
WHAT YOU SHOULD NEVER ASK A TRAIN ENTHUSIAST.

Research is vital to ensure the veracity of your premises. I was told this by my writing group compatriots. So, when doing my treks to sites for my stories I would take copious notes and check them out with the local sources. However, as I live in England and a lot of my second book, *Jeni*, is set in Scotland. Well, you get the picture. I carried on writing as the muse was upon me.

Then I came a cropper when I began to talk out loud. My husband was actually listening to me and pointed out that what I was saying could not be done. It wouldn't be physically possible and surely not in remote Scotland. I had to prove him wrong. How could I do it? Otherwise my whole story would fall apart before my very eyes. The story needed the train specifications fully researched but the internet was not proving very helpful. Current stuff, yes but past, not at all. I need expert advice but where to get it was the issue?

The very next day I was undertaking a bit of extra volunteer work for a local charity and got chatting with two of the regulars at break time when John interrupted us to say that I should ask them about my problem with *Jeni*. Why? They were both train enthusiasts; both the real ones and the model ones. Soon they were expounding on timetables, suitable lines, their rolling stock and even gradients and performances on them. They said give them a few days and a list of questions and they would get back to me with totally accurate information. Wow! Who knew, the answers were right on my doorstep! I emailed them the section I was working on and asked them if it was possible. By the following Monday morning I had their reply. They must have worked not it like a dog with a bone all weekend.

The addition of another friend's husband who created a working model of my chosen train related incident for me on his track in the attic enabled us to try to test it out and work out the finer points. This in turn meant that my research issues were soon solved. Thank you guys. The moral is don't overlook the keen enthusiast as a valuable research resource. However a word of caution may be applicable too! For once you have unleashed the power of a train enthusiast it cannot be contained in your presence again! I now have more than willing, nay I'd say devoted researchers on all matters of trains, boats and planes. Volunteers for researching hotels, it's always a popular choice; I wonder why? Cocktail tasters and various other things. I could really never need to go anywhere. BUT, I like doing these things for myself as they mean that I get to travel, meet totally fascinating people and perhaps even someone who has read one of my books.