



'IN THE SPOTLIGHT'

Each month we put a different person 'in the spotlight' and pose 12 wide-ranging questions to them. This month, we feature **Dr Sue Ablett, Chair of Evesham Festival of Words**.

1. Tell us an interesting fact about yourself that not many people know.

Many years ago, on a snowy winter's day, in Evesham, I was appointed Superintendent Registrar for a morning so that I could conduct two weddings. My mum was Registrar, the Superintendent was snowed in; but the two couples getting married walked several miles so their weddings could go ahead. With some quick thinking, my mum phoned the Registrar General's Office, and I was authorized over the phone. I wasn't exactly dressed for the role – jeans and wellies. Years later I was chatting to a lady in a shop, and it turned out she was one 'my brides'!

2. What book made most impact on you as a child?

There were several at different ages: Heidi; Little Women; The Secret Garden, for example. But like most young kids, I was horse-mad, so it would have to be Black Beauty. I still have a very well-thumbed copy – I should give myself a treat and read it again.

3. What is your favourite film, and why?

Local Hero – I've seen it lots of times, and still enjoy it. Good characters, nice storyline, stunning scenery, good music, and some nice humour.

4. What are your main hobbies/interests, apart from reading, of course?

Apart from reading and chairing Evesham Festival of Words, they are mostly all outdoor and active – running; cycling; dog walking; gardening; travel – to far-flung and pretty remote places. Also cinema and rock concerts, particularly Bruce Springsteen (will travel anywhere to see 'The Boss'), and Queen, to name but a couple (lucky enough to see Freddie at Wembley in the 80s).

5. What would be the three things you would like to have if you were stranded on a desert island?

Assuming I couldn't take a personal chef, I would need a boat to call pretty frequently to drop off a stock of ready meals. Apart from that, running shoes and, assuming the island is big enough, a bike. If I could improve my swimming, I could even undertake a solo triathlon!

6. What would a look at your bookshelves tell us about you?

Firstly that I love travel. I have a whole bookcase packed with guide books and other books linked to the many countries I've had the good fortune to visit. Apart from that, a real mixture – lots of books by authors who have featured at Evesham Festival of Words; complete sets by some favourite authors: Jodi Picoult, Katie Fforde; Santa Montefiore. I also still have many of my childhood favourites.



7. If you could invite any three people, dead or alive, to a dinner party, who would they be, and why?

I'm really not a dinner party person. It would have to be very informal. First guest would be Leonard Cohen. His record Songs of Leonard Cohen was the first LP I ever bought. I played it to death. It would be great for Leonard to tell me what some of the songs are about. Second would be Michael Palin. I love his voice and his enthusiasm for travel. We could have a great chat about all the places we've both visited, including North Korea. Lastly, in case conversation was flagging, it would have to be Bruce Springsteen. In the old days his concerts used to last four hours. He could sing to us – it could be a long night! And if any of them couldn't make it, then it would be Supervet Noel Fitzpatrick – an amazing man!

8. What kind of music do you like, and is there one favourite soundtrack?

Well apart from the people I've already mentioned, I really like traditional folk music. The sea shanties in the film Fishermen's Friends were great fun. I struggle a bit with classical music unless I've got a full orchestra to watch – I like to see which instrument is making what sound. To choose one favourite soundtrack is really tough. Bruce has so many epic ones, but I'm going to opt for one that never fails to lift my spirits and put a spring in my step – The Trap by Ron Goodwin (theme tune of The London Marathon).

9. What are your favourite charities/good causes, and why?

I support quite a number of charities, and have done for many years. I do lots of travel talks to various groups and always donate my fee to one charity or another. I have some regulars, such as the animal rescue centre in Leicestershire that Patch, our current dog, came from, and Spike and Fozzie before him. You can't put a price on the pleasure our dogs give us. There is also the local hospice and air ambulance – you never know when you might need them. I've seen so many people walking miles for water that I also support WaterAid. And then some local charities, such as Evesham Bell Tower Appeal, which I chaired.

10. Who is the person who has influenced you the most, or you most admire?

I would have to say my dad. He died 44 years ago. He instilled in me a love of gardening, which continues to this day. He was a kind, caring and modest man and I'd like to think I still follow some of his principles.

11. What is your connection to Evesham?

I was born in Evesham, moved away for University and work, but then latterly found myself spending more time in Evesham. It is where I do most of my 'charitable deeds' and I'm now lucky enough to have our family home as my second home. So I'm a part-time Evesham resident but I love it – the river, the Bell Tower, the people, the cafes, so much going on, including of course Evesham Festival of Words.



12. What would you list as your greatest achievement to date?

This is an easy one to answer, though it might seem an odd choice. And, no, it's not my PhD that I did in record time as a mature, part-time student. Nor is it the London Marathon that I ran to mark my 60th year and then again to mark my 65th, though that did feel pretty good. For me, the thing I'm most proud of, was helping my mum to be able to stay in her own home until she died. It wasn't always easy, as anyone who's been a carer will know, but it was just so important - to her, and to me and my brother.