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Author/Interview subject: Joanna Nadin and Sir Chris Hoy

Interviewed by: Janice Forsyth

JF: Hello there, I am Janice Forsyth. A huge massive welcome to Authors Live. It's just great to have you along wherever you're watching and listening, we're delighted to have you. I am Janice, it'd be silly if I was here all on my own. I know you're here, but also with me, splendid pupils from South Lanarkshire, from a wonderful school called Heathery Knowe Primary School. Have a look at them.

They can wave to you through the magic of television and cameras. I told you they were gorgeous, didn't I? They're fantastic. You can stop waving now. That's fine. We're going to have such great fun today.

You can probably tell I'm actually slightly extra excited. I always get excited at these events. How excited are you here today Heathery Knowe Primary? Are you very excited?

Aud: Yes.

JF: Yes, they are! We always have great guests but there's double the fun today, double the excitement, because we've got two absolutely splendid guests, really, really special. And the first is the author of many, many books for children and young adults, including the Rachel Riley series and the Penny Dreadful series. I know that you'll have read those.

And the other, well, he's nothing less than Britain's greatest Olympian ever! Yeah! How about a whoo?

Aud: Whoo!

JF: Very good. And a whoo out there? Yeah, I can hear you, very good. And all-round national treasure. So we're really, really excited to have them here. And one of the things as you're going to hear that they're going to be talking about is the importance of teamwork. Do you guys like working together as teams?

Aud: Yeah.

JF: Do you? Wonderful. It's so important.

Now what is also really vital for today is that we will be asking questions of our dynamic duo later on. And there is still time for you to ask a question via Twitter. So if your school or classroom has a Twitter account you can get in touch with us and just use the hashtag #authorslive. So you've still got time to come up with a really special question. Thank you very much for doing that I look forward to relaying them to our special guests.

So are you ready? Are you ready?

Aud: Yeah.

JF: Good. Please, huge cheering out there and here, a massive applause for our special, special guests today, Joanna Nadin and Sir Chris Hoy! [applause]

CH: Hello!

JN: Hello, hello Heathery Knowe.

Aud: Hi.

JN: And hello everyone watching at...I was going to say at home, but you're not at home, are you? You're in classrooms...

CH: At school.

JN: ...at school! Welcome, we're going to talk about a very ordinary boy called Fergus Hamilton, who turns out to be special in lots of ways. But these books are really special to us because we wrote them as a team. Now I write books a lot but this is the first time I've ever been able to write something as a team. Because my day job is writing books, that's all I do all day, is write books.

But apart from being a national treasure Chris has another day job. Just in case you didn't know, Chris, what's your day job?

CH: Well, I've kind of retired from cycling now, so I used to race professionally on the track at the Olympic Games. But now I design bikes and I test bikes and I design cycling clothing, and I do a bit of motorsport, and I do lots of different things really. And that's part of the fun, I don't have a job title any more. I do lots of different things.

JN: Sport though. Sport.

CH: Sport is the main things, yes.

JN: But basically you're a super speedy cyclist, that's what you're famous for.

CH: That's what I used to do for many years, yes.

JN: Just like Fergus, or more importantly just like Fergus' dreams of being... Because when we start the books Fergus isn't a super speedy cyclist at all. Who else here dreams about being someone else? Yes, with the blue shirt, what's your name?

Boy1: Aiden.

JN: Aiden. Who do you dream about being?

Boy1: Neymar.

JN: Neymar; who's that?

Boy1: A footballer.

JN: A footballer, I knew there'd be a footballer here. There's always a footballer. Why do you want to be a footballer? Is it the sport of the money?

Boy1: The sport.

JN: Good!

CH: Good answer.

JN: I'm glad to hear it! Chris, do you ever dream about being someone else?

CH: Not so much now. I used to dream...when I was a wee boy I used to dream of being Scotland captain for rugby. So I played rugby at school and when I was a wee boy Gavin Hastings was the captain. So I suppose I wanted to be Gavin Hastings when I was eight, nine, ten years of age. And he actually came to our school to one of the rugby training sessions once, and that was amazing to meet your hero.

JN: So not actually a cyclist first of all.

CH: Not a cyclist, no.

JN: No, a rugby player. But still sport.

CH: All kinds of sports, yeah.

JN: I do, I still dream about being other people all the time, which is why I write books you get to pretend to be other people all day. It's what's so exciting about being a

writer. And Fergus dreams about being other people because he feels just like I did, when I was about your age, that my life was a bit dull.

And Fergus lives in a pretty small flat above his grandpa's junk shop. They don't have that much money, and so he spends all his time dreaming about being his hero Steve "Spokes" Sullivan, he's a super speedy cyclist. And he would like to be just like him one day, except he needs one thing to start off, and that is a super speedy bike. But he doesn't have one.

Chris, do you want to say what happens at the beginning of the book?

CH: Well, at the beginning of the book Fergus is about to turn nine, and he's hoping for his birthday to get a Sullivan Swift. It's a brand new exciting bike he's been hoping for, and there's a little picture of it there, for a long time. And when he comes down on his birthday morning there's a bike shape present waiting for him to open up.

And he unwraps it and it's not the Sullivan Swift. It's his dad's old second-hand bike, it's a bit rusty, it looks a bit rubbish to be honest and he's actually a bit disappointed. But his grandpa says don't worry, we can fix it up, and we can put a bit of work into it and we can make it a little bit better.

JN: And it's more than a little bit better actually because he goes on the bike and he tries to ride it, and he's a bit rickety because he's not ridden in a long time, because he's outgrown his old bike. But the more he goes, he builds up speed, and when he builds up super speed something amazing happens. Does anyone know what happens? Can anyone tell us what happens to him when he rides the bike super fast?

CH: Any ideas?

JN: What could happen do you reckon? Yes, on the front row?

Boy2: He falls down the hill.

JN: He rolls down a hill? He goes down a hill at one point, but no. I'll tell you what happens. He flies, doesn't he?

CH: He does.

JN: And not just in this world, he flies into another world, a magic land called Nevermore. And Nevermore is nothing like this world in many senses, because it's full of dragons, there's a princess. There is a well of everlasting torment, there's a swamp of certain death. It's very different.

So the books are a little bit about magic. There's also about hard work as well because back in the real world Fergus is cycling and trying really, really hard to become a brilliant cyclist to get on a team called Wallace's winners. And that's the third thing that the books are about, they are about teamwork.

Teams are super important in whatever you do, aren't they? But especially so in sport. Chris, how important is a team in cycling?

CH: Well, teamwork for me was crucial, and it wasn't just about my team mates who I raced with and trained with, it was about the people that you didn't see behind the scenes. So we had coaches, we had managers, we had physiotherapists who kept you on the bike and sorted injuries. We had people who did all kinds of things to make sure that we were fit and healthy and ready to go on the race day.

JN: So teams, it's not just about the people who actually doing the sport themselves, it's the behind the scenes people, which I think I'm more of a behind the scenes person.

So Fergus has a team as well, you can see him up here on the screen. That's Fergus with his hands waving in the air. Now, he's the number one rider and he's sort of in charge of dreaming big really. That's his biggest thing.

Then you've got Daisy as well, she's right on the end with the big hair and her arms sticking right out. She's brave and a bit feisty, she's a little bit like me. And she's full of facts, isn't she? She knows everything there is to know about bicycles, because she's not allowed to ride a bike at the beginning of the book because her mum is so scared she'll fall off and hurt herself. So instead she's read about them instead and has learnt about bikes that way.

In the middle there, the very tall lanky one, he's called Calamity. Now he doesn't look like it but he is very graceful on a bike, he's super, super speed. And then down the front with the spotty helmet is Mini and she is like the stunt girl. She can do all sorts of tricks.

And so they're the cycling team but also in that picture, can you see the man at the back with the big eyebrows? That's Grandpa Herc. He's important, isn't he? What does he do?

CH: He's very important. Well, he's got a junk shop that Fergus lives above with his mum and he helps him fix up the bike. So when he gets this old bike that was his dad's and it's all old and rusty and not very good, he fixes it for him and he makes it into this special bike. And he's there to run the team and because they decide to...without giving too much aware of the plot, they set up their own team and he

helps them to do that. And although he's behind the scenes he's crucial in making it all happen.

JN: He's Mr Fix It basically. And there's someone else, or something else in the picture I should say. And down at the bottom there you can probably just see, it's a little dog. He's called Chimp. And sometimes he's a bit of a nuisance, but basically he is their biggest fan. And we know how much fans are important in sport. So Grandpa Herc and Chimp are the behind the scenes bit of the team basically.

CH: Yeah.

JN: But the important thing about them all is they've all got these different talents, these different things that make them special. And individually on their own they're good. But together they make a winning team. They need each other basically to succeed, just like me and Chris did really to write this book, because we couldn't have done it on our own.

CH: No, certainly not.

JN: I write books all day. I've written...I think I'm on my 58th at the moment, but I might be wrong because maths is no longer my strong point, I might have miscounted. And there's loads more in my head. If you sliced open my head, don't try it at home, inside it's like a big soup of story. It's full of characters and settings and funny names which sounds gross, but it's brilliant inside my head, I tell you.

Do I look like I win many bicycle races though? No. I honestly don't. I do love riding a bike but I ride it very, very slow. I think you can see it now, that's my bicycle. It was built in 1967, so it's coming up for...using my maths now, it's coming up for 50 years old.

CH: Wow.

JN: So it's even older than I am. It's a very old bike. I blame the bike for me not being very good at cycling.

I do ride it up and down the canal. I do what I like to call pootling, which means going fairly slowly. I can ride with no hands, that sometimes ends in me falling off as well which is another reason I'm not on a cycling team. Luckily though I know someone who's pretty good at cycling and all things bikes. Chris, how many races have you won?

CH: How many races have I won? Well, I've won six Olympic gold medals, I've won 11 world championship gold medals, and I've won...I don't know how many races I've won outside of that because I've been doing it for so long. I started racing when I was seven years of age, and I did BMX racing until I was 14, and then I did track cycling for the rest of my life. So I've raced for so many years I can't actually remember exactly how many.

JN: You just don't bother counting.

CH: I remember the important ones though, the Olympics.

JN: Yes.

CH: Yeah, six of those.

JN: It's like me and books, honestly. It's almost exactly the same! What does it feel like winning a race?

CH: It's amazing and it's one of these things that you... Do you know what's strange? It's the same feeling I got when I was seven years of age winning my first BMX race was the same feeling when I won Olympic gold medal.

JN: Really?

CH: It's the same excitement, the same nervousness before the start, because you don't know you're going to win, and that's part of the excitement of it. And when you do and you work really hard and you practice and you prepare for the race and you do the perfect performance, and it works out, it's amazing. It's great. But it doesn't always work out though.

JN: But there's another feeling, isn't there? Because it's not all about winning. What does it feel like... I can go quite fast on my bike down hill. What does it feel like going at the speed you go at?

CH: Oh, well that's what got me into cycling. What really attracted me to cycling in the first place was the sensation of speed. That feeling of when you go really fast, whether it's down a hill, on a velodrome, around the corner, mounting biking, whatever, I love that sensation of speed. And I think it's the adrenaline, it's the excitement, it's a little bit of fear as well because you're always worried you might fall off. But if you wear your helmet and you make sure you know where the brakes are, then you'll be alright.

But yeah, it wasn't just the speed, it was also jumping. I used to love building ramps in my back garden and the feeling of just getting your wheels off the ground.

JN: Almost literally flying then!

CH: Literally, well, yeah. Even if it was just an inch off the ground, that's what I wanted to try and do.

JN: But it's that feeling of being free and flying. I get that when I'm writing as well, when writing's going really well. It just feels amazing like that and we kind of wanted to capture that. Even though we do very different things I think that's one thing...

CH: Yeah.

JN: ...we have in common.

So you've got one person here, brain full of words, really not great at riding a bicycle. Then you've got the best cyclist in the world...

CH: With a very small brain, yeah.

JN: That's very much not true. Put us together and you have...I'm not going to say you have Flying Fergus, you have the possibility of it, don't you?

CH: Yeah.

JN: Because it doesn't happen instantly, it's not about something that happens amazingly overnight. It takes a lot of hard work, doesn't it?

CH: Yeah.

JN: And it starts off very differently. The first email I got from Chris when we were first talking about doing this, I had an email and it said Chitty Chitty Bang Bang but with a bike. Has anyone seen the film Chitty Chitty Bang Bang?

You'll see the connection then. You've got a car that can fly. You've got all the bonkers equipment. You've got the grandpa who's a bit bonkers as well. It's a brilliant film.

And I've got a fun fact for you; did you know that Roald Dahl wrote the film for Chitty Chitty Bang Bang? I can see your eyes almost popping out on the front row.

CH: That's what I was like!

JN: You didn't know that either this morning...

CH: I didn't know that, no.

JN: ...did you?

CH: Because Roald Dahl, he's one of my favourite, or he was my favourite author as a child.

JN: And me too.

CH: And I still love his books.

JN: And he was, yeah, an absolute inspiration when I was your age.

But actually it was another film that inspired you to first start cycling, wasn't it?

CH: It was. It was actually the film ET. Have any of you seen the film ET? Oh, loads of you!

JN: Yes.

CH: Brilliant! Well, you'll remember the scene, it's not actually the scene...it's two scenes really. The first part was the scene where he flies into the sky with ET in the basket on the front, and that was a cool scene. But also the bit at the end where they're going over the jumps, around the corners, getting chased by the police on their BMX bikes. I'd never seen a BMX bike before and that was the first thing that really got me into BMX racing.

JN: And it's a film that I love to, and Chris told me that when we first met. Ping, I had a lightbulb moment. Does anyone know what a lightbulb moment is? Yes, in the back row there.

Boy3: It's where you get this sudden image or sudden idea...

JN: Yes!

Boy3: ...but it's like a good idea.

JN: It is. It's like someone has switched a light on in your head and you can see that idea really, really clearly for the first time. And the image of a boy on a flying bike was one that was really strong for both of us. And we couldn't stop talking, could we?

And you told me another story that day, you told me about your very first bike. Because I'd imagined that Chris' first bike was a super speedy very flash racing bike. It wasn't, was it?

CH: It wasn't, no. It was actually a little bit like Fergus, it was a bike that was second-hand, my parents bought it from a jumble sale for £5 and my dad resprayed it black and he put BMX stickers on it and changed the handlebars and the grips, and I got it for my birthday. And I was amazed by it, I loved it, and it was fantastic. Although it wasn't an expensive bike it was all I wanted really. It was fantastic.

JN: And I think that's another message we wanted to say as well, it's not about flash equipment and it's not about being born a hero or being born to be famous. It's something that can happen.

I'd never set out wanting to be a writer when I was your age, I just wanted to be in a book. Being in a book is so much more exciting. I wanted to be George in the Famous Five. Has anyone read the Famous Five? Yeah, a few of you have.

It's about a bunch of...there's four of them and a dog, and they go off being detectives, and they solve all these crime mysteries that adults couldn't possibly solve, and I wanted to be that. Obviously I didn't turn out to be a girl in a crime solving gang. I ended up writing because my life didn't turn out like that. I didn't turn out to be a super heroine, unlike Chris.

ET was your first inspiration but later on you were inspired by a real life cyclist, weren't you?

CH: Yes, I was. I don't know if any of you have heard of a cyclist called Graeme Obree? And he was a Scottish cyclist and he was world champion back in the early to mid-1990s. And he didn't have this huge support team behind him, he was actually pretty much doing it on his own. He built his own bikes out of scrap metal and bits of washing machine parts. And he came up with a different style of riding on the bike.

And he was world champion, he was from...not far from here, he was from Irvine. And at that time to have someone from Scotland who was a world champion in cycling was a massive inspiration to me. But the point was that he made it happen himself. He worked so hard and he didn't have lots of money, he didn't have lots of backing. But he made it happen and he was the person that made me think well, maybe I could be better than I am just now. Maybe not as good as Graham, but maybe I could become a Scottish champion or a British champion or beyond that. And he was incredible. And he's still my hero to this day.

JN: And he's now one of mine as well. Chris, I'd never heard of him because as I say, I'm not really a bike person. But Chris told me about him in the meeting and it was another lightbulb moment, an absolutely inspiration. The idea of washing machine parts.

And it's the fact that he wasn't rich but he was really resourceful and he worked really, really hard, and that was another important message that we wanted to get in the book, that it's not the overnight success, you have to work. Chris, how much practice do you have to put in when you're cycling?

CH: When I was training I would be training for six hours a day, six days a week, and this was for year after year. And there was no guarantee of winning. It wasn't as if your coach just said if you do this you'll definitely win. You never knew that you were going to win or come second or third or wherever.

But you did the best you could. And I suppose that's what I've always tried to do and what my parents told to me, my grandparents told to me, just to try and be the best that I could be at whatever it was I chose to do. And it doesn't mean to say you're going to win, but it's just about giving it your all, committing and being as good as you can be.

JN: And what happens if you didn't bother with the practice?

CH: Well, if I didn't practice, it wasn't like I was born a cyclist. I wasn't somebody who was great at cycling from an early age, it took me a long time to get better and better. And it was the same in all sports. I loved all kinds of sports, I mean at school as well and studying. I was good but not brilliant. And I learnt from an early age if I worked hard I would get better results. But if I stopped, if I didn't train, if I didn't do my homework, if I didn't study, all the results would drop off very quickly.

JN: It's exactly the same with writing. I write every day and I've written every day probably since I was about 17 or 18. And you get better and better and better.

CH: I think it takes time as well. That's the thing.

JN: It does.

CH: You don't just get good at something. You try something once or twice, you're not very good at it. Sometimes you think well, I'm not very good at this and you just put it away. But if you keep working at it, no matter what it is, you will get better if you persevere.

JN: You said something very important to me that I kept in my head from that first day. Chris said if I didn't work hard I'd just be a fella with a fancy bike. And that to me is another little thing that's stuck in my head. And after that I was beginning to get all the seeds of the story together, weren't we? Because we had the idea of working really, really hard, we had Graham Obree and his washing machine parts to make a bike. We had your first bike from the junk shop.

CH: Yeah.

JN: We had ET, the image of Elliott flying on a bicycle. And we're beginning to get a story. Then we needed a setting and that was down to you really, wasn't it?

CH: Yeah, well, it's loosely based on Edinburgh, my hometown. It's a town a bit like Edinburgh and there's lots of name places in there which are important to me or important to my cycling career I suppose. I learnt to ride my bike at a place called Napier College. It's now called Napier University. And it was a big open concrete space on a Sunday afternoon and that was the first time I rode a bike. I was actually six, I was quite old. A lot of kids now are learning to ride their bikes when they're four, five years of age. But I was six, and it was Napier College.

And we named Napier Street, which is where Fergus lives with his mum and his grandpa. And then there's Carnoustie Common where they go to ride their bikes and I've got family that live in Carnoustie. And named characters after...well, my son's called Callum, so...

JN: Yeah, there's a Callum in there.

CH: Yeah.

JN: Although he's Calamity now.

CH: He's Calamity, yeah, but it's little bits here and there. And even characters like Chimp, without giving too much away, when they go to Nevermore Chimp can actually talk to Fergus and you can hear what he says, and he's got an Australian accent. And my coach is Australian or was Australian, and a lot of the characters from Chimp are based on Shane.

JN: But the name Chimp, that was your idea as well...

CH: Yeah.

JN: ...and this means something in sport, doesn't it?

CH: Well, Chimp, without getting too technical, when you're really nervous or excited before the start of a race, there's a part of you that we call the chimp. And it's

about trying to control the chimp so you don't get too excited and make wrong decisions or get a bit nervous or a bit anxious before a big race. And it's called controlling your chimp. So that was the idea behind the dog being called chimp.

And other characters too, Calamity Coogan, he's a big tall lanky boy, and he's a bit awkward. And when he's not on his bike he's a bit gangly and he's always tripping over things, he's a bit accident prone. But when he gets on a bike he is the most graceful... It's like poetry in motion when you see him pedalling. He looks like he's just designed to be a cyclist.

And there's a very famous cyclist called...has anybody heard of Bradley Wiggins? You have, yeah. Quite a few of you. And he's an Olympic champion, world champion, Tour de France rider. When I first saw him he was about 14 or 15 years of age, and he was like that. Really tall, long arms, long legs, big feet. And not accident prone, but when he got on a bike for the first time, I remember watching him just thinking wow, he had some special pedalling action. He looked amazing on a bike and that's where we got the idea for Calamity Coogan.

JN: So on dry land Calamity is terrible.

CH: Yeah.

JN: Accident prone all the time.

CH: Not that Bradley was.

JN: But on a bike, perfect. So then we had the setting, we had the characters, we had the plot. So we had our story. But we didn't yet have the book. We had the word side of it, we need something else to make a book, don't we? What else do we need?

Yes, in the second row there, what's your name?

Boy4: Daniel.

JN: Daniel, what else do we need?

Boy4: A front cover.

JN: A front cover, yes. We need the pictures. Now, some people ask us if we've done our own pictures. Do we, Chris?

CH: We don't. I'd love to claim that those were our illustrations, but no. We're not great.

- JN: No.
- CH: We're not like Clare's amazing ones here.
- JN: We did try last week, we were doing an event live on stage and we had a go at doing the pictures. Chris was surprisingly good at drawing a dog.
- CH: It looked more like a horse.
- JN: A little bit.
- CH: Jo's been very kind, yeah. It was more of a horsey dog.
- JN: Stroke hippo at one point.
- CH: A hairy hippo.
- JN: I drew a stickman because that's my limit of drawing a human person. Instead we have an amazing illustrator called Clare Elsom. There she is. There's Clare, who couldn't be with us today sadly.
- CH: She's probably drawing somewhere.
- JN: She draws all the time! And she's done an amazing job, and she has absolutely loved drawing Fergus. But I'm going to tell you an illustrator's secret now. She hates drawing bicycles, which is a tricky job when the book is all about bicycles. But apparently all book illustrators hate drawing bicycles. So if you are good at drawing bicycles you've got a good career ahead of you illustrating children's books, because they're apparently, along with hands, one of the hardest things to illustrate. They all...
- CH: It's probably one of the few things I can draw actually, a bike.
- JN: Really?
- CH: Yeah.
- JN: Oh, because you know how they work.
- CH: But I can't draw the... Yeah, exactly. But I can't draw the characters.
- JN: No. I tried...when we were prepping for this book I tried drawing a bike so I could learn all the parts. It's disastrous.
- CH: I think it's only if you're really into cycling that you know all the different bits, you can make it up. But yeah.

JN: I now know exactly how a bike works, I've learnt lots.

So now you've got me with all my words, you've got Chris with his amazing cycling and Clare with her amazing art, you put us together and you finally have Flying Fergus. But it needed all three of us to make it happen. On our own we would never have been able to do it. And you've heard a lot about us. I think it's time that we proved that Sir Chris isn't just a brilliant cyclist but he can read books as well. So we're going to get him to read a little bit of the book to you.

CH: Pressure.

JN: The pressure is on now.

CH: So this part of the book is where Fergus is going to try his new bike for the first time. So he's gone into the park with Daisy and with Chimp and he's going to test run his new bike.

Ready? Daisy asked. Fergus put his foot on top of the pedal and leaned forward. Ready, he replied. On your marks, get set, go! She called. And he was off, this time with Chimp bounding and barking after him. He leaned low on the handlebars like Daisy had told him to, making himself more streamlined. He pulled his elbows in and he'd already made sure all his clothes were as tucked in as possible.

Now it was down to his legs. They were pumping furiously, he was nearly there. He pumped harder and harder. Come on he said to himself, as the grass below became a blur of mossy green. Just a little more.

Nice one, Fergus. Called Daisy. I reckon you can slow down now. But Fergus wasn't really listening and he definitely wasn't going to slow down. He was almost there, he could tell. He could feel it in his heart and in his head. He felt like Captain Gadget, zooming through the air with a jetpack strapped to his back. He felt like Spokes Sullivan soaring around the velodrome in a blur of wheels and blue team strip. Fergus closed his eyes and gave it that last shot of power. And then he felt it, the wind in his face, the vibrations in the handlebars, a soaring in his heart; he was flying, really flying. And that's when it happened.

First he stopped pedalling, and then without thinking he let his feet turn backwards on the pedals, once, twice, three times. There was a tiny flash and a sound like a crack of a faraway firework. But Fergus was too caught up in the joy of the ride to hear anything but himself. Woohoo he yelled. And opened his eyes, hoping to see Daisy cheering him to the finishing line.

But something was wrong. There was no sign of Daisy. In fact there was no sign of the park at all. Fergus looked to the left, he looked to the right and then he looked down. Oh, holy mackerel he thought to himself. And then after that... But I don't want to give too much away, but we've already said, yeah, that's when he ended up in Nevermore.

JN: In Nevermore.

CH: Hmm.

JN: The magical land.

CH: Yes.

JN: We'll leave it on that cliff-hanger for you.

JF: I think we should and I think that reading deserves a huge round of applause, don't you? [applause]

CH: Thank you.

JF: Yeah!

CH: Cheers.

JF: That was great, thank you so much. I mean I don't know about you guys and wherever you're listening, I've learnt so much. I mean George was my favourite character in the Famous Five too, I wanted to be her. She had the best fun.

JN: She was so feisty.

JF: She was. She'd get into scrapes. And controlling your chimp, I had no idea!

CH: Yeah.

JF: What a wonderful concept.

CH: It's hard to explain, but yes.

JN: I think I'm all chimp though, this is worrying.

JF: Because we all get nervous about things, don't we? But it's a really good lesson to learn how to control that technique. Oh, this is great. Now, we have lots of questions and we've got a couple of questions from some of our pupils here at Heathery Knowe. Do you want to start with your question? We'll get the microphone over to you. If you can say your name and what your question is, thank you.

Boy5: My name's Aiden and my question is did you enjoy writing in primary school?

CH: Nice to meet you, Aiden, thanks for your question. I did actually and I wasn't a big reader, I didn't do a lot of reading. But when I found a book or an author that I really liked I read the book straight the way through and then found all the different books that they've written and read them all too. And with writing, I think it was once a similar thing, once I'd got an idea or it was something that I was excited about or really into, I could write and write and write. But if I was told by the teacher to write about something I wasn't that interested in, I struggled. So I suppose for me it was about being passionate and being excited about something and really wanting to do it. And it was always sport or sporting based things that I was interested in.

Are you into writing yourself? Do you enjoy writing?

Boy5: [inaudible 29:06] imaginative writing, I more like writing like that.

CH: Creative writing. But that's the best kind. That's the most fun kind.

JF: Wonderful.

CH: Excellent, thank you.

JF: Thank you, great question.

CH: A really good question.

JF: I mean it is that thing, Chris, isn't it? I imagine when you're on the bike you enter another world of sport and it's the determination. It's the same with reading too, isn't it?

CH: Absolutely.

JF: Whole other worlds open up.

CH: It transforms you and it's an escapism and it's a way to use your imagination and use your brain. It's one of the best things about being a kid is getting to read all the kids books. I loved Roald Dahl when I was... Unless that's a question someone else is going to ask, but I loved Roald Dahl when I was younger. Has anybody read any of Roald Dahl's books?

JF: Oh, everyone!

CH: Oh, of course you have!

JF: Wow.

CH: And my favourite book was George's Marvellous Medicine. And that to me was just brilliant, I loved it. And I loved the description that he had of the grandmother saying she had a puckered up mouth like a dog's bottom, which was a bit rude. And I remember thinking I can't believe they're letting us read this for school. But that was the best, yeah.

JF: Oh fantastic.

JN: That's another thing we have in common actually, that's my favourite book as well.

CH: Yes.

JN: Children's book. And I got caught, when I was at secondary school they had a stack of them in the classroom, we were supposed to be reading Romeo and Juliet, and I'd snuck a copy under the desk. And I was reading George's Marvellous Medicine, and if you've read it you'll know, it's very, very funny. And it's almost impossible to read without laughing. And you know when you laugh so much you're crying, I was doing that in the middle of... I must have been in year nine by then. Year nine. Crying with laughter in a very serious English lesson and my teacher said you will fail your English exams and never amount to anything, Joanna. So I'm hoping he's watching today...

CH: Give him a wave.

JN: ...to prove I'm alright.

JF: He must've been thinking what's so funny about Romeo and Juliet.

CH: Yeah.

JN: Yeah.

JF: I love that story. We have another question from someone here. It's Keira in the back row. This is Keira.

Girl1: Hi, my name's Keira, and do you still cycle every day?

CH: Hi Keira. Yes, I do. I cycle whenever I can. Sometimes I'm away from home so I don't have a bike with me. But when I'm at home I still go out and I still ride for fun. And although I don't ride quite as far as I used to, I still enjoy it. And it's one of these things you can do till you're really old, even older than me. But yeah, it's...

JN: My age even!

CH: But it's great. You can use it for transport, if you're cycling to school or to your work or just out for fun, to keep fit, to see your friends. And you can race if you want to as well.

JF: Great.

CH: Good question, thank you.

JF: I'm wondering, do you cycle, Keira?

Girl1: Yes.

JF: You enjoy cycling? How often do you do it?

Girl1: Usually every week or so.

JF: Great.

CH: Good for you.

JF: Lovely, brilliant, thank you very much indeed.

CH: Thank you.

JF: In fact, we should have a show of hands, who cycles here? Oh.

CH: Lots of you.

JF: You must be... And Joanna too.

CH: And of course.

JF: Of course. Brilliant. Thank you very much indeed. Well, I've now put on my specs because so many questions have come in via Twitter. Thank you very much indeed wherever you are for sending in your Twitter questions. So here are just some of them, from Deanburn Primary. Hello! Thank you very much. This is interesting, for both of you; what was your favourite part about writing Flying Fergus? In fact we've got two questions in one. Your favourite part and who is your favourite character in the books and why?

CH: I think it was creating the characters was the most fun part.

JN: Yeah.

CH: I don't know about you?

- JN: Actually yeah, the most fun part was just sitting down with Chris and talking about bikes and all the exciting things, and coming up with stuff. And then going away and watching stuff and watching... Chris said you've got to go and watch Graham Obree winning this race, and then this race. And I watched so much cycling, and that was...yeah, the beginning bit when it's all bubbling away in your brain.
- CH: And there's no rules either, that's what's great about fiction sorry, is that you can...
- JN: Do anything.
- CH: ...go into magical kingdoms and you can have dogs that can talk to you with an Australian accent and you can do all this stuff, and it's so much fun.
- JF: That's interesting, because I imagine a lot of people watching, they'll maybe have lots of homework, maths and all those different subjects. And in a way it's lovely to be able to escape into that other world. And it must be lovely for you too with a life as you've told us, it's full of structure and training and practice, practice, practice. Was it quite liberating for you to do this?
- CH: Absolutely, it's completely different. I never thought I'd get the chance, and as we've said already, I wouldn't have had the chance had I not met Jo, because I couldn't do it on my own. And it's just...yeah, it's been a wonderful experience and it's been like nothing else I've done before. So really enjoyed it.
- JF: It's also good to try new things, isn't it? That's another lesson.
- CH: Of course. To just push yourself out of your comfort zone, do things that you think you're maybe not very good at. Because if you can get people to help you and to guide you and to coach you, then you can do things that you never thought you would.
- JF: Indeed. What about the favourite character then? I mean it's like choosing a favourite child. But is there one?
- CH: For me actually, I got asked this recently and I said Fergus, and I went away and thought about it, and I actually think chimp is probably my favourite character once you get him to Nevermore, because he's quite cheeky and he's quite funny and he's a bit of a character. But all the characters have got their own little...just the fun parts to the characters.
- JF: I just love the name Fergus I have to say, it's a great series title, Flying Fergus. But Fergus is a brilliant name.

JN: It is a lovely name, isn't it?

JF: Yeah.

CH: Who's your favourite character?

JN: I'm going to have to say I love the baddies. It's so much more fun writing a baddy than it is a good person, because you can make them really horrible. So I have to say, yeah, Wesley and Prince Waldorf are my favourite characters because they're just super nasty.

JF: Lovely, thank you very much. Hello also to Kinnaird Primary, thank you very much for joining us and getting in touch. They've asked all sorts of questions but Class 5M says Chris, any of your real life cycling experiences in the book? I guess there might have been some kind of inspiration.

CH: Yes, well, certainly the bike initially. The idea of getting an old second-hand bike and doing it up and making it special, that was from my childhood really. Racing, I suppose it was trying to get the message across that I wasn't somebody who got onto a bike as a child and was brilliant and won loads of races, and I was just really good at it and didn't have to work. So the biggest thing, the biggest message is that I had to work very hard and it took a long time, and if you work hard at whatever you want to do you'll surprise yourself at how far you can go on it.

And I dreamt of becoming Olympic champion or a world champion but I never thought it would happen, because why would it? I wasn't... In my class I wasn't even the best at all the sport or wasn't the best in Scotland as I got older or Britain. But it took me time, so that was the thing, we really wanted to get that message over that in this world where everything seems to be overnight success, instant fame, blah-blah-blah, that you do have to work at it. And you'll appreciate it more if you've had to work for it than just having it land in your lap and given to you.

JF: I think it is such an important message to reinforce that comes to sport, writing or anything you're doing. Because I think when I was your age I would think I'll try doing something, and it was what you said earlier, Chris, that you're maybe not so good at that and you would put it to one side. But actually the message coming through clearly is no, go back, keep doing it.

CH: And I think a lot of the time people can tell you that oh, you're not good at this or you're not good at that, or you are good at this. And then you listen to them and then you go in that direction because you're told well, I'm not a cyclist or I'm not a

sportsman, I'm into academics or whatever, or vice versa. So I think it's important to just try lots of things and do your best.

JF: And of course for both of you, the flying, I mean we know that you like a bit of thrills and spills, and there was a wee bit of flying for you early on with your bike as you told us.

CH: Yes, absolutely, yeah.

JF: Not quite the flying in this book. This is a good one from Sutton Road Primary, Chris, wondering if just working on the book was actually more nerve-wracking than being in an Olympic final?

CH: Well...

JF: That's a good one.

JN: Was it?

CH: It wasn't quite as nerve-wracking because Jo made it easy for me.

JF: Ah!

CH: The Olympic final, it's one moment, it's four years of training and some cases it could be your whole cycling lifetime building towards one moment. And it's over in a split second and you...

JF: I'm nervous with you even saying it to me. Control the chimp.

CH: Yeah, exactly. But yeah, writing a book, it was nerve-wracking I think when the book first came out and you're waiting to hear what people think about it. And to a certain extent we're still getting a lot of feedback now. But it's lovely when people say nice things about it and enjoy it and just to see other kids reading books and enjoying them and hopefully not just reading and being inspired to read, but also being inspired to ride their bikes afterwards too.

JF: I think we all need to know, quite a few of you have asked, have you two been out on a bike together? Come on.

JN: You did promise to come to Bath.

CH: We will.

JN: And I just said you'd hate it...

CH: Bath's a great city for cycling.

JN: ...because I do pootle. I'm so slow.

CH: But that's all I do now.

JF: You can pootle.

CH: I'm an old man now. I'm past it, I can pootle as well.

JN: It would be...honestly, I'm...

CH: We'll get you in the velodrome, I think that'll be more exciting.

JN: People run past me and laugh on my bike, it's... Yes.

CH: It's not about the speed.

JF: Exactly, it's not about the speed, is it? I mean you guys...

CH: No. But we'll get you in the velodrome because everyone loves...

JN: I would love that.

CH: ...the velodrome.

JN: I'd love it.

CH: Yeah.

JF: Fantastic. Well, look, thank you very much. Time has flown, a bit like Fergus' bike, it absolutely has. It almost time to say goodbye. Oh!

CH: Oh.

JF: That's a shame, it is. But we've learnt so much, I've really enjoyed it. Thank you very much indeed to Joanna and Chris for joining us today. I think it's been just so interesting to learn about the writing process, and as the guys have said over and over again, the benefits of working together. You don't have to do it alone, you can do some activities alone, but it really is good to feel free to ask questions and just get help. You don't know how to do everything at once, and just that message from Chris; keep practising, keep practising, whatever it is you will get better.

I think we do need one final round of applause before we say goodbye. Go on!
[applause] Thank you.

Before we go though I need your help, we all need your help with something else because if you have a book that you love and would like to share then BBC

Scotland's lab would love to hear about it. And you can do it in all sorts of ways, you can do it by video, send us a video, take a photograph of the book, draw a picture, write a review, whatever you fancy, all those ways are possible. We want to know what book you would like to share and why. We know about Joanna and Chris and George's marvellous medicine being a favourite book.

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And that's true, isn't it, George's Marvellous Medicine, the number one book for you guys?

CH: Yeah, for me it was, yeah.

JN: Yeah.

JF: Brilliant, thank you very much. This event will be available to watch online of course at the scottishbooktrust.com/authorslive website. Look out for that of course you can watch all the previous ones as well and sign up to watch future broadcasts. We will be back very soon with another one. But from me Janice Forsyth, from Sir Chris Hoy, Joanna Nadin and all our audience, goodbye and another huge round of applause. [applause] Bye!

End of transcript