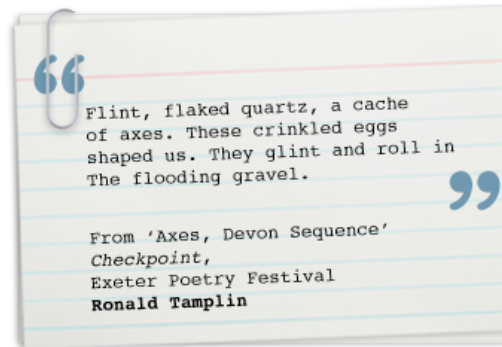




Good Afternoon! It's Tuesday on November 01, 2011.

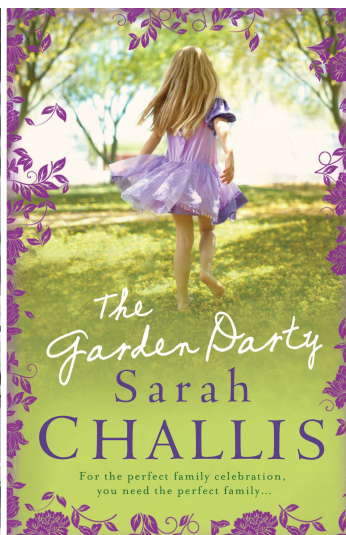
Literature for everyone in the South West



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## Sarah Challis



Sarah Challis worked for most of her adult life as a teacher, before starting to write in earnest when she was 50, since then she has had six books published. She has four sons and four grandchildren. She loves animals, especially dogs and horses, and being outdoors. On the other hand, she also loves reading and fashion and ballet and more recently, travelling to exotic places - preferably by camel.

The daughter of renowned cinematographer Christopher Challis, Sarah spent much of her childhood travelling to various film locations all over the world. She now lives in Dorset, also the setting for her novels.

Are there writers who have particularly inspired you, and the way you write? Are there any new writers that you particularly admire?

The writers that I admire and, I hope, influence my work are Alice Munro, Anne Tyler, Penelope Fitzgerald, Anita Brookner, Barbara Pym.

I also love Hardy, Hemmingway and Flaubert and Tolstoy, but I can't claim they influence my work!

New writers that I admire include Kate Atkinson and Ali Smith and Zoe Heller, Messers McEwan, Banks and Barnes



### Literature Clips

M.R. Hall *The Disappeared*



John Haynes and You (courtesy Seren Books)



**Do you gain inspiration from your own life and relationships?**

I suppose I must gain inspiration from my own life although none of my books address situations directly taken from what has happened to me. My books have changed as I have got older and I now have grandchildren and aged parents and so on, and this is reflected in what I write about. New aspects of living now interest me and I want to write about them. Family complications, long marriages and couples facing retirement were themes in my last book for instance!

**Can you tell us a bit about what you're working on at the moment?**

I am working on a sequel to my novel, *Footprints in The Sand*. This novel was about an adventure in Mali in West Africa. In the sequel I am catching up with what has happened to Clemmie, one of the heroines who stayed behind in Mali with her Tuareg lover. I have to do quite a bit of research and try to transport myself to the Sahara desert whilst looking out at a rain soaked garden in Dorset.

**Can you describe your writing environment and practice – do you have a particular place where you write, or time of day, number of words, for example?**

I now have a designated room that I write in. Before, I worked wherever I could clear a space and was always having to collect everything up in order to set the table etc!

I tend to write best in the mornings but I can't settle down to write until I have done the usual chores which include a lot of animal husbandry – chickens, horse, dogs etc.

I set myself a thousand words a day and sometimes these just flow and I do a lot more and on other days I struggle and check the word count on my computer every few minutes. Obviously it's not all writing – I do a lot of re-reading, thinking and plotting as well. Dog walking is a good time for plot inspiration – or for natural observations. What exactly is the colour of that sky? etc.

**When you have a germ of an idea for a piece of writing, how do you begin to plan for the writing stage. Do you map events in advance, for example, or do you simply begin?**

When I have a sketchy plot outline I just begin. I don't work out the details beforehand. Once I have got strong characters on the page they tend to dictate the direction the plot will go in. I usually have a destination in my mind – where I want the novel to end – but I may take a different route to get there than the one I planned originally.

**Do you have any advice for our readers who may wish to see their work published?**

My advice would be to KEEP GOING. Write and write and don't give up. I also read a lot when I am writing. Other people's work is often inspirational. Have faith in yourself and don't show your work to too many people for criticism that may be depressing, deflating and unhelpful. Write for yourself not to please others and you will develop your own clear voice.

**At Cyprus Well, we are keeping an eye on developments in the digitizing of books, I pads, Kindles etc. As an author, how do you view these developments?**

I think modern developments in publishing have to be embraced. It's inevitable that book publishing will undergo further huge changes and how writers are commissioned and paid will change too and it might become very difficult for new young novelists to make a living from writing – but on the other hand they may well gain huge accessibility for their work. Publishers have had a stranglehold on what is published for a very long time, which is not necessarily a good thing. I don't feel that digitizing books is an end – more a beginning of something. I don't mind how readers access my books. Personally I don't have a Kindle or I pad – I prefer to hold a hard copy of a book – but I can see how wonderful it would be to access so many titles without having to lug them about.

**Many thanks Sarah.**

**Interview Archive**

June 2010: Katy Guest  
 July 2010: Susanna Jones  
 August 2010: John Haynes  
 September 2010: Candy Neubert  
 October/November 2010: M.R. Hall  
 December 2010 Waterstone's Exeter Roman Gate  
 January 2011 Dave Bradley Editor in Chief, SFX  
 February/March 2011 Keith Blount, Scrivener/Literature & Latte

April 2011 Rachael Boast  
May/June 2011 Ginny Baily  
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August 2011 Tom Vowler  
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