

# A new chapter

Lorna Maybery meets a Countryside member who has turned author and self-publisher



Growing up on his parents' farm in north Devon was a happy experience for Countryside member Tim Lerwill – so much so that he decided to share his childhood experiences by writing and publishing a children's book.

Aimed at three to seven-year-olds, his book is called *The Snow Sheep* and tells the story of Farmer Tim, a small boy who helps out his dad when one of their sheep goes missing in the snow.

For Tim, a chartered accountant who lives near Bath, the book was the culmination of months of planning in his spare time. It began as an idea conceived while reading bedtime stories to his daughter Maisie. Tim says: 'It was January this year, I was reading my daughter, now five, a bedtime story about a farm and it occurred to me that the author might not have been brought up on a farm, so I decided to start telling Maisie my own stories of things that happened to me.'

'Then I thought, as I have a baby son, Jake, I'd better write them down now so I could read them to him when he is older. So I did just that and thought, actually they are not too bad, so why don't I try publishing them.'

Tim, 35, began to research the world of publishing and read books on how to get your story into print.

'I realised it could take a few years to be accepted and published by an established

publisher,' says Tim. 'So I decided that with the self-publishing route you can do it a lot quicker as well as having full control over the words, illustrations and the size of the book. It has taken me seven months to go from book concept to book launch.'

'With the self-publishing route you obviously become a publisher. The first thing I had to do was make sure the words were suitable for three- to seven-year-olds. I asked a children's literature specialist to provide some direction.'

'Once I had the words finalised, I needed an illustrator, and after looking at numerous illustrators and their pictures, I settled on Kelly Dyson. With the words and pictures complete, I was able to produce a first proofcopy.'

*The Snow Sheep* is the first of the Farmer Tim stories in what will, Tim hopes, become a series of 10 picture book stories. Tim chose a winter theme for the first book. 'I've initially written a winter story and will then do a spring one, and so on to harvest time, and pick up various cycles in the farm such as market time and ploughing.'

Eager to ensure that the story was interesting enough, Tim sent a draft of the book to family and friends for comments and as the feedback was good, he was confident the book would stand up well in the children's market. The final stage was to get an ISBN code so that it could be sold anywhere in the world.

As publisher as well as author, Tim also had to put a lot of thought into the finer details of the book.

'You have to think about how you will lay out the pages and what size you want the book. Then as a self-publisher you need to think how you market it.'

'From July onwards I went into local bookshops and farm shops. Waterstone's in Bath has been very good. It has taken the book and I have had a book reading and signing, which went really well. I did three readings throughout a day, which was quite nerve-wracking but a good experience.'

Tim enjoys getting out and about promoting his book. 'It's fun to talk to people and gauge their reaction. They look at the cover for the first time and it brings a smile to their faces.'

Launching a book called *The Snow Sheep* at the height of summer was obviously a hard sell, but Tim is hoping that it will start to take off at Christmas. Hartley Farm Shop, near Winsley, Wiltshire, was the first farm shop to give its support to Tim by selling his book.

Tim is looking to the future with his book series and the second instalment *The Vegetable Patch* is also now available.

And his advice to anyone who would like to see their own words in print?

'There are probably a lot of your members who would like to write a book and get it published. I would say that self-publishing is a great way of getting your book out there and it feels good to see your own book in somewhere like Waterstone's.'

'And with an eye for the future it would be fantastic if one day the Farmer Tim stories could be seen on TV. It's a bit of a dream, but if you don't try, you don't get!'

## Further information

**The Snow Sheep and The Vegetable Patch are both priced £4.99 and are available from Amazon, WH Smith and Waterstone's. Lerwill Publishing is offering NFU Countryside members 20 per cent off the RRP of £4.99 per book when purchased via [www.lerwill.co.uk](http://www.lerwill.co.uk) with free postage until further notice. For more information on this great discount, turn to page 47 in the Your Countryside section.**

