

I was thrilled to be appointed Patron of Reading at Salesbury, since stories have been a lifelong joy for me, and I try to enthuse others to love reading too. The commitment of the teachers at Salesbury to encourage reading was very impressive, and the children I've written with, coded with, swapped book tips with and read to have been enthusiastic, hard-working and very well-behaved – a credit to themselves, their families and the school.

What made me love reading was seeing my parents read, my Mum reading to me at bedtime and being taken to the library regularly. But it also required a book to get me hooked on reading to myself – and that for me, and for our elder daughter, was Enid Blyton's Five On A Treasure Island.

As a young child I loved Malory Towers and The Famous Five, plus Narnia, Jennings, The Borrowers, and Just William, the Moomins and Pippi Longstocking, Charlie and The Chocolate Factory, The Secret Garden and Tom's Midnight Garden. At school, when we'd finished our work, we were allowed to read, and each classroom had a well-stocked bookshelf. Of course, I read everything they had, enjoying Don Quixote, Treasure Island, Robinson Crusoe, The Water Babies and even The Pilgrim's Progress. In retrospect, they stretched us, but to me, it was a privilege and delight to read in lessons.

There wasn't a Young Adult section then, unlike today, so from children's books I went straight to adult mysteries – Agatha Christie being my favourite then – and PG Wodehouse, who remains a joy today. I mainly read contemporary fiction, with Kate Atkinson, Ian McEwan and Julian Barnes being my current favourite authors, plus crime – Ian Rankin, PD James and Susan Hill being my favourites mystery writers, but I also enjoy some science books, some history and the occasional biography.

When I had children, I of course hoped they'd love reading too. Our elder daughter's Reception teacher advised me to read alternate pages with her, to develop her reading, which was wonderful advice. Sharing Harry Potter with each of our daughters in turn was a particular delight, but we enjoyed lots of books together, including Hans Christian Andersen and The Brothers Grimm classics and Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol as Christmas approached.

Because I love mysteries, puzzles and science, I tried to find a book with all those elements for our eldest, who was also a voracious reader, but there wasn't one. So I wrote The Einstein Code for her, including all those elements, but its main theme is love – principally Ben's love for his Mum, who is kidnapped. The key to getting her back appears to be The Einstein Code, which Ben needs his cousins Freddie and Jess's help to solve. But the Chief seems intent on stopping him.

Kind friends submitted The Einstein Code to the Manchester Children's Literary Festival where it was shortlisted as one of the best 6 debuts of 2010, astonishing me. But it needed a fresh idea to lift it from nearly publishable to publishable – and it took years of writing practice before I knew how to change it. It was finally published in 2016, so then I continued the trilogy. In The Darwin Code and The Quantum Code gets increasingly harder for Ben to achieve his goal of getting his Mum safely home, and the Chief gets more and more dangerous.

Fortunately, amazon reviews and book sales reassure me that many readers have enjoyed my books. I'm grateful to everyone who takes the trouble to post a review.

To my amazement my coding website for children www.juniorcodecrackers.com get thousands of hits each year. And to my delight in several cases The Einstein Code has been the book that's converted a non-reader to a bookworm.

I am often asked what I'm writing now. In short, it's cryptic crossword clues. The Times published my first Listener crossword in June, and since then I've had two others published (an Inquisitor in the I and a puzzle in the Magpie cryptic crossword magazine.) The themes so far have all been authors or books I've loved, music I relish and codes.