

LONDON WRITERS

KEN FOLLETT, 63

CABLE STREET MURAL, SHADWELL

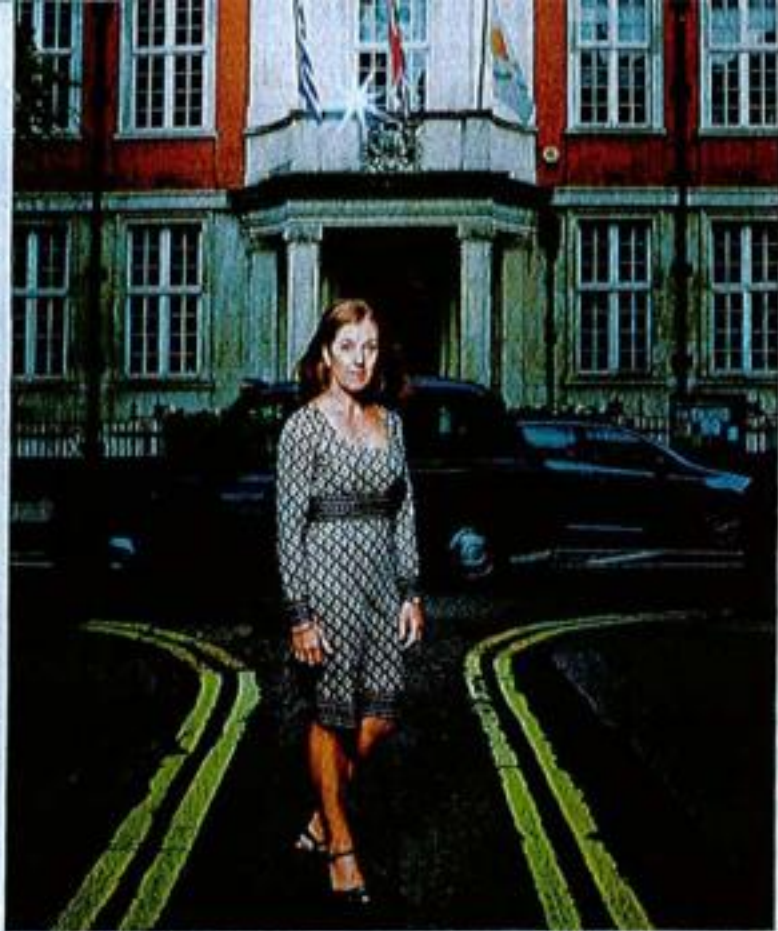
*Best known for writing thrillers and historical novels, Ken has sold over 130 million copies of his novels worldwide. His bestselling *The Pillars of the Earth*, published in 1989, was recently adapted for TV and produced by Ridley Scott. He lives in Soho with his wife Barbara.*

'On 4 October 1936 this was the scene of the Battle of Cable Street when the British Fascists were planning on marching into Stepney, which at the time was 50 per cent Jewish. Hundreds of thousands of East Enders descended on to the street to block their route and when the police tried to clear a path for the Fascists, residents built a barricade out of old junk here and eventually defeated the Fascists. The British Fascist movement never really recovered from that.

The scenes are depicted in this mural and the action takes up a chapter in my latest book, *Winter of the World*. When I was writing I would come here with a notebook and camera and visualise the barricades, the police with their horses and people throwing furniture out of the windows. East Enders in those days didn't have much love for the police.

I write from my home in Soho where I live with my wife Barbara [a retired Labour MP]. It's great being a writer living in London because there's always something happening on the street. And Barbara provides me with inspiration: I'm famous for my strong female characters and she's certainly one of those.' *Winter of the World is out now (Macmillan, £20)*

'I WOULD COME HERE WITH A NOTEBOOK AND CAMERA AND VISUALISE THE BARRICADES'



VICTORIA HISLOP, 53

THE HELLENIC CENTRE, MARYLEBONE

*Driven by her passion for Greece, Victoria has written three novels and a number of short stories set in that country. *The Island* was a bestseller in 2005 and has sold over two million copies worldwide. Victoria lives in Kent with her husband Ian (broadcaster and editor of *Private Eye*) and their two children.*

'I come here for Greek lessons with a teacher called Thomas Vogiatzis, who inspired one of my characters, but I wouldn't like to say which. At the moment most of what I write is set in Greece, so when I'm not actually there, this is a second home for me.

I'm a household name in Greece and get recognised everywhere I go, which is weird because that's not the case in the UK. This summer in Crete, where we have a house, people kept sending over bottles of wine to our table in restaurants. The Greeks are very generous even when they have nothing.

My love affair with Greece started when I was 16. I never had a Greek lover but that hasn't stopped me writing romances. I haven't had a lot of romances in my life because I met Ian at university, but that's the fun of being a novelist, you write about other people's experiences.

I'll show Ian a penultimate proof; I like to get it nearly finished before he sees it. It's a bit like getting somebody to taste a cake mixture; I'd rather they had a slice when it was finished. Not that baking and Ian are particularly compatible, but he is like my testing blade when you stick in a knife to see if the sponge is cooked. I don't like to show him too much otherwise he might as well do it.' *The Last Dance and Other Stories is published on 8 November (Headline Review, £12.99)*



The top ten novels about London

Chosen by David Sexton

CHARLES DICKENS
GREAT EXPECTATIONS

DANIEL DEFOE
A JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR

GEORGE AND WEEDON GROSSMITH
THE DIARY OF A NOBODY

MURIEL SPARK
A FAR CRY FROM KENSINGTON

JOHN LANCHESTER
MR PHILLIPS

IAN MCEWAN
SATURDAY

GEORGE GISSING
THE NETHER WORLD

ARNOLD BENNETT
RICEYMAN STEPS

WILL SELF
HOW THE DEAD LIVE

ANITA BROOKNER
STRANGERS

