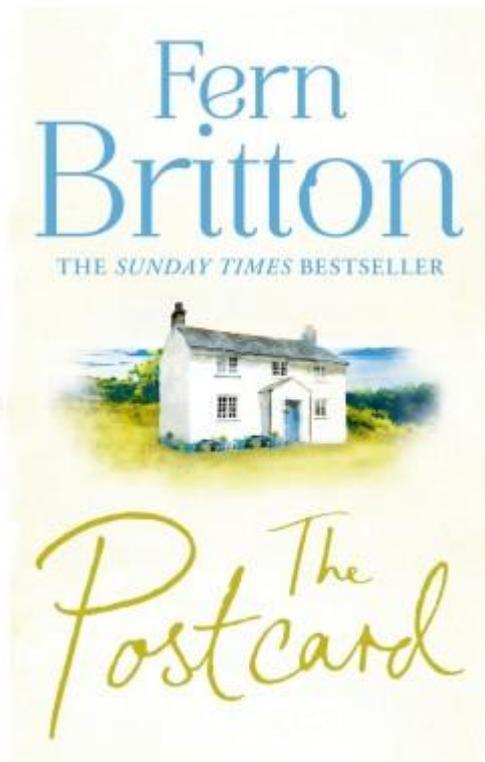




Author of the Month interview: Fern Britton

BY [JONATHAN PRITCHARD-BARRETT](#) ON 08/06/2016 [EBOOKS](#), [FICTION](#)



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It has been six years since Fern Britton's first novel [New Beginnings](#) marked a, well, a new beginning in her career as a novelist. [The Postcard](#) is her sixth novel, and explores the backstory of Penny Leighton who appears in [A Seaside Affair](#). With Fern as our author of the month, we were lucky enough to have a telephone chat with her.

Although we're only talking on the phone, it's easy to tell why Fern is considered a national treasure. She comes across as warm and sunny, and is certainly happy to answer questions. Perhaps I'm wrong, but it seems like she could maintain this charm and loveliness whatever gets thrown at her. Like a true pro, Fern will always remain lovely under fire. The heroine of *The Postcard*, Penny Leighton, is a woman who gets quite a lot thrown at her.

The inspiration for *The Postcard* was the unexpected changes that can derail our lives. "We all think we've got our lives sorted out," says Fern. "We've got good jobs, and have good relationships at home, and a nice house, but those things can implode." Penny Leighton struggles with financial and husband problems, then her sister turns up. Trouble – and redemption – ensues.

The book also addresses post-natal depression, something that Fern experienced after her first children (twins) were born. She points out that it doesn't just affect mothers but is also terrifying for their families too. "I'd like to encourage people who are feeling unwell to go to the doctor and get well. Because the moment someone says to you, 'Actually, you aren't well are you?' You feel better."

Fern has suffered depression on and off since she was 18, but has learned how to manage the illness. Now, she says, she's really well and is not frightened of it. "I know that it will pass." Fern has never been afraid of talking about her experience of depression, and chipping away at the stigma associated with the condition. She has positive ambitions for the book too. "I hope it will help people ... help anybody who is reading it and feeling a bit peculiar and thinking 'Okay, there's hope. Let's go to the doctor and get sorted out.'"

Fern Fiction Facts

Favourite book about Cornwall: "Anything by [Daphne du Maurier](#)"

Alternative location for a novel: India

Current read: [The Muse](#) by Jessie Burton

Most surprising favourite: The swearsy gangster stories of [Kimberley Chambers](#)

Reading motto: "I read everything and anything."

Reading advice: "Go for what you want to read and really enjoy it!"

It's the humanity and flaws she looks for when creating a new character. She wants heroines and heroes at whom audiences will occasionally yell, "You stupid person! What did you do that for?" As a location for these characters, Fern definitely prefers small Cornish villages – she bought her first house in one when she got her first job.

"Because it's such a small community you all mix together, people of all ages, the farmers, the old people who run the shop, the kids, the new baby arriving, the people getting married, and the funeral. You really integrate into the whole thing. I love that feeling of being part of a community. I was in my early 20s at the time and it really suited me. It's good for stories. You can go out and walk about and something's definitely going to happen."

It's possible for Fern to find time to write now that she's not doing a daily live show, which she did for over 30 years. She marks the diary 'Writing Week' to make sure she doesn't deviate from her 2,000 word a day goal. Powered by "loads of tea", this discipline means turning off the phone, locking the door and working till midnight if necessary.

[On BBC Breakfast, Fern admitted](#) that while writing her third book [The Holiday Home](#) she was scared sick that it would be a dud. "This one was a little less terrifying," she says. "But nonetheless it is frightening when you've got a book about to go out and you close your eyes and think 'Don't look at the reviews' until someone says you can because they're ok. My father is an actor and my brother is an actor, so I grew up in a family that never looked at reviews just in case."

In the end *The Holiday Home* got positive reviews and sold well. So, picture if you will, Fern Britton, one of the country's best TV presenters and now a Sunday Times bestselling novelist waiting for someone to whisper in her ear that reviews for *The Postcard* have been fine. It's a strange image, but part of what makes Fern such a delightfully warm and engaging personality.

You can learn more about Fern on her Facebook page [facebook.com/officialfernbritton](https://www.facebook.com/officialfernbritton) and on Twitter [@Fern Britton](https://twitter.com/Fern_Britton)

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