

Hello – and welcome everyone!

I have an awful memory, so I thought I'd toss this question of mine before I forgot and you start asking me questions – and I demonstrate the slowness of my typing skills.

I have just started writing a column for the Tudor Society which targets 'writing' historical fiction.

I am interested to know what YOU would like me to cover??

ADMIN Tim23:58

Hi Julie

Julie Lindner-Reid23:58

Hi all

Laurie Duerr23:58

Hi Tim!

Wendy Dunn23:59

Hi Laurie and Julie!

Claire Ridgway23:59

A warm welcome to our March expert live chat and a big thank you to Wendy for joining us. I hope you've had chance to watch Wendy's wonderful talk on writing historical fiction. Now is your chance to ask Wendy questions about writing. Simply type your question in the text box, or you can lurk if you're new to this and see how it goes. Oh and do answer Wendy's question about what she should cover in her column on writing historical fiction.

Claire Ridgway0:00

Hi Louise!

Lorna Wanstall0:00

Good evening

Laurie Duerr0:00

Hi Wendy, thanks for the great talk, its so interesting to hear your experiences and planning that go into writing historical novels!

Wendy Dunn0:00

Hi Lorna!

Lorna Wanstall0:00

Hi wendy

Claire Ridgway0:00

Hi Lorna!

Wendy Dunn0:00

I am so glad you enjoyed it, Laurie!

Elizabeth Alex0:01

Hello Everyone

Claire Ridgway0:01

Hi Elizabeth!

Louise Bridge0:02

Hi Claire - was just reading the chat above and I have to admit I'm from Essex too

Claire Ridgway0:02

Louise, we love Essex people!

Lorna Wanstall0:02

Louise I live over the water from you

Wendy Dunn0:03

Hi Lorna again! What do I enjoy about writing historical fiction? Everything, really. At the moment, I am trying to wean myself from researching overmuch my new novel. But I love Tudor history so much - I just want to share that knowledge with my readers.

Claire Ridgway0:04

Wendy, do you experiment with points of view and tenses, or do you have a preferred style?

Lorna Wanstall0:04

I can see southend from just down the road from me as well

Louise Bridge0:04

I'm from Essex but I'm in the US now :) Oh nice Lorna!

Wendy Dunn0:04

Do I experiment with points of view and tenses, or do I have a preferred style?

Wendy Dunn0:04

YES!

Wendy Dunn0:04

I love experimenting!

Laurie Duerr0:04

Louise and I actually work together!

Lorna Wanstall0:05

I guess what I like the most about writing historical fiction is the way you can bend and twist storylines if you understand what mean

Wendy Dunn0:05

My first drafts are always my writing playground.

Claire Ridgway0:05

Laurie, how lovely to have another Tudor history lover at work with you!

Elizabeth Alex0:05

Just read that you will be writing a column - that's wonderful!

Wendy Dunn0:06

I know what you mean about bending and twisting storylines.

Claire Ridgway0:06

Thank you, Wendy!

Laurie Duerr0:06

Yes exactly! When I need a break, I go talk to Louise about history!! Everyone else thinks we're crazy!

Lorna Wanstall0:06

well I suppose you can call it experimenting

ADMIN Tim0:06

As a publisher of historical fiction and non-fiction (MadeGlobal Publishing) I would say that for fiction it's vital to come up with an interesting perspective. In Wendy's case, her books are written about people we think we know, but from the perspective of those around them, It makes the re-telling much more interesting and more publishable.

Wendy Dunn0:07

What I know about writing HF is that the work is fiction. That is, it tells a story, and has to have that beating heart to connect to readers!

ADMIN Tim0:07

For non-fiction, the key is to back up your understanding and telling of the truth with primary sources, not using secondary sources.

Claire Ridgway0:08

I can imagine that it's easy to get bogged down in the details, to focus too much on being accurate.

Lorna Wanstall0:08

Fiction is fun.

Wendy Dunn0:08

I am very excited about my column. I am hoping to share LOTS with its readers!

Laurie Duerr0:08

but it also seems like it would be more challenging than just compiling a history book, since you are still dealing with and respecting the facts overall, but also making it more "related" and creative for the reader..

Lorna Wanstall0:09

Although I think Claire will want to slap my wrists..... hard... when she sees how I've experimented with the boleyns

Ceri Creffield0:09

I would think the difficult thing is to strike the right balance between the demands of the narrative and historical accuracy.

Claire Ridgway0:10

Lorna, ha!

Wendy Dunn0:10

It is very easy to get bogged down by details. I heard another author describe it as sludge - something we really need to watch out and to get of...I try to work ways to make my research invisible to the reader. If they notice my research, then I need to think of ways for them to not notice.

Claire Ridgway0:10

Ceri, yes, that's what's stopped me from pursuing fiction. Fiction is my first love but I know I'll worry.

Elizabeth Alex0:11

Wendy, I loved Dear Heart, How Like you This. It's written so beautifully - I felt such spirit coming through.

Lorna Wanstall0:11

I agree with that fully Wendy, it's happened a few times with me.

Ceri Creffield0:11

Yes Claire, too much dramatic licence can ruin it. Too little and it can become lifeless.

Claire Ridgway0:12

Ceri, yes.

Lorna Wanstall0:13

I've become a little stuck on one of the storylines I'm writing at the moment. It just doesn't seem right

Claire Ridgway0:13

How much do you plan out your novel, or do you just go with the flow?

Roland Hui0:13

Wendy - do you ever get writer's block. If so. how do you overcome that?

Ceri Creffield0:13

Who has been your favourite character to write about, Wendy?

Wendy Dunn0:14

Thank you, Elizabeth. Dear Heart was my first experience of feeling utterly channeled by a character. Tom became so real to me while I was writing it we used to have arguments!

Elizabeth Alex0:14

Not surprising!

RealTudorLady0:16

Hi Wendy, may I ask you about Charles Brandon in Dear Heart, do you see him as a womanizer as that is how he came across in one bit?

Wendy Dunn0:17

How much do I plan out my novel, or do I just go with the flow?

History does provide me a framework and characters for my works - but I have to find that beating heart of narrative.

That's why that first draft is so important to me. By the time, I emerge from writing a first draft, I know the story I want to tell. The next drafts is making that all come together whilst keeping my story informed by history.

Claire Ridgway0:18

Thank you!

Ceri Creffield0:19

How many drafts do you go through, Wendy?

Wendy Dunn0:19

Who has been my favourite character to write about?? LOL - that is like asking a mother to name their favourite child. I love all my characters. I have to - they are all part of my life! And have been important to my life.

Wendy Dunn0:21

How many drafts do I go through? Hmmm - usually at least three drafts, I think.

Laurie Duerr0:21

Wendy, after all of your research, you must really feel like you know your characters like actual people, by the time your book is completed?

RealTudorLady0:21

My favourite character of yours Wendy is little Catherine Carey and her seeking a place with her Aunt at Court.

Elizabeth Alex0:22

One of the obstacles I encounter, when planning to write historical fiction, is how far to take the speech/vocab/language of the era. I really appreciated that Dear Heart kept it light. And it felt right.

Louise Bridge0:24

While doing your research do you find yourself planning or knowing if a topic or event would be best explored either in a book or a column? If so, how do you decide?

Lorna Wanstall0:25

Louise I find it easier if you read as many books as you can fact or fiction of who you want to write about. One of my fave books is Crown of thistles by Linda porter

Wendy Dunn0:26

Charles Brandon. This is when your research builds up a picture of someone in your mind. Charles Brandon seemed to like to get himself in messy situations with women. You know (and I am remembering the research I did for Dear Heart - which was a long time ago now. Clare might know differently), when he married Mary Tudor, he could have still been married to another woman. He clearly had a lot of sex appeal to the females of the Tudor court. But I think I stopped having any liking for him when he married his young ward only weeks after the death of Mary Tudor. He was 48 and she may have been as young as 14...

Lorna Wanstall0:26

She's been of great help to me

RealTudorLady0:26

How do you go about researching how your speech and dialogue to make it authentic and not too modern?

Louise Bridge0:27

Thank you Lorna!

Wendy Dunn0:27

Thank you, RealTudorLady. Kate was a joy to write!

Lorna Wanstall0:28

LOuise but do try to avoid SWMNBN books as they are really just pants.

Lorna Wanstall0:29

The chipmunks made good use of them though

RealTudorLady0:29

Thanks, Wendy, yes, Brandon had a complex marriage history, more complex than the King's. I think he married Katherine Willoughby for money, but they were a successful match.

Ceri Creffield0:29

SWMNBN?

Lorna Wanstall0:30

Ceri SWMNBN (Phillipa gregory)

Lorna Wanstall0:30

She Who Must Not Be Named

Ceri Creffield0:31



Laurie Duerr0:31

Wendy, what originally attracted you to the Tudor era?

Claire Ridgway0:32

Re the language, that must be tricky. I did come across one novel where Tudor people were saying "ok" and that seemed very odd, but then you don't want to go too far the other way either.

RealTudorLady0:32

Lorna, quick clap four times and spin around three to release the curse of mentioning PG.

Lorna Wanstall0:32

LOL

ADMIN Tim0:33

"OK" is definitely a no-go!

Ceri Creffield0:34

It does jar when a writer uses too modern a register.

Lorna Wanstall0:34

Oh by the way Claire finished the haunted queen by Alison weir.. all I have to say is "MEH"

Wendy Dunn0:35

Elizabeth Allen wrote:

One of the obstacles I encounter, when planning to write historical fiction, is how far to take the speech/vocab/language of the era. I really appreciated that Dear Heart kept it light. And it felt right.

LOL. I had Tom Wyatt's voice well and trult in my head - thanks to his poetry. Plus - all my reading of Shakespeare as a girl. I LOVE the Tudor voice, so I think I just went ahead with what I loved. BUT - even my dentist (who enjoyed Dear Heart too) teased me for years with 'Verily, and welladay'. Because I wrote the work in first person, I wanted Tom to have individual voice characteristics...I saw my 'verily' as like the 'so' my father used to say at the start of every sentence, and likely me too... I gather some readers got rather tired of 'verily'. But if Tom appears in my works, he will say his verily...

Claire Ridgway0:35

"Verily" is a wonderful word!

ADMIN Tim0:36

Equally, being too old-fashioned in speech can be offputting, to many THEES AND THOUS

Elizabeth Alex0:36

Isn't it, though. And "Yea" is a favourite.

Lorna Wanstall0:36

I use the word Aye now and again

ADMIN Tim0:37

Verily I say unto thee...

RealTudorLady0:37

And verily I sayeth to thee forsooth. lol

Ceri Creffield0:37

Aye isn't so bad - that still gets used in modern speech at times, certainly in Wales.

ADMIN Tim0:37

Definitely should be the topic of one of your articles for the magazine, Wendy!

Lorna Wanstall0:37

I love shakespeare's swear words

Wendy Dunn0:37

While doing your research do you find yourself planning or knowing if a topic or event would be best explored either in a book or a column? If so, how do you decide?

I think you are asking how do I know if I should write fiction or non fiction?

For me, it is when research opens to the door to a historical personage and they step forward in my mind and begin to speak - and then the door opens to their world.

Elizabeth Alex0:38

Yes indeed, Tim.

Julie Lindner-Reid0:38

We used Aye unironically all the time in the Navy lol

RealTudorLady0:39

Aye is Scots for yes.

Lorna Wanstall0:39

RTI Aye lol

Wendy Dunn0:39

What what originally attracted me to the Tudor era?

When I was ten, I received a child's book of British history with a chapter about Elizabeth I. That chapter changed my life – and began all my reading about the Tudors, which led me to my love of reading historical fiction, and then to writing it.

Claire Ridgway0:40

I think your point about showing versus telling was spot on in your talk.

ADMIN Tim0:40

oh aye, that it is.

Laurie Duerr0:40

Thanks Wendy! And thanks to Elizabeth I for originally making an impact on you!

Ceri Creffield0:41

Wendy, it's amazing how something simple like that can trigger a life-long interest.

Louise Bridge0:41

Yes Wendy, fiction or non fiction

Elizabeth Alex0:41

Wendy, have you dressed in Tudor-style clothing?

Lorna Wanstall0:41

Well Elizabeth 1st was a remarkable woman

Wendy Dunn0:42

It does jar when a writer uses too modern a register.

I agree. I strive for a balance nowadays - writing which conveys the essence of 'Tudor speak' and hopefully will keep the reader believing in my story...

Wendy Dunn0:43

I think your point about showing versus telling was spot on in your talk.
Thank you, Claire. I call it turning research inside out.

Ceri Creffield0:44

Wendy, what would you say is the most important thing to keep in mind when writing historical fiction?

Wendy Dunn0:45

Wendy, have you dressed in Tudor-style clothing?

LOL! I desperately want a Tudor gown. I have everything I need to make one. I just don't have the time. One day...

RealTudorLady0:46

Wendy, when looking at sources and documents, which was your favourite and most exciting to see?

Wendy Dunn0:46

Wendy, what would you say is the most important thing to keep in mind when writing historical fiction?

That you are telling a story - a story which needs to breathe life on the past.

Elizabeth Alex0:46

Wendy, another column topic might be about the value of visiting sites in person, if possible. And, perhaps, your experiences of doing so.

Wendy Dunn0:48

Thanks Wendy! And thanks to Elizabeth I for originally making an impact on you!

Dear Laurie - sometimes I think all my writing is preparing me to write my Elizabeth I novel. I really would like to do that one day!

Laurie Duerr0:48

Wendy, that would be great!!

Wendy Dunn0:49

Wendy, it's amazing how something simple like that can trigger a life-long interest.

Ceri - that chapter inspired me. It was such a wonderful story of turning life into a victory song....

Lorna Wanstall0:50

Elizabeth 1 had so many facets to her character it's small wonder so many historical novels have been written about her

Wendy Dunn0:51

Wendy, when looking at sources and documents, which was your favourite and most exciting to see?

@RealTudorLady:

Primary documents - when you hear your people's voices speak in letters, etc.

Lorna Wanstall0:51

Anne and Henry were a real molatove cocktail together and yet they made someone who still holds everybody so enraptured of her

RealTudorLady0:52

Thanks, yes, I love reading the letters as they wrote them, the person in their own voice.

Wendy Dunn0:53

LOL! Lorna I gather England is wishing for the return Elizabeth I at the moment.

Lorna Wanstall0:54

Yes Wendy or even her jumbo sized father.

Laurie Duerr0:54

Wendy, what other characters, besides E1, would you be interested in writing about?

Wendy Dunn0:55

Wendy, another column topic might be about the value of visiting sites in person, if possible. And, perhaps, your experiences of doing so.

Wonderful idea! I am going to the UK in May - I can write about how the experience has enriched my current work!

Ceri Creffield0:57

Where will you be visiting, Wendy?

Claire Ridgway0:58

Thank you so much to Wendy for her talk, for answering all of our questions here, and also for agreeing to write a regular column for Tudor Life magazine. Thank you to you all for coming to the chat and asking such excellent questions. Louise is our winner today and gets to pick which of Wendy's novels she'd like. We'll be in touch soon, Louise.

Laurie Duerr0:59

Thank you Claire and Wendy!!

RealTudorLady0:59

Thanks Wendy, take care.

Elizabeth Alex0:59

Thank you Wendy, Claire, Tim and all.

Ceri Creffield0:59

Congratulations Louise! Thanks Wendy.

Laurie Duerr0:59

Congrats Louise!!

Wendy Dunn0:59

Wendy, what other characters, besides E1, would you be interested in writing about?

The lesser known ones, I think. But I must admit to really liking Margaret of Austria. I think I would happily spend a few years writing about her...

At the moment, my point of view character is Maria de Salinas... I have really loved the experience of giving her voice...

Lorna Wanstall0:59

Thank you Wendy.. Nice one Louise happy reading

Claire Ridgway1:00

Have a wonderful weekend, everyone!

Louise Bridge1:00

Thank you Laurie! Thank you Claire, Tim and Wendy.

Ceri Creffield1:00

Good night all.

ddddddClaire Ridgway1:00

Night night!

RealTudorLady1:01

Thanks, Claire and Tim for having us again. Goodnight all.

Lorna Wanstall1:01

Right folks Time for bed as zebbedee once said. Take care and keep safe everyone Xx