

Clacton Gazette

Clacton: Elsie was my spark, says author Martin

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[By Claire Owen »](#)

A published author has had a chance meeting with the teacher who first inspired his love of books three decades ago.

Martin Penalver was six when he was taught to read by Elsie Butcher at Holland Park Primary School in Clacton.

More than 30 years and one novel later, the pair met by accident at Winsford House Care Home in St Paul's Road, where 84-year-old Elsie is now a resident.

Martin, who lives in Chilburn Road, explained: "I was volunteering for Help the Aged at an open day at the home, and brought Elsie a cup of coffee.

"We started talking, and when she said she loved reading, I told her that I'd written a book last year called *In Search of An Angel*, and said I'd give her a copy.

"Later on when I was thinking about it, something clicked and I realised she was the woman who'd taught me to read all those years ago.

"It was amazing to meet up with her like that."

Martin says that Elsie was a wonderful teacher who really got him interested in books.

"She doesn't want to take all the credit, but she was definitely the spark that lit the fire," he said.

"I loved the way she handled the class and how she explained things.

"You had to behave yourself in her class though!"

Elsie, who taught at Holland Park for 13 years, remembers Martin as being very talented.

"He was an A+ pupil," she said.

"It was obvious that he loved books and his narrative work was outstanding."

She added: "I've read his book, and found it to be sit-up-til-3am readable.

"The characters are really well observed, as well as the details of period and place."

Martin has since written a sequel to his novel called *The Ticking of the Clock*, which will be on sale in 2009

