

1. Hi Darcy! It's a pleasure to have you in this space! Let's start with your book, *The Daughters of Pendle*. There is a brief intro that is dated 1564, where we witness a terrible practice of the past: witch hunting. It wasn't one of the most enlightening moments of humankind, let's be honest. And still, you decided to use it as the pivotal point of your book. Can you tell us why?

Hello, and thank you. That short prologue was a very late addition to the story. I had received notes from an American beta reader who, never having heard of Pendle or its history, suggested filling in some of the background to the tale by adding historical information, possibly by bulking up one of the characters and having them extol the details throughout the book. I decided a direct prologue would be more effective. It enabled me to ground the story historically; with a flash of insight into that terrible practice, also geographically; not only the area but some of the actual buildings where the modern-day adventure takes place, and it gave me a chance to give one of the main characters some foundation.

I think that dark period in history is evocative for a lot of different reasons. Apart from the very serious abuses and crimes against innocent women (and some men), that dark time holds an unusual place in the national psych in that depending on who you talk to it can evoke conversations about, social control and abuse, feminism or indeed, actual witches and witchcraft. I do comment on some of those issues in the way I portray the events in the prologue but there are many, much more insightful and serious accounts of those times and crimes. It is a subject which deserves a degree of sensitivity and despite my trying to create a fun, though dark adventure I have tried to be respectful to the history. I did ask a personal friend who happens to be a practicing witch, (Tamzin Powell, who has published the academic tome, **The Witches Ways in the Welsh Borders**. A book used by the prolific and magnificent, Phil Rickman as a subject bible no less) if she would give the story a sensitivity pass as I didn't want to trample on anyone's belief system or practices. Being a fun, horror story, she was more than happy with the approach I have taken throughout the tale.

2. I think that the most controversial bit of your book is represented by the dialogues. They are not your traditional speech in between two quotation marks with a dialogue tag somewhere, more like a film script, but still lacking it's specific formatting and economy. This choice might make the read difficult or uncomfortable for some. Why this bold decision?

Yes, it has been mentioned a few times. I think it ultimately comes down to me not being a writer! I did a Film and Animation degree in my late twenties. The, pure Film degree, which I really wanted to do, was too expensive as it was the tail end of photographic film stock, just before everything started sliding over to digital.

I have always drawn and conjured filmic scenes in my imagination so the animation degree was a good fit. As I was only prepping and creating storyboards and scripts for my own use, I developed a bit of a hybrid approach which is pretty much what you see in the book.

Also, when I started making notes and plotting this story twenty odd years ago, I didn't know if I ever thought I would see the process through, I certainly never considered I would find/need a publisher so continued in the style I was comfortable with.

It hasn't been a belligerent decision though; my developmental editor did suggest I change it to the more standard format. I did some work on a few chapters but I couldn't make them flow in the same way that this is invisible to my eye. At her suggestion I decided to get feedback and started to engage with beta readers, who are invaluable by the way (thank you!), and had no negative feedback about the formatting from anyone who read it. Out of eight potential readers one refused to read it outright, saying that they didn't read film scripts. Of the other seven, a couple mentioned it up front before reading but none mentioned it again in their notes.

I also sell the book in a local, new-age spirituality shop in my home town, (it's the perfect audience for the story) I have been told by the owner that most folk who buy it have already flicked through the copy they have on the counter, so I think if readers are aware, it doesn't pose too much of a problem. Similarly, the 'look inside' feature on Amazon should prepare potential readers. If I ever start getting reviews then they will of course speak for themselves and I may find I have made a terrible, terrible mistake!

3. The storyline seems to leave some questions unanswered at the end – for example who is the circle of old ladies, or what happened to the cult? I came to think that it was a very specific choice the one you made. Can we hope it was because you are already planning a second book in the series?

Most definitely, but initially, when this was going to be a one off, I was trying to create a feeling in the reader similar to that experienced by the main characters; they are somewhat unprepared and ignorant to what is going on around them and given the nature of the adventure, the harrowing end, and (for those who survive) hopefully, a return to the safety of home in a haze of relief and confusion. I felt withholding the answers to those undoubted questions added to that sense of bewilderment.

After planning and plotting more separate adventures, I realised that with minimal tinkering I could tie them all together and now have three more instalments which grow in scope as the story progresses and yes, the histories and futures of the different groups are a major part of those stories. They are quite well developed and are nearing the somewhat prohibitively expensive, professional editor stages. I shall keep playing the lottery!

4. There are some wonderful images at the opening and closing of each chapter. Who made them and why did you decide to use them for a book that target adult readers?

Thank you, I created all of the artwork in the book except for the cover painting; **A Walk in the Woods**, which is by another personal friend, the quite brilliant Lynda Jones. (Her work is amazing and ranges from wistful landscapes to full on folk horror). It has never crossed my mind that I couldn't or shouldn't have images! I'm so visually driven that my wanting to recreate the pictures in my imagination is just a normal part of the creative process. I suppose once the decision had been made that I wasn't going to approach agents or publishers it was a case of anything I wanted goes. I'm hoping that I have conveyed a compelling atmosphere throughout the story and I would also hope these illustrations, which are mood pieces really, enhance that atmosphere. I have had a lot of very positive feedback about the illustrations.

5. I've researched the internet quite extensively, but there is no info whatsoever about you. Can you guide the readers into your world? Tell us about how you decided to start writing, why did you choose self-publishing instead of a traditional approach, if you wrote other things beside *The Daughters of Pendle*, and, if so, where can we find them?

At 53, (a general builder by trade) I've come to writing relatively late I think, though since my early twenties I have always made notes and jotted down character or plot machinations as they appear to me. I'm inspired by anything that excites me and a lot continues to resonate from when I was a kid. Pre video of course, **Jason and the Argonauts** being on TV at Christmas was a highlight of the year! **Doctor Who** and the sci-fi/adventure comic **2000AD** became staples as I got older. I also remember watching a few films that I probably shouldn't have at that age, lots of **Hammer Horror** for instance and the ones that have stuck with me are those with devastating endings. **She**, from the H. Rider Haggard novel, **The Wicker Man** by Robert Hardy, and later, **Withnail and I**, have all left indelible marks on my psyche and undoubtedly influence my writing.

Why self-publish? Because the way I've approached this; as a, 'It might get finished, let's see what happens' project, approaching publishers was never really on the agenda. Also, because it has taken so long to come to fruition the self-publishing business model has change massively and, print on demand, is an absolute game changer. Self-publishing became a 'no-brainer' as I got closer to believing I may actually get the story completed and to a standard I was happy (proud even) to put out.

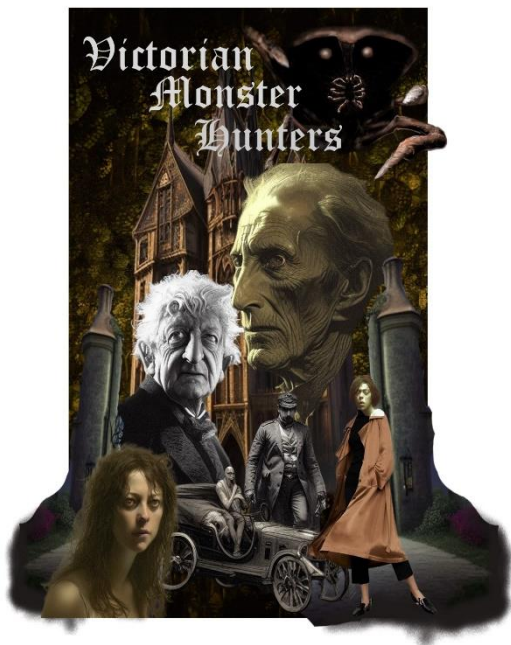
My lack of presence on the internet is something I know needs to be addressed, especially now I'm trying to garner interest in this story! I do like and use Facebook, and many of the groups I'm a member of have helped get me over the finish line in respect to finishing and publishing this book. Absolutely Invaluable. When I get my act together perhaps you would be kind enough to edit in a link somewhere?

The only other examples of my writing that exist are the films I made while at university 1997-1999. The first, a one-minute, expressionist metaphor, 'Greed'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWCocaPnvvo> . And my final year film, a five-minute, downbeat, realist psychodrama, called, 'Keep Out '. I'm still quite proud of these two. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bksbogGG85U> .

6. Last but not least: plans for the future?

As well as trying to bring the sequels to **The Daughters of Pendle** to print, which are: **In the Shadows of Time**, **Arthurs Gold** and **A Fountain of Gods**. I'm also plotting out a one-off Horror/Adventure, called **The Victorian Monster Hunters Club** which is turning into a lot of fun.

And being, as you may have worked out from my previous answers, a frustrated film-maker I have started producing mock-up film posters for my stories and am dabbling in AI generated images which I pinch snippets of to use in bigger compositions, here are my most recent efforts,



And a couple for 'Daughters'...



I'm also toying with the idea of forming a small guerrilla film making unit to make a couple of very short films before embarking on making a trailer for a film version of **The Daughters of Pendle**, but that seems a bit of a stretch at the moment. We shall see!