

Tell me a bit generally about your diaries, how did you start, and how long you kept them for, and what was your motivation to begin with?

Ok well, I guess I started doing it because I thought it would be fun in my dotage to look back on all the holidays. And also I have very occasionally referred to them if someone said they're going to a certain place that I know we've been to. And if we've particularly a restaurant or something like that, or even just generally to remind me of certain holidays when it's cropped up, sometimes in conversation. Oh yes, we did that, we went there, and I've looked back. But to be honest I haven't looked back very much, but I am looking to the future, thinking it would be a nice thing to do, to sit one evening, you know in a few years time and just read back about all the holidays. But some of them... you know I did get a bit carried away with minute details that are just ridiculous, you know, what you ate, silly thing like, having had breakfast and gone out, but it's also, it's more interesting what places we went to visit within the holiday and that sort of thing.

And so how long... you said the first one was...

The first one was [196x] - and actually that was our honeymoon. I guess, I guess I must have decided to start, just as soon as I got married. Actually, thinking back, I think I got the idea from my mother-in-law. She did this, she always recorded details of her holidaying, I think that's where I got the idea from. And my daughter now does it as well actually, she likes to record the details of her holidays. I'm pretty sure that's where I got the idea from.

And so it's just holidays, you've never had an inclination to keep diaries?

No... well I think I might have done you know when I was a teenager but I've never kept them. And I never really got properly into, I didn't do it regularly.

And it's something you still do now, you go away and...

Yeh yeh. Right up to this day, I recorded, we went skiing in February and I've made a note of what we did yeh, yeh.

So have you got different books?

I've got two books, they're A... A what size, what would you call it? **A5?** A5 size, so actually I'm only on my, I'm nearly finished my second book. The other book's just one of those. So yeh, yeh it's erm, completely filled one, and then moved on the next, which is very nearly full.

Would you say it's every holiday, or have you ever forgotten it?

I think I've done pretty much every holiday except maybe weekends, you know if we've just been somewhere for a long weekend, I haven't done it. I think I've even done some of those if it was somewhere interesting. But mainly it's the main holidays.

And you take it away with you and write while you're away?

No, I make work for myself actually. I think that's what my daughter does I've noticed, she takes the book that she's recording it with her. But stupidly, don't ask me why, I make it very difficult for myself by making notes while we're away just on a really scrappy notebook, and then when I get back, I transcribe it in to my book. I suppose that's, that way I can edit it a bit. Lately I've started to try and leave out the trivia. In the early days, they are pretty trivial. But now I find I can just summarise it better to make it briefer, and just the highlights.

You mentioned trivia, but how do you decide what to write about, what ends up in there?

Erm, good question, I don't know really. I don't know how I decide I just do it. I think, yeh. Well I mean, I still do some trivia because I comment on the fact that there are very early flights and I was very tired when I came back again. I suppose that's another reason I do it, so that I can leaner by our mistakes I hate these early flights, I'm getting too old for this, I get very tired when I come back, and you do it to get cheap flights, well I think I've reached the stage I'd rather pay a bit more and go at a more respectable time. So I suppose things like that I comment on, but mainly it's just what happened day to day, what we did, day to day. And just summarised it.

What you're writing, how detailed is it, is it in notes or proper sentences?

It usually is in proper sentences actually. Yeh, it is. But that's, but I suppose that's another thing I'm trying to change. Because I was coming back from holiday with about 15 tightly packed pages of what we were doing form day to day, and then rewriting it into this book. So now I'm trying to make it a little bit more I suppose, so I'm not doing this ridiculous thing of writing out great long things twice.

And do you only write, or is there anything else within it like postcards or pictures and newspaper clippings? Is this a separate thing?

It's really mainly writing. I think I did save some postcards but they seem to have gone actually, so no it is really just writing, and I don't seem to save the cards anymore. No, it's just writing.

I guess you have photos of some of these holidays as well? Again is that something quite separate?

Yeh they're not part of the thing at all.

Thinking about how you look back at them. When would you read, pick this book up and read it again, what would trigger you to do that?

Well, as I say, to look at it now, the only reason I've ever gone back and looked at it so far, is when I do want to know about specific things that we did on certain holidays. How you know, the name of a restaurant or something like that, to remind myself. So that doesn't happen all that often, But Ive done it partly, with a view to eventually enjoying reading through it and reminiscing about all these holidays. The other thing I do at the end of each written report of the holiday I do a full cost analysis as well. I write down what everything cost, and what we spent,

so I've got a total of what we cost, or what the holiday cost us. And that's mainly out of interest really. Sometimes a bit shocked by what a relatively simple holiday has cost us. And again comparing you know how interesting it is, so much more expensive doing some sorts of holidays than others. But I do that every time, yeh, though I don't know if I did it at the very early stage, but I've certainly been doing that some time - no I didn't do that at the very beginning - but nowadays I always do a full cost analysis at the end of what we spend.

Is that again, taking note of things on the holiday, or you get the receipts or something when you come back?

I try, like when the flights are booked I try and make a note so I've got it ready. And yeh, or if I've forgotten to do that, I'll say to [Eric] how much were those flights, what did they cost us, just write it all down really. And I tend to deal with our finances anyway so I can get the, I mean I usually go and get the foreign currency and stuff so I write all that down, and when the visa slips come in, I make a note of all those and tot them all up and make a pretty accurate assessment of what the whole thing cost us, even minute details really, even the train from [Home city] to Manchester airport, I write all that down.

So when you're looking back then, you tend to be searching for something specific, but I mean do you come across other things as well, or do you ever just flick through it?

No I don't. I haven't done, just flick through it, no I've always, the only time I've ever referred to them is to look at something specific so far. But as I say, I'm still hoping that in the future I'll just do it out of interest. But no it's just specific. I don't know, [Eric] might say what did it cost us to go so and so, you know. No, I don't know, I've only ever looked for specific things.

And sort of how easy is it to find?

Well, fairly easy, because I put at the start of each one I put the dates we went and where we went, at the start of each article, as long as we can roughly remember the year, it doesn't usually take very long to find it.

So you would just be in there for a couple of minutes...

Yeh yeh, and I would find it. Because it's all in date over, so as long as I can remember roughly when we went to wherever I'm looking for it's usually easy to find.

Would you say there was anything social about that? Will you sort of, then maybe say to [Eric] or someone else afterwards... oh you know, we did this and it cost this much. Would you say it's something that's more for you or you talk to about to other people very much?

I certainly wouldn't talk about the costs sort of thing. Erm... well... has it helped me talk about it? I don't.... I don't think so particularly, because mostly you talk about your holidays, you talk about them pretty soon after you've just been. So I feel you can remember it all anyway, I don't really need to refer to a diary for it. I suppose yeh, I think, somebody did, some visitors once say 'was it expensive

doing such and such' - a case in point is we went to Thailand last year, and (broken audio)... in case they wanted to do it, did ask roughly how much it cost, and I think I did refer to it then to say, oh yeh it was... you know, it cost such and such. Yeh, for that. But not often.

So somebody else wouldn't read them at any point?

No, I've never given it to anyone else to read. It's a bit personal you know. And also, I still largely maintain it's pretty boring (laughter) and I wouldn't actually give it to anyone else to read, for those two reasons. It's a bit personal and I think it is a bit boring. I do think.. I am a bit of a waffler and I do think sometimes I go into too much detail. There's things that are just, you know, a bit silly really. I don't think it's necessary, on reflection, but still, I did it! (laughter)

And where do you keep them in the house? On a bookshelf or a drawer or...

They're just somewhere on the bottom of a bookshelf that's got other miscellaneous, well similar things actually, it's got very old photo albums and stuff like that, and it's all on the bottom shelf, it's that sort of thing.

It would be, would you be happy to maybe have a look through at a couple of the things that you've got there and maybe pick out some interesting examples of things. If you're happy too..

I don't mind, I just don't know where to go...

Maybe do some older ones, some slightly more recent ones...and give me a flavour of the kind of things...

I absolutely - I can't believe how much I used to write actually, some of it is just ridiculously detailed.

Ok France, summer 1988, left [Home city] Monday 25th of July, stayed the night in Wolverhampton - that's [Eric]'s mother - to leave [Harriet] - the dog who she used to look after. Got up early, 6.30, to go to Dover, traffic awful, big queues around the dartford tunnel! (laughter). Arrived 1.15, 2pm ferry - you know, it is very, detailed rubbish (laughter).

We went on the hoverspeed, none of us very keen on the hover, prefer a normal boat. Forgot to fill with petrol in England and it was dearer in France, less traffic in France, made good time, got to Quentin about 8.30, basic but adequate site - we were camping in those days - only £2 to stay there. You know I sort of quite find that interesting now, to see how cheap it was to do these sort of things then. Walked into town, found good restaurant from the guide and had an excellent meal. I mean do you want me to go on? It goes on, (laughter) this particular one, I mean most of them will!

And how long is an average sort of, if you're writing about a holiday?

Well this is France, summer 1988 and it's 1, 2, 3, four sides of this A5 paper. And that finishes with what it cost us, and general 'Car didn't behave very well, it was noisy, it overheated'. (laughter) You know, it's just, oh and I sort of finished with

the comment, this one I've put *"An excellent holiday. Particularly enjoyed the stay at the chateau, like a big house party, very relaxed, very friendly and welcoming."* That was erm, our daughter had a pen-friend and she stayed in, she stayed with this family.

The costing, is that like set out in quite a sort of accounted sort of way, or is it kind of just a final cost? Or is it set out in quite a lot of detail? The cost? Yeh.

I've got ferry cost, insurance, cash and travellers cheques, ordinary cheques, this was before visa, oh no there is visa as well, access for petrol and meals and then added it all up. This holiday cost £1380.

Do you want to maybe grab a couple of other examples of different holidays?

Ok. And I promise you're not being boring!

Well... we went to Australia and Malaysia in nineteen-ninety seven! And you see I start (laughing) *"BA strikes so change plans, went by train to London, then coach to Oxford* - where our daughter lives - they took us to heathrow. What time the flight left, and where we had to change.

So the start of it you talk about the travel, what sort of things do you write about when you've been away?

Well I think [Eric] must have been at a conference. We arrived at Sydney and got a lift to the hotel. Right, the next day, er... *we had a nice breakfast then walked into Sydney and had a look round. Cool but dry and autumnal, saw the harbour and opera house. Pretty city, walked back to hotel. Met [Joe Rogers]! (laughter) Took a ferry into Sydney, looked round the harbour and opera house and The Rocks, an old area, nicely redeveloped, went to conference reception, lots of wine and canapés! (laughter). Then went to a thai restaurant for a nice meal. Jet lag persists! Wednesday [Eric] went off to the conference, I walked down to Darling Harbour, very attractive, looked round shops, went on a two-hour boat trip,"* and it sort of goes on like that, so I just say what we did from day to day really. I mean this is another very long one. And then at the end of the conference we went to Kuala Lumpur, so that will be even more detailed, blimey! Er...(starts reading) oh I don't know. But yeh.. it's erm... very detailed.

Malaysia was definitely different from anything we've seen before, memories of friendly people, lovely Pangor island, temples and history... jungle walks in highland, lots of stalls, heat and bustle. Food, mostly good, but I missed bread and potatoes (laughters). Loved the freshly squeezed exotic juices.

So it looks like I used to summarise it at the end a bit more, I didn't realise, I didn't remember doing that actually. I don't know that I do that so much now.

So the most recent one was Bulgaria in February. **Very good.** And I've just put, that's much, yeh that's much shorter, we went for a week.

Flew from Newcastle, early flight so stayed in the Premier Inn the night before. A short wait in Amsterdam to change flights to Sofia. Arrived about 3pm local time. Met by a transfer car, took one hour to get to Borowitz and he was a very scary driver. Hotel fine, nice room, but beds uncomfortable and bathroom very basic and smelt of smoke! Half board with breakfast and evening meal buffets, very big choice, heavy on pork and chicken. Er... pretty small town, with ski slopes and a few shops next to the hotel. Very friendly and cheap. They all had ski lessons everyday, though [Eric] [Shannon] and [Will] gave up after a couple of days to ski alone. The children did very well, Tom now an expert! Exclamation mark - it was his first week. By the end of the week they were going up on chairlifts and skiing well on the easiest slopes. Snowing, views lovely. We had two evening meals out at pubs. I mainly - because I don't ski - I mainly read books in the hotel, but went out each day to watch them. etc... that's nearly all of it.

So yeh, there's three extracts for you!

How does it feel then to look back at your diaries in the way that you just have, what does that feel like?

Er... good actually. I'm really glad I did it. I mean, just reading that little bit of that early France one. You know I had forgot - you forget, I would never remember all those - I mean I remember that we went camping in France with the kids, but I don't remember any detail whatsoever. I don't even remember all the places that we went to. So it's really nice to know that it's there and that I can read it when I want to.

And when you read it, do you remember then? Yeh, it does come back to me. Yeh, yeh you can.. yeh, it does come back to me. Not the minute details, we didn't like hovercrafts or whatever. But yeh the places do, and some of the things we did do yeh. i can remember when I read it, but I wouldn't remember if I didn't read it.

But are there then sort of specific episodes that you recall when you read that? That maybe you've not written down, or is it kind of a just general sense, of that's something that we did in the past and an experience as a whole that you remember?

Erm I think it's probably, I think it's possible that I would be reminded of specific things, as well as the general thing. I think I could be, I could probably think, 'oh I had forgotten that, it's nice to remember that we did such and such or whatever'.

Of what you've written down there, what are the kind of details that stand out to you? What are the things that now, you're really glad you wrote down? You said some of it's trivial, but what are the things that surprise you or stand out?

I think just erm, it would be more the specific places we went to. And, the more unusual experiences. I mean, yeh I can't quite remember now, but yeh we did go to Malaysia, and there were specific experiences there it would be nice to look

back on, and nice to read about. I remember, but not in detail, and I've got detail here. Yeh, so I suppose, I do still think that my, 'got up at 8.45 and had breakfast, left about 9.45' is silly. I don't think I needed to do that, I think that's just a bit over the top really.

So now, you sort of say, those sort of details are as important?

No, I don't think that's erm..

What would you say you focus on now?

I suppose I still like, I mean I suppose I would quite like, I just read that very latest one, I was scared stiff on that car drive from the airport to Borowitz. He was a really nightmare driver and I've written that down and I suppose I might have forgotten that and it's quite amusing to remember it. You know, he was a bit of a lunatic, right up to the car in front and overtaking on bends and things. And I've made a comment about that, I don't know if I'd have worried about it otherwise. Does it matter? No I suppose it doesn't it's just something to look back on.

And how does it compare to looking back at sort of holiday photos?

I think I've got more, I think it's better to have the diaries. I don't think photos would tell me as much by any means. I am, I am quite old-fashioned really, I think it's wonderful what you can do nowadays, but I still don't think you can beat recorded written things and also photographs. I think it's a real shame that we so rarely print of photographs now. Of course you can see them brilliantly on a compute and what-have-you, but it's just not the same. If a friend comes round it's just, was so nice to just get out a packet of photos and show photos, rather than set up a computer screen and you know. I miss that. I think it's, you know. I mean I know it's good.

But when you look back at a holiday or something like that, how does it compare reading what you've got written there, compared to say looking at a set of photographs from a holiday?

It's different. Reading what I've got written here is good for me personally, and I enjoy knowing all the minute details whereas looking a few photographs is also nice, but not the same, because you've only got a snapshot of the experience. Not the detail.

And do you look at old holiday photographs very much?

No, not very much, no, no. So yeh, so my earlier comment is probably a bit silly really. It's just... we don't. I don't very much. I do occasionally. But not very much no.

Are there things you feel that are missing? Is there things you wish you had written more about it?

No I don't think so. I think I've covered holidays pretty detailed. No there's nothing that I wish I'd added really. Because they are so detailed! (laughter) As I say it's more likely I wish I'd missed some of it out, not that it really matters. No, I'm particularly, yeh I get a satisfaction in looking back at what things cost then, I just think it's interesting, seeing how things have changed.

As well as photographs, we talked about postcards, is there any other sort of moments from holidays, that remind you have from holidays that kind of remind you of those times? I'm just trying to work out where does keeping a diary sit alongside other practices like taking photographs or bring back something from the place you've went to...

I can't say I always do, I do like the idea of always bringing back something that does specifically remind me of the place, like just a cheap bracelet or something like that. Just something that I can say I remember or I bought that in Crete or whatever. I don't always, but I do... like I don't think I've brought anything back from Borowitz for instance. But that's different, because with the diaries I've got specifically want to sit down and read them, or sit down and look up something, but if it's like a bracelet or something, every time I get it out and put it on, I'm reminded where I bought it.

And they're just around the house? They're not in a big box somewhere?

Yeh yeh yeh. Y

You just come across them? Yeh, yeh yeh.

And do you feel that you do get that sense, every time that you put it on, or quite often, that you remember the place where it comes from?

Yeh, yeh I do.

And what's that, as an experience, what's that like compared to reading your diaries?

(laughter). Erm, different I suppose. It's not the same thing, because it's just erm... a physical reminder of a place. I don't think 'oh we did such and such there' or we went, you know we went... but if I'm putting on a bracelet it's just 'oh yes, I bought that in...' wherever it was, and that's the end of the thought. I don't then remember the holiday and think what did we do on that holiday. Whereas when we did the diary bit, that would remind me of the whole holiday, rather than remind me of the fact that I'd just brought something back. **Yeh, yeh.** It's different, yeh.

When you look back, what are the things that surprise you the most, or most unexpected in what you've written?

Erm.. the detail! Back to that again. What surprise me most... well the detail and the costs I suppose. Well it doesn't surprise me, but it's interesting how much cheaper everything was then. And it reminds me, our kids are long since grown up, left home, got families of their own, and it reminds me of the super holidays we had when they were kids. It's memories, it's happy memories I suppose. That's what it reminds me of.

Is there anything unhappy in there, would you generally say you record all the positive things, or would you make a point of saying this was not so good if you had a bad experience on holiday as well?

I think any bad experiences we had which fortunately are few and far between I

would have recorded, but I am more interested in the positive things, but I'd still write it down. I mean the kids nearly drowned me on one holiday! (laughter) [Eric] had disappeared off to get the car fixed and I'm a very poor swimmer, and they're very good swimmers, and we were messing about, they used to windsurf in those days, and it was a windsurfing board that you could just, you know sit on it and paddle about on it. if you weren't windsurfing. And me and the kids were on this and er.. i don't know.. I'm sure it probably was.. they were messing about and I fell in, and I honestly thought I was going to drown, because I'm a very poor swimmer. So I recorded that. And that was very very scary at the time. I really thought my time had come, because I knew [Eric], if [Eric] had seen I would have been quite happy, but he'd gone because he was in another town, and the kids weren't that old really. But fortunately they were strong swimmers, but they effectively rescued me really. So erm... you know, to be... I suppose I do remember that anyway because it was quite traumatic, but I know it's written down in those diaries somewhere. It is quite funny. Yeh.

With that, or with something else, would you ever get a sensation, of in the everyday - remember something about a holiday, and then have a desire to go back and have a look at what you've written about it? Would you say that would ever happen, remember something and see what you had written about it?

I think I might, yeh. I think I would go back and see what I'd written about something specific. There is one or two things, actually, I mean just having this conversation with you, has made me think I should erm... I think I might sit and read. I mean some of the... we did some fantastic trips with [Eric] going to conferences. And so yeh.. I have forgotten them really, I don't think about them, and I've got very detailed reports there, we've been across America and all sorts. It can be nice to read road trips across America and that sort of thing.

Would you say you're generally a nostalgic person at all, and you quite like looking back at the past?

Yeh I think I probably am. Yeh I do, I do. I am quite nostalgic for the past yeh.

And what do [Eric] and the kids and things think of you keeping this sort of diary.

Well I as I say... I think, I would say - you would have to ask him - but I would think that [Eric]'s quite pleased that I do it actually. I don't think he's ever looked at them... oh he does! No that's not true! Actually no that;s not true because every time we've been on holiday and I've written up he's very interested in seeing what I've written. He always reads what I've written, at the time, you know straight after we've come back and I've written up. And he'll be like 'Very nice dear!' (laughter) and such and such. But I think he's pleased that there is a record there, but I don't think... and I suppose very very occasionally, he has said 'do you remember...', 'how does that compare when we went to such and such.' So I mean he does make reference to them, but he doesn't ever go back to them to read... The kids... I don't know whether my son even knows I do it, to

be honest. But Sarah.. I'm pretty sure, well I do know my daughter does it, I don't know whether she does it for every single holiday but I know she does keep a holiday diary. So I guess it's just followed on from me doing it, and my mother-in-law yeh.

What do you think you'll do with your diaries sort of in the future? Do you think other people would keep them or... do you think people will read them or they'll just sit on a shelf somewhere?

Realistically... probably they won't. I think maybe it is a little bit more of a female thing... I would think, that when we're dead and gone and looking through the stuff, I would expect my daughter to at least flick through and perhaps read a bit of the things that you know the holidays she's interested in. I would half expect her not to destroy them, but I might be wrong. I might be wrong. I wouldn't ask her to keep them...

Yeh, you wouldn't set them aside and say...

No no no, but I mean they would be there on the book shelf if we're killed in an aeroplane tomorrow and they come through our stuff. My son wouldn't be at all interested, I don't think. I think it is more of a sex thing unfortunately, but I think so. I dunno, I could be wrong! But that's my feeling, my daughter would be interested, I'm sure she would open them, and look back to some of the family holidays when we were kids and just skip through, she wouldn't read the detail. but she'd skip through and be reminded, because she didn't used to diaries then. Whether she would then chuck them away I suppose probably she would.

Why do you think it's been holidays that have been important for you to record. Does this make you wish at all that you'd kept a diary for everyday life and things that have happened. Why is it specifically holidays you think you've recorded.

Well that's a good question. I suppose because on the whole, day to day life, I mean, I lead a very happy life, I'm very very happy. But I don't think on the whole anything day to day is particularly memorable. You know I mean I tend to the same things week in week out apart from the holidays I guess. I mean I don't think there would be enough to... make it worthwhile doing a daily diary. I see it more as a teenage thing, when you've got all the teenage angst and you know... I don't think I've got enough in my day to day life, to find interesting enough to record. For me, or for anyone else. But for me, you I just erm... I've been for a walk around the race course, I've talked to you and I'm going for a cup of tea with a friend this afternoon. Or, which I'm more than happy about, but it's not exciting or interesting to write down.

I guess, it seems to me you've got it in those two books, a whole range of time, in effectively a really small sort of space. But do you... are you quite proud of them? Do you feel quite an important possession?

No.. not particularly. Well...yes and no I suppose. Yeh I suppose I am, I'm pleased I have them. And very occasionally it was a bit of a chore, particularly because of the stupid way I do it. I think the reason I never took the books away

with me - there is a reason - I was always scared that they would get lost. or my bag would be stolen and that would be the end of it, so it would be gone completely. That is why I do it on scraps of paper rather than take the physical book, because there would be too much.. So I would be very, clearly I would be very sad. I mean one books full, the other book's nearly full so if it got lost or stolen with other things, I mean it wouldn't get stolen for it's own value, but you know what I mean, it would be gone and I would deb very very sad because of all the memories. So that's why I do it on scraps of paper. But you can get... it has been a bit tedious sometimes over the years to be faced with 15 scraps of paper to then have to write again. But yeh I'm glad I did it. Yes... I suppose I am proud I did it, I think it's been a nice thing to do.

Just quickly, how long does it take you to write it out? An evening or something like that, a couple of hours?

Well some of the longer holidays that have got more detail in it can take me I guess up to a couple of hours, but I mean for instance the summary I've done of that skiing was probably half an hour tops. But I suppose the answer is it depends a bit on the holiday.

Just to come back to this fear of losing them or them being lost, have you ever thought about digitising them scanning them in or typing them up or anything at all?

I haven't really because I don't think they would... well I suppose if the house burnt down they'd go, but I would just think that while they're kept in the house, I mean nobodies going to steal them. I mean I think it would take a long while doing it. I mean I do that with recipes, I digitise recipes and it takes me forever, typing up, typing up all these recipes that I've got scraps of paper on. So I certainly wouldn't contemplate doing two diaries of it. It would take hours and hours and hours! I wouldn't even think of doing it.

I think I've asked you a III.. anything to add..

No honestly, there isn't really.