

Interview on Warneford Hospital Radio on 10th November

Linda Ashworth did a 'Desert-island-discs'-style special for the Bookspeak programme – this is not exactly a transcript, but notes I made in preparation, with the relevant music.

Music was my first love and it will be my last, hence the lyric competition on www.hengistarcher.co.uk. The following tracks are some of my all-time favourites. Coincidentally they fit in nicely with one or more scenes in Archer and all feature on the compilation I call Archer soundtrack which plays constantly in my car.

Another one bites the dust – Queen

Almost anything from the Queen catalogue speaks of proud, brave warriors – I was torn between "We will rock you", "We are the champions", "Killer Queen" and "Princes of the universe". It's hard to imagine a movie with jousting and sword fighting that wouldn't include this track.

Dancing in the moonlight – Thin Lizzy

Although these books explore many of the medieval lifestyles and customs, there is a huge Celtic influence, not that I need an excuse to play Thin Lizzy. This track covers a couple of scenes in the book, the first is where Archer is teaching archery to two of the girls in his year. To help them understand the flight path of an arrow, he looses a glowing arrow in the woods after dark and in return they teach him how to dance. A little later, one of the girls asks him to help her find a plant with special healing properties which only flowers when the moon is full. He reluctantly leads her into the forbidden Yew forest where they realise it was all a dangerous hoax.

Edge of the Blade - Journey

Journey are my all-time favourite band, narrowly beating Queen – I love them so much I even wrote a musical with 18 of their songs. This track also a dual function, the description of the sword and buckler fighting gets quite technical, talking about the *false* edge of the blade, which is the thicker, usually blunt edge. It could also refer to one of Archer's early trials when he is set upon by a group of his peers and someone produces a knife. You'll have to read on to find out what happens, but he has mixed memories when he looks at that scar.

We don't need another hero – Tina Turner

What's not to love about Tina? She is such a powerhouse, performing well into her 60's – I dressed up to be her for my 40th birthday – lots of fake tan and I ran 3 miles every day for a month to try and get the famous legs. I would however change one word in the title – the "don't" to a "do". This song refers to the fact that Archer is the sort of boy that any parent would be proud to call son, any boy would love to be and every girl dreams about kissing. It also refers to the ancient Beltane tradition where 9 boys and 9 girls compete to see who is King and Queen of the May – part of the test is to see who can best represent their chosen "Worthy" - a hero from the past like King Arthur, Lady Godiva, Bodacea (or Boudicca if you prefer) and of course Robin Hood.

Rat Trap – Boomtown Rats

Another Irish band that takes me straight back to the early 80's when I was studying at Cov Uni (then Lanchester Polytechnic). This track also covers two scenes – the one I mentioned earlier where Archer's enemy Edlyn tricks Patricia into going to the forest, then tries to make Archer believe she betrayed him. The other scene was one of my favourites to write – Archer and his two good friends are on their way to visit a famous Bowyer when they are set upon by a band of fierce Renegates and Archer is forced to shoot an apple off his friend's head William Tell style.

Jessie's Girl – Rick Springfield

Another 80's power ballad that spoke to my imagination – I'm sure there's a book in there somewhere. Archer's best friends Fletch and Finn are arguing over a cheerleader type and Archer doesn't see what all the fuss is about. Sure she's pretty, but how can she not know it? But when he gets to know her better and sees her kind heart and generous nature, he starts to understand the attraction. You'll have to read the book to find out who wins her heart.

Standing outside the fire – Garth Brooks

Some of my favourite songs are the ones that tell a story and Garth is a master of the craft – he can paint a vivid, atmospheric tale in a few carefully chosen words. For most of his life, Archer was a loner, standing outside the various groups and the last scene has him facing a terrible dilemma when his enemy is burning in the flames of the Beltane bonfire.