

# Grannies, Grumps and Glitter –

a meeting with Tracey Corderoy

Surrounded by a sea of multi-coloured glitter at the Edinburgh Book Festival, I attempted to interview Tracey Corderoy. Over sixty small children had been entranced by her stories, magic tricks and craft activities. Her appealing Welsh accent revealed her upbringing in a deprived area of South Wales where her only reading material was a treasured Ladybird book, *Cinderella*, which she read over and over again. Not having books didn't deter her, she told me. "At school my eyes were opened. It was like Christmas and I devoured the books from Keats to Bronte. I eventually left school at eighteen for Bath Teacher Training College and found I loved teaching primary school children." Her teaching continued until her first daughter was born, after which she took time out when her second daughter came along.

She became inspired to write during her teaching career when she read to her class as well as her daughter. "I always loved stories," she said, "and story time became a special part of the day. I always wished that one day I could read my own stories to my pupils." But her life changed dramatically when the family moved into a small cottage in a Welsh valley. "It seemed the right thing to do whilst renovating and working so I decided to begin".

She was not an overnight success, however, she told me, ruefully. "It took three years of writing full time and a pattern emerged, as every Friday I'd get a rejection letter!" But her perseverance paid off and eventually her work was accepted. She has since published over twenty-five books with several others in the pipeline.

I have always been curious about author/illustrator partnerships and although Tracey's editors choose the illustrators, she has always been happy, so far. "They are usually good at interpreting and seeing the illustrations for the first time is an exciting experience. It's difficult sometimes to get used to



them. You invest so much into the characters." Her latest titles were a family effort. "My editor asked if I knew about hamsters but with a difference! I went for a walk with my daughter and Dylan the dog beside a brook in the valley where we live and she said, 'Why not write about animals that live in a place like this?'" New readers will find the *Willow Valley* series perfect for those first steps and for reading aloud too.

Tracey has also addressed small children's 'problems' with potty

training, sharing, tantrums and, in *Little White Owl*, how to look at people from the inside rather than focus on their outward appearance. She's had an incredible output in the last two years working for no less than six publishers – Little Tiger, Stripes, Egmont, Scholastic, Nosy Crow and Alison Green Books. Her latest project is about an embarrassing granny who's a witch in *Whizz Pop, Granny Stop!* An entertaining rhyming story suitable for five to eight year olds, an age group where she felt children did not have a great deal of choice. And I was delighted to be shown a mock-up of her forthcoming title, *A Flower in the Snow*, a truly enchanting story of Luna, a small girl with a polar bear as her best friend. They find a beautiful flower but when it withers, Bear goes in search of another – with surprising results. Sophie Allsopp's illustrations are a joy with their soft colours and golden highlights. A perfect Christmas gift which will last all year round.

Tracey is off on her travels again visiting Book Festivals. Her daughters are still avid readers – Orwell and Christie at the moment, and Charlotte is writing her own book.

In her Welsh valley home, Tracey should be proud of her achievements and a bright and busy future beckons.

Valerie Bierman

*A Flower in the Snow*  
Illustrated by Sophie Allsopp  
Egmont £6.99 ISBN: 978-1405249454

*Whizz Pop, Granny Stop!*  
Illustrated by Joe Berger.  
Nosy Crow £6.99 ISBN: 978-0857631305

*Willow Valley: Birthday Fun*  
Scholastic £4.99 ISBN: 978-1407124742

*The Grunt and the Grouch series*  
Little Tiger Press

*Never say NO to a Princess!*  
Illustrated by Kate Leake  
Alison Green Books £6.99 ISBN: 978-1407115580

