



TOPIC OF THE MONTH: LOUISE WARD

MAY 2008

This month CEC Online speaks to Louise Ward, an Englishwoman who has been living in Vorarlberg for a number of years. Louise talks to us about the South of England, accents and Queen's English...

SP: Hello, this is Sophie Paratte for CEC Online. Today I'm sitting together with Louise Ward in Feldkirch.

Hi Louise!

LW: Hi.

SP: So, as you might know, the James Bond crew will be filming in Feldkirch tonight but unfortunately, you won't be able to spy on Daniel Craig through your window...

LW: Shame!

SP: Or maybe you will see him if you have been cast as an extra...

LW: No, unfortunately not!

SP: Jokes aside though, I guess you know that most of the technical crew is English.

LW: I didn't know that. I thought maybe they'd employ a local crew or employ people locally everywhere they filmed, but it's quite interesting so many English people are discovering Feldkirch.

SP: And if you're a James Bond fan or feel like speaking English with some of your fellow citizens this is a really good occasion.

LW: Yeah, definitely. I mean I think we're planning to go down and just have a look and see what's going on a little bit – hoping to spot Daniel Craig of course. But yeah, maybe if there's some of the crew there, we can have a chat and yeah it'd be quite interesting to see what's going on down there, definitely. And obviously I'm a James Bon fan because every English person should be a big James Bond fan, I think.

SP: OK. Back to you now, though. I believe you're from the South of England.

LW: Yes, that's right. I'm from a place called Ipswich, which is I would say about an hour north east of London and it's around twenty-five kilometres from the coast. That's where I grew up, but I haven't lived there for many years, I left there when I was about nineteen and moved about another hour north of there to a place called Norwich - but that's still in the South of England, really.

SP: Did you study in Norwich?

LW: Yes, that's where I went to university and I ended up staying there 'cause it's a –



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such a nice – it's a really beautiful city. I'd say it's quite undiscovered, really. Not many people that visit England go to Norwich. They tend to go Oxford, Cambridge, York, Canterbury, but I would say Norwich is a city very much like those – with a beautiful cathedral and it's a university town, so you've got a good mix of different cultures and backgrounds in the city and yes, it's very beautiful but relatively unknown, really.

SP: So, what kind of English do they speak down there?

LW: A country bumpkin.

SP: Is that the official term?

LW: I don't think it's the official term, but that's what most people'd call us I think from that part of the world. Norfolk and Suffolk – I'm originally from Suffolk and then Norwich is in Norfolk – would actually be called East Anglia. And most people think that this is just one accent, but there's a local rivalry between Norwich and Ipswich. We would say, we have very different accents in those two towns. People from the north of England would perhaps think that I came from London. Because I have lived in London and I've lived in so many different places, I think my accent has been watered down quite a lot over the years, to the point where I just have a "Southern accent". But when I speak to my mum, for example on the phone, I slip back to my country accent, I think a little bit – my real Suffolk accent.

SP: Non-native English speakers tend to believe that British English is easier to learn than American English, because they probably think that everybody speaks what we call "Queen's English".

LW: Yeah... I'm always pushed to put my finger on exactly what "Queen's English" is. It's difficult to define. I suppose you just have to listen to an interview with the Queen, I guess to find out, but I think there're so many different *Englishes* if you like, from different parts of the world – from the north, from the south, obviously people from Wales have a very different accent, from Ireland and there isn't really one accent and I think people who learn English are naturally going to pick up the accent from their teacher. My boyfriend, Paul, comes from the north of England and he's also an English teacher and I've had students who he taught before, who've actually corrected my English, my pronunciation because they say: "no, you should say it like this" because they've got his northern accent and they think the way I speak is not the Queen's English, is wrong. So yeah, I would say there's not, it's very difficult to define what the right English to learn is. It's more important that you can actually communicate.

SP: I bet most of your students do understand you very well, though. Both as a teacher and a native English speaker, you must probably have had to learn to speak more slowly.

LW: Yes definitely, although I've been teaching in various ways for many years. I worked as a customer service's trainer and then I re-trained as a primary school teacher before I came here and started teaching English. So, I've always – when you're explaining things as a teacher you have to make sure that you're speaking clearly. So I've always had that background before I started teaching English. But yes, I think you do have to learn to speak more slowly and clearly and to think about the phrases that you use – try not to use too many idioms. I think that is a big complaint in business, from a lot of people who



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have to use English as a second language, that when English people or Americans speak to them, they tend to use a lot of idioms and local phrases that aren't international. So you know, as an English teacher, you're a bit more aware of that I think, when you're speaking.

SP: Apart from teaching, you also like living in Vorarlberg?

LW: Yes,, I love it! I've been in this area for about eight years now and I really, I think Feldkirch is a very beautiful town and there's lots of other nice places around here. We're so close to Lake Constance, which is fantastic. There're the mountains and yeah, when I sit in my flat and look out of the window, the scenery here, I think it's wonderful. We're almost an undiscovered treasure, really, in the middle of Europe. Not so many people know about it and I'm quite glad not too many tourists come here, actually.

SP: So, that means that feel totally integrated here and that you can't imagine going back to England.

LW: Yeah, I do really. I still feel quite English, but when I go back to England I feel like a foreigner – more and more so now. The more times I go home, each time I feel a bit more removed from England and more European, I guess. I mean, I've got English friends here, but equally, we've got Austrian friends as well. So, yeah, I would say we're quite well integrated. It's difficult when you teach English as a job to practise the German too much, but that's another thing I enjoy being able to communicate now in another language and to enjoy speaking in German.

SP: Especially because German is not exactly the easiest language to learn.

LW: No, it's not. Actually, I learnt some German at school. It was offered – the second language in England most people learn is French – and then you can choose maybe a third language. And at my school there was nothing else on offer, except for German so I thought, well I'll try some German. And I studied it for about four years at school and when I came here at first, I thought I wouldn't have any problems at all. But one I hadn't spoken German for about fifteen years, and secondly it wasn't the German that I learnt at school that people were speaking here! So I had a few problems to even recognise it as German at first, but the longer I've been here the more I've learnt and I try and read in German and try and practise when I can – I'm a little bit lazy actually about reading and watching TV in German. But I've come to the point now, where I've been here long enough to communicate and get by and do everything I need to do: read the papers and so on...

SP: Excellent. Then I wish you good luck in Vorarlberg and thank you very much for your time.

LW: You're welcome. Thank you