



TLC SHOWCASE

Viv Cockram

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Introduction to *Gone Fishing*

Gone Fishing is a memoir about holidays, it is a set of short stories each one depicting a holiday in my lifetime.

My first foray into writing was when I was about thirteen years old, it was a torrid love story about unrequited love and death. Not a good combination. Later in life I realised that my skills in writing lay in describing events that I actually knew something about. So I moved from fiction to memoirs.

This is where TLC became involved. I had written my first memoir, *Paying with Fish* and I wanted someone to critique it who did not know me and who also knew what they were talking about. A colleague at work had recommended TLC and so I sent my manuscript off with a final comment of “should I try to get it published or have a gin and tonic on Cromer Pier”. Not a totally random act as we did live in Cromer at the time. I was allocated a mentor, Frankie Bailey and she appraised my manuscript. She provided honest, clear and professional advice and answered that a couple of gin and tonics were in order along with getting it published.

The rest is history as they say, after applying Frankie’s advice *Paying with Fish* was published, swiftly followed by a second memoir. In August 2025 they were both remaindered which was a little disappointing to say the least as I was just completing my third memoir *Gone Fishing*. I decided to self-publish but really needed the same honest feedback as I received for *Paying with Fish*, so I turned to TLC once again.

As luck would have it Frankie Bailey agreed to assess that manuscript too. I really needed the confidence and self-belief to follow the publishing path I had chosen. I think many writers have massive self-doubt and I am no different. The turning point in Frankie’s assessment and critique for me was in relation to the section “Dancing Gills”. She commented “I think you would have made a very good comedy ‘short liner’ back in the day. I can easily imagine you with the big team who wrote ‘Birds of a Feather’”. It gave me massive confidence and self-belief but more than that I thought “she gets me.”

The extract chosen for this showcase is from “Dancing Gills”.

Extract from *Gone Fishing*

Dancing Gills

“Excuse me, I think she might be needing this”, said the kind man handing me Esther’s boarding card that she had dropped on the floor whilst queuing at departures security at Birmingham Airport.

For goodness sake !

We are on our way, Esther, Ann and myself to Costa Calma in Fuerteventura for a few days in the sun to celebrate Esther’s seventieth birthday. This does not bode well. Esther has never flown anywhere before, she is scared of flying and is going to have a Valium or something if we ever get through departures. She has already asked whether the whole multitude of people milling around the huge check-in area are all going on the same plane as us to Fuerteventura. I think I am just going to have to drink copious amounts of red wine to get through this.

We have managed to get through security with no further mishaps and are now looking for something to eat and drink so that Esther can take her tablet. She is not happy with any of the food choices available, she really wants a sandwich. So we have gone to all the appropriate locations selling such delicacies, but no, she is not happy with any of them.

“I want one like she has got”, she exclaimed, whilst pointing to a lady seated partaking of such a snack.

Ann and myself have dutifully looked around and followed the trajectory of her finger and have spied the person in question.

“For god’s sake” Ann has exclaimed exasperated, “that’s her own sandwich she has brought from home!” as all three of us stared at the poor woman eating her bread roll from a Tupperware lunch box.

I need a drink.

We have managed to persuade her to eat a sandwich which we can actually purchase and she has subsequently complied, had some water and taken the tablet. Ann and I are on red wine, I think we will need it.

We have managed to get her on the plane with no further issues. The tablet seems to be working so much so that she now wants a glass of white wine. We have managed to persuade her that it may not be so sensible so soon after taking the calming dose and all has gone smoothly.

After our arrival at El Matorral airport we have managed to get through passport control without any problems and are awaiting our luggage in the baggage handling area. Ann and I have retrieved ours as they came out early. Esther's has not arrived yet and we are all looking down towards the opening leading to below ground where the cases are loaded awaiting for them to be jettisoned out.

Oh here it is and we have declared such.

Where is she?

Give me strength. She is currently laid on the conveyor belt clinging desperately to her case whilst being driven along legs outstretched past all the other waiting passengers. I have managed to grab her and retrieve her from this position and manhandle her back onto her feet. Notice I keep repeating the word "managed", that is exactly what I am doing constantly. The transfer bus has been located by myself quite expediently. I feel that now we are here after what has happened earlier that Ann has relinquished all control and accountability for Esther and it is now all down to me. To be honest I have organised and arranged the whole thing so it would be a natural assumption to think so. I think she is being bloody crafty if you ask me.

H10 Playa Esmeralda has been reached, it is located on the edge of Costa Calma, but if today's activities are anything to go by I do not think it is going to be very calm!

Oh for crying out loud!

The poor holiday rep has just had to rescue Esther from the revolving doors where she has managed to get herself and her suitcase completely wedged.

A nice glass of cava is awaiting us whilst we fill in the forms and check in. We have all partaken of this including Esther. Hopefully enough time has lapsed between the taking of the Valium and now, but to be quite honest I am letting her get on with it.

The little bugger!

Ann the devious minx when shown into our shared room has immediately claimed the bed furthest away from the window with the speed of a cheetah.

About the Writer

Viv has never won a prize in her life.

Actually that is a bit of a lie as she did win the book *Mrs Tiggy-Winkle, Beatrix Potter* for full attendance at junior school in 1965. Given her mother's zealous propensity for Viv to achieve that accolade it is hardly surprising.

Since then nothing.

Gone Fishing is Viv's third published book, so in some ways it could be said that the itch has been scratched. Viv's first two published books, *Paying With Fish* and *I Do Not Want a Fish Finger Sandwich* have been remaindered so maybe not completely.

Viv's memoir writing has been described as humorous, real and honest and it could be said that her journey through the publishing world has mirrored her writing, not necessarily the humour part.

Viv's writing career started in the early 2000s as an offshoot to her occupation as a Senior Business Analyst publishing business articles in Consultancy Magazines. Not exactly a humorous activity but she took that strong desire to write in a totally different direction and produced her first memoir.

Viv is married to Martyn, they have five children and twelve grandchildren between them. They live a fairly quiet (not really) life in Derbyshire with their new puppy Steve. If not in Derbyshire they can usually be found in The Vendee, France.

