

SOME THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT BEN HOPE (and Scott Mariani)

Ben Hope fans just can't get enough of their ex-SAS hero. Here are a few extra details about Ben and his creator that you won't find in the books!

Age nine, a young Ben was taken to a shooting gallery at a funfair in England, where he had his first go shooting a rifle and displayed surprising marksmanship skills.

Between dropping out of university and joining the British army, Ben travelled aimlessly around Europe for a time, living by taking jobs on farms. As a grape-picker at a vineyard in the south of France he first developed his taste for wine, as well as his flair for languages and his love of the French countryside.

When a young Ben walked away from his first great love Leigh Llewellyn, he broke her heart. Suffering remorse over his actions, he wrote her a long letter in which he tried to explain his reasons for abandoning their relationship to pursue his military ambitions. Leigh would never read the letter, as Ben tore it up unsent. It would be years before they met again, for one brief period of happiness before tragedy struck...

While on vacation between kidnap rescue missions, Ben was hiking on the Irish coast when he happened upon a female German shepherd puppy that had fallen into the stormy sea and was in danger of drowning. Instinctively diving into the tall waves, Ben saved her life. The grateful owners thanked him and they exchanged numbers. Two years later, they contacted him again to say the pup had now given birth to a litter of her own, and Ben was invited to have his pick of them. The male pup he selected, he decided to name 'Storm'.

Although Scott didn't consciously base his character's name on anything except his own imagination, it's fun to note that Ben Hope is also the name of a famous mountain in Scotland. Ben Hope is additionally the name of a variety of blackcurrant: the bush is vigorous, hardy and highly resistant to pests. Maybe it has more in common with the fictitious Ben than meets the eye!

Despite his Italian-sounding surname, Scott Mariani is partly of French origin. He loves France, its countryside, food, wine, etc. And perhaps it's not so hard to see why his creation Ben Hope ended up living in France.

Readers of the books will notice that Ben has an affinity with the ocean. This reflects his creator's love of the sea, as Scott grew up on the east coast of Scotland and as a boy was never done exploring its rocky beaches and sand dunes. To this day, on his travels Scott likes to be close to the sea.

Another similarity between Scott and his creation is the love of jazz. Although Scott prefers more laid-back stuff while Ben's tastes lean towards the more frenetic, wild and hard to listen to.

Many readers write to tell Scott that Ben has been a great source of inspiration to them in their lives. Some people 'channel' him to help overcome fears and phobias. One reader got over his fear of flying this way. Others find that he's a companion to them, and gives them strength, hope, and inspiration through the ups and downs of life.

