



## Pages of the Past

CELEBRATING  
HISTORICAL FICTION

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Vol. 1, No. 32, November 8, 2019

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- Researching: Take notes, notes, notes!
- Author Spotlight: Vickie Goldie
- Reading Roundup: Books from the 1920s

### From the Editor

Annie Brewster doesn't listen very well. Okay, so she's a fictional character. That's still no excuse.

Last weekend one of my writer's groups was talking about participating in National Novel Writing Month (NANO). A character generator was mentioned and it was asked if we'd like to try it out to see what kinds of characters came up. Now, I myself don't have any problems with coming up with characters. I have so many characters forcing themselves into my mind, trying to get their story written. But...to play along. (Yes, peer pressure does exist in the writing world!)

A character trait was picked according to the initial of your first name. An occupation was chosen by the month of your birth. (Or date, I may have those two mixed up.) The character's desire was the last, according to the date of birth.

I ended up with a (1) chatty (2) teacher (3) who is always dreaming of the future.

The group decided to write a flash fiction story about the character we ended up with and we'll bring it back to the group tomorrow. I asked about the word count, so I had a sense of what the group meant by flash fiction. 1,000 words. That's doable, especially considering its NANO month.

Except Annie Brewster didn't listen. Right now we're at about 1200 words – and her story isn't even halfway done. I'll take the *start* of her story with me tomorrow.

While I go deal with an errant Annie Brewster who decided to take over the show, read on and see what our guest, Vicki Goldie has to share with us about writing historical fiction.

*Trisha*

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## Researching – Take notes, notes, notes!

Makes notes, make notes, make notes!

We think our memories are infallible. They aren't.

We think we'll remember dates and details. We don't.

We think that online resources will always be available. They aren't.

I found out the hard way that these difficulties are part of the researching life. When I first began seeking information on the families from Athelstan, Iowa that made quilt squares I 1934, I copiously took pages and pages of notes. By the time I started accumulating so much data that it all began to blur together, I started separating the information into different family lines. However...what I didn't do was make notes of where I found the materials. I'd take a break and work on other projects, then pick this one back up after a few months or so. Several years later, I'd pick up my notebook and look back to reference something and for the life of me couldn't understand what my short, cryptic note meant. And when I'd try to go back to the original information, I couldn't find where I'd found it in the first place. I did not take near enough notes as to the specific pages where I'd found information. If possible, print out the pages. Yes, you'll go through a lot of ink and a lot of paper, but you'll have the information handy, along with page links printed at the top or bottom of the pages.

In another example, I planned on writing a short children's stories about Anna Edson Taylor, a woman who went over Niagara Falls in a barrel. In this case, I did print out the pages for documentation. I never wrote the story and several years later looked at it again to decide if I wanted to work on this story idea. I had the links for where I'd gotten the information, but when I tried to go to several of the pages to try to dig a little deeper into my research, the pages didn't exist anymore. I sure was glad that I'd printed the pages out!

Many people joke that once it's on the internet, it survives forever. That's not true. Even in putting together this article, many sites I planned to use and share with you here don't exist anymore.

Whether you're recording your information on an audio recording, a laptop, on an iPad in Evernote, or via the old-school legal pad method, there are some details you'll want to remember to include.

- The date
- Subject/Interviewee's Name, with address and phone number in an accessible location
- Details mentioned, such as names, relationships, ages, years, locations, etc. Don't trust your memory! I've neglected too many details that I knew I'd remember. That Vera was the uncle's wife, or that they moved to Myrtle after they were married. It's all so clear in the telling of the story...until you get home – or finally look at your notes three months later.
- If you're visiting a museum, historical society, or archives, double-check the hours they're open. Although you can't eat or drink in the facilities, it may be nice to have lunch or some drinks available in the car. They may or may not be nearby accessible food spots.

- If any books are used in your research, make a note of the book's details such as title, author, or publication date.
- On books you use in your search, check the bibliography for additional references and sources of possible further research.
- Check the policies beforehand. Every place you'll visit will have different guidelines and expectations. It helps to be aware of them ahead of time.



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Our guest author today, Vicki Goldie, takes the setting of the historical past and then adds in her own elements of crime and mystery, and even better – a blind sleuth! Keep reading to find out how details in her real-life influenced the characteristics of her lead character. It’s always amazing to learn about how an author's real-life becomes intertwined with their writing.



**Welcome, Vicki. It’s wonderful to shine the spotlight on you this week at Pages of the Past. What drew you to write historical fiction?**

I have always loved escaping into the past with a good book. Over the years, particularly as a former librarian I have read many books and have learnt so much about the past as a consequence. I was lucky to be able to follow up on my favourites by researching the history too. However, I found that I was unable to find enough books on the period that interested me most, so I decided that as I loved writing I would try to write a historical novel that I would love to read.

**Do you have a favorite era to write in? What do you enjoy most about that era?**

Yes, I love writing about the Art Deco period. Since my mother introduced me to Agatha Christie at age twelve I have avidly tried to read as many books set in that period as possible.

When I lived in London, I was within walking distance of Portobello Road and scoured the stalls for Art Deco finds. This was in the 1970s when it was unfashionable mind, so I was able to pick up a few bargains!

I now live in a very small 1920s era house on the South Coast of England.

**Do you have any favorite methods you use in researching your books?**

I usually start with the internet and use Pinterest to create a ‘look book’. Sometimes I go into the library to do the historical research and I, of course, buy a lot of books to help if they are not available through the library service.

I also love using YouTube, there are so many useful videos posted there, from driving an Austin 7 to recently finding a demonstration of using a wax cylinder a Dictaphone.

**Tell us about one of your favorite characters from one of your books.**

This would have to be my lead sleuth Alasdair Charters, he is a WW1 veteran blinded in the war. He is only 28 when the first book opens in 1922. He is married to a glamorous aristocrat called Melissa. She is very long-suffering as he has suffered from depression for years. He had been a real man of action previously, good at sports and quick on his feet. He has a fluency in languages. This is why the Secret Intelligence Service plucked him from the trenches and enlisted him as a spy. He was active throughout the war only being blinded close to the end. He also has what we would call today, PTSD, so he experiences flashbacks. He tries to hide this from everyone as 'shell shock' as it was called was considered cowardly. He has cut himself off from everyone, their friends and family and been living as a recluse, feeling that he is useless and Melissa would be better off without him. Then to please her he agrees to a weekend away with her family in the New Forest and finds a new role in life – solving mysteries.

**What challenges have you found with writing historical fiction?**

The main challenge has been the correct use of words and terms, so many colloquial sayings today are post-1950, or are not English. In Britain, for example, an entrance hall is never called a foyer. They are the entrances in cinemas here.

Reflecting this accuracy for the period I spent a lot of time researching lighting, boilers, and kitchens of the 1920s in England. For my third book which I am currently researching and planning, the setting is the South of France, and for example, I have to add in the pier that was bombed by the Germans in the 1940s. It is little things like this that add realism for that time.

**Do you have a current historical fiction work in progress? Can you give us a little teaser about it and let us know when we can look for it?**

My second novel in the series is *Blind Pool*. It is set in the Somerset levels in England. It is once again a country house setting. Melissa and Alistair go for a weekend and are cut off by floods in a house with a murderer. Look out for an engaging American 'tourist' Sheridan Kennard – what is he up to?

This will be published again by the wonderful Victorina Press and is due out late Spring early Summer 2020.

**Do you write in any genre other than historical fiction?**

Not at the moment. I have quite a few planned in the series!

**What is your favorite genre to write in and why?**

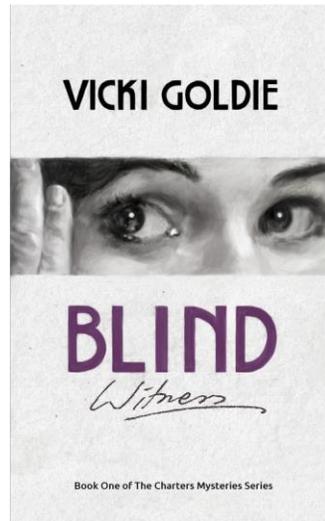
I am writing in the crime and mystery genre. Mine border on 'Cozy' in that I do not have any really gruesome descriptions of the murders.

I love reading all types of crime though, as I love trying to solve a puzzle but also the psychology behind the crime always interests me.

**Is there anything you'd like to share with us that I didn't ask you about?**

The reason I have a blind sleuth is that I have been married to a blind physiotherapist for over 40 years, and I wanted to focus on aspects of that disability and reflect on their opportunities then and now. We have some great stories over the years that I can use in the novels.

*Blind Witness* is now available to buy on Kindle.



**You can find Vicki's books here:**

<https://www.victorinapress.com/vicki-goldie/>

<https://amzn.to/2n6ffgc>

**You can find Vicki here:**

<https://www.facebook.com/vicki.goldie>

[www.vickigoldie.com](http://www.vickigoldie.com)

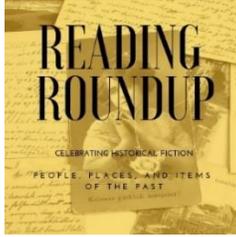
[@vicki\\_goldie](https://www.instagram.com/vicki_goldie)

Vicki worked as a Chartered Librarian for the Royal National Institute of Blind People and then for the past 19 years in public libraries in Bournemouth and Poole. There she enjoyed arranging and attending writing courses and author events, including such luminaries as Fay Weldon and Peter James. With the Reading Agency and other librarians around the country, she reviewed and selected books for The BBC Radio Two Book Club. All the time writing away in her spare time.

Born in California but brought up in England she was introduced to the Golden Age of crime authors at an early age by her mother. She is married to a blind physiotherapist, and it is from his mother, born in a large country house in Devon (now a hotel), educated by a governess and with a cut-glass voice like the Queen, that she absorbed real-life stories about the twenties and thirties.

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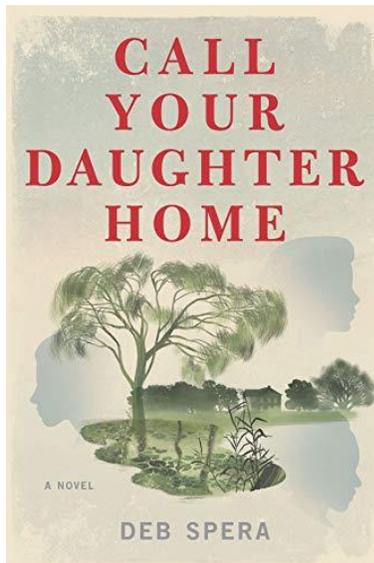
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## The 1920s

### Call Your Daughter Home

Deb Spera



It's 1924 in Branchville, South Carolina and three women have come to a crossroads. Gertrude, a mother of four, must make an unconscionable decision to save her daughters. Retta, a first-generation freed slave, comes to Gertrude's aid by watching her children, despite the gossip it causes in her community. Annie, the matriarch of the influential Coles family, offers Gertrude employment at her sewing circle while facing problems of her own at home.

These three women seemingly have nothing in common, yet as they unite to stand up to injustices that have long plagued the small town, they find strength in the bond that ties women together. Told in the pitch-perfect voices of Gertrude, Retta, and Annie, *Call Your Daughter Home* is an emotional, timeless story about the power of family, community, and ferocity of motherhood.

*Authors: Do you have a historical fiction book or short story that you'd like featured in Pages of the Past? Email me at [texastrishafaye@yahoo.com](mailto:texastrishafaye@yahoo.com) to see about scheduling your book or short story in a future issue.*

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