

MEET AUTHOR JEFFREY ARCHER

with bmag

Lord Jeffrey Archer is coming to Brisbane to launch his new book and **Alex Bernard** interviews the best-selling author exclusively for *bmag*



I've been talking to Lord Jeffrey Archer for approximately three minutes and I have the overwhelming urge to see him thrown back in prison. He is so smug about the Poms Ashes win it chills me to my core and I recall he only served two of his four year sentence at Her Majesty's Pleasure... Although I'm not sure whether he's a joker or a genius when he suggests we bring Warney out of retirement for the World Cup as the wicket favours the spinners.

"I'm not a writer - I'm a storyteller," Lord Archer informs me when ask I about his latest work. "A storyteller goes to bed at night not knowing what's going to happen the next day. I never know what's going to happen to my characters until I'm writing it. My theory is: If I wonder what will happen on the next page, there's a good chance you'll wonder what's going to happen on the next page, as well."

He has just undertaken his most audacious writing project to date - a five-book series called *The Clifton Chronicles*. Set in Bristol the story spans the twentieth century from 1919 onwards and follows the fortunes of the

Clifton family. Shortly, Archer will publish the first in the series *Only Time Will Tell* which follows the life of Harry Clifton from his birth in 1920 through to 1940.

Archer is very familiar with the area have grown up in Weston-super-Mare, Somerset. He writes so vividly about the region the local tourism body are already planning tours of the area based on the exploits of the characters in the novels.

I'm warming to Lord Archer when I discover we have other things in common - a love of Mini Coopers ("Oh goodness the only car to drive in London my dear") and ambivalence to technology. He still writes every single word of his novels in long-hand. He starts every morning with a brand new Pilot felt-tipped pen. "I don't like biros - they're too hard to push across the page." He has a very rigid schedule starting each day at 6am and writing in two hour blocks.

He prefers to write abroad where there are minimal distractions, but rules out writing in Australia. "I wouldn't want to waste my time writing! There are too many things I'd rather

do and see."

One of the most formidable characters in *Only Time Will Tell* is Maisie Clifton, the protagonist's mother. She is a woman of considerable ingenuity and strength. I asked Lord Archer how he wrote so convincingly in a female voice. "I've been surrounded by remarkable women my whole life. Firstly my mother, a housewife and small business owner whom, had she been born 50 years later, I'm sure would have gone to university and held an important job, and my wife is an Oxford graduate and a leader in her chosen field." And, as a member of the Conservative Party he did work for Margaret Thatcher, Britain's "Iron Lady", for 11 years.

Archer's bestseller to date is the prodigious *Kane and Abel*. It has sold over 32 million copies and is currently in its 94th reprint in its 31st year. The mini-series, made in 1986, is just about to be released on DVD here in Australia and Lord Archer speaks in glowing terms of the performances. "I was very happy with the original adaptation but they're looking at remaking it, actually," he explains.

When I ask who he'd like see cast in the lead role he suggests Matt Damon in the role of William Kane, initially made famous by Sam Neill.

Lord Archer will be in Brisbane next month to promote *Only Time Will Tell*. He likes meeting those who enjoy reading his work. "Of course you can't help but read what critics have to say about your work but I put a great deal of stock in what those people who just love reading think. That's who you write for - not some book reviewer from *The Times*, or wherever."

Meet Lord Jeffrey Archer

Lord Jeffrey Archer will talk about his new Book *Only Time Will Tell* (published in March by Macmillan) at a special event hosted by Dymocks and *bmag* at 6.30pm, Friday 25 March, 2011 at The Irish Club, 175 Elizabeth Street, city. Tickets \$20 each. To book call 38865704 or email Hazel@event32.com.au.

Alex Bernard is a writer and radio presenter on 4BC 116am each Saturday and Sunday 12 noon to 5pm

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