

# **BLINKIN' 'ELL**

**Stevie Fisher's**  
Roughest Ride

# BLINKIN' ELL

Stevie Fisher's  
Roughest Ride

S T E V I E F I S H E R

EDITED BY BROUGH SCOTT

*The proceeds of this book will be shared between  
the Stevie Fisher Trust, The Injured Jockeys Fund  
and The Countryside Alliance.*

First published by Pitch Publishing, 2021



Pitch Publishing  
A2 Yeoman Gate  
Yeoman Way  
Worthing  
Sussex  
BN13 3QZ

[www.pitchpublishing.co.uk](http://www.pitchpublishing.co.uk)  
[info@pitchpublishing.co.uk](mailto:info@pitchpublishing.co.uk)

© 2021, Stevie Fisher

Every effort has been made to trace the copyright. Any oversight will be rectified in future editions at the earliest opportunity by the publisher.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, sold or utilised in any form or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the Publisher.

A CIP catalogue record is available for this book  
from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-83950-073-2

Typesetting and origination by Pitch Publishing

Printed and bound by Replika Press



## Contents

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>8</b>
-----------------	----------

*Prologue*

<b>LUCKY? HOW LUCKY?</b>	<b>12</b>
--------------------------	-----------

## PART ONE

*Chapter 1*

<b>THE BOY IN WESTON</b>	<b>18</b>
--------------------------	-----------

*Chapter 2*

<b>STABLE TIME</b>	<b>26</b>
--------------------	-----------

*Chapter 3*

<b>APPRENTICESHIP</b>	<b>36</b>
-----------------------	-----------

*Chapter 4*

<b>ANN BLAKER AND LATER</b>	<b>47</b>
-----------------------------	-----------

*Chapter 5*

<b>CARS, FISHES AND SPANIELS</b>	<b>56</b>
----------------------------------	-----------

*Chapter 6*

<b>BECOMING THE BEST</b>	<b>61</b>
--------------------------	-----------

*Chapter 7*

<b>LADS, LESSONS AND LUCRE</b>	<b>70</b>
--------------------------------	-----------

---

---

*Chapter 8*

**COMPETITIONS** 76

*Chapter 9*

**HUNTING AND DRAGGING** 94

*Chapter 10*

**A SHOE FOR A DATE** 104

*Chapter 11*

**PARACHUTING** 124

*Chapter 12*

**XMAS TREES** 129

*Chapter 13*

**HUNTIN', SHOOTIN' AND FISHING** 134

*Chapter 14*

**SKI CLUB** 145

*Chapter 15*

**FOUR-LEGGED JO DAWES** 152

*Chapter 16*

**RACING SADDLE** 161

*Chapter 17*

**GOING RACING** 169

*Chapter 18*

**OVERLOAD AT THE OVAL** 182

*Chapter 19*

**PUSHING OUR LUCK** 187

---

---

---

---

*Chapter 20*

**40<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY** 193

*Chapter 21*

**A WARNING** 199

*PART TWO*

*Chapter 22*

**AFTER THE STROKE** 204

*Chapter 23*

**MOVING ON** 212

*Chapter 24*

**DAILY LIVING** 222

*Chapter 25*

**EYE GAZE** 228

*Chapter 26*

**LOCKED DOWN** 233

*Chapter 27*

**A BIRTHDAY SURPRISE** 242

*Chapter 28*

**ASCOT ON THE ALGARVE** 248

*Acknowledgements* 254

---

---



## FOREWORD

---

Stevie Fisher always knew the risks of burning the candle at both ends. That's why he wanted to call this book 'I Told You It Would End In Tears.'

What follows is both a celebration of life and a cautionary tale, but above all it's a miracle in its making. What it absolutely is not is any sort of 'agony volume' although there is no disguising the shock on first meeting. For the body in the chair looks like Stephen Hawking on a bad day. On 5 August 2014, Stevie had a massive stroke which left him with 'Locked In Syndrome', officially 'pseudocoma' or, easier 'LIS.' He is totally paralysed and can only communicate by blinking his left eyelid.

When you meet him you don't know where to look, so you look round the walls. On them you see the very different figure of Stevie in his full-blown pomp, roaring home a winner at the Cheltenham Festival. You see the boy from Weston-super-Mare

who fell in love with horses giving holiday rides on Brean Beach. The straying, overweight youth who found his metier in farriery and became its most award-winning apprentice. The bold rider jumping massive fences alongside horse world elite with the Mid Surrey Drag. The life and soul of every party from barbecue to ski chalet. The man of whom you want to disapprove but whose energy and charm and enthusiasm embraces friendship everywhere it goes.

At first the contrast is a wistful one, but then something happens that is both eerie and comic and, when fully understood, quite wonderfully life affirming. By blinking his eye-gaze on to one of the commands on his computer screen, Stevie can set off a strange computer voice to relate one of the stories you will read below. That's when it hits. For while the words may come in deadpan 'speak your weight' style delivery, you suddenly realise the content is that of the bold, bawdy and brilliant figure in the photos. The mind imprisoned in that headpiece is still that of the man on the wall.

He is not Jean-Dominique Bauby, the sophisticated editor-in-chief of *Elle* magazine, whose beautiful and allegoric *The Diving Bell*





and *The Butterfly* caused such a best-selling sensation when it chronicled his own 'locked in' predicament in 1997. Stevie also cannot be Kate Allatt whose own book *Running Free* charts her astonishing and inspiring recovery from the trap out of which Stevie can never escape.

What he actually is remains just as remarkable as both those heroes. He is proof that even the hardest and stoniest of places can

never fully extinguish the wondrous force that is the human spirit. This book, all 33,000 words of it, has been written blink by blink, letter by letter, by a farrier whose only detailed leisure reading had been the form book. I have corrected some spellings and helped with a bit of punctuation but otherwise the words, the challenge, the adventures, the fun and disaster are all Stevie's – and that's not forgetting the blame!

So come with me through Stevie's story and prepare, as we should in all of life, to both laugh, and cry – with a special emphasis on the former.

**Brough Scott,**

April 2021





## *Prologue*

# LUCKY? HOW LUCKY?

That day I had played golf with my friend Rick Gurney.

Rick was probably my best mate. We used to have such a laugh and spend a lot of time together. He had a lovely family and I knew them all very well. We were that close that, when his wife Abi had a surprise birthday party, they thought it best if they didn't tell me as well.

I had worked hard for 15 years, had good lads that worked for me, and on some days could get away with just doing mornings. I was shoeing for Gary Moore, a very good trainer with a very good horse called Sire de Grugy I always shod myself, who won the Queen Mother Champion Chase at the Cheltenham Festival. I had a lovely house, a fantastic and pretty wife, great mates, a nice car and the money to do what I liked, within reason. But because I didn't know what within reason meant, I did pretty much what I liked.

Although we both actually ran several successful enterprises, Rick and I liked many of the same things



horse racing, drinking, betting, eating, casinos and generally not working. Rick says when we went racing he used to take me for the best curry I had ever had, but I was always too pissed to remember it!

One day, on the way home from Charing point-to-point, with drink taken, we agreed that we were both overweight and had a bet of a grand

*Best mates:  
me and  
Richard Gurney.*

on who could lose the most weight by the time of our birthdays. These were 9 and 10 May – about eight weeks away. I won the grand by losing over three stone. On the last day I lost nine pounds by dehydrating myself and by having some piss pills that make you wee. I had learnt about them when I needed to lose weight for my racing.

We were quite evenly matched at golf. We were both crap. Afterwards we went for lunch at the Griffin Pub in Fletching. Chicken Caesar was my favourite, but all the food was pretty good. We knew the landlord of the Griffin, James Pullan, very well, and he would often have lunch with us. But if he did, the wine bill could get out of hand.

In good weather lunch at the Griffin was always outside, otherwise indoors by the fire. That day, Rick says, was very hot, but I kept complaining of the cold. So obviously something was brewing.

That night I walked down the stairs and my left arm was feeling a bit funny. By the time I got to the bottom, I knew I was having a stroke. I called up the stairs to my wife Geraldine to call an ambulance. I went into the downstairs spare room and sat on the bed. It was about 2 am, Tuesday, 5 August 2014.

I was found a bed in the intensive care unit of Haywards Heath Hospital. I think I was drifting in and out of consciousness, because I remember seeing people but nothing made much sense. For a few weeks I was kept in a coma, and it was then that I had the most real dreams. In those dreams I was finding it too hard to move. I stayed there for a good few weeks, I think.

When I first woke up, on the ITU, I was convinced I had shot someone in a bizarre accident. I was breathing through a tracheostomy – a tube in my neck. I knew I had suffered a massive stroke, as I remembered it happening at home, and I knew that my wife was coming to see me each day. But my brain was a lot slower, and my short-term memory was pretty shot. For a while I would struggle to concentrate on anything. I could hear the chaps in the other beds – one lad called Terry had backed Leicester City to win the Premiership at 5,000-1. I hope he did the same the following season, because they won it at the same price!

I could hear OK, and was very aware of what was happening around me. But I couldn't move or speak. I had Locked-In Syndrome. The doctor told me that I would either get better or stay like this.

To begin with it seemed as though the people around me were confident that I would get better. I was seeing a physio every day, and an occupational therapist would come and work on my hands. It is hard to say how I felt inside, as I was on very strong anti-depressant drugs. I think at this point I thought I would recover, but at the time it didn't seem to matter.

