

Anna Rains

A loyal and dedicated member of the Guild for Lifelong Learning.

It was 2004 when I first found the Guild, beginning with Creative Writing under the expert guidance of Sue Dodd and staying with her until she retired.

During the time between 2004 and now I have attended numerous classes and subjects – from Bridge lessons, water colour painting, craft classes – but always returned to writing.

There was a gap a few years after Sue left, and I found Gill Rossini. Two awesome women who encouraged and inspired me to tackle more complicated challenges.

Back in 2004, I thought I could write, something I rapidly realised was not the case, however, undaunted I took on the task of writing a biography about my extraordinary life and that of the very eccentric family I come from. To be fair, it never really intended for it to get published. It was written so that my grandchildren and other members of my family could learn about the remarkable family I have descended from. They may believe they come from a normal family – but they don't.

Sixty years of my life went into that book, now titled, 'From a Bus to a Haunted Farmhouse', and last year I extended it into the next twenty years to bring it up to date. I always tell people it is funny, because who wants to read a sad or boring book!

Since then, helped and encouraged by the extremely competent Gill Rossini, I have just completed my sixth book.

After the biography, updated in April last year, I have written a series of Ghostly Takes and Curious Stories from England – at least a couple of them are true or have truthful bits in them.

Then came, 'In the Woke of Betrayal@', a thriller about the kidnap of a child. Followed by, 'The Senator's Mistress, the woman who knew too much', (the edition with the gold dragon bracelet on the cover). Both won small awards, in an international competition.

And now my latest, 'The Chateau of Lost Souls'. Completed on Saturday 18 October, so very new. A psychological thriller set in a restored chateaux in France. The chateaux is extremely haunted. This thriller could be called a Murder Mystery in reverse. Not just one murder, but eight people invited, all of whom have one thing in common, they have all killed someone – and got away with it. The owner, whose own brother was murdered and the killer never found, sets out to seek revenge. A complete cross section of people and characters who make up this intense story, are invited to the chateaux, now a world class hotel, for a murder mystery experience, not realising they are the intended victim.

Each one is put on the hot seat where the owner interrogates them to confess their crimes. The twist is that they never see who is behind the sound system.

Back to the Guild. If it hadn't been for Gill in particular, I would never have mastered the art of becoming a published author. She is an inspiration, full of so many ideas, always challenging and always positive and fun.

So, my suggestion to anyone who has ever thought 'they have a book in themselves, or poetry or any other kind of writing, is to sign up to Gill Rossini's classes, which are great for anyone, from complete beginner to advanced and more experienced writers. These can be life changing and, like me, set you off on an absorbing hobby – or career.