

Inca Author Information Page

Simon Cousins

Currently living in: I live in rural Carmarthenshire. I have a tree and a sheep for neighbours.

Main works: Soon to be available for purchase from a street corner near you: 'Eight Days One May' a contemporary novel about life, loss and friendship in the modern world, and 'Half True' the unreliable memoirs of a professional builder (me).

I started writing because: I was invited to retire early so I decided to show the world that I wasn't finished, that I could still make a contribution to society. Also I wanted to make a lot of money and be famous.

My main writing interests are: I like any book (or music) that conveys a truth. This may be fiction or autobiography but it probably won't be whatever is selling by the million this year.

My sources of research and information are: My life. I also argue a lot down the pub. I'm not particular what I argue about, I just like to argue. Sometimes I get good ideas from the ridiculous things people say when trying to demolish my conviction that I'm always right.

My inspiration comes from: People and places. At the end of it all then family, friends and memories will be what we remember.

My stories are planned like this: The core story line in 'Eight Days One May' is the search of one man for the truth about what happened to his mother. Other story lines forced their way into the book as the characters developed and became real (well they became real to me.)

My future plans are to: Finish my two books! Then spend all my royalties on a nice lasagne and bottle of wine (hopefully I'll be in Italy at the time).

My own favourite character is: In my book 'Eight Days One May' the central character is Walker but you are not supposed to like him. He is one of life's black swans (in modern management speak). He arrives, causes lots of problems then leaves. The character I really wanted a happy ending for was Ellen. Her life is hard and little goes right for her but she doesn't give up, she fights on. I can't tell you whether there is indeed a happy ending for Ellen, you have to buy the book.

I sometimes find myself thinking like: The central character in 'Half True.' That's because it really is me. I think you'll be surprised by the sort of things builders do. For example, a house I was meant to renovate I accidentally burned to the ground within half-an-hour of arriving. If you want to know how – and, in retrospect, it really was an unlikely combination of events – then you'll have to buy the book.

My advice to new writers would be: (1) It's harder than you think. (2) Practice (a lot) on throwaway short stories before you start on that one killer idea that you have.

Writing has its ups and downs: It certainly does. I found listening to Bruce Springsteen helped me through the times when I was doubting I could write anything worth reading. I also thought red wine would help until my wife pointed out that I'd spent hours writing pure gibberish.

When I'm not writing: I have a family and my local pub (it's only seven miles away). Somehow I just don't seem to have much time for anyone or anything else.

I accept criticism from: I like criticism. It means someone has actually read what I've written and cares enough to talk to me about it. Indifference is the real killer.

I promote my books via: I can't market myself. When I was growing up and going to school anyone trying to market themselves got a belt round the ear (parents and teachers) or a good kicking (friends). We learnt to be modest.

My favourite mainstream authors are: Ian Rankin, James Lee Burke, Henning Mankell and anyone who has managed to publish their autobiography describing an ordinary working life – they are heroes.

I am currently reading: Alan Bennett 'Talking Heads' - I bought a second-hand copy in a charity shop last week. It's nearly twenty years old but still brilliant.

I prefer to read books in: Paperback. I don't like paying for hardbacks (times were hard when I was growing up) and e-books are too modern and doubtless require some piece of equipment I don't possess.

A bit about my other interests: I like folk music. Over the course of hundreds of conversations I have been told a great many things about folk music. Maybe one or two of them were true but mostly I was left wondering why people talk so much *****. One other thing, I don't drink lager. I never have and I never will.

My most unattainable ambition is: To drink more than four pints and remain standing and coherent.

Last thoughts before we go down the pub/club/library/boot-sale/exercise yard: Please buy my book. Think of me as a lame donkey or endangered monkey in need of your charity.