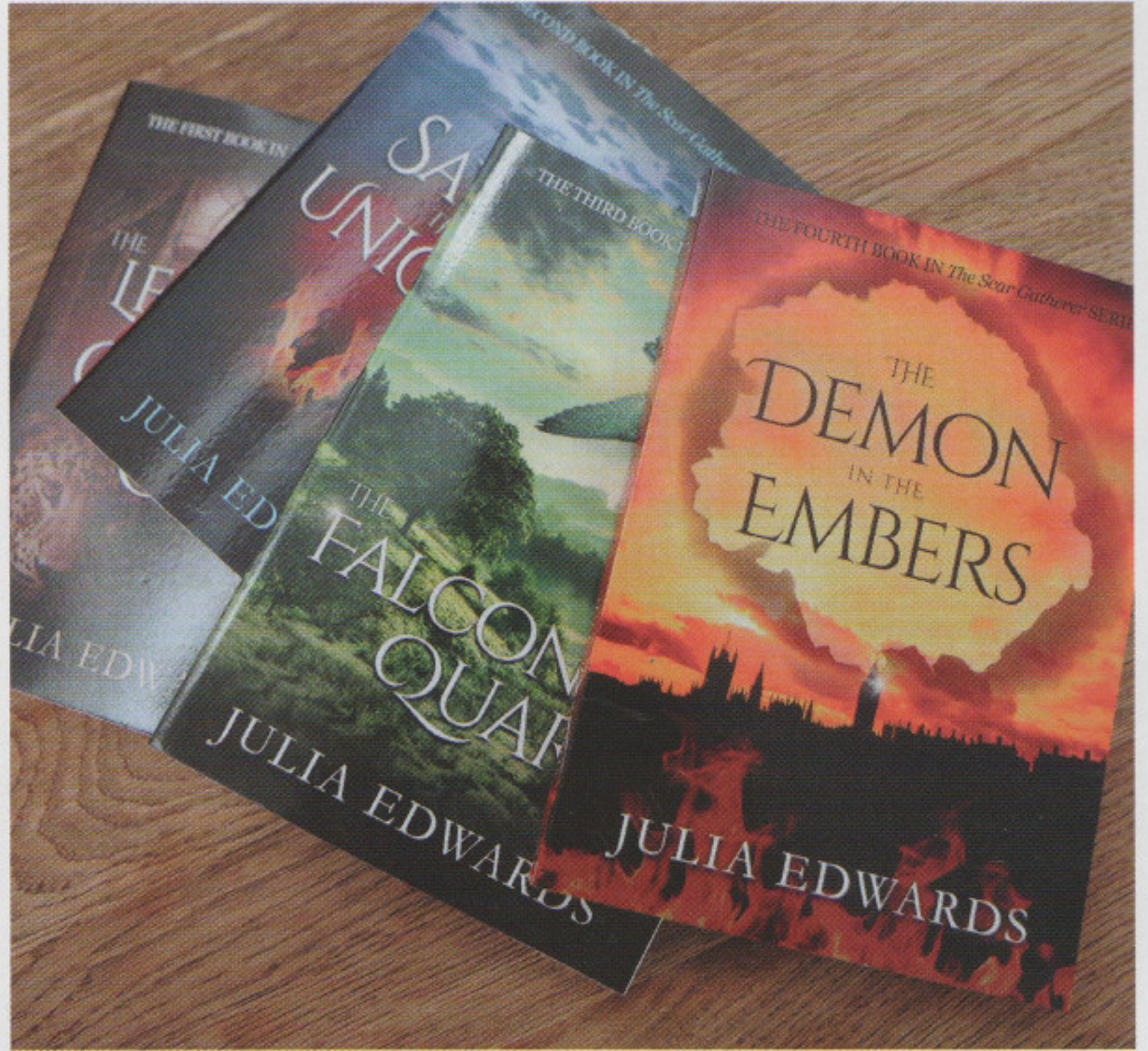


My Wiltshire

SALISBURY



Author Julia Edwards has celebrated the launch of her fourth book in the children's *The Scar Gatherer* series and is now penning her fifth. She was selected as finalist in the BBC's *End of Time* competition from 5,000 entries and since then has embarked on her children's series, plunging 11-year-old Joe Hopkins back into the past from the flames of the Great Fire of London to Roman Britain, Viking York, Wardour Castle and Tudor England. Julia has also written adult novel, *Time was Away*.

Tell us a little about yourself and your family.

I grew up in Lyndhurst and lived in various different places before my husband and I moved to Laverstock near Salisbury. I'd known Salisbury since my childhood, and always loved it. The city is quite quirky, with all its old buildings and beautiful cathedral. The market is great and there are still many independent shops. It is just 20 minutes from the New Forest, which is a deep part of who I am. I live with my husband, our dog and our three children, aged eight, five and two.

I'm the author of five books, four of them for children and one adult novel. The adult novel, *Time was Away*, was my first novel, so it was a very long time in the writing.

The children's books are the first four books in a series of time-travel adventures, called *The Scar Gatherer* series. I'm currently writing the fifth book, and I hope my eight-year-old son might read the draft copy when it's ready.

Where do you live?

We were incredibly fortunate to find our dream house when we moved to Salisbury, and even luckier to be able to buy it. We have a big garden and a bit of land with the River Bourne running through it. One hot afternoon last summer, my children and I took our canoe on an expedition down the river. The children have no idea how lucky they are to live where we do, but I am glad of it every single day.

What inspires you?

I find inspiration from other authors. I recently re-read my all-time favourite book, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society* by Mary Ann Schaffer, for the third time. When I reached the end, I turned straight back to read it again. It's the only thing she ever wrote, but it's brilliantly well written and makes me laugh over and over. I am also reading Harry Potter to one of my sons. Even though I've read it before, J K Rowling still takes my breath away with her inventiveness and the smoothness of her writing. Another source of inspiration is the children I work with in schools when I lead workshops. One class I met recently was brimming over with ideas and suggestions for the next *Scar Gatherer* book – I was bowled over by their creativity, and I did jot some of them down as possible ideas for the last two books in the series. It is inspiring to receive emails and letters from children who have enjoyed my books. That keeps me working at the next book, even on the days when the writing is difficult.

What do you love most about your work?

I love the variety. Besides the writing and editing, there is the research, managing and creating the content for the series website. There is also the finance, the production of the books, and the marketing and PR. Most of all, I love leading school workshops. There is nothing that beats connecting with your readers on a personal level. Children are very candid about what they do and don't like, so you get a very honest opinion.

Where do you love most in Wiltshire?

Coming from the New Forest, I love how different Wiltshire is. I love the streams that wind through hidden valleys, the poppies turning the fields red in late summer and the pretty village pubs. I love The Close at Salisbury Cathedral, especially during the evening when it can be magical. My favourite place is Old Wardour Castle. It is buried away, miles from anywhere – you have to hold your nerve as you follow the signs, you never seem to be getting closer. Suddenly, a huge ruined castle appears in front of you and you can go pretty much anywhere you want around it. I loved it so much when I first visited that I changed the whole plan for *The Scar Gatherer* series, to include it. Wardour Castle is the setting of the third book, *The Falconer's Quarry*.

Do you have a favourite restaurant or pub?

We don't go out to eat that often, however we had a great meal for 10 of us at Koh Thai Tapas at Endless Street in Salisbury recently.