gatwick), I would be happy to come and speak.

Back to my role as Treasurer; please, don't hesitate to contact me any time with queries - I will always do what I can to help and I can't answer your query straight away - I will get back to you.

Looking forward to seeing some of you throughout the rest of the year.

Jill Harris

Our Treasurer loves travelling but we caught up with her!!

I am now just over 4 months into my role as your Tangent Treasurer and by the time you get this magazine I should have received your clubs subs and if not, I will be chasing up through your Club Contact at the time of writing I am chasing up 100 clubs - please help me - it is a massive task!!!

However, it's not all gummi news; I have been travelling and recently came back from The Round Table World Meeting in Gotland, Sweden, where I represented Tangent GB and saw Jason Thomson finish his year as RTI president. Vaughan and I had planned to do this and I made a promise to myself after Vaughan died to do everything that we had agreed to do jointly. This event was a great example of the 4 clubs working so well together; I was so well looked after. The pre-tour included a flight over the island in a 4 seater plane; a BBQ on the beach; listening to vinyl records of a local sculptor's house who we met at dinner, leaving his house at 2am…, showering in fiber by speed boat and finally acting as sniper at paint ball and being told by a 28 year old Tabler that you must not get up! To move, roll over and keep yourself low to the ground!! The pre-tour members have kept in touch using 'What's App' and some of us have already booked to go to Nepal next year. I made some great friends and have received many invitations from across the globe as a result!

Becoming involved in international events is a wonderful opportunity to make life-long friends… do think about going to Germany in 2016 for the next Tangent Club International AGM.

Alex's chosen charity this year is ROUND TABLE CHILDREN'S WISH for which I am an ambassador and if you would like a speaker for one of your meetings and are within 2 hours driving of me (close to Gatwick), I would be happy to come and speak.

Why change the habit of a lifetime?

Kingsbridge & District Tangent 248 gate-crashed their 41 Club 50th Anniversary Dinner! Dressed as nuns the ladies entertained the men with their version 'My Favourite Things' from the Sound of Music!!

Janice O'Neill

A little bit of vice.

Hello Ladies, Gosh, doesn't time fly, almost half way through the Tangent year already. I'm so enjoying having fun with Team Alex, meeting with friends to plan for next year but especially coming along to meet you at your meetings.

If you would like me to come along to a meeting, any time this year or next just get in touch at vice-president@tangent-clubs.org

Yours in friendship, Paula Farnfield

Bilston Tangent & 41 Club Tug-of-War (and the Ladies have it!!!)

Bilston Ladies Tangent chairman, Jo Aston, challenged Bilston 41 club to a tug-of-war, after their August Sunday Lunch. Despite just having eaten lunch, Bilston Ladies triumphed easily, although to be fair, the gentlemen were outnumbered!

Saddleworth Tangent

Saddleworth Tangent 60 held a Friendship Evening in March which was attended by over 100 people including visiting Tangent members from the North West, Ladies WI Groups and friends and family. Our very entertaining guest speaker was retired police inspector, Lillian King and Janice O'Neill gave the toast during her Presidential year.

The photograph shows Chairman Christine Tanner with Past President Janice O'Neill.

Angels on tour

Beth Allen from Harpenden Tangent and Linda Bryson from Whitley Bay Tangent both members of Angels of the North and both holidaying around Nantwich, although neither knew the other was in the area, happened to bump into each other by a local coffee shop. And so it was that Beth and Arnold took coffee and cake with Linda and Dai sitting out in the sunshine. A very pleasant interlude in each other's holiday.
Northampton Nene go Italian

On a warm, sunny July evening 12 ladies took part in a treasure hunt around Tetsworth, Berks, organised by Reading Valley Ladies Circle. You had to hunt for clues, solve them and then eliminate places from the Treasure map to eventually find the location of the buried treasure.

There was an impressive array of officers on the walk: Tangent; National Vice President Paul Barnfield, National Executive Administrator Jackie Hampton, Lodden Chairman Hilary Tindall, Circle; Reading Valley Chairman Kate Ferguson and also President of the Inner Wheel Club of Reading Maiden Erleigh Sarah Reynolds, who is also a member of Reading Valley Tangent. Not bad for a girls outing and a real example of involving different clubs!

Whitley Bay Ladies and the Blood Bikes…!

Members of Whitley Bay 17 were amazed to hear about the magnificent work of the Northumbria Blood Bikes from Steve Rawlings, a Rider and the Rota Manager. The service which delivers blood, blood products and test results to the North East hospitals every year. Thousands of pounds which is saving the NHS every penny would be used to run the service, it was agreed that any surplus should be split evenly between this year’s two National Charities of 41 Club and Tangent, The Stroke Association and Round Table Children’s Day Fasey. (Editor’s note – not too competitive, I hope, gentlemen?)

Four Club BBQ

After a week of fairly miserable weather in the South West, the sun eventually shone and the temperature rose, on what was to be the best day of the week. It was very welcome, as Sunday 2nd August had been chosen for the second joint BBQ, for the 41 and Tangent Clubs of Taunton, along with the 41 and Tangent Clubs of Wellington.

The event took place in the newly built Langford Budville Jubilee Hall, located in a small village just outside Wellington in Somerset. A perfect venue as there is plenty of space to all outside when the sun shines, and a large hall if it doesn’t!

The venue is very well equipped which proved very necessary as we had a brilliant turnout with 60 folks sitting down to eat and be merry all in glorious sunshine. The food, comprising customary BBQ fare, was cooked to perfection and with impeccable timing on a brace of BBQ stoves by Taunton’s David Brown and Wellington’s David Fasey. (Editor’s note – not too competitive, I hope, gentlemen?)

The event much appreciated and enjoyed by all, and whilst not setting out to be a fund raising event, it was agreed that any surplus should be split evenly between this year’s two National Charities of 41 Club and Tangent, The Stroke Association and Round Table Children’s Day Fasey. (Editor’s note – not too competitive, I hope, gentlemen?)

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Sous Chef David taking instructions……

Still Tabling

Super Sec Melodie keeps us on the straight and narrow

Greetings!

Enclosed with this magazine you will have 2 forms relating to the National AGM to be held next April in Birmingham.

Would you like to be more involved in the running of our great Association? We are seeking Nominations for the posts of National Vice President (a 3 year commitment including President and PP), National Secretary (2 years), National Sales and Tangent Officer (2 years) and National Editor and Website Coordinator (2 years). Do please contact me, or the current Officer, for further information and job descriptions of these posts.

Is there something your club feels strongly about which you would like to put forward to go on the AGM Agenda for the membership to consider? If so, why not see if you can get support from another club too and submit a completed Proposition form? Final date for completed forms is midnight Friday 15 January 2016. We have extended the usual deadline in order to give you the chance to consider these things after the busy Christmas period is over.

Calling all super sleuths!

• Do you know which of the members in your club are regularly checking that Gmail inbox that one of you so carefully set up? We are particularly keen that any membership enquiries that go direct to you are dealt with you at one of the many events advertised elsewhere in the magazine, especially if you can join us at Salisbury Tangent 396’s 40th Charter Anniversary Lunch on Sunday 15th November.

Melodie Brookes
Happy Birthday Pam!

Reading Tangent are very proud to share the news that member Margaret Hannibal received an MBE at Windsor Castle on 14th July for her work with bereaved children in Dorset. Margaret worked for many years in a local hospice and realised there was limited support for bereaved children and their families. Mosaic was founded in 2007.

As Chief Executive, Margaret has worked tirelessly to provide support for children who have lost or are losing, a parent or sibling through terminal illness/accidental death including murder or suicide. Margaret talks to schools and organisations in Dorset raising awareness, and funding from many sources, she has secured funding from the National Lottery and Children in Need, gaining recognition of the excellent work the Mosaic team are doing.

Further information on Mosaic available at mosaicfamilysupport.org.uk.

Happy Birthday Doncaster!

On Thursday 14th May Doncaster Tangent 62 celebrated their 50th! A anniversary with a wonderful day trip out, culminating in a splendid afternoon tea at Goldsborough Hall, Yorkshire. Editor’s note: yum yum – a really elegant afternoon, I’m sure!!

25 Years and Counting - Sheringham & Cromer 802

From L to R: Sue Clayton, Liz North, Alex Voller, Chris Tew, Linda Pawley, Pam Otway and Helen Bailey.

25 Years is a special anniversary and Sheringham and Cromer Tangent 802 celebrated their special day on 12th May with a dinner at the Links Country Park Hotel, near Cromer. In total 61 ladies attended including past and present members as well as guests from North Norfolk, Broadland, Dereham and Amersham and Poole Tangent Clubs.

Alex Voller, National President was the guest of honour and the evening was a celebration of fun and friendship!

Happy Birthday

A very special lady - Margaret Hannibal MBE

Wareham Tangent 746

Wareham Tangent are very proud to share the news that member Margaret Hannibal received an MBE at Windsor Castle on 14th July for her work with bereaved children in Dorset. Margaret worked for many years in a local hospice and realised there was limited support for bereaved children and their families. Mosaic was founded in 2007.

As Chief Executive, Margaret has worked tirelessly to provide support for children who have lost or are losing, a parent or sibling through terminal illness/accidental death including murder or suicide. Margaret talks to schools and organisations in Dorset raising awareness, and funding from many sources, she has secured funding from the National Lottery and Children in Need, gaining recognition of the excellent work the Mosaic team are doing.

Further information on Mosaic available at mosaicfamilysupport.org.uk.

Calling all Yorkshire Tangent Golfers

Hull Tangent 750 are organising a golfing day playing for the Yorkshire Tangent Friendship Trophy 2016.

This great event has been held for a number of years at various clubs around Yorkshire but would welcome new Tangent golfers!

It is open to any member of a Yorkshire Tangent club who has a current ‘Congu’ handicap certificate.

It will take place at Hessle Golf Club on Thursday 19th May 2016 with the first tee @10.30am

Programme for the Day

Registration with Bacon Butties and coffee/tea will be served

18 holes of golf

Halfway House

2 course meal with coffee

Prizes

Cost £42.50

For more information email Jan Barnes or jan66barnes@gmail.com

Midland Regional Luncheon 2016

Hosted by Shirley Tangent 86

Date: Saturday 27th February 2016

Venue: Stratford Manor Hotel

Warwick Road, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 0PY

Coffee from 11.30am followed by lunch at 12.30pm

Cost: £38.50 to include a glass of wine or soft drink with your meal

Speaker: Jennie Storr

“Why can’t a man be more like a woman?”

For more details, follow the link http://tangent-clubs.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Midland-Regional-lunch-booking-form-2016.pdf or email BJ Brown, bj.brown@virgin.net

BIRMINGHAM 2016

LAST CHANCE SALOON

BOOK IN BEFORE 31 OCTOBER

TO GET YOUR EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT

WILD WEST MIDLANDS

14TH – 17TH APRIL 2016

www.4clbconference.org

Salisbury Tangent 300: 46th Charter celebrations.

Sunday 14th November 2016

Please join us for a three-course lunch at Salisbury’s White Hart Hotel, followed by a guided tour of Salisbury Cathedral, including an interactive exhibition displaying the finest preserved of the four surviving original 1215 documents of Magna Carta.

Cost £35

We hope that you will be able to join us on this special occasion.

Please reply by 1st November 2016.

For further details and booking form contact:
tangentsalisbury@gmail.com
Great Start to the Year

Incoming Horsham 406 Chairman, Linda Vates was delighted that her first act at our AGM was to induct two new members, Fran and Lynn. Linda was jubilant, when at the club’s first meeting of the Tangent year, she was called upon again, to induct Anne.

What a great start to the New Year for Horsham!

Three new members in two meetings is probably a record for us. But what about in other clubs? Can anyone challenge this???

Fun, Friends & Fundraising

Barnsley Tangent 70 set out to raise £100 for Breast Cancer Care by holding a Tea Party for Breast Cancer Care. Beautiful weather enabled the club to hold the event in the garden of their secretary, Janice Watfield. The traditional elements of a Tea Party were all there… table cloths, china teaset, flowers fresh from the garden on each table, balloons, bunting and pink roses, and of course, sandwiches, scones, cakes, muffins, biscuits (many decorated with the Breast Cancer logo) and lastly (but not least) strawberries and cream! – no-one was slimming that day!

The event was supported by Tangent members, friends and neighbours. With people tending a hand with baking, raffle prizes and donated toys, the event was a great success. Janice was keen to ensure that the event also highlighted awareness of Breast Cancer. Three of those present were Breast Cancer survivors and urged everyone to check themselves regularly and to ensure they always attended their mammogram appointments.

The hoped for £100 target was exceeded and the final amount raised for Breast Cancer Care was a fantastic £465.70. Everyone had a great afternoon AND went home laden with goodies!

City of Wells 747 donate to the Multiple Sclerosis Society

At our Annual General Meeting held in April, City of Wells Tangent 747 decided to celebrate an £800.00 surplus in our accounts by making a donation to the Mendip Branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Following an enjoyable supper in June, a cheque was handed over to Brian Duffel, the local collections coordinator. The event took place at the George Inn at Croscombe where the Londford, Peter Graham is chairman of the Mendip Branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society. Linda Bolton, Secretary of City of Wells reports that the club is really pleased to be able to make a contribution to this very worthwhile organisation who make such a difference to the lives of local people with MS. Jane Shakespears, a local campaigner who is affected by Multiple Sclerosis, also attended.

Good Start to the Year

Julia Elliott, Social Secretary of Nunstead Tangent recently wrote to me about her club and how they are managing membership issues and creating a club that seems to be buzzing! Currently Nunstead Tangent has around 26 current members and are a relatively young tangent with members ageing from 45 to 70 with the majority aged 50 to 65. They have a discretionary membership policy but last year 4 of the 5 new members had links to the Round Table Family.

Nunstead plan their programme to ensure they have taken into account the changing world. They want to encourage new members, preserve the membership they have and safeguard the future of their Tangent Club.

They have thought through the membership issue and have bravely faced the fact that opportunities for like-minded ladies to join may historically only have been open to a very specific group, but by encouraging discretionary membership and paying attention to new experiences rather than focusing too much on how things “used to be” Nunstead now has a strong Tangent which will carry on for many years to come.

To ensure the Chairman’s role is not too onerous, the club asks for volunteers at the beginning of the Tangent year, to take on the responsibility for organising a meeting. This group then meet and plan the programme for the whole year.

Nunstead tries to allocate summer months to outdoor activities and winter months to more traditional speaker meetings but always plan to ensure there is a meal at the end of the meeting. This means that if individual members don’t wish to participate in the activity or may be working and find it difficult to make early meetings, they can join later in the evening.

This year’s programme is planning four speaker meetings, Disc Golf, Archery, Clay Pigeon Shooting, Croquet, Ghost Walk, Local Walks, Winter Joint Formal Ball, Xmas Mini pie and a visit to Highgrove. Hopefully this is an eclectic mix of traditional and new.

Some members attend National Conference and all enjoy regional lunches whenever they can. Nunstead always try to give support and assistance to the local Ladies Circle and Round Table Clubs when they are asked.

Fun and friendship is what it is all about and Nunstead Tangent try very hard to guarantee that they deliver!!
Imagine.

They sat in the garden with after-dinner coffees.

“Do you remember the visit to the gallery Sophie – the day we met?”

She paused,

“Heavens, that was a long time ago. You’d only just taken the job and got landed with doing a documentary on our ‘behind the scenes’ visit to the storerooms.”

“Are you still in touch with any of the group? Did you ever...?"

She drew a slow breath,

“Oh - that. I never saw her again you know Paul. No one ever found out what happened. We’d arranged to have lunch but she - she just disappeared. I waited for ages – even checked the loos. The staff were marvellous – searched the whole gallery at closing time. A funny thing to happen on a trip to a provincial gallery... There was an investigation of course – you must remember.”

He nodded.

“We’d been best friends since school and she just - vanished. There are times when it seems as though it happened yesterday...”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

It was a fascinating piece; a riot of colour celebrating North Eastern place names. Most intriguing was the position of the Gateshead Islands. Set in an unrealistically pretty, pale-blue, North Sea they would prove a hazard to any passing ships. They sat there, serene and impossibly large, exactly where ships would turn into the river mouth, on a heading for the Low Light and the safety of the haven. She wondered if the artist had had some purpose in such a specific re-positioning.

Absorbed in the map, she didn’t notice the absence of chattering voices until she heard the muffled thud of the door closing, the sharp finality of locks clicking.

“NO,” she breathed, “NO, I’m still here ...”

She turned, quickly stepping towards the doorway, calling out again, “WAIT...”

Her voice failed as the lights dipped, flared once, and died. Thick silence pressed into her ears as if the storeroom held its breath, allowing the dark and the silence to settle and fill the space.

She froze. After long moments she became aware of a faint glimmer of green light emphasising the darkness. The EXIT sign above the door mocked her.

Eventually she accepted the silence, tried to think. Memory reached into the dark, revealed space flowing from her feet towards heavy wire racking. Crowded between classical masterpieces, occasional Victorian patriarchs had seemed out of place. Encased within carved and gilded frames, some chipped, some grinned with dust; they had all begged to be taken out and appreciated.

She recalled packing cases, some heavily shrouded paintings propped against them. Reality was black, un-relieved but for that faint, green glow. Darkness wrapped around her eyes like a blindfold - NO, that was her imagination. All she needed to do was to stay calm and be patient. She would be missed. It couldn’t be much longer, someone must realise her absence soon...

She was desperate to hear something, anything, however slight, to indicate that she wasn’t forgotten. A pulse beat loudly.

With no focus she was losing a sense of where she was, she felt herself sway. One small, step, a second. Another. Peripheral vision remembered a desk with a phone. A shocking red pinpoint of light flashed, the phone rang briefly. Hope flared.

She had to reach it. She had to cross the black space. The ringing stopped and panic swelled again. She swallowed it down, struggling to still the scream rising from the soles of her feet. There was a phone - she could summon help. Her foot edged forward, a slow, sliding step, one step nearer the beckoning red message light.

Something slickly and slightly soft wrapped around her ankles; trapped her feet.

A ragged gasp exploded from her lungs. Her stomach clenched, ribs squeezed against a heart that pounded in her throat and thundered in her ears. She fought not to allow herself to just scream and scream and scream. The image of the flaming Mouth of Hell, depicted so horrendously in the immense John Martin painting propped against the wall, flashed across her mind. The white-hot cavernous space at the centre of the image pulsed and thrrobbed drawing her closer.

Hot tears welled, trickled down her cheek.

No one had noticed her absence. No one would hear her scream. No one was coming.

Fighting down overwhelming terror she told herself that whatever was wrapped around her hadn’t climbed up to her face and sucked the breath from her throat; hadn’t developed needle sharp teeth and ripped her flesh until blood ran.

She needed to know. She drew a slow, ragged breath.

Her cautious fingers reached down; tentatively explored... encountered something soft and slightly crackly - reams of it spilling around her feet. Relief sighed out. She’d walked into one of the bales of bubble-wrap that stood around.

Deliberately recalling the image of the John Martin hell-mouth, she squashed several of the bubbles. Tight knots in her spine relaxed with each satisfying pop.

The episode with the non-life-threatening bubble wrap calmed her and she accepted what a tiny corner of her brain had been trying to point out for some time. Common sense waved a white flag. Told her it probably wasn’t nearly as long as she thought since the door closed. As an adult it was time she stopped acting like a jumpy teenager.

She would be missed. It might take a little while before everyone realised that she wasn’t there, but she would, eventually, be missed. Sophie had suggested lunch, Paul wanted to discuss future membership. They would notice – it might just take a while.

Somewhere in the darkness something rustled.

Judi Steen is a member of Angels of the North and a writer... she took up my challenge to write a short story.... read on!