

And finally...

## Staff info

### Park Facilities Manager features in Liverpool Post for fiction writing

**A familiar face smiled out at us from the pages of the Liverpool Post during October – our very own Melanie Cusick-Jones!**

As well as keeping busy as our Park Facilities Manager during the day, by night Melanie is a fiction writer with a Masters in English Literature who published her debut novel, 'Hope's Daughter', in 2011.

She told the Liverpool Post all about her double life and where she gets her inspiration from in their 10th October issue.

"I started writing in late 2003, after I'd finished a Masters in English Literature at Sheffield University and whilst I was searching for my first 'proper' job. As I only get to write as a hobby in my spare time, it has taken me a long while to build up the skills to write a full length novel – and I'm still nowhere near as good as I'd like to be.

"Studying literature, I've obviously read a huge number of books, I just never realised how difficult it was to actually write one! It turned out that just sitting down to write a book was the best practice and training for actually doing it – I also took an Open University creative writing course a few years ago, which helped with technique.

"I wrote a couple of shorter 'practice' novels before embarking on 'Hope's Daughter' which was the first novel I felt comfortable putting out into public. I'm hoping to revisit these shorter novels and polish them up for release in 2014.

"It can be tricky balancing work with writing, and work wins the majority of the time! I came to Birchwood Park in September 2012 and

I have been working on my next book at weekends, or in the evenings. There have been periods where I've not written for months on end because other things take priority. At the moment I'm doing the final edits of the next book – so there's no TV, no reading, less sleeping, as I try to concentrate on the story and get it finished.

"I'd love to say that I have a 'writing cave' that I disappear into to write, but I'm not that lucky. If I have the choice, I like a table next to a window, so that I can stare out of it as I try to work out what to write next. If I get a free lunchtime during the week, I like to settle in at the Café at The Centre at Birchwood Park with a big mug of tea – it's great for clearing your head in the middle of the working day and getting some words down on paper.

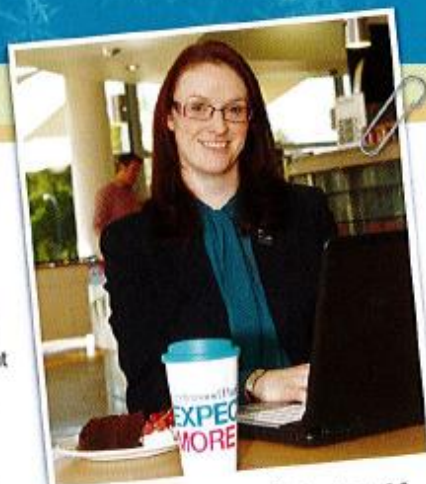
"My books hover somewhere in the middle of sci-fi, futuristic and fantasy genres, so I can't say that my work at Birchwood Park strictly inspires my writing. However, some places in Liverpool and London feature in my next book. The backdrop is a mixture of places I've been in both cities, including a rather iconic building in Liverpool. The work I do doesn't often inspire

what I write, but the places that I go to, as I do my job, definitely do.

"Apart from that, inspiration comes from the books I've read and enjoyed in the past. I find that real life news

stories, or snippets of science data, mingled with my experiences of people in everyday life, are the biggest influences on the fictional worlds I put together.

"One of my favourite authors is Philip K Dick, and I've read a lot of his books – they've inspired major films like 'Blade Runner' and 'The Adjustment Bureau'. 'Human Is?' is one of my favourite books



Melanie Cusick-Jones

by him – it's great because it's a collection of short stories all around the theme of what it is to be human. It contains so many ideas in small bite-sized pieces and gives you a lot to think about.

"People often ask me why I write; though it sounds simplistic, I think I love writing mainly because I love reading. I had read so many stories by other people that, at first, I just wanted to see if I could do it. As I've got more into it, I find that I like creating a world, and then solving the problems within it – working out how and why a character gets from one place to another, and how they overcome the challenges in their path. Sometimes I'm surprised by what happens; I can be in full writing flow, expecting the character to do one thing and then they end up doing something completely different, and the whole story changes.

"My proudest moment to date has been releasing my first book and getting back real reader reviews – that was when I'd achieved what I set out to do. It's a great feeling to get a good review from someone who doesn't know you in any way and simply comes to the book, reads it and enjoys it."

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