

## The story of a Cambridge English Readers author An interview with David A Hill

**Q: David, can you tell us something about your involvement with ELT? How did it start?**

**David Hill (DH):** With a summer holiday job in one of the huge south coast language schools, between finishing college and starting full-time teaching in UK primary schools.

**Q: And how did you get into it full-time?**

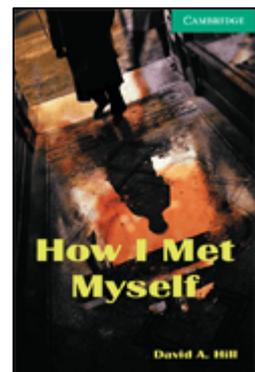
**DH:** Just to try something different, I think. I was already on the promotion ladder after three years in the UK, and was worried about getting trapped early! So after various interviews I landed on my feet with the excellent CLM private language organisation in Trentino, Italy. I had two glorious years in Riva Del Garda.

**Q: And then?**

**DH:** A year back in the UK for a specialisation Diploma in ELT, followed by a three-month summer spell with the influential Pilgrims of Canterbury – something I carried on for 11 more summers! – and then off to what was then Yugoslavia. There I did two years in a primary teacher training college and four years in a university. It was a very important time for me. I began to develop my own materials, particularly pictures, which led to my first book.

**Q: What happened after Yugoslavia?**

**DH:** Twelve wonderful years in Milan, again for The British Council. I was called English Teaching Advisor for Northern Italy. I was in charge of the in-house and outreach training programmes for the Italian state sector. I travelled all over the north, organising and running workshops, seminars and conferences – including the renowned British Council Italy Conference, for which I set up and ran the Academic Programme seven times!



**Q: And you were heavily involved with IATEFL at that time, too, weren't you?**

**DH:** Yes, indeed. I set up and co-ordinated the IATEFL Italy Branch for eight years, and was the IATEFL Teacher Trainers SIG Newsletter Editor for eight years too. I went to all the UK Conferences, and was closely involved in the setting up of all the new branches in Eastern Europe in the early 90s.

**Q: And then you left The British Council in 1998?**

**DH:** Well, the Council decided it didn't need the Milan post, so it was cut. I got offered a couple of other posts which I didn't really want, and I didn't get the one I did want, and so I decided to go it alone.

**Q: And what do you do now?**

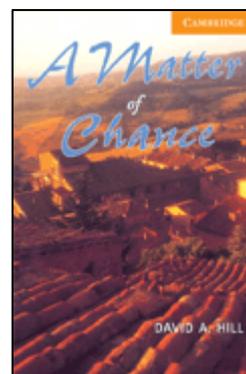
**DH:** Well, basically, I am available for all kinds of training and teaching work, plus materials writing and consultancies of all kinds.

**Q: And does it work?**

**DH:** It seems to! I've had a range of interesting work in around 20 countries since 1998. I have a particularly happy relationship with the Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE). I am an Associate Trainer there, and every summer I spend up to 12 weeks training teachers and acting as Academic Co-ordinator for the staff. I also attend Conferences in Eastern Europe on their behalf.

**Q: And how did you get involved with the Cambridge English Readers series?**

**DH:** I'd known Philip [Prowse, the series editor] for some years, and he asked me if I'd like to act as a reader for the first 6 pilot editions of the series. I did that. And he said 'Well, what about writing one yourself?' And so when I went freelance, I did just that, and that is how *A Matter of Chance* started.



**Q: Was it easy to write?**

**DH:** Interestingly, I'd written what became the introduction in Italy back in 1978, and had never finished the story. So I used that unusual first page, and invented a story from there.

**Q: And the second one – *How I Met Myself*?**

**DH:** That was strange! I was in Budapest, and I just had this idea about a man who met himself – his doppelgänger – in the streets where I was living. And it wrote itself, very quickly.

**Q: I understand you've been touring to promote the series.**

**DH:** Yes, I've done lectures and workshops in Italy twice, Croatia twice, Slovenia, Hungary and Serbia. The response is very positive. It's such an easy series to promote – it almost sells itself!! I love the stories myself, so I don't have to invent things about how good they are – it's true! And I have long been a firm believer in extensive reading as a language learning tool. So it's very enjoyable work.

**Q: And are we going to see any other Cambridge English Readers from you?**

**DH:** I'm trying! I've already sent Philip a Level 2 romance, which needs some reworking. Unfortunately, I've been busy with a couple of other writing projects lately, so I've not had time, but I hope to get back into it soon.