

CROYDON WRITERS



Michael Round

15 September 1937 – 6 July 2024

**Tribute Issue
December 2024**

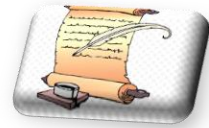




Link to Help the Hero Fund donation page in memory of Michael Round
<https://herofunds.helpforheroes.org.uk/In-Memory/Michael-Round>.



From the Editor's Desk



It has been a period of sad loss for Croydon Writers as we said goodbye to our mentor, guide, and president Michael Round this year.

We dedicate this issue to honouring Michael's memory in a way that reflects his values, with positivity and gratitude for having known him and benefited from his guidance as our mentor. Our members have contributed their heartfelt tributes, which we have compiled into a commemoration of his life and impact. The best homage Croydon Writers can give Michael is to continue writing, as he would have wanted us to.

Here's to you, Michael. Thank you for inspiring us. We will miss you.

Roopa Banerjee

Editor



Michael Round was born on 15th September 1937 in West Bromwich, an only child to May Round and her husband. He left school with 5 O levels. After working as a clerk in a mail order business, he was called up for National Service. There was an option to become a regular soldier with more concessions, such as learning to drive and the opportunity to become an officer. He signed up for the Intelligence Corps for twenty-two years but had the option to leave every three years.

Michael arrived at Maresfield Barracks in East Sussex, where he undertook the Intelligence Corps training, which took six months. One branch of the Corps was dedicated to languages. He also learned to interrogate, and handle being interrogated, and to search for things in impossible places, especially booby traps. They were taught how to give presentations, which Michael was particularly good at, as he had a hankering to be a teacher. Because he gave a talk on Rommel, he was nicknamed Rommel from then on.

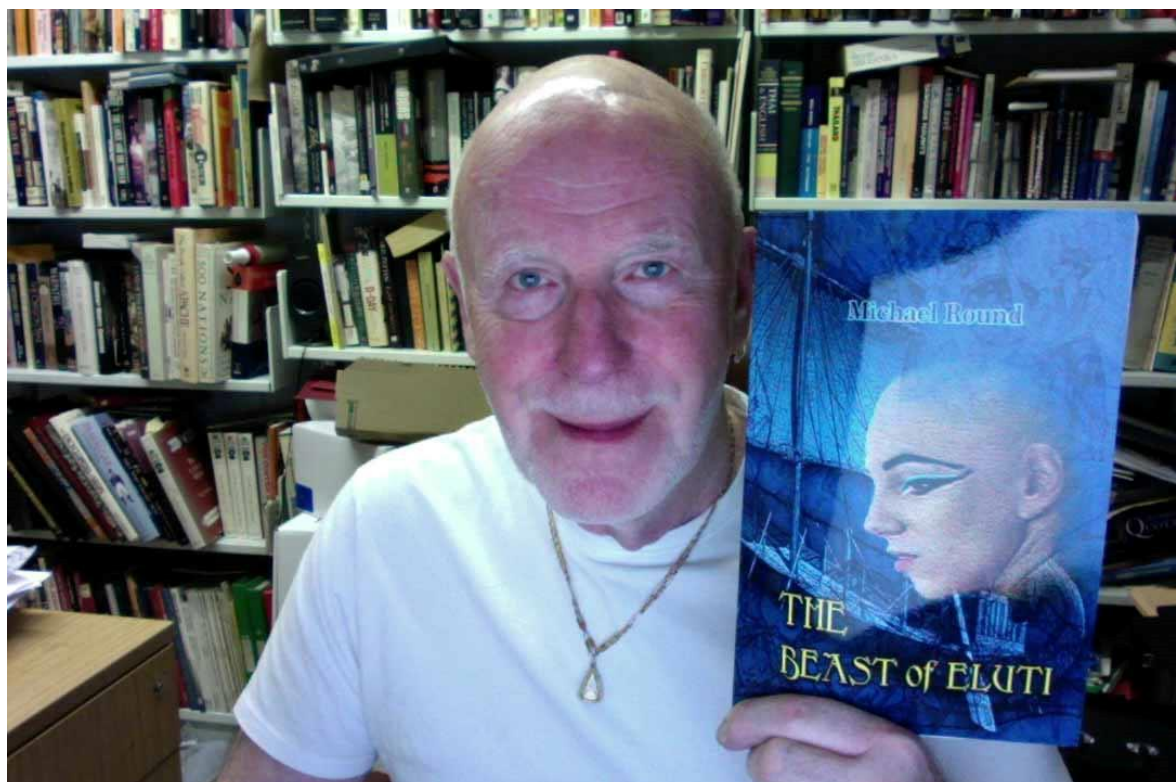
On weekend leave, Michael would sometimes stay at the Union Jack Club in London. Out of a choice of four countries, Michael chose to go to Cyprus because it was active service and a better chance of promotion. They travelled there by ship and after landing in intense heat; they travelled to a training camp in Nicosia. All the time they were in Cyprus, they slept in tents. Michael was appointed operations clerk; his typing speed was an advantage. Cigarettes and lager were cheap. Everyone smoked and drank, but Michael was not keen on either, so he avoided drinking, smoking, and gambling by saying he was reading a good book.

After nine months, Michael became a temporary Lance Corporal. They were in the middle of suppressing a colonial

uprising. He was taken off clerical duties to man the gates at the docks to help with searches and checking of goods. The Cyprus Emergency within which they were operating was because Cyprus became a Turkish Province with a large Greek population.

Michael was a prolific letter writer, he wrote to everyone, but the letters he wrote home to his mother were kept and were the basis for his biographical book, *The Bird of Time*.

Michael loved the docks but hated gate duty. He was transferred to the Ports and Travel unit. They had to check cargoes, passengers, and crew on ships and had the use of three boats to do so. He became very skilled with the use of the dingy, photographs of all ships were required, and Michael became proficient at photography, a skill which became useful later as a publisher. As Chief Clerk, Michael opened all correspondence, typed a reply, and passed it and the original to the Major for approval. He was promoted to permanent Lance Corporal. Michael sold his first short story to *The Times of Cyprus*. He was also writing a historical novel set at the time of Napoleon's Italian campaign.



Michael inadvertently caused a diplomatic incident. During very bad weather, he escorted some Israeli boats to land safely in the port, thinking they were fishing boats, but they were war ships converted to fishing boats. They had been told not to enter the port. They thought Michael was waiting for them, so they followed his boat.

After the British wife of a sergeant, Mrs Cutcliffe and her friend were shot in the street, and Mrs Cutcliffe later died, the British troops' reaction was violent and as a reaction to that behaviour, Michael, after three years, decided not to stay in the army. He took advice from army colleagues to apply for teaching and to buy himself out. While on leave, he was called for an interview to be personal secretary to the ADS to the Directory of Military Intelligence at the War office where he was told he would have to do a shorthand course. Michael loathed shorthand and told them he was buying himself out of the army.

He was awarded the General Service Medal with the Cyprus single bar. After teacher training in West Bromwich, he taught in Dulwich and he met his wife Barbara, a teacher on his first day at Stockwell Manor school in 1965. In 1975, he was appointed headmaster of Hayling Manor School, South Croydon. He and Barbara fostered many children who became family.

Michael retired at fifty-seven because of ill health and later took up a part-time position as editor of the then Francis Chichester publishing company where he gained experience for his later publishing business Rainbow Valley Books. He was a magistrate for many years, which he loved.

Michael was prolific in everything he did and was a former Chairman and Competition Secretary of the Civil and Public Service Writers and Editor and Webmaster. Also, Chairman, Editor, and Webmaster of Croydon Writers. He will be very much missed by all the writers whom he advised and helped.

**A Personal Appreciation:
Rainbow Valley Books**

Martin Domleo

Croydon Writers Magazine is the best magazine of its kind that I have encountered in a long adult life. Colourful, beautifully laid out, bursting with interest, wide-ranging, there's nothing else like it. Michael Round was at its core. Along with his books, the magazine remains an indelible tribute to a remarkable man.

I came to hear of Michael Round and Rainbow Valley Books through Dorothy Nelson, the secretary of the Preston Poets' Society and Country member of Croydon Writers. My previous publisher (of two novellas and two poetry collections) having become seriously ill, I was extremely grateful when, in late 2023, Michael agreed to publish what was to be my fourth collection of poems. From the start, Michael was complimentary about my poetry. 'You're good, you know,' he said to me whilst doing a first edit of 'Outdoor Lessons' by phone and computer – words I shall treasure as long as I take breath.

Michael had strong views as to how a poem should be set out, especially when a poem ran to two pages. 'It does not have to be in line,' he said, referring to the first line of the stanza moving to the second page. 'Best to move it down, to give the second page a balanced look.' Michael would not budge on this. After publication, I came to see he was absolutely right. On the outer and inner covers of 'Outdoor Lessons', Michael incorporated photos of three of my oil paintings, making the collection the most visually attractive of my published poetry books. Despite horrible weather, 'Outdoor Lessons' had a successful launch in the events space at the Continental Hotel in Preston in January 2024, with eighteen copies sold.

The manner in which Shakespeare's folio of 36 plays came down to us was a blank area for most of my adult life. It nagged me for years. Around the turn of the century, I started some serious

research, beginning with the purchase of a copy of a Norton Facsimile of the First Folio costing £100.00 from a specialist bookshop in Preston. In 2010, I completed a play called ‘A Closeness of Words’ showing how Shakespeare’s fellow actors and friends collected the plays and drove them into publication. The play was part-performed in 2013 at the University of Central Lancashire. A novella on the same subject ‘The Rest Is Silence’ followed in 2016. Mentioning in passing to Michael that I had written a novella and a play on Shakespeare’s folio, caught his interest. At Michael’s request, I sent him a copy of ‘The Rest Is Silence’ and in return, Michael sent me a copy of his ‘J’. I commented on ‘J’ that the sizzling dialogue made the book a real page-turner. At Michael’s request, I then forwarded a copy of my play, ‘A Closeness of Words’. ‘The play stands’, Michael wrote in an email, and yes, he would publish it.

Sadly, so sadly, I heard of Michael’s sudden demise two weeks after the arrival of a second batch of plays. Sadly, ‘A Closeness of Words’ turned out to be Rainbow Valley’s final publication.

The front cover of ‘A Closeness of Words’ – all Michael’s work – is finished in black with extracts from Shakespeare’s plays and some lines from ‘A Closeness of Words’ dotted around the title and subtitle (‘A play for the stage’) and playwright. Among them:

*What is love? ‘tis not hereafter;
Present love has present laughter.*

and:

*To die, - to sleep; -
To sleep! Perchance to dream: - ay, there’s the rub.*

Remembering a Very Good friend

Mike Jackson

Michael Round's death has taken away a very good friend. I first met him when I was Chairman of the Croydon Writers. His immediate, continuing help and advice enabled me to learn much more about how to use my computer. During my long career, I hardly used computers as my work was handwritten and with dictation. Only the use of a computer came just before I retired. We met from time to time at his home and otherwise for coffee at cafes and garden centres. This continued throughout his Chairmanship.

With his help, I wrote, slowly getting better, with all my stories, poetry, and pieces after his showing me and now I am still getting better. When I was at work, I either dictated or hand-wrote. My late wife, Jackie, (a fine professional secretary), or my working colleagues, secretaries, and the typing pool girls prepared the drafts and final work for me, either typing or when computers came in.

Not only how to better use computing, but I also learned from him 'tricks of the trade' and how to begin working on stories and how to start on books.

He was not very impressed with my first book draft and said so in a manner I cannot repeat. So, it's still not final. So, my published stuff is short stories and pieces mainly in our Croydon publications.

I mourn his passing deeply. I have lost my writing mentor, and I also have lost one of my greatest friends.

Barbara- your man from Brum will not, by me, ever be forgotten, and I thank you for his influence, friendship, and comradeship in my life.

If I had to describe Michael in two words, I would use 'Dedicated' and 'Confident'. I remember seeing him step into the role of chairman of Croydon Writers with ease. He did it in no diffident manner, moving swiftly to change things to adapt to his vision of an effective writing group. We went along with the sway, albeit with mouths agape, as he made it clear in no uncertain manner that writing was serious work, and not merely a hobby. We fell in line as we started bringing in more written pieces when he asked us to share what we had written or accomplished since the previous meeting. Alas, he struck off our tea and coffee break and we watched our teacups get carted off with great dismay!

I interacted with Michael more by email than in any other way as he proofread the magazines that I edited for Croydon Writers for nine years. In all those years, he never failed to spur me on with generous compliments and always gave unstinted support when I wanted to try out new themes in every issue. I learned a lot from him in these email chats. His insistence on starting the first paragraph from the left margin and using indents only in the following ones met a lot of resistance from me till I realised that he was right, and I had been doing it wrong all these years, to my intense chagrin. His amusement when I meekly agreed after that was something that stayed on with us as humour through all our proofreading sessions after that.

The only times I ever saw Michael truly exasperated were when we didn't receive enough submissions from members for the magazine. He would say he couldn't quite understand how, in a group of writers, there could be such hesitation—or reluctance—to send in their writing. He never lacked the confidence to share his

writing and his insistence on the same from the members brought about an increased flow of written pieces flooding my email inbox.

Thank you, Michael, for your dedication, and for pushing us to take our writing seriously. The one single thought in my mind as I write this is that I wish you could read this tribute issue.

Follow Croydon Writers on Twitter, or X as we now call it!



Croydon Writers is eager to expand our reach and connect with more of the writing community through social media. Twitter offers a fantastic way to grow our membership and highlight the talent within our group.

If you're not already following us, join us on **@CroydonWriters** to stay updated on our news, events, and member achievements like book launches.

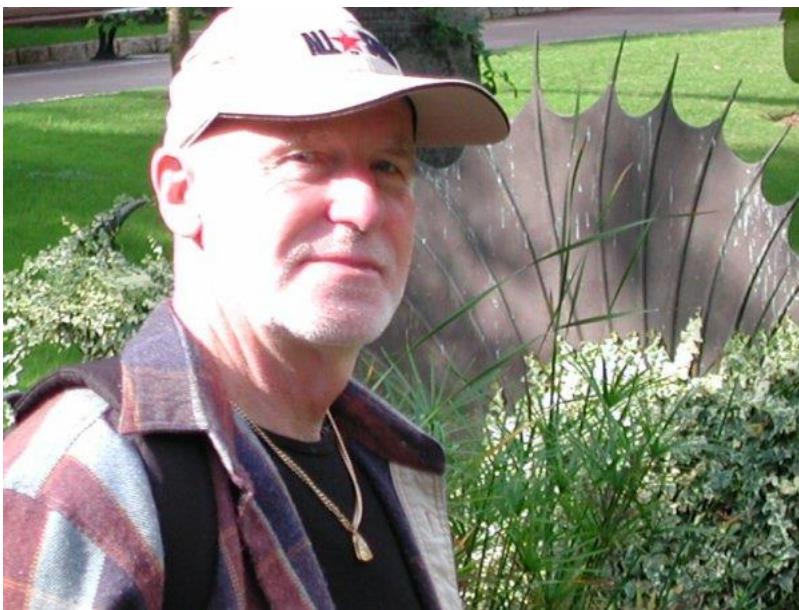
For our existing followers, thank you! We'd love your help in spreading the word by retweeting our posts, so more writers, readers, and enthusiasts can discover and celebrate our work. Together, we can amplify Croydon Writers' presence!

Michael not only got me writing short stories again, which I hadn't done for some time but mainly writing letters and memoirs or book reviews. He also took on typing out my printing as I could no longer use my computer.

When he was editing the last anthology, he wrote to me requesting that I write a story for it. He even gave me the title, "The House on the Hill". At first, I thought that as I hadn't written any stories for ages, I come up with something good enough. He was clever. Because I live on a hill, I did indeed come up with a story about an old lady who lived on the hill. I went on to write several more from his themes, which has kept my brain going. If Michael hadn't presumed I was up to the task and if he had said, 'Would I be able to?' instead of 'I'm expecting you to do this', maybe I would have made an excuse. Michael was forceful, as Jean Bowden was before him. He expected the best of us, and I am sure he received it.



One thing a developing writer needs and wants above all is good quality feedback, and I will miss Michael's comments: frank, useful, and yet always encouraging and motivating. It is perhaps the mark of a former teacher that he was as ready to correct grammatical details as issues of style. Most of us are nervous about doing this but it is really welcome. It is due to Michael that I accepted that the word 'alright' is not all right, and he was the person who persuaded me to adopt the sturdy British preference for single quotes, as well as inculcating me into the relatively arcane matter of omitted final quotes where a single speaker's words continue across paragraphs. I will not write 'any more' anymore, except where I actually mean it.



Michael had the gift of transferring some of his own boundless energy through the wonderfully positive comments he often provided, and he was also an example in many ways. He loved

historical writing and had the knack of combining careful research with that telling choice of imagined detail that brings a story alive, something I strive in vain to emulate.

Michael picked up two other ladies and me every evening that there was a meeting of the CROYDON WRITERS. He was the inspiration behind our group. If he had not picked me up, there was no way I could have attended the meetings, which started late in the evening and concluded well past ten in the night.

I wrote because I liked playing with words, with no idea of any particular virtue in my work. Michael, by his enthusiasm and consistent help, gave me the impulse to continue.

He read, commented, and encouraged me till I felt that what I wrote was readable. Hesitant writers like me need a Michael to provide the impetus to continue, with faith in ourselves.

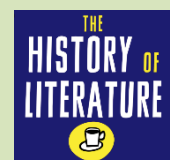
I cannot imagine anyone else having the sheer professional energy and foresight to make lazy writers like me stop talking about writing and get the words down on paper.

We are going to struggle without Michael.

Podcasts for Writers

From light-hearted conversations about writing to live talks from world-renowned writers, writers' podcasts are the perfect resource for book lovers who like to delve beyond the book. The internet is inundated with options for literary podcasts but here are a few recommendations to get you going:

The History of Literature journeys through time to examine history's greatest literary moments and achievements, from dissecting the lives of our greatest authors to the writers who went to war to the Epic of Gilgamesh.



Anything But Silent is run by the British Library which interviews all manner of guests, from famous writers to the people who make the British Library tick.



I first met Michael Round when he joined Croydon Writers some years ago when author Jean Bowden was President. However, I had heard of him as he was headmaster at our nephew's school Hayling Manor.

Michael soon became a prominent member, as he was outspoken and very knowledgeable on writing matters. He joined the committee and became webmaster and later Chair and took over from Roopa Banerjee as editor.

After I invited him to the annual literary lunch of the Society of Civil and Public Service Writers where I was meetings secretary, he decided to join. Very soon he was on the committee and became competition secretary, later editor of Author and eventually Chair, which he resigned from a few years ago and I took it over.

Michael was a workaholic and a leader and was prolific in everything he did, especially in the boutique publishing company he ran. Rainbow Valley Books published many of his books and for many others particularly from the two writing groups and from recommendations from satisfied authors. His last book 'Genius' was published the week before his sudden death.

When his former pupils heard of his passing, there was much sadness and nostalgia in the many comments about him on Facebook. All were full of praise for him as the best headteacher ever and for his wholehearted support and teaching and the rapport they had with him. What a joy it would have been to be his pupil!

I had asked him to read and comment on two chapters of the manuscript of my book on Irish nurses in Britain that I had researched and worked on for decades. After he critiqued it, he

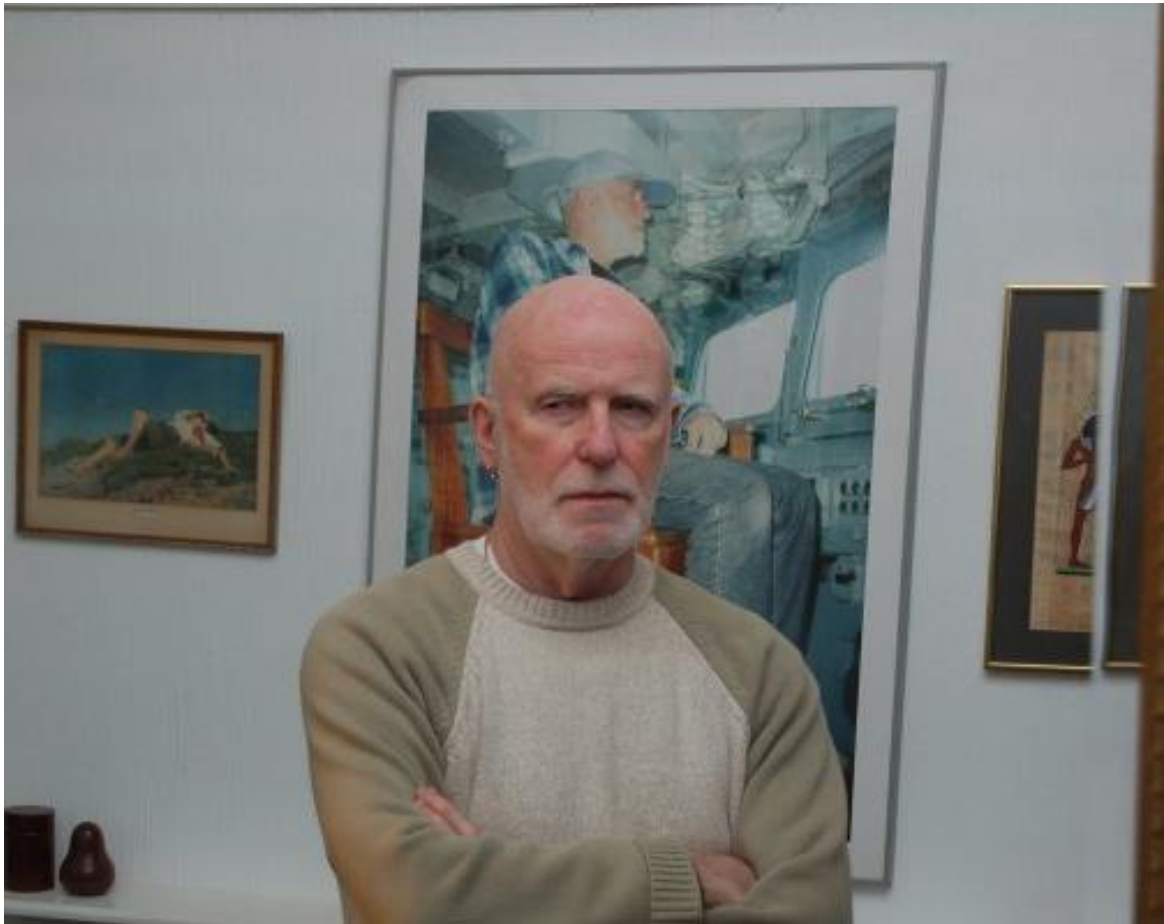
offered to publish it. I was thrilled. Covid came and life changed overnight. We worked together about four days a week on Skype for many months. I had never used Skype before and rarely since, but it was so useful during this period. Because of his persistence and expertise, the book has been a great success.



Early this year, I completed my second book with him, a memoir of my childhood *Blackberries and Crubeens*, again working on Skype. I was thrilled with the resulting book. I would never have had such professional editing except for Michael and am eternally grateful to him and shall miss his advice and help. Also, I have lost a good friend and so have many writers who have been published with his support. We all miss you, Michael.

Michael

Jeremy Dixon



Something that sticks in my mind as a typical memory of Michael is that, for reasons unclear to me, he listed me as a correspondent for the magazine on, among other things, ballet. I know nothing about ballet and am not interested in it. But that fact, of course, enabled me to write an article expounding on the problems with expressing things in dance. Thus, Michael had obtained what was (in my biased opinion) an interesting piece for the magazine - a neat exercise of editorial skill.

I hardly know where to begin, so perhaps should go back to the start. I was told Michael ran a publishing company by a friend who was part of his online Creative Writing group. He had offered to read her novel in progress.

I'd had a novel on my PC, which I believed was ready for publication, for 6 years. Without a literary agent, I had given up looking for a publisher. I had confidence in the book, though, and emailed Michael who simply asked me to send him the whole thing. I did this with a few autobiographical notes and was delighted when he said he could get my book out within a few weeks. It would be his next task. There were minor editing issues, not least punctuating dialogue. I was surprised to find so many irritating typos so worked every day for six weeks. Michael was amazing throughout the process (though certainly no push-over), formatting the novel, and designing a cover from photographs I sent him. We quickly established a strong working relationship and mutual respect for each other's skills. The finished result was truly amazing. I held two local book launches in June 2022 and sold almost every copy. I regard *The Attendant's Room* as my greatest achievement, and this couldn't have happened without Michael's extraordinary commitment, astute insight, and care.

A year ago, Michael asked me to write a textbook for writers. I'd had this in mind since retiring in 2012 but concentrated on my fiction writing and honorary admin work for various creative writing groups I am involved with. I was recovering from the effects of cancer treatment so was not then in a position to go ahead.

After Christmas 2023, I began work in earnest, with Michael backing me all the way. I gathered my workshops together and revised student handouts in a more conversational style. Michael was encouraging, suggesting every writers' group in the country should have a copy. He would help with contacts. It wasn't perfect, however, and the process was tough. I had never ventured into a non-fiction book, let alone one of this type.



His editorial skills were fantastic, and I worked every day on this book, which he hoped would be published by Christmas 2024. For two months we held long weekend editorial sessions over the phone, each with my latest draft MS in front of us. This way real progress was made.

I knew he was waiting for a heart op but he told me he wasn't worrying about it. Our last conversation was on 6th July, a three-hour conversation during which he told me my work was done, and the rest up to him. I knew I wasn't feeling well, but assumed I had picked up a new virus. I promised him I would write a review of his novella, *Genius*, by the following Monday when he planned a discussion with Croydon Writers.

I didn't realise how unwell I was and collapsed while writing notes in his book. I did manage to complete the review and email it to him on Monday morning. Days later, I was taken to hospital with serious kidney damage. While waiting for the ambulance I received an email from the friend who had introduced me to Michael, saying she had heard Michael had died. This was a terrible shock, but I had to leave the enormity of the news to one side, as my own health was failing. It was only when I was discharged from hospital that I realised Michael had died on the day we last spoke. It had been such a productive and happy conversation.

The news has been difficult to process, and I keep hearing his voice in my head. What an amazing talent he had, and such dedication to unknown authors. There will never be another like him. I appreciate what a loss his passing means to all the writers and others who knew him.

Only now am I able to consider what to do with my nearly finished writers' handbook. I know I won't find another publisher like Michael, and I am extremely grateful to have known him. I regret our not having met in person. I had hoped to correct this, but time doesn't wait.

I am aware this tribute doesn't do him justice.

"A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself."

– Oprah Winfrey

I was first introduced to Michael by my friend Tony Welwig.

This was all about my writing group here in East Sussex becoming affiliated to the Croydon Writers. I was delighted when Michael agreed to this, and the Ex Bex Writers were thrilled to come onboard.

Michael and I liaised through our electronic devices by email, having not met Michael in person. I felt I acquired a pleasant glimpse of his character.

We shared a fondness in the gems of the Mediterranean. Michael told me his story of living in a tent for three years on a scrubland above a virtual swamp in Cyprus in an active army camp surrounded by barbed wire.

His pleasure of the sea shone through his words as he said, "oh my God yes..... and the sea." He recalled arriving on a troop ship not long after a summer's dawn and going on deck awaiting disembarkation in Famagusta and just gazing at that clear blue sea, then the golden beach with a band of green caused by a legion of palm trees, then blue again above. Beautiful.

Michael also introduced me to the knowledge of the bathos and pathos approach in writing. This has been a helpful notion.

Our exchange in our adoration of the Mediterranean came about when Michael had read my story of Stoupa, "Beautiful Stoupa". He described it as a love letter, this made it more special to me as I had not thought of it in that way, but of course it is most definitely a love letter.

Michael was enthusiastic about my piece on Stoupa (which he edited ready to be shared by the Croydon Writers) and thought my pictures fantastic.

I was shocked and saddened by the news of his passing. And felt much sympathy for his wife, family and for those who knew him well. I am sorry to have not had the pleasure to enjoy more of Michaels knowledge and expertise.

Where to pitch

Freelance writer and avid traveller

Susan Shain started her website

Where to Pitch to “help writers find homes for their stories.” The

site offers a search feature for

instantly finding relevant

publications to pitch to for your

vertical! Her newsletter builds on

this resource with monthly tips,

tools, and advice for getting your writing to the right places. Join a

community of freelance writers learning to pitch smarter, one

email at a time.

Subscribe to ‘Where to Pitch’ newsletter on her website for free weekly updates on writing opportunities.

<https://wheretopitch.substack.com/>

Do write in to us to let us know if you have any publishing success through this website! It will encourage more of our members to pitch a story somewhere!



I think that Michael's fondness for historical research for his fiction is well known, but I was surprised to find myself part of this process. Having evidently filed in his mind that I had an interest in heraldry, he e-mailed me to ask if I could tell him the significance of a heraldic coronet in an illustration he sent me: I think his idea was that this would fit somewhere into his works about Caravaggio. Luckily, I found relevant references in books I own and so was able to give him what I think was an adequate answer (it was the coronet of an untitled Italian noble, in case anyone is curious). I wonder how many of Michael's acquaintances, in the Circle and elsewhere, were likewise unofficial experts and how much of their knowledge appeared in his writing. I think of it as rather an honour.

Famous Christmas Quotes:

“Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!

What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store.

What if Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more!”

— Dr. Seuss, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*



“I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.”

— Charles Dickens

Words were his passion

Tony Welwig

As a country member of Croydon Writers, I never had the opportunity to meet Michael Round at the meetings and Christmas get-togethers held in Croydon. But despite this misfortune, we used to communicate by way of countless emails and occasional letters, and I can say that I knew Michael as a friend this way. We often shared jokes and discussed serious matters and although we had many differing opinions about worldly things, I accepted his feelings, and he accepted mine also.

He was a unique person, and rarely have I known anyone else whose interest in life has amounted to such a dedicated commitment to the field of writing. When I complimented Michael on the good work he was doing for the magazine, he replied, "I have been writing and publishing, and setting my books for decades, but the magazine is a very interesting challenge. Glad I'm appreciated. A lonely job, actually." Michael's enthusiasm was often accompanied by words of excitement, "THAT'S THE ONE. Prepped for the mag. Now need 200 400, 600, or more words on HOW, WHERE, and THE MOMENT." Such were Michael's comments for many of my photographs submitted for inclusion in the Croydon Writers magazine. But Michael spoke his mind too for I smile when relating to what I thought was a brilliant picture of mine, "Even this is not good enough," he replied. And another classic remark I relate to is, "Good shot, but the focus, not up to scratch. Wish I had taken it, but as editor...."

Michael was never reluctant to cast a blunt and to-the-point remark my way should he think it was needed, and I remember one such occasion clearly. I was telling Michael of the old days when I was the Minutes Secretary, when after each meeting I

would compile a precise account of the proceedings and would read the details out at the following meeting. Country members would be sent such details also. I asked Michael, "Why isn't there a Croydon Writers Minutes Secretary now? Everything would be on record then and Country members would know what was going on." Michael's immediate response was, "Because there isn't one, but I will bring the matter up at the next committee meeting." And that was his brief concise answer.

The funny side of Michael crept into his emails from time to time. I once sent him two stories and four pictures for the magazine. He replied, "All great, but I can only use one story and one picture. Heavens, what a choice to make!"

I often wondered how Michael managed to cope with everything he took on, being Magazine Editor, Webmaster, Chairman of Croydon Writers, and partaking of important roles in another writers' society, while indulging in writing books, too. I had to ask him how he dealt with it all so efficiently. He had an amusing answer - "I copy the ways of Napoleon for he is my good Advisor. What I do is like opening a chest of drawers and dealing with what's in it. I open a drawer and sort that out, then open another and deal with that, and when done I continue likewise. This way you stick to a path and continue on the journey. Napoleon commanded an army, rewrote the code of law, ran a huge state, and carried out lots of other duties - HE STUCK TO DOING ONE THING THEN ANOTHER AND SO ON - HE ADVISES ME WELL."

As a publisher, Michael gave all of us in Croydon Writers the opportunity of having our work printed in the numerous anthologies he so kindly produced from time to time. Michael knew that many of us had never had our words in print for the world to see and so this chance for such work to appear in a book was not to be missed. I was always pleased to write about my experiences in Africa and the Scottish Highlands, and my eyes would light up when Michael entered into friendly email

conversations on the work that I sent him.

I will always remember Michael's kindness when my canine companion Crunchie died. He was so understanding of the trauma of what I was going through and sent a letter and flowers on behalf of Croydon Writers. This was so much appreciated and when he found out I was still grieving after four months, he very kindly emailed me to say, " Do yourself a big favour, Tony. Go and get another dog. There are many rescue-boys needing a home. Don't deprive yourself of the love that another dog could give you. Crunchie in the big blue yonder will agree." And yes, I did just this and my current dog called Archie gives me that love that Michael assured me of.

My last communication with Michael was on the evening that he died. I had sent him my review of his newly published novella "Genius" as he had requested, and he had replied promptly only an hour or so before he left this world. He commented on the cold-steel rapier fight at the end of the last chapter of the novella because I had told Michael that this was the most exciting reading. "Yes," said Michael, "the rapier was razor on both edges and the point a needle over three foot in length, very very dangerous. The fights were often, CLICK ,PING, THRUST, DEAD."

Excitement encompassed lots of Michael's writing, not least of all that which appeared in "Genius", and judging him over the limited time that we corresponded together, I feel that his efforts to further the cause of writing have been worthy of much praise.

Well done, Michael. I will remember you as a friend and fellow writer.

"You can always edit a bad page. You can't edit a blank one."

Jodi Picoalt

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Location of meetings:

East Croydon United Reformed Church, Addiscombe Grove,
Croydon CR0 5LP

<http://www.eastcroydonurc.org.uk>

Timing of meetings:


Second Monday of each month
7.30 pm to 9.30 pm

No meetings in January and August

**Connect with us on the internet:****Website :**

<https://croydonwriters.co.uk/>

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