



## **The Letterpress Project**

### **Author and Illustrator E-Interviews**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this series of Letterpress Project e-interviews that we are undertaking over the coming months. The Letterpress Project is a not-for-profit initiative that exists to promote the value and pleasures of the physical book and we are keen to get the thoughts of authors and book illustrators about their own influences, experiences and love of books. We are happy for you to make your answers as long or as brief as you are comfortable with and we will undertake not to edit or paraphrase any of your comments without your explicit permission.

#### **Q1. What are your earliest memories of books and reading? For example, did you have a favourite or inspirational book?**

There were very few books in our house and most of those were bibles, but my parents did visit the local library fortnightly, so reading was very much endorsed as 'an activity'. Most of the books I owned as a child were given as gifts. One of the earliest and most influential was 'Katy Country Mouse to the Rescue' a rip-roaring adventure in Ladybird book format, whose main protagonist is female and of mature years, albeit a rather impractically dressed mouse. I still have my original copy of the book, and still think it's a terrific read.

#### **Q2. What inspired you to become an author / illustrator?**

I spent the first forty-odd years of my life secure in the certainty that 'people like me don't write books'. I was convinced that real writers were naturals, whose words flowed from them practically into fully-formed books or poems. When I began to understand that writing for publication is a painstaking process of writing and rewriting; revising and editing, that even the most successful authors have to work at, it made me realise that what I was doing was not so very different.

#### **Q3. For you, what makes a successful book or illustration?**

I'd like to differentiate between 'successful' and 'good'. Many successful books are deservedly so, but there are of course successful books that are poorly written, and vice-versa. For me, a good book is one that effortlessly takes me to another time and/or place, in the company of 'real' characters, using language that is mostly invisible, but sometimes surprising, original and clever. It's a book that I can't wait to get back to at any opportunity, that leaves me with a sense of satisfaction, but that I'm sad to finish.

**Q4. Do you have a specific audience in mind when you write your books / plan your illustrations?**

Not specifically, although the DI Mariner series is firmly located in the police procedural category, so I am mindful of the conventions of the genre, while not being hidebound by them. I do however welcome any comments readers may make, and a couple of years back someone remarked on how often my protagonist blasphemed. Not in itself an issue, but I try to avoid overusing any words or phrases, so since then I've tried to be more creative with the 'cussin'.

**Q5. What future do you think the physical book has? For example, do you think the electronic book will replace the physical book?**

Whilst there will always be exceptions, I think unfortunately, over time, each generation will take a step further away from the routine enjoyment of physical books; something that is already happening with many younger people. The only factor I could see impeding this general trend would be if electronic devices were to become unreliable or unsustainable.

**Q6. Are you a book collector? Is there a special book you'd love to own?**

Can't think of one.

Thank you very much for taking time to do this for us. We will advise you when we publish it on the website - [www.letterpressproject.co.uk](http://www.letterpressproject.co.uk). Please return the completed interview to:

**Karen Argent**

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