Collected Papers 1998-2010 on

MALCOLM SAVILLE, CHILDREN'S WRITER:

By Stephen Bigger, Malcolm Saville Archive.

© Stephen Bigger 2010

Collected Papers 1998-2010 on
MALCOLM SAVILLE, CHILDREN'S WRITER:

By Stephen Bigger, Malcolm Saville Archive.
© Stephen Bigger 2010

Note: All versions are revised editions of the original texts by Stephen Bigger which appeared in *Acksherley!* the magazine of the Malcolm Saville Society or Annual Gathering programmes. These are free to members. Papers here have been revised in 2010. See http://www.witchend.com and http://malcolmesavillearchive.blogspot.com for further information.

PREFACE.

Part 1. The Emerging Author
1. D J Desmond: the Anonymous Author. 2005
Malcolm Saville wrote occasionally under this name, and these works are discussed.
2. Malcolm Saville at My Garden Magazine. 2005
3. Apprenticeship: Malcolm Saville and David Severn 2003
The literary relationship between two beginning writers.
4. The Influence of J M Barrie on Malcolm Saville 2004
Malcolm Saville was fond of Dear Brutus by J M Barrie and this influenced his characterisation. 2004.
5. Did Malcolm Saville know W.E. Johns, author of Biggles? 2009.

Part 2. Values
6. Families in Difficulties
7. Romany Secrets: The depiction of Romanies in the writings of Malcolm Saville. 2002
8. Children Coping - Welcome the Jillies. 1998
9. Yellow Peril? The Depiction of the Chinese in the Fiction of Malcolm Saville 2002
Malcolm Saville's depiction of Chinese residents of Docklands.
10. Good People Working Together: The Lesson of *Sea Witch Comes Home*

Part 3. Locations
11. Why Choose Blakeney? Birds, Artists and Holidays in Digs. 2002
Post-war holidays and Malcolm Saville's Jillies series.
12. Coping in dangerous waters: defining gender roles in the Ely Floods 2003
Relationships in The Luck of Sallowby (1952), Malcolm Saville's fifth Jillies book, set in Ely floods.
13. Romanticised Landscape: Malcolm Saville's Cornwall
Real and fictional topography in Malcolm Saville's Flying Fish Adventure 2003
14. Sea Watch at Southwold. 2004
Comparison of historical detail of the 1953 North Sea 'great storm' with Malcolm Saville's Sea Witch Comes Home. Easter 2004.
15. Dartmoor, Flying Saucers and Military Secrecy 2005.
Links between flying saucers in two Saville stories, and other science fiction literature.
16. Muker, North Yorkshire: The Mysteries of Muker: Or Which Steps, Which Barn and Which Crackpot?

Part 4. Life in the 1940s
17. Spirit of the Place: Writing about England.
18. *Small Creatures,* and the Truth in a Tale Series. Nature writing.
19. Railways of Adventure. The place of railways in Malcolm Saville's fiction. 2004 and 2007.
20. Harvest Holiday: A Happy Return to Townsend Farm. 2008
21. A Death in Normandy. The background to Mary and Michael's father. 2009.

PREFACE

These articles have appeared over a twelve year period in the Magazine of the Malcolm Saville Society, *Acksherley!* or in the Annual Gathering souvenir programmes. The articles presume a basic knowledge of Malcolm Saville's books for children and generally encourage readers to re-read the books being discussed and to see new things in them. For readers new to Malcolm Saville, let me just say here that he wrote stories for children, some for younger children and some for teenagers, between 1943 and 1978. The early stories were dramatised on the radio (Children's Hour) from the beginning.

Malcolm Saville, born in Hastings, published some 87 books for children alongside a full-time career in publishing. He is best known for his Lone Pine Series starting with *Mystery at Witchend*, twenty full-length novels and one novelette. These spanned from his favourite Shropshire, to Rye, Dartmoor, North Yorkshire, Southwold and London. He is considered a master at evoking location. His other series included *The Jillies, The Buckinghams, Mary and Michael, Susan and Bill*, the Nettleford series and the Marston Baines novels for older children.

The Jillies (6 books, 1948-53) starting in Norfolk with two families, the Jillions and Standings who meet on holiday in Blakeney, in Redshanks Warning. They meet up again in London, the Pennines , Ely, Austria and finally the home counties. In the Buckingham's series (6 books 1950–74 starting with The Master of Maryknoll), children befriend the son of a famous exiled Polish violinist. Venues range from Ludlow, Shropshire, to north Yorkshire, Brighton, London, Italy, Amsterdam. For younger children there were two series: Mary and Michael (1945-57) were Londoners who were sent to the country and get to Cornwall, Dorset, Sussex, and the Grand Union Canal. The first book, *Trouble at Townsend* (1945), of their life on a farm, became a film. Susan and Bill were children who moved to a new town (unspecified): stories describe their settling in experiences as well as their holidays, including one in a railway camping coach. The Nettleford series are experiences of village and farm life for young children. For older teenagers, the Marston Baines thriller-romances (1962-1978) echo James Bond, a master spy whose university student friends get into some serious difficulties with terrorists, anti-semites, drug dealers, black magic and mafia. Two books never resulted in series: *Treasure at the Mill* (1957); and *The Thin Grey Man* (1966).The films of *Treasure at the Mill* and *Trouble at Townsend* have recently been reissued and are attractive period pieces of children's cinema.

Malcolm Saville also wrote non-fiction, generally on country themes (such as *Country Scrapbook, Open-Air Scrapbook*, and *Seaside Scrapbook* of the 1940s, encouraging post-war outdoor pursuits and holidays. There were two main religious books, *King of Kings* (1958, a life of Jesus) and *Strange Story* (1967, the crucifixion seen through the eyes of contemporary Roman children).

Further Reading:

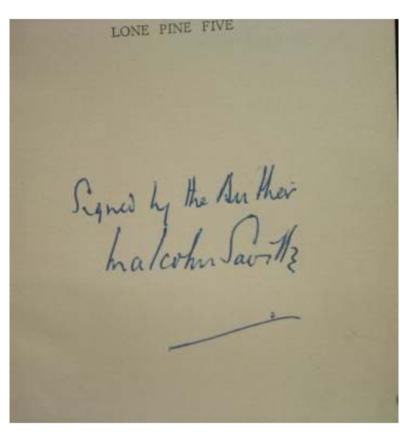
The Malcolm Saville Society website, http://www.witchend.com, contains information and links. The entry *Malcolm Saville* on Wikipedia contains an accurate list of his books for children. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malcolm_Saville.

Mark O'Hanlon, *The Complete Lone Pine* Worcester: Mark O'Hanlon (2nd edition)
Mark O'Hanlon, *Beyond the Lone Pine* Worcester: Mark O'Hanlon (biography)

PART 1. The Emerging Author

1. D J DESMOND: THE ANONYMOUS AUTHOR.

© STEPHEN BIGGER, 2005.



Later in his writing life, Malcolm Saville proudly signed books "Signed by the Author Malcolm Saville". Author normally has a capital A, to say that it was a status worth having. Works attributed anonymously as D J Desmond therefore are interesting. Those currently known are: his first book, *Amateur Acting and Producing for Beginners* (1937); Stonewall Jackson, a story (1939); a poem contained within his Country Scrapbook (1944); Craftsmanship in a Machine Age (1948) and *John & Jennifer on the Farm* (Denes, 1949). *Amateur Acting* was essentially completed as part of his job, one of a series. As such a pseudonym was natural. 'Stonewall Jackson' was from the same period. His prose poem in *Country Scrapbook* is part of a miscellany of poems by more famous people, so the pseudonym is not to draw attention to his own authorship. 'Craftsmanship' used the pseudonym because it was his second article in the same book, the first being 'The World's Greatest Port' under his own name. *John & Jennifer on the Farm* with the publisher Nelson was someone else's series, Gee Denes who used photographs as the skeleton of this series for young school children and who is named as the author. With his career profile, Malcolm Saville may have preferred not to use his own name for a ghost written book. It gave him the opportunity however for his own series for Nelson with Susan and Bill (note the switch in order of gender). Nevertheless, all these works should be recognised as part of his authentic corpus of work. As to the name, until I have further evidence, I will continue to assume that, like James Herriott, it came from the telephone book.

I.

Amateur Acting and Producing for Beginners was published in 1937, price 2/6d, as part of C Arthur Pearson Ltd's The Beginner Series including, according to the back cover, books on photography, stamp collecting and short story writing. Pearson's were in Southampton Street, The Strand in London, a part of the George Newnes publishing empire for which, after a period in journalism, Malcolm Saville has just started to work in marketing (where he helped to launch Enid Blyton's career): like Fleet Street for newspapers, this was a street of book and magazine publishers of great significance to Malcolm Saville's working life since it also housed Newnes, and My Garden magazine. This was a street where publishers and editors met in pubs and cafes and did deals. Capt WE Johns' office was here, for *Popular Flying* magazine (bought by George Newnes in 1935 who introduced a spin-off *Flying*, both hugely critical of government inactivity in preparing for war. Johns met Theo Stephens of My Garden magazine in 1936 and wrote a year long series called *The Passing Show* about his own Surrey garden later published as a book (1937), and many other garden articles. Publishing was a small world which provided Malcolm Saville opportunities for authorship. Decisions to use an alias or pen-name are always interesting. Possibly Malcolm Saville saw this as a one off and quirky book, a work task, not something he wished to define his own career. I think it was probably not lack of confidence – seeing your own name on your first book motivates many a writer!

The back cover states: "Written by an experienced amateur, this book is a practical and entertaining guide to the essentials of amateur acting and the art of producing". In the book, Malcolm Saville talks about the "society of which I am a member" (p.25) who referred to key background organisers as "Five Industrious Mechanics".

"Barrie is difficult, but I know a Society that made a big success of Dear Brutus." (p.23).

Dear Brutus appears to be his favourite, getting honourable mentions in both *Redshanks Warning* and *Sea Witch Comes Home* (see chapters 4 and 14 below). I suspect that this Drama Society was his own, but modesty forbade such explicit praise. He speaks of the Welwyn Garden City One-Act Drama Competition as something he had experienced, where:

> The local theatre is taken for a week and four one act plays are given each night …before an adjudicator. Teams from all over the country are entered, and the theatre is packed to capacity each night. The experience of acting before a critic is somewhat nerve-wracking, but certainly stimulating…These drama festivals do bring out the very best in a cast. Team-work is essential, for there is no time for petty jealousies and the like. It should be remembered, too, that the One-Acter invariably needs just as much rehearsal as a full-length play. Every single word and movement must be rehearsed again and again, for often the most trivial fault will be spotted, and carelessness is unforgivable…Enter one of these Drama Festivals every year, and your standard will quickly improve, for the competitive spirit and the criticism act like a topic." (p.106)

He finishes:

> "And so we finish on one of the most fascinating aspects of the age-old art. Year by year amateurs are achieving better results. Often we are able to try out new plays which otherwise would never get a chance. We admire and respect the professional stage, and hope that our little efforts will do something towards keeping – and restoring – the Theatre and Dramatic Art to its rightful place in the life of the community." (p.107)

One other part I find interesting: he says that the works of living writers charge a royalty per performance (and distinguishes for royalty purposes between a 'reading' [for study, without fee] and a 'performance' [with fee, even if there is no audience].

> "Many amateurs resent the fact that an author should make a living, and consider that because they happen to be a small, struggling society they should be exempt from such dues, but any attempt to evade these perfectly just obligations may lead to serious trouble" (p.18).

This was a point he was to make throughout his life, that an artist or author needs to live, and that royalties only came through purchases. Malcolm Saville, with his personal marketing strategy, emphasised this more than most other contemporary writers. His letters invariably invite children to buy more books and tell their friends to do so also.

Malcolm Saville's first books for children were immediately adapted for radio serials. One wonders how his experience of dialogue on the stage helped him write dialogue in his stories for children. The structure of his stories changed after the experience of having too many characters in *The Secret of Grey Walls* to make good radio listening – after this the dramatis personae of his books were reduced.

II

'Stonewall Jackson' is a story about a gardener worth his weight in manure, in a compendium of gardening stories put together by Theo Stephens of *My Garden* magazine as bedtime reading. The collection is quirky, and also contains a story by "M.S." and, of the other famous names, Capt. W.E. Johns. In the story 'Stonewall Jackson', the narrator (who needs but cannot afford help in the garden) has daughters Rosemary the elder, and Susan aged 4. Jackson is revealed as an ex-serviceman eking an existence through a round of gardens he maintains, come rain or shine. He recognizes and gets rid of a plausible con-man as being from his old platoon. We recognise some later vintage Saville in the ending: "So you see that we cannot do without him. The Jacksons of England are as precious a heritage as our gardens and our little hills and fields" (p.101).

III

Country Scrapbook (pages 111-3) contains a prose poem by D.J. Desmond, 'The First Storm of Autumn', written for adults about the south-west or 'prevailing' wind. The wind is described as 'he' (unlike George Macdonald's North Wind which was very female). Written during the war, war references are interesting: "the groping searchlights silently stabbed the sky with mechanical beauty"; "He nearly smothered a convoy, homeward bound, and gave a helping hand to a flying

boat of Coastal Command winging eastward from patrol". "He greeted sleepy firewatchers in the towns and tore at the hair of a green-jerseyed landgirl at the gate of a Hertfordshire field." He was himself one of those sleepy firewatchers. This had clearly been a bad night. The poem finishes: "The wind that is forever England has come and gone again, as he will always do".

IV

Craftsmanship in a Machine Age was written for the annual *Exploration & Discovery* 3 in 1948. This raises the point that machines are taking over the jobs that were once done by skilled craftsmen. The people operating these machines are in repetitive uncreative work. Machines can mass produce, but they cannot create beauty. However, the machine can serve individual craftsman: he tells the story of the rebuilding of the Houses of Commons after war damage, combining machine and hand finishing. There is a message too about sustainability:

> "Two great wars in this century have sadly depleted the forests of Britain and it is a tragedy that so much of our timber has been felled while so little has been replanted. The timber for the debating chamber of the House of Commons has been found in the wild country of Herefordshire and Shropshire. It has been growing there for three centuries – an army of sturdy giants which might well have been reared for this very purpose, so certain did they seem to be of their destiny. It is said that the oak trees in Shropshire grow to a greater size than anywhere else in Britain, while the Hereford oaks are still famous for their mistletoe, which grows on them now as it did on the oaks which the Druids considered holy." (p.293).

He describes how the trees are cut, planked, seasoned and dried in kilns. They it is brought to London, selected and carved. Machines cut and shape the pieces so the craftsmen simply have to concern themselves with the finishing. This account is drawn from a visit to the London works of Green and Vardy. Part of his message is that, because of the war, there are not sufficient trained staff or apprentices to do work of this level, so retired craftsmen have returned. He begs young people to consider this as a career:

> "Every minute of his working life will be interesting and may well be exciting. He has become a creator. His fingers sensitive and disciplined like those of a pianist or a surgeon, can make beauty from a block of wood that will outlive him and his great grandchildren" (p.300).

V

John and Jennifer on the Farm is part of a series for Nelson. Two photographs are reproduced here. Gee Denes produced a synopsis based on colour photographs and in the early days a ghost writer produced the story. The small print on the title page therefore reads: Story by D. J. Desmond, Designed by Q. Durov. Jennifer stayed with her cousin John and his sisters Angela and Christine at Sunnylands Farm. "She had been ill with measles. Now the measles had quite gone, but the doctor said she need not go back to school yet, and that three or four months in the country would do her a lot of good". We can instantly recognise *Jane's Country Year* here, and Michael and Mary's Townsend Farm. Jennifer is the central character, John plus siblings Angela and Christine her guides. This is a gentle story simply explaining what went on in a post-war farm. We see the farm through Jennifer's eyes, aided by some magnificent colour photographs of 1940s farm machinery and work. Jennifer tries most jobs and by the time she had to go home, declared: "When I grow up I want to be a farmer, too". Not, of course, a farmer's wife. This work for Nelson was fortuitous: Saville's Susan and Bill series for Nelson started in 1954, not on a farm but in a new-town housing estate.

References.

Denes, Gee (1949) *John and Jennifer on the Farm* London: Nelson

Desmond D.J. (1937) *Amateur Acting and Producing for Beginners* London: C Arthur Pearson

Desmond D.J. (1939) Stonewall Jackson in *My Garden's Good-Night* ed. Theo Stephens, My Garden magazine

Desmond D.J. (1948) Craftsmanship in a Machine Age in *Adventure & Discovery for Boys and Girls* 3, London: Jonathan Cape

Johns, W.E. (1937) *The Passing Show* London: Newnes.

Saville, Malcolm (1944) *Country Scrapbook* London: National magazine Co (2nd enlarged edition 1945 by Gramol Publications)

2. MALCOLM SAVILLE AT MY GARDEN MAGAZINE (1946-52).

© STEPHEN BIGGER, 2005

Malcolm Saville worked from 1946 till its closure in 1951 as associate editor on the gardening monthly magazine *My Garden: The Intimate Magazine for Garden Lovers* both in its offices in Southampton Street, The Strand in London, and in Guildford after its 1949 move. The magazine was as high quality as the budget would allow, printed by Hazell, Watson & Viney Ltd of Aylesbury both in London and Guildford days, with artwork, poetry and photographs (some in colour) as well as articles. This suited Malcolm Saville's interest in the process of publishing as seen for example in his Scrapbooks which were then appearing. As D J Desmond he had contributed one article, 'Stonewall Jackson', to *My Garden Good-Night*, a compendium of gardening stories put together by Theo Stephens of *My Garden* magazine as bedtime reading. The collection is quirky, and also contains a story by "M.S." about a nightmare garden, and, of the other famous names, the author. W.E. Johns. 'Stonewall Jackson' is a story about a gardener worth his weight in manure. In the story 'Stonewall Jackson', the narrator (who needs but cannot afford help in the garden) has daughters Rosemary the elder, and Susan aged 4. Jackson is revealed as an ex-serviceman eking an existence through a round of gardens he maintains, come rain or shine. He recognizes, and gets rid of, a plausible con-man coming from his old platoon. We recognise some later vintage Saville in the ending: "So you see that we cannot do without him. The Jacksons of England are as precious a heritage as our gardens and our little hills and fields" (p.101).

Saved from his post-war job with Aquascutum, his duties were to commission and prepare manuscripts for publication, help the proprietor and Editor Theo A. Stephens prepare 'My Garden Notebook' (mainly a compendium of news and recent gardening publications), and to write the Editorial when the Editor was abroad. The magazine articles were informative without being dry, and emotive without being sentimental.

Here is a sample of material directly relating to Malcolm Saville.

> First, moving house and office to Guildford was somewhat stressful:
> "We are tempted this month to write about moving. Not the moving of precious plants nor the planting of trees, but the removal of household effects and, what is even more exasperating, the transference of an entire office and everything in it. M.S. has moved house twice since last September – on the last occasion in pitiless rain alternating capriciously with fog. He had hardly recovered from this experience before Christmas arrived and we shook the mud of Southampton Street from our tired feet and are now doing our best to adapt ourselves to very much more congenial surroundings where we look forward to welcoming many of our friends…" (TAS and MS, My Garden Notebook (February 1950, p.179).

A Saville editorial (May 1948 pp.461-3) gives fascinating glimpses of postwar revival and rebuilding, particularly in cities like London, promoting a Women's Voluntary Services scheme. Saville was later to praise the WVS for flood relief in The Luck of Sallowby.

I Have pledged the readers of My Garden to the support of a great and worthy cause. Last month we included a note about the W.V.S. Garden Gift Scheme, the purpose of which is to help owners of blitzed and prefabricated houses to begin making, or in some cases to re-make, their gardens.

Every reader of this magazine loves gardens, and knows the joy and solace which a personally owned garden can bring. Many of us are perhaps only dimly - and perhaps a little uncomfortably - aware of the drab desolation of the bombed sites, still so noticeable in London, and many of our great cities. The scars left by Hitler's fury have not healed, although their ugliness was sometimes softened by wild flowers which, almost miraculously it seemed, flourished and flaunted a gay challenge to destruction.

On many of these deserts of rubble, prefabricated houses have been built. They are the homes of our countrymen, but they are not beautiful. They all have gardens but many of their owners have never had a garden before and do not know how to grow their own flowers and vegetables. It has already been proved that the gift of a few plants has awakened the love of beauty and of growing things which is part of every Briton's heritage.

I have told the W.V.S. I am confident that the readers of this magazine will support this scheme, if only because they know from their own experience what a garden means in life to-day. Gardeners are kindly folk and generous too. There has never before been such an opportunity for those who have gardens to help those who have not.

This is how the scheme works. The W.V.S. serves as a link between those who will give surplus plants and seedlings to recipients who need them most in London and other blitzed cities, by collecting the gifts, paying for transport, and then distributing them. Donors are asked to name gift plants. Use of the English name is preferable and note of colour, height and season of flowering is appreciated. When your gift is ready, notify your nearest local W.V.S. centre which will do everything else. Do not, please, in any circumstances send parcels to the office of My Garden, for we have neither the space nor the organisation to deal with them. If you do not know your nearest W.V.S. centre, write direct to Headquarters, Women's Voluntary Services, 41, Tothill Street, London, S.W.1, who will tell you where to send your gift. Even the smallest collection is a real help, and it has been found that plants and seedlings survive the longest distances they have to travel. Almost anything which will grow in a garden is acceptable - annual seedlings, bedding out plants, herbaceous and hedging plants in season, bulbs, rock plants, and, of course, anything to encourage garden food production, particularly brassica seedlings, onions, leeks, marrows and tomatoes.

The scheme is simple, but the idea behind it is great and typically British in its dependence upon voluntary effort. The demand for plants and seedlings is greater than the supply, but readers of My Garden will soon reverse this situation. Will you please pause a moment before throwing your surplus seedlings and plants on the compost heap? The W.V.S. will make better use of them.

M. S.

The previous year he had visited bomb-ravaged docklands to research *Two Fair Plaits* and *The World's Greatest Port* (both 1948).

In 1947-8 Saville oversaw a long series 'In a Cornish Garden' by Lady Clara Vyvyan of Trelowarren near Helston, and a year later a series through the year month by month. Lady Vyvyan paid tribute to the Editors in *Letters from a Cornish Garden* (Michael Joseph, 1972, (pp. 139-147): "I always think of those two….just with the idea of saluting their personal kindness and their understanding". In comparison to her experiences with many editors (she stresses their youth) "my literary intercourse with Theo Stephens and

THE OLD PLACE

By

C. C. VYVYAN

Malcolm Saville shines out in memory like a lighthouse." Her first article, called Garden Survivals, about how Trelowarren had survived the war and billeted troups. After this she became a very regular contributor. She went on: "After a year… I noticed that Malcolm Saville was signing the correspondence but there was no change in the friendly spirit of the letters. After a while he signed himself 'Associate Editor' and there could be not doubt that Theo Stephens had completely absorbed his Associate into the atmosphere of the magazine. He had attracted me in his first letter by his naïve modesty in apologising for a slight mistake he had made about my signature and by adding: 'I am still rather a new boy to this magazine and the fault was entirely mine'. A few months later when I was in London, Theo Stephens invited Malcolm Saville and myself to a memorable lunch. Friendly relations were cemented and I realised that we were all three on the same wavelength in our thoughts." After this (1946) came the commission to write the twelve monthly articles *In a Cornish Garden.* In *My Garden's* final issue in January 1952 she wrote: "My Garden … has always kept open a view of the distant horizon, has always, beyond the facts, behind the information on its pages, given renewed force to unseen values. In every one of these monthly numbers there would be some pages to reinforce our sense of eternity beyond time."

In 1948 Malcolm Saville visited Helston, Cornwall and produced *The Flying Fish Adventure* based there. As I have shown elsewhere (chapter 13), the house Trevasson in that story is based on Penrose House near Helston and Porthleven owned by the Rogers family, very prominent in Cornish society. Clara Vyvyan's maiden name was Rogers, albeit from Burncoose near Truro, so the Penrose Rogers would be her distant cousins. Malcolm Saville's visit to Helston is probably no coincidence and it is inconceivable that a visit to Lady Vyvyan in Trelowarren was not included in his itinerary, if he did not actually stay there. He later (February 1949) recommended Lady Vyvyan's new 'folklife' book to his My Garden readers.

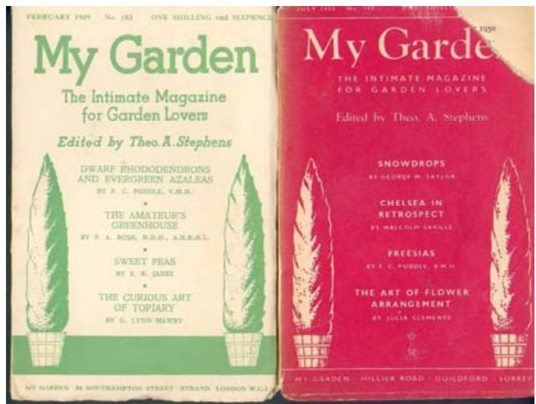
DEDICATED TO
THEO. A. STEPHENS
EDITOR
And
MALCOLM SAVILLE
ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF
My Garden
In gratitude for their encouragement and kindness.

Dedication of CC Vyvyan's "The Old Place"

An editorial the following year (February 1949) showed his high regard for Theo Stephens and the magazine team and something of his philosophy of writing:

EDITORIAL, FEBRUARY 1949

"I HAVE learned after many years of experience that it is sometimes possible to find a treasure in what used to be called the "White Elephant Stall" at church bazaars, and that the best way to secure an advantage over other treasure seekers is to assist a wife who holds a position of authority in the organisation. With this advantage it is possible to obtain a preview before the hordes of supporters and bargain hunters surge into the hall after the opening ceremony.



I am now able to record my greatest triumph - four cups, saucers, plates and milk jug of real Royal Worcester. The jug is chipped and two plates are riveted, but these pieces of beautiful, translucent china with their hand-painted designs of blackberries are a lovely relic of a more gracious age-an age in which we had standards without standardisation and in which beauty and craftsmanship were worth striving for. This treasure was coveted by nine out of ten people who saw it later, and I was struck once again by the fact that we are all starved of beauty to-day and in the gravest danger of accepting, without protest or comment, the mediocre and second-

rate.

I was reminded of my find - which continues to delight us all at home - when re-reading the notes written by the Editor in our January issue. Mr. Stephens, as our readers are aware, is now in Australia. It would not altogether surprise me if I received a cable from him in three weeks' time announcing his unexpected arrival in Honolulu or Antarctica but, while he is away, I would like to suggest that this little magazine which he conceived 15 years ago, goes from strength to strength and from country to country, because it is, like my treasure, hand-made, beautiful and rare, and the child of one who is probably above all else an individualist. I have often noticed that such people draw other individualists to them, and although it is 17 years since Theo. Stephens first befriended me as I was working my way into journalism, it seems now to have been inevitable that I should join him eventually as Associate Editor of this magazine.

Loyalty to-day - except to an idea - seems to be becoming an outworn virtue but we, in the office of My Garden, have proof every day of the loyalty and friendship of our readers and contributors. And so while the Editor himself flies over the Island Continent and makes new friends beneath the Southern Cross, I want to tell our friends how intensely proud his colleagues are to work with him and that while we welcome genuine criticism and all realise that we are never too old to learn, we know we are making the best magazine for gardens lovers in the world. It would be possible to write many pages of how this crew of individualists eventually settles down to pull the boat to the captain's orders. I could never say enough, for instance, to express my appreciation of the wise counsel and apparently unlimited horticultural knowledge of Mr. F. C. Puddle, our Advisory Editor. And then our Julia Clements is indefatigable. Her enthusiasm is a tonic to us all, for, when she is not travelling, lecturing and preaching the gospel of My Garden all over the world, she bombards the Editors with ideas. But every member of this small crew pulls his - or her - weight and I think we all know how fortunate we are to be doing the job we like the best. There is no hobby or interest in the world like gardening. To some there is no adventure like publishing, and to a very few of us there is nothing quite so worth while as the production of a magazine for those who love gardens. Those of us who write and edit are the humble servants of you who read. We always try to remember this.
MALCOLM SAVILLE.

My final excerpt is an article he wrote about the 1950 Chelsea Flower Show which shows both a high regard for the royal family, and an eye for the absurd:

Chelsea in Retrospect by Malcolm Saville
My Garden, July 1950, 65-70.

THE Chelsea seen by the staff of My Garden is a very different Show from that seen by the ordinary visitor. This year ours began on the Monday afternoon while the workmen - many of them now our old friends - were still labouring on the stands. While waiting for our van to arrive from Guildford we stood on our draughty corner and watched the dappled shadows cast by the leaves of the familiar Plane trees moving gently across the asphalt.

"This year", we said with false optimism, , "it is going to be fine", and we gloated over the thought that just for once we should be able to greet you all without overcoats and waterproofs and that our girls, in gay, summer frocks, would make as brave a show in Sundries Avenue as would the banked flowers in the marquees.

Tuesday morning, while the judging is in progress, and while a select company awaits the gracious patronage of Royalty, offers an experience which never stales. This is the one time when the exhibitors can really appreciate each other's efforts. The time when the great tents are hushed and the flowers are at their best.

Let me give you some impressions of this year's Private View - just a few from the many recollections which come crowding back now that the excitement is over for another year .

Among the general exhibits which I remember particularly was the wonderful display of Tulips by Messrs. Walter Blom and Sons - Tulips of all colours opening wide in the diffused sunshine and looking hungry for approbation. Another was Messrs. Suttons' outstanding Gold Medal exhibit consisting mostly of annuals. This was a mass of fragrant colour with Giant Rocket Stocks, Gleam Nasturtiums, Dimorphothecas and, most particularly, a beautiful little group of their special hybrid, parti-coloured Arctotis.

I was also delighted to see the Iris shown by Orpington Nurseries, for this firm is planting our own

Iris border at Guildford. Choicest of all these blooms was the incomparably lovely variety 'Spindrift' in delicate, sea-shell pink. We also liked the well-cultivated Fuchsias shown by Mortlock Bros. of Langley, Bucks.

Azaleas were well in evidence - particularly the imposing exhibit put up by Edmund L. de Rothschild, Esq., and those shown by Stewarts of Ferndown. There was also an outstanding display of flowering shrubs by Messrs. Hilliers of Winchester. There were Strawberries, too, shown by Laxtons of Bedford, and an unusual and delightful exhibit of Water Lilies and other waterside plants from Perry's of Enfield.

We recall also with pleasure the Clematis from Jackman's of Woking; the magnificent Roses - especially the vivid, vermillion 'Sultane' from Wheatcrofts of Nottingham, and Gold Medal exhibits of Carnations from Allwoods and Lindabruce Nurseries. Neither can I forget the formal beauty of Messrs. Dobbie's [sic] show of Sweet Peas - an exhibit of perfection which also brought this famous firm a Gold Medal.

And while we were still admiring and taking notes the Royal cars arrived. I do not suppose that there is any country in the world where the public treat their beloved Royalty with such respect and affection, and certainly there is no Royalty anywhere so deserving of such. There is no need of armed bodyguards at Chelsea. Our King and Queen are gardeners and we know it. Queen Mary, with her unwanted car hovering in unexpected places lest she needed it, walked for an hour unaided and those of us who had foreign friends with us will be pardoned if we were a trifle smug about those great personalities who mean so much to us.

We remember, too, the way in which the King and Queen accepted Carnations from our old friend Montagu Allwood and the way in which another contributor of ours from the West Country who was standing by said, “This brings a catch to your throat. Thank God we've still got this left to us!”

And then on Tuesday afternoon the Fellows of the R.H.S. surged round our stand and once again we renewed old friendships. How we treasured the “I've been a member of My Garden for seventeen years now” from an elderly gentleman whose quiet voice and smile proved conclusively that he had loved flowers for even longer than he had cherished our own efforts.

On Wednesday winter returned and we shivered on our exposed corner and tried to be as cheerful in adversity as many of you managed to be. On Thursday the rains came as they always do and the morning of that day is something we wish to forget. Perhaps we were a little ashamed of our grumbling when a dear old lady with the water from the roof of our stand cascading over her unique sou'wester from another and more gracious age, smiled at us and, with typical British understatement, remarked, "It's a pity it’s so wet, isn't it?"

It was.

Somehow there is always something on Friday to make us smile again and to cheer us when we most need it. We shall remember with gratitude the lady who arrived at our stand just ten minutes before closing time when the tents were packed with clamouring hordes waiting to buy flowers at bargain prices.

“Tell me”, she beamed, “where can I buy some flowers? I've never been here before, but I shall want them delivered to Claridges without delay”.

History does not record her fate, but here is our last memory. The Guards Band had played “The King” and already the avenues were thronged with the bearers of giant Delphiniums, alpines in pots and bunches of flowers now past their glory. Alone and unconcerned by the jostling crowds came a bareheaded woman in a tweed suit carrying one tall and swaying Lily in a pot. Looking neither to right nor left she walked with the unhurried gait of an acolyte and I merely nodded agreement when someone at my side said, “How she must love flowers!”

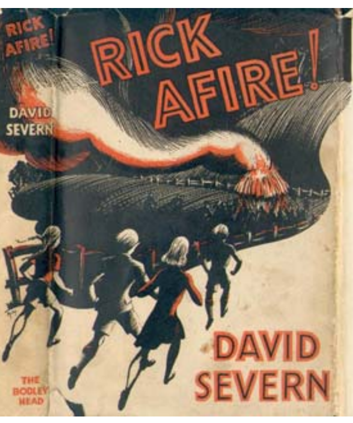
The magazine was forced to close after its last 1951 issue, owing to spiralling costs for quality printing. Theo Stephens went on to write for the Sunday Times; Malcolm Saville moved on also, back to Southampton Street, The Strand by joining the publisher George Newnes taking charge of children’s stories such as Sunny Stories. He also moved his home away from Guildford, buying various houses around the south coast before settling in Winchelsea. In retirement, he returned to gardening in *See How it Grows: an Introduction to Gardening for Boys and Girls* (Oxford University Press, 1971), a book which impressively starts with how to make a compost heap. A man after my own heart.

Illustration:
Staff of My Garden after its move to Guildford. Malcolm Saville is wearing glasses; Theo Stephens is on the far left on the step.

3. A STRANGE APPRENTICESHIP: MALCOLM SAVILLE AND DAVID SEVERN

© STEPHEN BIGGER 2003

Malcolm Saville started writing for children late in 1942. Why? He was of an age to keep his civilian job and to fire-watch with the ARP (Air Raid Precautions). He had written a book on amateur dramatics and a few gardening stories; but he had not written a children's story. Nevertheless, in October 1943, *Mystery of Witchend* emerged as a very good first children's novel. Saville worked in publishing, and his own children were away in Shropshire which gave him the impetus to communicate with them through story. However, many in a similar position did not write books so this was an unusual turn of events. One important factor so far hidden was, I contend here, that he gained the idea and the confidence when he came across the children's stories of a young new writer, David Severn (David Storr Unwin[1], born 1918) who started publishing for children in 1942. I intend to chart here the evidence for how the first few Severn books had an important influence; but it is important to say that this in many significant ways, Saville developed his own style, direction and values. There are important differences. David Severn does not mention the war, until it is over, except to explain why the characters were invited to play village cricket[2]. His stories are pastoral summer holiday jaunts in the country, remembering a time before the bombing. And they are set in anonymous locations. Saville chooses to address real war situations and in recognisable locations.



Severn's first children's novel was *Rick Afire* (1942), the first of five 'Crusoe' stories. *Rick Afire* is a tale of two children evacuated from London because father was in hospital, to Whitehouse Farm [3] where they had adventures with the twins Brian and Pam with a pony called Nobby ('Pegasus') and a dog called William.

Rick Afire starts:

> "Stonebury Junction…Stonebury…change 'ere for the Muddlington, 'amsford and Downpoort line… Stonebury Junction…Stonebury…"
> The station was crowded with people. People were swarming out of the train and more were pushing their way in; people were stumbling and tripping over bags and hampers, throwing large suitcases through the doors and heaving them up into the racks. At last the train steamed out, the bustle died down, and after a while the platform cleared. Derek and Diana Longmore grouped their rucksacks and cases in a heap and looked around. There was no sign of the twins.

Compare this with the opening lines of *Mystery at Witchend*, "They changed trains in Shrewsbury", with the Morton family struggling with their luggage and finally arriving at Onnybrook to a fracas

---

[1] For further details of David Severn's books see my *David Severn, Children's Writer 1942-1977 (*online:). Severn was the name of a maternal grandparent. His father the publisher Sir Stanley Unwin travelled the world with Severn Storr ('Johnnie') in 1912, described in *Two Young Men See the World* (1934, Allen & Unwin). Stanley Unwin married Severn Storr's sister Mary Storr. The pseudonym was to achieve publication on merit.

[2] Enid Blyton, who influenced both writers in their early stages (see below), also makes little reference to the war. Her Famous Five Series began in 1942. Many other writers help their readers grapple with the war, no one more than Elinor Brent-Dyer.

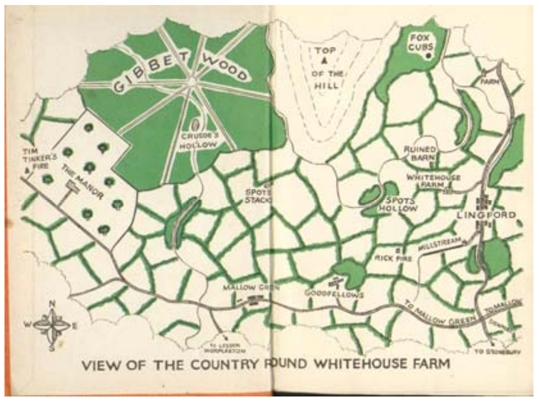
[3] Based on a farm in Essex.

over the 'spy' Jacob's missing parcel. The apprentice thus similarly started his story with the family's arrival at a busy station.

The twins in *Rick Afire* arrive helter skelter in a galloping homemade donkey cart.

> They came around the curve like a rocket. As he spoke the trap tipped violently, jerking both passengers off their balance, and they heeled over, clinging grimly to the sides while they took the bend on a single wheel…Then the trap hung poised for a moment; then the wheel dropped back with a thud and pony and cart came tearing along the straight into the station yard. The twins were sitting up on the seat as if nothing had happened…The trap drew up to the railings and the stocky figures of a girl and boy, in shorts and blue shirts, with tanned arms and legs and freckled faces, dropped down to the ground.

The twins were like peas in a pod, with freckled snubbed noses. Pam had a pony tail, the only way they could easily be told apart. They chattered most of the time. Identical twins are genetically identical and therefore always same sex; but this curious picture of different-sex lively identical twins reappears the following year in the Morton twins, with great emphasis on being 'like peas in a pod'. Saville makes them younger, and gives them exaggerated mannerisms and conversation. We can imagine Saville being energised by *Rick Afire* (the two writers share many similar values and enthusiasms) and writing a draft of the first chapter of *Mystery at Witchend* to send off to his own children in Shropshire. Indeed he may already have decided to have a go: *Rick Afire* came out in November 1942 for Christmas marketing; Saville may have seen a prepublication copy in the trade, or may have shaped up his emerging ideas into the form we now know. Themes such as mysterious strangers, disaster, car chases, and ambiguity over who to trust are all used by Saville, as is the idea of using a map on the inside pages (and both describe the map being drawn within the story, a rare thing in previous children's stories [4]). Both use an emblem stamped in the front boards – Severn a burning rick, Saville a lone pine. There is in *Rick Afire!* a dominant landmark: a "clump of pines, the tall ones sticking out above everything else. A clump of pines…one single clump of pines in the whole vast circle of woodland". In their explorations through a larch wood, Saville's children find 'a clearing with two big pine trees' which becomes their landmark. Only later, in chapter 4, does he introduce the lone pine which gave Saville his very potent icon.



There is no doubt that Saville would have recognised in *Rick Afire!* values closely akin to his own. There is a love of the countryside, close observation of nature and a sense of preciousness of the environment. Readers are warned against collecting birds' eggs; there is delight at fox cubs at play; birds flit across the pages; compassion on animals at the market is expressed. Severn's books combine description with action. The same is true of Saville who later presented his own observations about nature in separate, focused nature books – *Jane's Country Year,* and the Scrapbooks, and many others later.

[4] A fep map appears previously only in Arthur Ramsome's *Swallows and Amazons* (1930) and other works.

In *Rick Afire!* two London children stay at a farm and are shown country ways. A pig escapes to farrow, a mysterious camper is stalked and later befriended (Mr Robinson, or 'Crusoe'), a hay rick catches fire and after proving Crusoe innocent, Tim Tinker, a traveller, is identified as the culprit and chased in a dramatic car chase. Saville's *Trouble at Townsend* (1945) reflects this plot, a parallel story starting with a railway journey from London, where Mary and Michael are sent to a farm when their father is ill. They get to know Bob, a herd escape, the Highwood catches fire, and an exciting lorry chase helps to put it out. In Jane's Country Year (1946), Jane is sent from London to the country to recover from illness at the farm of Auntie Kate and Uncle William. It is, in adventure terms, an uneventful year, but gives Saville an opportunity to give townees a glimpse of nature and country life in its richness and rawness.[5] Later still, in *All Summer Through*, the opening story of the Nettleford Owlers series, the children are sent to a farm and joined by Tony an unpopular rich townee cousin, who redeems himself when a hay-rick is set alight. Severn's original theme therefore has had rich progeny. The Crusoe figure, the young befriending adult, appears in different forms in various Saville stories – Bill Ward in the first, and later Alan Denton, Charles Stirling, reporters James Wilson and Dan Sturt, or a policeman (Charles Martin). In *Mystery at Witchend*, the description of the children on the Long Mynd spying on the man in the raincoat is very reminiscent of Severn's children spying in the wood on 'Crusoe'.

The seeds of one later book can be seen. The children

> "…had lunch in a funny place with a lot of beams, even more than Whitehouse".
> "And a kettle hanging outside as a sign", said Derek. "It was called Ye Olde Cake Shoppe or something. Terribly ancient sort of place, but the grub wasn't bad. I was hungry then…" he added reflectively.
> The twins knew all about the Cake Shoppe.

Saville readers will readily recognise the Copper Kettle in Ely, in *The Luck of Sallowby*, described exactly in these terms and placed on the location of a very different commercial Ye Olde Tea Shoppe with a teapot hanging outside.

The second Severn book was *A Cabin for Crusoe* (1943) where an attempt to build a wilderness cabin brings Crusoe and the children into conflict with a group of Romanies, a conflict fomented by the farmer. The Romanies are painted realistically with a gang of lads, a bad-tempered heavy, his scheming and cheating wife, and a decent elder figure who appears continually throughout the series, Patch Cooper. The story discusses traditional Romany camping sites, the Romany way of life, and attitudes of settled folk in a very sensitive way. The Romanies are real people, not stereotypes. The tone is respectful. The conflict is resolved, and with Patch's help, Crusoe gets a caravan instead of a cabin. A year later, Saville introduces his Romany family – Reuben, Miranda and Fenella – in *Seven White Gates* (1944) with a depiction that is sensitive if romanticised. Saville prefers as the term for non-Romany, the inaccurate circumlocution 'gentile' to Severn's Romany word gorgio.

The third Crusoe book was *A Waggon for Five* (1944) where the group join up with Cooper's circus run by a relative of Patch[6]. They experience circus life and foil a plot to steal the takings of the circus by the strong man. He is apprehended in a frantic lorry chase. The plot of Saville's *Young Johnnie Bimbo* (1956) is closely related, where the future of the circus is threatened by a crooked dog trainer who has embezzled funds and causes damage. The threat of destruction by storm in Severn becomes fire in Saville. Another family is introduced in this book, the Crosbies, who live on a houseboat and whose father is an artist. These feature in the fourth book, *Hermit in the Hills* (1945), and adventure that in real time follows immediately on from the circus (a technique Saville uses later to link *Two Fair Plaits* with *The Secret of Snowfell*). A year later, Saville introduces his new family, the Warrenders at Rye as new members. The Crosbies are not the

---

[5] All these books may draw some inspiration from Enid Blyton's *The Children of Cherry Tree Farm* (1941) where sick children go to a farm to recuperate. In *The Children of Willow Farm* (1942), they move into their own farm nearby.

[6] Circus life was a significant early theme for Enid Blyton: see *Mr Galliano's Circus* series, 1938-42, written in a very different style for younger readers.

Warrenders but are clearly the prototypes for the Jillies (1948 onwards). Mr Crosbie is a nationally famous artist who makes a living selling his paintings, living precariously in bohemian style with his three children in a houseboat. The Crosbie's hijack the 'Waggoners' for a cricket match and later met up with them at the circus. Motherless, and looked after by elder sister Jean, they had a "large, old fashioned tourer", an old and unreliable car in which we can recognise the Jillies' car 'Benjamin'. Yet Leonard Crosbie himself was more like Mr Buckingham in the Buckinghams series: nationally famous in his own field, living by creative artistic endeavour, empowering his children to grow up freely and unencumbered in remote surroundings (the Crosbie's houseboat; and the Buckingham's remote cottage). Jean, the oldest Crosbie girl, is the prototype for both Amanda and Juliet – competent, artistic and mature beyond her years.

Hermit in the Hills is an inspired exploration of the philosophy of art (e.g. pages 48-51). Two sections will suffice here.

> "Take something more simple," he said, "a tree growing out from a slope…"
>
> People will see it in different ways,
>
> "But of all the people who come by, perhaps only one will know the birch and feel with it; see the backward twist of the trunk as it adjusts itself to the pull of the slope; the curve of the branches, supple, yet firm and strong as steel; feel the life in it, roots groping down deep into the soil;, leaves and twigs swayed and rustled by the wind… only one person will go away with the wholeness, the perfection of that tree as a three firmly printed in his mind. And he would be the only person qualified to paint it."

The hermit was brought up as a farmer, disowned by his father and in self-chosen exile to the hills in order to paint on the wall of a cave. He drew Mr Crosbie:

> The stranger's sketch was in complete contrast to Mr Crosbie's drawings. Instead of their bold, forceful shading, he had achieved his effect with a few lines; the curve of the artist's hat, the sagging outline of his coat and trousers. The essentials alone were there; nothing more. (pp. 108-9).

In Saville's Buckinghams series, the equivalent exile was a musician and composer imprisoned in Poland.

The final book of this series was *Forest Holiday* (1946), a story of being lost in a forest and culminates with gipsies at a local fair. Saville's use of this fair has to wait until 1953, The Neglected Mountain where Reuben's family are placed at the Bishop's Castle Fair (with other Fairs appearing in *The Flying Fish Adventure* and *Master of Maryknoll*, both 1950). In 1947 Severn introduced a new family – the Warners – in a separate series, and here links cease.

In conclusion, Saville seems to have made significant use of the characters and plots of the early David Severn 'Crusoe' stories. He felt very comfortably at home with Severn's values, the rural idyll and countryside as a cure for war-time trauma. This was not a form of plagiarism, but a quarry for ideas, characters and locations. Throughout his life, Saville searched for characters, plots and locations in books, magazines and papers and preferred this to relying on this imagination alone. He made his own use of these with new story lines and new life imbued into his characters. He had different strategies on key points – for example he encouraged his readers to reflect on the reality of war and bereavement, whilst Severn prefers escapism. Yet without Severn's first book, Saville may not have written for children at all. I take such a successful apprenticeship to be the greatest compliment a writer can receive.

Stephen Bigger. December 2002

See further Stephen Bigger, 2007 *David Severn (David Storr Unwin), Children's Writer 1942-1977* *(click for text)* (Research Paper, International Research Centre for Children's Literature, Language and Creativity, Worcester)..

4 " DAUGHTERS ARE THE THING": THE INFLUENCE OF J M BARRIE'S *DEAR BRUTUS* ON MALCOLM SAVILLE

© STEPHEN BIGGER 2004

As Malcolm Saville described family relationships in his new Jillions family in 1948 (*Redshank's Warning*, the first book of the Jillies), he made a point of using a phrase from J. M. Barrie's play *Dear Brutus* (1917) to define the relationship between father and daughter: "daughters are the thing". He tells the reader about Barrie, the author of Peter Pan, and about a failing artist with a 'might-have-been' daughter from Barrie's play. In 1960 he returns to the same point in explaining the feelings of a new (and unfortunately short-lived) character Rose Channing to her father, in *Sea Witch Comes Home*. The fathers in both cases are feckless. They are loved more than they deserve. *Dear Brutus* has created this tension in Malcolm Saville's mind, whose characters play out deep personal insecurities. If we need a key to unlock the writer's mind, we are handed one here.

There are two key passages. In the first, Mr Jillions (J.D.) botches a holiday in Norfolk and paints all day whilst his children undergo hardship and danger to rescue a stolen painting.

> "Mandy and Prue perched themselves on the arms of their father's chair, kissed the top of his head, and woke him.
> J.D.[7] was not the kind of father who fussed about his children. He yawned, stretched, and pulled them both down on his knees.
> "Had a good day, kids? Splendid! I like this place, too. Better than London". His arms tightened around them while Mandy twisted his thinning hair into a little tuft[8]. "One day", he went on, "if it is ever revived again, I'll take you to see a play by a Scotsman called James Barrie. It's about a lazy, good for nothing artist with an only daughter…But you could read the play anyway: it's called Dear Brutus."
> "What about it, darling!" Mandy asked.
> "I was just remembering something this artist said in the play …. Mind you, young Tim's worth more than you both rolled together, but – "
> "But what, darling? What are you talking about? What did this lazy artist say?"
> J.D. made a supreme effort and stood up. Then, with an arm round each of his daughters' shoulders – "He said, 'Daughters are the thing', and 'pon my soul I think he had something there! Good night my dears, and sleep well."
>
> *Redshank's Warning.* p.113.

Earlier in the book, the doctor, Dr. Harvey, had said something similar (p.19):

> "He looked at the two girls affectionately. Nice kids! He would have liked daughters".

Sons are worth more but daughters are special, 'the thing'. This thought generated by Barrie's play (where daughters are described as better than sons) has created Saville's new family, the Jillies. JD is the artist taken directly from the play *Dear Brutus*.

In *Sea Witch Comes Home* (1960) there is a chapter headed 'Daughters are the Thing' with the following very explicit quotation. Twelve year old Rose Channing is remembering a conversation with her missing father.

> Then he had sat down beside her, lit his pipe and said, "Once upon a time, Rose, long before you were born, but when I was young and gay, there lived a man called James Barrie[9]. He was a great playwright and I remember very well that in a play of his called *Dear Brutus* there was a character a little like me – much nicer, actually – who had a

[7] Short for 'Jilly Darling', an affectionate epithet.
[8] This tuft of hair is a significant theme in Barrie's *Mary Rose*, about which see below.
[9] Barrie died in 1937

daughter a little like you but not nearly as nice. And once they were talking together in a sort of enchanted wood and they agreed that daughters were the thing. And so they are, Rosie. Daughters are the thing. Paul is a grand chap but he doesn't sit on verandas in the sunshine shelling peas, and talk like we do. I'm sure that I shan't like the man you marry[10], darling, but try and fall in love with a rich one. I'll never have enough money for you!"
She had asked him the age of the daughter in the play and he had said that she was the age that fathers like their daughters the best.
"One of these days I'll buy some of the Barrie plays and we'll read them together", he went on. "He wrote another called Mary Rose[11], and that may be why we gave you my favourite name". (p.146)

The focus is on the close relationship between father and daughter. The detail shows that Malcolm Saville has read the play, noting stage directions as well as dialogue.

It will pay us to find out a little more about *Dear Brutus* and J M Barrie. Barrie was a prolific novelist and playwright, now known almost exclusively for Peter Pan. This was a humorous magic world for children, Neverland, where the possibilities of existence and non-existence are explored. In story, non-existing (fictional) characters take on lasting existence. *Dear Brutus* continues the theme. It is midsummer night's in an enchanted wood in which a house party are given a second chance to make something of their lives; after which the dream fades and they revert to their everyday masks, having learnt very little from the experience. *Dear Brutus* takes its title from Julius Caesar: "the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings": we are responsible for our own actions and fortunes, and cannot blame fate or luck. We create our own success and failure. When given a second chance, most of us would make the same mistakes. What we are like inside determines how we get on in life. Only a few have the 'grit' to reflect, learn and change.

In the enchanted wood, an artist father and his daughter are welcomed by a nightingale's song as they race to find the easel. He is named Dearth, in real life childless, given a second chance. She is tousled and freckled, "as lovely as you think she is, and she is aged the moment when you like your daughter best." She is called Margaret. The father is singing a song 'picked up in the Latin Quarter'. The relationship is an illusion, a dream, capable of evaporating. She is a 'might-have-been'.

The "might-have-beens" are ghosts, unfulfilled aspirations. I might have been a brilliant painter, father said, and I might have had no Margaret.
"I am so glad", Margaret said "I am not a shade. How awful it would be, Daddy, to wake up and find one wasn't alive… Daddy, I think men need daughters…Especially artists…Fame is not everything.

DEARTH (the father) Fame is rot; daughters are the thing.
MARGARET Daughters are the thing.
The discussion turns to sons, and whether they have close relationships with mothers. Talk then turns to growing up.
MARGARET No. I am just preparing you. You see, darling, I can't call you Dad when my hair is up. I think I shall call you Parent.
(He growls)
Parent dear, do you remember the days when your Margaret was a slip of a girl, and sat on your knee? How foolish we were, Parent, in those distant days.
DEARTH Shut up, Margaret.
MARGARET Now I must be more distant to you; more like a boy who could not sit on your knee any more.

[10] This is a strong theme in *Dear Brutus*
[11] In the collected *The Plays of J M Barrie* (1928), *Mary Rose* follows immediately after *Dear Brutus*.

> The conversation moves to Margaret in love. 'You will even write my love letters', said Margaret.
> DEARTH (ashamed) Surely to goodness, Margaret, I will leave you alone to do that.
> MARGARET Not you; you will try to, but you won't be able.
> DEARTH I want you, you see, to do things exquisitely. I do wish I could leave you to do things a little more for yourself. I suppose it's owing to my having had to be father and mother both. I knew nothing practically about the bringing up of children, and of course I couldn't trust you to a nurse.
> MARGARET (severely) Not you; so sure you could do it better yourself. That's you all over… Dad, if ever I should marry – not that I will, but if I should – at the marriage ceremony will you let me be the one to say 'I do'?

The scene demonstrates playfully the father's feeling (or need) for control over his daughter's life. It ends plaintively when he returns to the house, not realising (as she does) that this will burst the illusion:

> …She runs from tree to tree calling to her daddy. We begin to lose her among the shadows.)
> MARGARET (out of the impalpable that is carrying her away). Daddy, come back; I don't want to be a might-have-been.

Dearth's realisation that he has lost Margaret is the hardest moment of the play.

A writer can create characters in the state he likes them best, and keep them there, and make decisions for them. To an extent they have a life of their own, drawn out of the writers unconscious thoughts. The female characters in Malcolm Saville's stories are created and directed by the author, who controls their lives and passionately tries to keep them alive, in print. At the altar, it is Saville who will say 'I do': engagements made in *Home to Witchend* were arranged in *Mystery at Witchend* or shortly after. For the girls, their hair is not quite up. 'Daughters' are mixed into male aspirations and illusions. What to a father seems perfect, to the daughter seems constraining, protective, and ultimately a denial of her right to be independent.

Dear Brutus becomes clearly important to Malcolm Saville after the war. His own daughters had put their own hair up, grown up and left home. His new project, the Jillies, his surrogate fictional family, took over, and the decision taken to continue with Lone Pine after he had thought it complete. These were his "might-have-beens", who took on their own reality in the enchanted forest of the imagination. At the end of his life, Saville wrote to a colleague (13.5.1980),

> "But I'm completely sold on the Jillies and have just finished *Redshank's Warning*. I prefer the characters to the Lone Piners and the actual writing and descriptions of the background seem better. For many of the letters I get re-affirm my belief in the importance of human relationships. Children long for friends and believe in loyalty, and this is what the Jillies exemplify."

By 1960, he had re-read the Jillies, and created a new Lone Pine story out of the inspiration of *Redshanks Warning*. He set it in Southwold, and again featured a stolen painting found ultimately in a church. He re-read *Dear Brutus* and quotes stage directions and explanations as well as dialogue. As before, Barrie had an enervating effect stimulating his creativity. Rose ('Margaret') could have had a series of her own, and Saville immediately threw himself into creative overdrive, producing more imaginative "might-have-beens". Rose emerged out of this 'with her hair up', a young woman, a brand new concept: Rosina the university student in the Marston Baines series (1963 onwards). Rosina's love for Simon is returned, as the younger Rose's for David was not.

> "She (Rosina) was completely natural, without any silly shyness. Warm-hearted, splendid company, good fun, and always so feminine. Worth spoiling a little, Simon thought as he smiled at her".

At the climax of the first book, *Three Towers in Tuscany,* Marston Baines said, echoing JD, Dr Harvey and Rose's father:

> "… Marchant, although he had no daughters of his own, might well have liked one like you. I would too.". Rosina blushed again and looked down at her hands in her lap.

By the end of the series (1978), Simon is tired of spying and proposes to Rosina:

> "All I want to do is to marry you as soon as possible for ever and a day. I will have to find another job, but will you marry me whatever I do?".

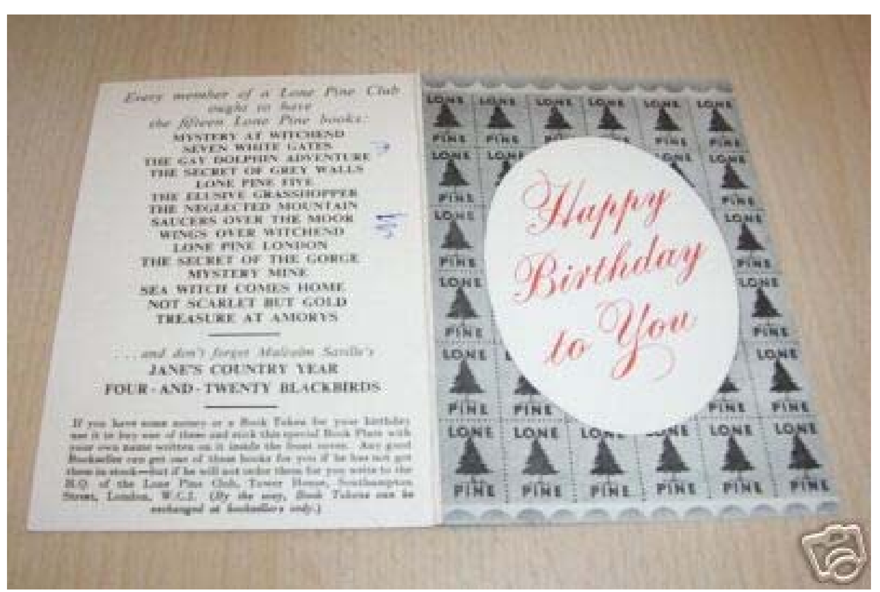
As Barrie's Margaret had prophesied, Saville gives her reply for her:

> "I will. For ever and a day."

Malcolm Saville's correspondence over the last five year's of life shows him in despair that the Marston Baines' stories were out of print and not paperbacked. They had become supremely important to him.

Fathers, especially artists, need daughters. Dearth did not recognize his wife in the might-have-been forest, so neither JD nor Richard Channing is allowed a wife. Their relationship with their families, and in particular their daughters, is put under scrutiny. They need looking after, pampering, inspiring, and loving – these are the stated functions of Malcolm Saville's young women, towards fathers who admit to being inadequate. "Daughters are the thing", not fame was the view from Barrie around which Saville found personally meaningful – and he wanted the stories of his fictional 'daughters' Mandy, Prue and Rose/Rosina to be his legacy. But as Margaret said, the real world is not like this. A father has to let go, and allow a daughter a life of her own. Saville never quite allows this for his fictional 'daughters', whose special friendships are arranged from the beginning and none are allowed to break up. Margaret disappears into a neverland; Mary Rose in the play of that name, also disappears into a heavenly neverland. Rose (and Paul) similarly disappear from our wider lone-pine story.

February 2003



5. “CAPTAIN” W E JOHNS AND HIS FRIENDS.

© STEPHEN BIGGER 2009

Tony Gillam raises the interesting question (*Acksherley! 35)* of whether Malcolm Saville knew W E Johns, editor of *Popular Flying*, and author of Biggles and other war adventure books. Johns, from humble Hertfordshire roots, had moved to Surrey in 1937 and describes his garden in *My Garden* magazine until 1944. The early articles were collected in the book *The Passing Show*. His offices were in Southampton Street, close to Pearsons, who published Malcolm Saville's first book on amateur dramatics. Johns' magazines, *Popular Flying* and later *Flying* were bought by Newnes, whose offices were nearby. Malcolm Saville wrote short stories for *My Garden* in the same period, and both writers knew Theo Stephens, the editor of *My Garden* for whom Malcolm Saville was soon to work. John's last piece for *My Garden*, in 1947 ("The Show has Passed", by which time he lived in Scotland) was on Saville's shift. Working in the same area, drinking in the same cafes, and knowing the same people, Johns and Saville undoubtedly met. Details of Johns life are to be found in *Biggles! - The Life of Captain W. E. Johns* by Peter Beresford Ellis and Jennifer Schofield. He had left the Royal Flying Core/ RAF with the rank of Flying Officer - he may have considered "Captain" its Army/RFC equivalent) by 1931 when he started the monthly magazine *Popular Flying*. It did well, and set him to writing short stories and before long Biggles stories. These gave him his early fortune, but were not royalty based (he earned around £250 per title for assigned copyright until after the war and had to write to pay his tax bill) so writing new books was more lucrative than promoting old titles for him. Writing two chapters a day before breakfast, a book would take about a week to ten days, with minimal redrafting. Few other writers worked at this pace – Enid Blyton was one; another, Eileen Marsh, I shall describe below.

Popular Flying eventually became notorious in government circles, although there are several ways of describing this. On the surface, the Chamberlain government was promoting appeasement, leading to the Munich Agreement. Beneath the surface, rearmament was happening, encouraged for example by Churchill, including the development of modern planes such as the Hurricane and Spitfire and a range of heavy bombers such as Germany never developed. German and Italian visiting dignitaries were shown old fashioned fighters such as Swordfish and Gladiators to encourage them to be complaisant. There was great concern at how far ahead the Germans were by 1938. Johns made it his campaign to press for massive air rearmament, so the government put pressure on Newnes for him to be removed as editor. When Chamberlain was forced in 1939 to declare war, he had bought some time and the gap in air resources was starting to closing. The huge problems in Spitfire production had been solved. Nevertheless it was taken for granted, as a result of Nevil Shute's book *Whatever Happened to the Corbetts?* (1938) on the fictional blitz of Southampton, that cities could be instantly wiped out. Casualties were expected to be in the millions and beyond the ability of hospitals to cope. Therefore, arrangements were made for children to be evacuated from target cities on the very day war was declared. Victory in the Battle of Britain would not have been possible two years earlier.

Johns was soon forgiven and his power to inspire young men to become airmen was recognized. He was commissioned by the government therefore to write series for girls (Worrals) and other sections of the armed services (Gimlet, of the commandos). His reward was a lion's share of the paper ration.

Another figure that links Saville and Johns was Geoffrey Trease, a mutual friend of both. His published work started with a socialist account of Robin Hood, which went down well in Russia, so he was given a guided tour around Stalinist USSR. The book that came out of this was *Red Comet*, published in USSR. This was the story of an inventor who developed a monoplane in a garage, which he then flew with two children as passengers all around USSR. The information (propaganda) they were given in real life was told to the fictional children. In his postwar book on children's literature, *Tales Out of School* (1948), Trease incorporated two quotations (pp.11-12), one from Saville and one from Johns. Saville argued that writers must recognize their great

responsibilities; Johns commented (tongue in cheek?) that the writer's success is measured by book sales. Trease lived near Great Malvern: Malcolm Saville used to drop in "on the way to his beloved Shropshire", according to Trease's autobiography.

Finally, with no real connection to Saville that I know, but a Romney Marsh writer, Dorothy Eileen Heming (nee Marsh). In the depression of the early 1930s, her husband Jack Heming (who worked for the Daily Telegraph) took a train to London to find out what books were likely to sell. He came back saying, Write about Flying! – so was influenced by Johns. His wife Eileen, with four children to support, did so and wrote around 120 books between 1935 and her death in 1948 under various names: Eileen Marsh, Dorothy Carter, Eileen Heming, Guy Dempster, Dempster Heming, Martin Kent, Elizabeth Rogers and others. In fact between 1935 and 1939 she produced 37 books. Her biography is told in *Among Her Own People*, by Eric Bates (privately published). She was not a flier, but her descriptions of pilot skill have fooled professional pilots (see Mary Cadogan's *Women with Wings*): her husband Jack was a world war I pilot, and in WW2 joined the RNVR. Many stories are set in Canada and the arctic, some in Australia. The Fleet Air Arm of the Navy is covered in Guy Dempster books, for boys, containing bloodcurdling scenes in Norway, Malta and elsewhere, with action equal to anything by Percy or John Westerman. She also wrote Sunday school "prize" stories for Lutterworth, under several names, spiritual tales of virtue that are by no means twee- and he only books still in print. She wrote whilst the children were in school, to supplement the family budget. Her autobiographical novel suggests she received £35 per book (a working man received up to £3 per week), so ten books a year produced a good income. These books rarely broke into a second impression, so are rare. She does not deserve to be forgotten.

Did Malcolm Saville know W. E. Johns? It would be strange if they had never met, given workplaces and friends in common. Saville appreciated the value of marketing. However, he rarely wrote about flying.

PART 2 VALUES

6. PARENTS IN DIFFICULTIES.

© STEPHEN BIGGER, JANUARY, 2008.

2008 is the 60th anniversatry of Malcolm Saville's *Redshanks Warning* (1948), the first of the Jillies series, and the first Saville book I wrote about, in 1998. This is a story of a motherless family with a pretty useless artistic father. Amanda, age 16, operates as the mother of her two other siblings, Prue and Tim. 2008 is also the 65th anniversary of *Mystery of Witchend* (1943), where the Morton family are sent without father deep into the country to avoid the Blitz. "We had bombs in London" , the children put it, or more darkly it was said "They were bombed in London". Mrs Morton and children famously took the train that changed in Shrewsbury for a local train to Onnybrook near Church Stretton. The book (and the series) starts with young David being given, by this father, the solemn responsibity of looking after his mother and the "awful twins" whilst his father was away. There the children met up with motherless Petronella (Peter) Stirling, whose father eked out a lonely existence servicing Hatchholt Reservoir for the Shropshire Water Authority: when called to headquarters in Birmingham, he had to send his daughter to Barton Beach to relatives she hardly knew, on a farm modelled on Saville's own home, West End Farmhouse, Wheathampstead. Between the two books, Mary and Michael, their father killed in the Normandy landings, are exiled to the country to Townsend Farm, also modelled on Saville's own home, when their mother has to look after a relative. The children's adventures (and misadventures became a film (starring a young Petula Clarke) as well as a book (*Trouble at Townsend*). Their mother is juggling family needs: the arrival of the fateful telegram is described, and their mother's responses. By the second book of the series, *The Riddle of the Painted Box*, 1947) her brother, Uncle Jim (ex-RAF) had moved in. At about the same time, *Jane's Country Year* shows young Jane sent to a farm to relatives to recuperate from illness.

This was not an easy time for parents for whom health, safety, security, housing and life itself were uncertain; this article is a tribute to all who lived, fought, coped, died and survived the second world war and struggled to bring up their families amid austerities, rationing and disease. Malcolm Saville himself was bringing up his own family, working, writing and firewatching. The decision to send them to "his beloved Shropshire" (as Geoffrey Trease put it in *Tales Out of School* in 1948) was inspired and had lasting consequences.

The fictional Mrs Morton brought her children to Shropshire by train via Shrewsbury in an unofficial evacuation. We see her organising well and having high expectations of their behaviour: she spoke to the twins "in her special, quiet voice" (p.18), demanding that they apologise to Mrs Braid for upsetting her. Witchend was not modern, a house of many levels, added to over the years. The scullery contained a copper (for heating water) and a tin bath. Water had to be pumped from the stream, firewood had to be collected, eggs and milk collected from the farm. Household chores had to be shared. Mrs Morton gives detailed instructions on how to behave in the country – although boiling spring water was probably neither practical nor necessary. After her first meeting with Peter, she accepted her as though part of her own family:

"Now I've met her I'm going to treat her as part of the family....I've always wanted two boys and two girls" [MaW: p.69]

Just like Saville's own family, the two Rs and two Js to whom this book is dedicated, Robin and Rosemary, Jeremy and Jennifer. He adds:

> "It may have been because Peter had no mother of her own or just because Mrs. Morton loved all children, but within five minutes the two were like old friends" [MaW p.69].

We also learn that she smoked [MaW p.87].

We know that Mr Morton joined the RAF, then became a fighter pilot (by 1960 we are told he was a Battle of Britain Spitfire pilot). Judging by the age of his children, he would be mid-30s, very old for a fighter pilot unless he had flown before the war. We get a glimpse of him through David's dream (ch 1), playing a favorite game with David and Macbeth the dog in the garden. We meet him again in Rye in 1945, demobbed and down for a golfing holiday. In 1946, both Mr and Mrs Morton have to go to London on business, causing an unexpected childcare crisis which took the Lone Piners to Clun. Mrs Morton is housewife, mother, in charge. Later the family move to Brownlow Square in London, where Mr Morton is described as a quiet man, and a lawyer.

Jasper Stirling, Peter's's father had lost his wife and brought up his daughter alone, sending her off to boarding school in Shrewsbury. She knew and appreciated solitude, riding the Long Mynd hills on her pony, and was resourceful and independent. Not unhappy at school, we see her crying with homesickness for the Mynd (SWG:p.9). Her father was resident caretaker of Hatchholt Reservoir, so lived on the job in the depth of the wilderness. He is a complex character, interestingly drawn. It was he and not his daughter who needed looking after: Peter is not a cared-for child but a carer. He had an obsession with dirt and mess, needing tidiness and hating unexpected clutter. Our first meeting with him says:

> "The living room was the tidiest, cleanest place they had ever seen. Everything gleamed...Mr Stirling, after dishing up the potatoes, went to the cupboard for newspaper and spread the sheets on the floor." (MaW: 47).

He said, "You're always welcome here if you keep the place clean" (MaW: 48).
David thought that the house reminded him of a gleaming lighthouse. When he was not sure whether to cook a meal for three or five, panic over took him until Peter sorted him out [p.125]. Whether it was for three or five, everything he had cooked had to be eaten. Peter said,

> "Daddy's a darling, but I'm the only one who knows how to deal with him. If you want to please him, please just be tidy and just don't drop crumbs on the floor." [MaW: 124]

Once these problems were resolved, Mr. Stirling could relax and get cheerfully into conversation. He insisted on doing the washing up, "he had a special place for everything, and did not trust even his daughter to deputise for him" [MaW: 126].

He was full of anxiety, blaming himself for being taken in by the saboteur with the back-pack bomb. He hated the telephone, regarding it as a harbinger of bad news (SWG:11). He had family (Peter's Uncle Micah and Aunt Caroline) in Seven Gates Farm (modelled on Saville's own home West End Farmhouse, Wheathampstead) in not-so-far-off Barton Beach (modern day Stiperstones) whom he seems to have lost contact with, but has to send his daughter Peter to them in Seven White Gates whilst he goes to "detestable" Birmingham on business in the ater board headquarters. David's letter to Peter describes Mr Stirling as "depressed" [SWG: 16]. She will, writes her father, find Uncle Micah "a little strange" [SWG:13]. Indeed he is distant and intraspective: a secret surrounding their son Charles is unravelled in the story. Charles' mother (Micah's first wife) had died when Charles was 12 and Micah had taken it very badly. Charles had left home when he was 17 and had not kept in touch, leaving Micah doubly bereaved. He married

Caroline (Carol) who seems normal. Such odd behaviour is of course true to life. No family is normal. Malcolm Saville has undoubted observed the people around him and used them as raw material. This prevents his characters from being cardboard cutouts. Charles of course returns home and is forgiven – happy endings are not so true to life.

Of the other characters, Tom Ingles is the nephew of the local farmer Alf Ingles (his wife is Betty). He missed London, despite "them blitzes": but

> "their home is gone and his mother's somewhere else with the baby and his Dad's in the war, and Alf here says he'll make a farmer of Tom maybe. But sometimes I wonder...." [p.30]

Once Tom met David, another Londoner, he couldn't stop talking. He joined the club, but only occasionally, because of work duties on the farm. Jenny Harman lived in the post office in Barton Beach with a very difficult stepmother described as shrew-like (presumably in the Shakespearian sense). She forbids Jenny to take Peter up to Seven Gates Farm – Jenny goes anyway, so there is no love lost there. Jenny is clearly unloved by this step-parent and the bad relationship is only resolved by the end of the series, when she has to accept the reality of Jenny and Tom's relationship. By 1945 Penny Warrender's parents are permanently away in India, so lives with her war-widow aunt and cousin Jonathan (Jon) heading seemingly towards a first cousin marriage! Her aunt was on her own, a single parent, trying to run a hotel left her by her Uncle Charles, to create a family income in a world demanding enterprise and without state benefits. Unfortunately the hotel had a crooked manager, Mr Grandon.

These are real life parents with typical problems of these years. Saville's intention may have been therapeutic: despite the war, he was saying that we have to make the best of our lives and support others who need it. Two parent families were not the norm. Parents and children had to negotiate difficult times.

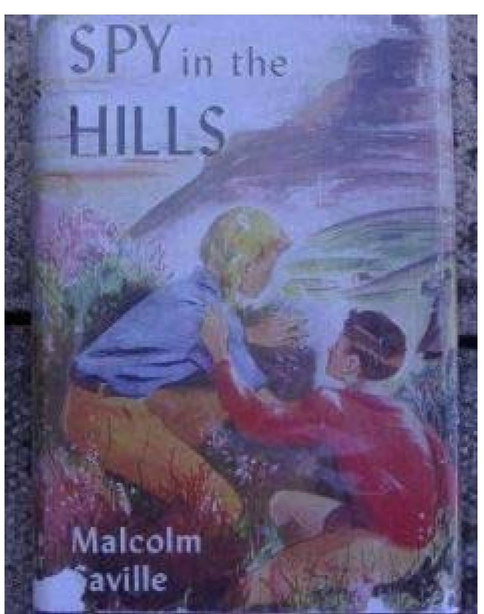
Sixty years ago this year, the Jillies were introduced with *Redshanks Warning* (1948). Londoners from Chelsea, Mr Jillions was an artist and half-hearted employee of a commercial design company, with three children to support. His wife was dead, and eldest child Amanda (Mandy) held the family together with a succession of home helps. The plot of this story revolves around the children recovering from illness and needing a holiday at the sea. The children love their father dearly (their nickname for him is JD, for Jilly Darling) but he is described as feckless and useless. We don't expect his ancient car "Benjamin" to arrive safely; he hasn't booked rooms and everywhere seems full – Mandy has to sort it out. He goes out to paint and leaves his children unsupervised and actually in danger. The book is a guide to how to cope with a helpless and hopeless parent; it leads readers to aspire to self-sufficiency and independence: much as Mystery of Witchend is a call to help mother and be good, Redshanks Warning is about taking over the adult/parent role. Father is a good natured but opinionated self-absorbed man.

A later Lone Pine adventure, *Sea Witch Comes Home* (1960), retells this basic story with the father Mr Channing, involved in smuggling stolen paintings to Holland on his small boat. His relationship with his daughter Rose is akin to that of Mr Jillions and Amanda (see also my article on how this was influenced by the work of J M Barrie). At the same time of writing, 1958, fifty years ago, Mr Gray (in *Four and Twenty Blackbirds)*, who becomes Mr Brown in later editions, is the incompetent father of the family who takes over a cafe in Lewes, full of impractical ideas about making his fortune that everyone knows will end in disaster. Mrs Gray, helped by the children, make a success of the cafe despite their father not getting his life together.

So, the parents described in the various Saville books are described as having real problems and temperaments, so most readers could find some situation to identify with. The child characters negotiate their various non-saccarine families to make the best of them, and this produces the model of the responsible caring child, capable of keeping things together even when their parent or parents have not got their lives together. Saville's stories are full of female achievement and common sense, against male egos and obsessions. Caroline Stirling has to bring Micah back to earth with Peter's help. Peter has had long experience with her own father. Even tough and

independent Peter has to let David win in their swimming race, and settle to be only vice-captain of the club. Amanda Jillions has to manoevre her father into doing the right thing. Not all the men are weak: minor characters like Bill Ward are impressive; but they deserve no stature simply because they are men. Children growing up in the 1940s had experienced the female war effort, not only at home but also in factories and other industries such as the railways. This is not Saville's territory, which is a pity, but other writers at the time gave examples of these, such as Lorna Lewis's *Tea and Hot Bombs* (1943). With men away in the services, women had to be strong single mothers, and even young girls as young as 12 had to bring up their siblings, as in Kitty Barne's evacuation story and Carnegie prizewinner *Visitors From London* (1940), where the most impressive of all the evacuated mothers is twelve year old Lily Tipping who turns out to be the brilliant young 'mother' of her brother Cyril (5) and sister Irene (4). Of the men who returned from the war, some settled and some were restless, reluctant to settle down to a mundane life after living on high adrenaline. The Mass Observation diaries of ordinary women (Nella Last's story appeared on TV in 2007) revealed women both getting on with it (or in Churchill's words, Going To It) and on occasions dreading their husband's return from the war. Mass Observation shows that there was no heroic drive to victory with many war workers doing as little as possible. For children, these were confusing times which Malcolm Saville has well caught. His values of self-help and community involvement also had a not insignificant propaganda value in the 1940s.

American version of *Mystery at Witchend*



7. ROMANY SECRETS: THE DEPICTION OF ROMANIES IN THE WRITINGS OF MALCOLM SAVILLE.

STEPHEN BIGGER

All Lone Pine readers are familiar with Reuben, Miranda and Fenella, the Romany family in the yellow and red traditional gypsy caravan. This article is about them, and about Malcolm Saville's (metaphorical) relationship with them. We think we know them well, since they appear in many Lone Pine books. But we don't know their names, only the aliases they chose to use with us gadje, or non-gypsies (literally 'peasants' or small farmers). We don't know where they went to or came from, only that they popped up in cameo moments on the Shropshire-Wales borders. Some of their secrets we will try to uncover; most we have no chance with.

First the names. Romanies have a culture and language that originated in India, is akin to ancient Sanskrit and its modern development Hindi. Their migrations through Afghanistan and Iran (Persian) to Europe happened in the remote past, and they picked up local loan words from places they passed through. Each Romany has three names: that which is whispered in their ear at baptism in infancy (not Christian baptism) and never again, in case evil spirits use it to harm them; the Romany name they normally use; and the assumed alias they use in gadje company – whether Miranda or Charity or Sarah or even Sundance. They have no surnames but make up Romany names when arrested because it cheers up the court case to hear the magistrate refer to them as "Mr Buttocks' or pornographic equivalents such as Mr Porado, 'erection'. Jan Yoors, child of Bohemian parents, describes how he ran away to join a Romany *kumpania* in the 1930s and lived with them over many summers (*The Gypsies*, 1967). His friends had names such as Kore, Pulika, Zurka and Nanosh.

Generally, Romanies have little to do with gadjes and have no respect for them. (Reuben incorrectly and confusingly replaces the term gadje with 'Gentiles': Malcolm Saville probably felt that children might recognise the parallel, but Romanies are in no way connected to Jews.) As nomads, they live off the land, which in practice means chicken as well as hedgehog. Since they do not recognise the concept of property or ownership, their moderation in appropriating whatever is around ('stealing') is a strategic and not a moral issue – they try to keep relations with local people sweet to encourage trade. Horse dealing and basket making are common, with some specialising in metalwork. Some gadjes who do Romanies a good turn earn a special relationship (as Peter did controlling Fenella's horse). These do not become 'friends' but 'contacts', used as potentially helpful people who, for occasional support, are likely to create a welcome in places like Witchend and Bury Court, Clun (Alan Denton's place in *Grey Walls*). Reuben's support against the sheep-thieves built a lasting understanding with the detective Mr Cantor which develops in *Neglected Mountain*. There is nothing sentimental in this friendship.

Fortune-telling is a form of exploitation of superstitious gadjes linking vague truisms with clues left by previous Romanies through patrins (secret signs) which tell of births, marriages, deaths and attitudes so that he customers can be told what they want to hear. Romany women became the sounding board for gadje anxieties and obsessions which increase their disrespect and show them the downside of settled existence. Romanies protected their 'friends' from being pestered by fortune-tellers; Miranda would not in real life have told the children's fortunes as they had ceased to be 'punters' (although her advice – overcome your fears – is helpful).

Malcolm Saville had clearly met a Romany group and was determined to break down a stereotype by presenting them as noble savages, almost as middle class. "Peter soon learned that she really had found fine friends in these wandering Romanies, who were so different from the rascally van-dwellers which many people miscalled gypsies" (*Neglected Mountain*, p.145). His Romany family only had one child (the norm is one a year), and paid its way (no stealing). The narratives gives many opportunities for expressing prejudice and breaking it down. The result is worthy, even if inaccurate. A classic study, *The Gypsies* by Jean-Paul Clebert was translated by Charles

Duff (1963) with additional material on English Gypsies. This distinguishes between the Romanies and other gypsies, travellers and tinkers, and differentiated between southern English Romanies (around Epsom) and Welsh Romanies, the furthest migrants from India. Romany hop-pickers worked in Herefordshire; and picked peas in Worcestershire. These surely were of the same *kumpania* as 'Reuben' and 'Miranda', amongst the caravans in Minsterley quarry.

PETER GRABBED AT THE HORSE'S HEAD. HER LEGS SWUNG CLEAR OF THE GROUND AS THE HORSE REARED IN SURPRISE.

The Romanies are introduced in *Seven White Gates*, when their caravan-horse bolts at the sudden appearance of an army tank and Peter saves the day. This creates a bond which lasts through the series. Little Fenella remains shy from here right to *Home to Witchend*, not the streetwise confident child Romany children tend to be whose main fun in life is to insult gadje. Peter is taken into a Romany camp in Minsterley quarry where she passes out and is revived with tea and 'hotchi-witchi' (hedgehog), which she enthusiastically eats. Jan Yoors writes:
"One of the boys was called Nanosh. His jet-black hair was long and he had a faded megenta silk kerchief tightly would around his neck. His dirty white shirt was buttonless and showed his bare young chest. Together we wandered all over the wasteland. Between two wagons at the far end of the camp they delightedly showed me an impressive number of dead animals hanging from a line by their hind legs. They were smaller than rabbits but definitely of the rodent family…Nanosh relieved my embarrassment by informing me that they were hedgehogs with their quills shaved off….Nanosh explained to me that hedgehogs were a delicacy among his people and that the boys spent a good deal of time hunting them; they were at their best in fall, when they had accumulated the fat essential for their long hibernation." (p.15)
Nanosh then "skilfully loosened the skin from the hind [leg] bone, then, putting it to his mouth and puffing his cheeks, he slowly inflated the hedgehog until its skin was taut". It was then ready for shaving and preparing for the pot. "Oh well" Peter said. "Thank you very much, Mr Reuben. I had some sandwiches with me when I started, but I would like to try hedgehog". Theirs however were cooked with the spines on: "two cylinders of baked clay were exposed…Peter watched how the baked clay was cracked and peeled off, bringing with it the spines of the hedgehog and leaving him bare but beautifully cooked". This is the gadje version of hedgehog cuisine; unfortunately it would mean that the entrails were cooked inside the animal, which as well as being unpleasant, came up against Romany food regulations which are complex. There is another example in Yoors, where Romanies refused to eat piles of delicious strawberries because women had stepped over them, thus ritually polluting them. The hedgehog was 'between rabbit and chicken', said Saville. Yoors describes it a "tender and delicate texture, gamey, and quite fat. It is often seasoned with wild garlic and black pepper" (pp.15f).

As the red and yellow caravan arrived in Witchend with Peter's message, Reuben told the Romany story: "He told him how they had special camping places all over the country – the quarry on the Minsterley road being one and a Common called Nomansland in Hertfordshire being another" (p.105). Why Hertfordshire? Probably because this was where Malcolm Saville

first made contact with a Romany group. [12] The Epsom gathering on Derby day is much more famous, frequented routinely by Welsh and other Romanies. Basket-making is characteristic of Welsh Romanies, witnessed by the carrying basket made for Mackie. Another well observed detail is Reuben's hat: "Reuben removed his greasy hat courteously"; the picture of the caravan in Grey Walls shows him in his hat. With few exceptions, a Romany man will wear his hat always, even in bed. Would he doff it? An interesting mid century middle class question!

"IS IT AWFUL?" WHISPERED JENNY. "AM I GOING TO HAVE AN AWFUL FATE?"

C

Reuben and Miranda are Romany speakers, said to be rare today but mainly because Romanies keep it to themselves. Romany is related to Hindi. The numerals are virtually identical and many Hindi words are recognisable. Malcolm Saville uses romni, 'woman' (rom is 'man'). He uses the word chi starting with 'little chi' but more accurately later as 'Fenella chi'. This is the equivalent of the Hindi ji, a term of endearment and respect not dissimilar to 'dear'. 'Little chi' would be similar to Hindi chota ji, 'my dear little one'. Mrs Morton is rauni, 'mistress of the house', related to Hindi rani, 'mistress' or 'queen'.

It is perhaps a good thing that Malcolm Saville's interests in matchmaking did not extend to Fenella. Betrothal traditionally took place early, at puberty and only Romany partners can be considered. Any girl who married out was banished from the Romany community, and would become part of the non-Romany 'travellers', generally a rootless crowd without traditions and with bad reputations. A special friendship between Fenella and Dickie would have been hugely problematic.

It is interesting that the first legal attack on gypsies by the Nazis in the 1930s were through the draconian in-breeding prohibitions. The Lone Pine Romanies are attacked as thieves even by 'nice' Alan Denton but the family shine through as a decent hardworking moral family (even if a bit dirty). Gypsies appear negatively in Enid Blyton (Six Cousins) and David Severn (Rick A'Fire). Our Romanies were created in 1944 at a time when Romanies throughout Europe were being shot, herded into work camps and (those who survived) gassed in January 1945 in the extermination camps. Many were victims of Nazi murder squads, others by local vigilante action. The army tank may not only have created a curious friendship but also helped to save the British Romany community from a similar fate.

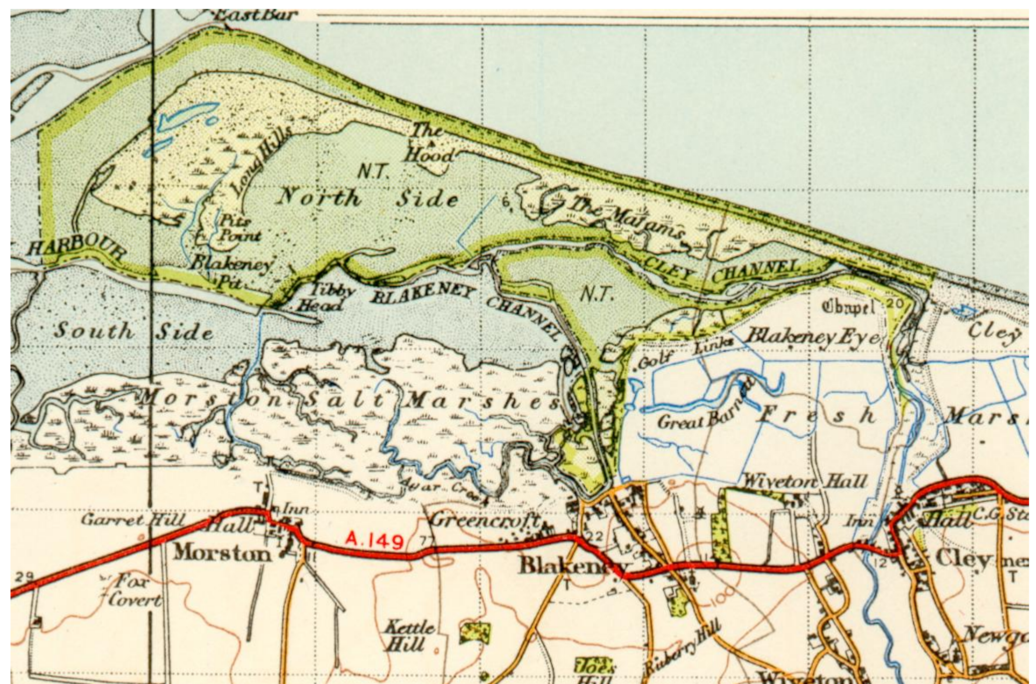
Pictures are by Bertram Prance: a) The runaway caravan, *Seven White Gates*.
b) The Secret of Grey Walls. NB Miranda would not have told Jenny's fortune, as she was a friend.

Note: Bridget Cobb, Acksherley! 17 (2001) p.4 has the autograph of Gypsy Petrulengro, self-styled King of the Gypsies on Nomansland near Harpenden in the 1940s. Gypsies have no leaders or rulers, but claiming to be 'King' was a common device to gain advantage.

8. Children Coping - Welcome the Jillies
1998

Part One: Redshanks Warning

1948, fifty years ago, was the year the Jillies burst upon the scene. Malcolm Saville published no other books. With four Lone Pine adventures under his belt (*Lone Pine Five* was written in 1948 and published the following year) and *Trouble at Townsend* providing radio exposure leading to a sequel (*Riddle of the Painted Box*) in 1947, it was time for a major new series. Children's publishing had become competitive and the Jillies gave Saville a new platform. The first two adventures, *Redshanks Warning* and *Two Fair Plaits*, his eleventh and twelfth books, were both published during the year, the first set in Blakeney on the Norfolk coast, the second in London dockside. Malcolm Saville was 47 years old, had been writing seriously for only five years.
These books introduce readers to the children of Mr Jillions (nicknamed 'JD' for 'Jilly Darling') - Mandy, Prue, and Tim - and their friends Guy and Mark Standing (whose parents can afford to drive a better car and to stay in an hotel). JD is a somewhat feckless commercial artist and designer in London: their home is in Chelsea near the Embankment. The Jillies are a cultured household. Literary and artistic allusions are made to G.K.Chesterton's *Invisible Man* (from *The Innocence of Father Brown,* about taking postmen for granted; not the famous HG Wells story – religious Chesterton couldn't stand atheist Wells); to the ballet Sleeping Beauty; to R.L.Stephenson; and to James Barrie's *Dear Brutus.* And the car is nicknamed Benjamin, an explicit biblical reference. Saville does not generally make a great deal of this in other books, nor in later Jillies adventures. He is depicting the Jillies as not too affluent but cultured and artistically aware middle class Londoners. The Standing parents, well off nouveau riche enterpreneurs on a golfing holiday, are introduced briefly but play no real part.



On this OS map of 1946, note the golf links near Blakeney Eye. They are visible today if you know what you are looking for (former bunkers especially. It was small, 9 holes only. At Cley, the windmill has been mistaken for a church on the frontpaper map.

In *Redshanks Warning* the youngsters meet on the Norfolk Coast, in the harbour village of Blakeney after an earlier chance meeting *en route* at a wayside inn (unlikely maybe, but stranger things happen in real life). The youngsters foil a gang of art thieves smuggling out stolen paintings by boat (a plot later further developed in *Sea Witch*, a well crafted experimental Lone Pine story continuing themes first explored through this first Jillies book). Its themes include

children and young people coping in adversity, especially without a mother; limited and flawed adults; ambiguity in judging people's motives, telling the good from the bad; and of course the triumph of right over wickedness.
The villains are transparent stereotypes. Sandrock was intimidating and suspicious (in a later book he kicks a puppy in Ely and develops peculiar mannerisms which annoy even his boss); Pauline Harvey kidnapped and mistreated a dog (for no explicit reason) and was usually angry; Mrs Roberts, Sandrock's landlady was "not attractive", with "a large dull face"; and to make matters worse she was "very deaf". George, who had hidden the stolen painting, had an oily smile and disconcerting teeth. They had a tendency to call the children "silly", an adult perception from which children often suffer and which Saville clearly exposes. Villains have to be suspicious characters which seems a cliché today. Yet Saville is beginning to flesh them out. Sandrock convinces Mandy briefly that he is a policeman (and who's to say policemen don't sometimes act suspiciously).
Saville uses the device of the adult 'expert', in this case 'Mr' Charles Martin (or just 'Martin'), a 'Detective-Sergeant'. This makes the investigation official (although Martin is required to prove himself first) and therefore safe; and it tidies up loose ends as the whole gang is rounded up. Yet there is no doubt that it is the youngsters who solve the mystery and are not excluded even at the critical and dangerous denouement . Later the role of helpful adult tended to be played by journalists (such as James Wilson and Dan Sturt).
The frontispiece map has some strange quirks. Cley-next-the-sea, the next village at the end of the raised causeway, bears little similarity to the real village. The causeway comes out at the wrong end of the village, the church is in the wrong place, the windmill is missing - JD would surely have painted it since it is clearly visible from the Point where he sets his easel. In Blakeney, a house is drawn on a mudbank on the wrong side of the channel. The hotel is missing and the marsh has trees where trees could not possibly survive in the tidal mud. In short the map is only half remembered.

1948 also gave birth to British Railways: passing by Norwich, Tim refers to spotting "engines that used to be LNER", a very contemporary reference although the initials (as London North Eastern *Region* would not die so quickly. As a London lad, Tim would have known of the streamlined *East Anglian* express running between Liverpool Street and Norwich. Two B17 4-6-0s were streamlined in 1937: LNER no 2870 [later 1670] was named *City of London* (it was formally *Tottenham Hotspur;* and 2859 [later 1659] was named *East Anglian* (formerly *Norwich City*). These ran in green at first, but in black during the war. Both lasted until 1959 but lost their streamlining in their latter years.
How has 50 years affected our reading? A number of things are surprising today. Adults use surnames to each other "That you, Jillions? Harvey here". Dr. Harvey is much more intrusive than a doctor today, telling JD to take Prue for a holiday. Harvey must be at least considering whether to join the National Health Service, initiated in 1948 (although few doctors were in favour). But it is smoking that seems very strange today as it is clearly socially accepted. The adults use cigarettes and pipes interchangably, often chainsmoke. The children however do not. The first hints of a link between smoking and cancer were not made until 1952, the year the king died of lung cancer. Gender relationships are interesting. The boys engaged throughout in put downs of the girls - Guy called Mandy a "silly schoolgirl". Yet the girls come back confidently as Saville shows the girls overcoming their fears and acting effectively. Adult men behave rather familiarly with the girls. Charles Martin the policeman puts his arm around Prue's shoulder and later around Mandy (pipe in the other hand). George the boatman gave Prue "a special smile". Charles' invitation to take the children out in the boat (when he was a total stranger and before they knew he was a policeman) would seem sinister today, but the children were only concerned that their parents knew where they were.
Blakeney is today much the same as fifty years ago. The church is accurately described. There are more houses and bungalows on the main road near the church. The houses on Quay Street are terraced fishermen's cottages going down a steep hill to the quay, now a National Trust car park. The hotels are of good quality and there are two excellent pubs. The tide comes in over the mudbanks making navigation extremely difficult at low tide except for small boats like George's. The raised causeway to Cley gives an excellent walk with sea lavender on the seaward side and

Oxford Ragwort (including an unusual white form) on the other. [Later note: the Ragwort was eliminated five years later]. It is seabird country, with terns, gulls and waders.
Saville didn't get to know the village well, and shows little awareness of its surroundings. His visit was clearly a short one, with time to walk the village but not the causeway, and without the time to explore Cley; yet he was able to build a very evocative story around his slight knowledge.

PART TWO: TWO FAIR PLAITS

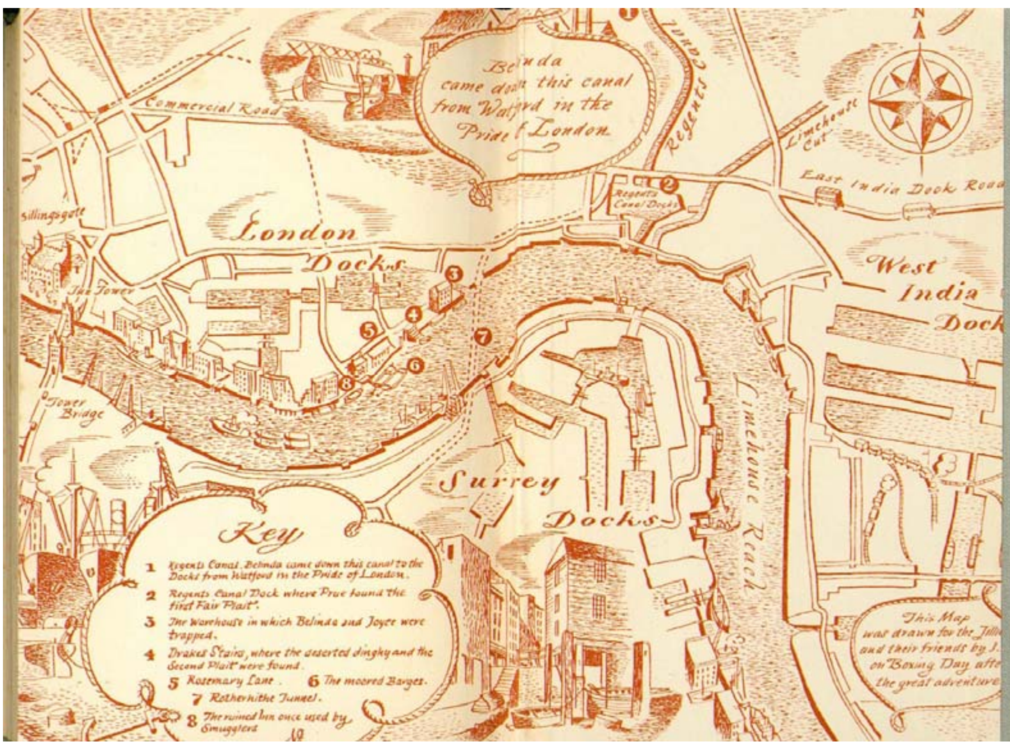
She squelched through the mud to the steps.

(*See p.* 128)

In Part One, we explored how the Jillies were introduced in *Redshank's Warning*, a cultured household meeting up with the Standing boys from a 'professional' family. Strong themes coming through focus on relationships between adolescents and adults (in which adults do not fare well) and between girls and boys. *Two Fair Plaits* also came out in 1948, based in London (Chelsea and Wapping) the following Christmas. A young girl Belinda (Linda) is kidnapped; her destination should have been to a neighbour of the Jillies near the Chelsea Embankment, who were in the right place at the right time to render assistance. Belinda's trials run alongside the efforts of the youngsters to find her. The plot takes some surprising turns, ending almost terminally in a burning warehouse. There is plenty of tension, and a final Christmas party the like of which is not to reappear until *Return to Witchend*.

This story introduces a particular focus on class – upper and middle class Chelsea against working class docklands. Honours are even. Villains and heroes (or heroines) come from each side. The working class Burtons play a crucial role, especially Mr Burton's tug *Happy Days*. We might today read a few passages as patronising but our knowledge and sensitivity are now broader. Saville describes a world that is 'strangely alien' with the children out of their depth. One line is unfortunate, and strengthened with a picture: a 'yellow face with slanting eyes' looking at Mandy which frightened her and brought out Guy's comment 'I didn't like him at all'. The Burton's kitchen is described as 'microscopic' and 'dim' but the doorstep is white and clean. The heroism of Jillies (including JD) dashing into a warehouse fire did not, and would not, please the fire brigade. The repentance of the young docklands villain, Joyce, who caused the fire with her cigarette, is touching - but her parents the bargees are branded as poor, lazy and incompetent. Joyce is characterised by heavy make-up, 'painted mouth', high heels and a dominating concern

for her appearance. The picture of working class life is a stereotype from a middle class perspective. Saville had seen working class life from a distance - the bargees, charwomen, inner-city terraced housing which seemed so cramped. He was uncomfortable with the mix of cultures, finding the exotic threatening. He was not at home either with the over-exuberant working class girls' dress-sense. But he had a glimpse that there was virtue in the tenements, there were decent people like the Burtons. And others with social pretensions cannot be trusted and prove sometimes unexpectedly to be villains.



We can follow the journey with Sandy on our street maps today. Alighting from the bus at Limehouse Church (St Anne's) they walk west past the entrance to Limehouse Basin, where the Regents Park Canal meets the Thames. Belinda finishes her journey down the Canal here, and writes her message to Tim and Prue who had slipped onto the towpath. Called Limehouse Basin today and in 1851, it appears on a pre-war map (and on the hard-back front and back cover map, as Regent's Canal Dock. The other children walked along Commercial Road and took the left turn (Branch Road to the road tunnel, as Sandy indicated; Horseferry Road in 1851 after the ferry to Horseferry Stairs in South Rotherhithe opposite, although this is not on a 1769 map. This would bring them onto what is today 'The Highway' (A1203) but was Medland Street leading to Broad Street. There is then some vagueness explained by the fog. Sandy says that Rosemary Lane is first on the left: on 1851 and 1920 maps, this would lead to the Fish Market (now Free Trade Wharf) and there were several other sideroads to adjoining warehouses. The area is now a pre-world war I park. Sandy had taken them along Broad St, past the tunnel entrance and along High St Shadwell and crossed the road into New Gravel Lane. This is in fact the second left, but on Saville's map the first is a no-through-road. In the gloom the others followed, unaware of where they were until arriving at Rosemary Lane. The walk from Limehouse church was about a mile. Rosemary Lane is now and was then Wapping Wall. The children approached it presumably by crossing the London New Dock (later Shadwell Basin) on New Gravel Lane (on 1851 maps; Garnet Street today) as Rosemary Lane is said to end in a cul-de-sac at the burning warehouse where Belinda almost perished (today's Pier Head). In fact the dock entrance was (and still is) bridged into Glamis Road adjutting King Edward Memorial Park. This bridge may however have suffered war damage as bombed factories are mentioned nearby. The Jillies find Drake's Stairs going from Rosemary Lane to the river (between Shadwell Dock Stairs and New Crane Stairs). So Rosemary Lane was a real place authentically described. The smugglers inn, number 8 on Saville's map, also appears in Peter Dawlish's *Captain Peg-Legs War* (1939), a sea-faring yarn

setting out from Wapping. It was called *Prospect of Whitby*, and is identified as such in *Come to London.*

There is often a hint of romance, perhaps aimed at teenage readers. Mandy and Guy almost have a tender moment on Blakeney Quay at the end of *Redshank* before being interrupted (as happens frequently in Saville's stories). Carrying the injured Mandy to the boat on the Thames was a kindling moment destroyed by inappropriate embarrassed schoolboy humour. The second Jillies book ends with Mandy and Guy sitting side by side on the floor, the readers not knowing quite what might develop - but of course nothing does. Young people can easily identify with the feelings and insecurities of romance, and with lost opportunities.

Of the Jillies, Mandy is impressive, an effective manager, a good communicator, and a quick thinker. Prue is not far behind. Saville pours a great deal of affection into these characters. Daughters are prized - "daughters are the thing", JD said, echoing the earlier thoughts of Doctor Harvey. Guy and Mark are chauvinists who never quite realize that they have been outshone. Romance almost, but never quite breaks through. This affirming representation of Mandy is a helpful role model, although the attitudes of the boys sometimes causes her (briefly) to doubt herself. One conversation is telling, when she is annoyed with Guy for wanting to leave everything to the police: 'I want us to help, but to do it in our own way, just to prove that we can…You haven't seen that Mr Trevor, Guy! If you had, you'd want to work on our own. He just patronised me and I'm not going to put up with that.'. There are many Mandies around - children with initiative and sensitivity who respond superbly to challenge, but who have to get used to being patronised.

A theme that is clearly of significance is that the Jillies' mother is dead. For three years Mandy has coped, with the help of 'charwomen'. Belinda had also lost her mother, also three years ago. 'Linda was only a little girl, but perhaps because she had no mother she had become very self-reliant and plucky for her age. During the last ten minutes she had done as much as nine out of ten adults could have done…' (in attempting to save Joyce from the fire). There is a sense of children coping, and coping well, through loss. The war had dislocated society and left many children without one or both parents. Saville's fathers generally cope badly. JD is "not a great deal of practical help", but responds "vaguely". "Remind me Mandy or I shall forget" shows how responsible Mandy has to be and how she keeps the family together. His car is a bit rickety, and he is "not interested in anything mechanical". In Blakeney, JD messes up the accommodation booking and disappears at the crack of dawn to paint, leaving the children to deal with the villains and to bring him his sandwiches. He has little hair, a goatee beard and a limp, and moves only "slowly". He takes days off work to take the children out, so must have had an understanding or exasperated employer. He could be contrary: he criticises Mandy for being too hearty early in the morning, yet claims pompously that the best time of the day is before breakfast. Yet he is a loving father, with lots of kisses, hugs and 'darlings'. When the chips are down, he can be 'superb'. There is a clear message that adults are not to be relied on, but have to be organised and from time to time outfaced.

Malcolm Saville's stories contrast sharply with normal expectations of children. Schools could (and can) be authoritarian places which give few opportunities for children to solve problems and be proactive and creative. Parents are protective and, even more today, allow children few opportunities to have adventures and be self-reliant. Children are expected to obey, to revere the words of adults (especially parents and teachers). Their own abilities are not taken seriously enough and youngsters rarely are able to experience responsibility and work out strategy. Giving children this hands-on experience of problem-solving and responsibility in safe ways transforms education and is both motivating and affirming. Saville provided in fiction what life did not (and still does not) offer. Yet many children have to be as responsible as Mandy, holding the family together, looking after siblings and even infirm parents and relatives. And in so doing they can outshine the adults around them who can be set in their ways and lacking in imagination, common sense and determination.

9. YELLOW PERIL? THE DEPICTION OF THE CHINESE IN THE FICTION OF MALCOLM SAVILLE

STEPHEN BIGGER

She saw a yellow face with slanting eyes looking down at her.

I want to start this piece from a picture (p.103 of Two Fair Plaits, 1948 edition, p.85 of the Armada paperback, 1966). Lunt Roberts' picture is captioned 'She saw a yellow face with slanting eyes looking down at her' and depicts a small man the size of Guy, a Chinese face, hands in pockets under a street-light (gas-lamp style) wearing a British raincoat and Trilby style soft hat. The text adds that this was a 'slight, human figure' coming through the fog and into the light.

> 'So quietly and quickly did the man move that Mandy nearly cried out as his sleeve brushed hers…'.

Guy cuddled Mandy (of course) and Mark said 'I hope those two kids don't meet that chap. I didn't like him at all.' He was not a threat, not intrinsic to the story - simply local 'colour', designed to paint the location as frightening and dangerous.

Barry Salter, a small-time crook getting off the bus in Commercial Road, found the place full of sailors (*A Palace for the Buckinghams*).

> 'Some were brown and some were yellow, for this was Commercial Road, the main thoroughfare of London's dockland'.

This is described as a tough area - he overcame some 'louts' before meeting two policemen (in real life Garnet Street, on a bridge over the docks clearly marked on the map in Two Fair Plaits): Saville observed, 'Police always patrol in pairs in this part of London'. His destination, Spice Lane (aka Rosemary Lane in *Two Fair Plaits*, Wapping Wall in real life), 'was a squalid little street' with terraced houses one side and warehouses on the other. He knocked at no 39[13], home of Septimus Bland: 'A Chinaman was standing with his back to the door, regarding him without favour'. This is Chang, 'a horrible Chinaman' (Juliet) who spends the rest of the book obeying orders and getting injured by both sides. No story of docklands is complete without a Chinese baddie. Dickens also developed the stereotype: *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* opens in a seedy life-threatening opium den in Limehouse. Philip Pullman also set his superb Sally Lockhart trilogy in Victorian docklands, set amongst the working class tensions of the poor, Irish and Jewish communities in the 1870s. In *The Tiger in the Well* (1991), a spectacular collapse of the hydraulic lift (see below) transforms Sally's chances. Yet we still have the cliché of the Chinese unspeakable villain, Ah Ling (in fact Ah Ling is half Chinese and half Belgian). Hard to credit that the 1901 census revealed only 545 Chinese people in the whole country, mainly in dockland areas such as London and Liverpool, a tiny number considering the mythology of exotic threat. This situation remained until the 1950s when immigration from Hong Kong created Soho as modern Chinatown.

Then several things happened at the same time

Chang in action in A Palace for the Buckinghams.

[13] No 39 Rosemary Lane is where the Burton's lived but 39 Spice Lane is clearly grander.

The policeman who summed up Juliet with 'You are not from these parts' would equally have summed up Malcolm Saville similarly, as a stranger to docklands. In Come to London (1967,p.68) he wrote of the famous ancient inn said to be used by smugglers, The Prospect of Whitby on Wapping Wall, with verandas on piles over the water: 'I went there some years ago [1946-7] and used it as a scene in one of my adventure stories'[14]. He was thus not a frequent visitor.

The purpose of my article is to shed a little more light on the Chinese in London. First can I introduce Mrs Gladys Farmer, owner of a Chinese restaurant in Limehouse as described by Tony Aldous[15]. Opposite St Anne's Hawksmoor church, this was the very spot where the Jillies (and probably Saville before them) got off the bus before passing Limehouse Basin. 'Her father came from Shanghai, her mother was a Scot; so they lived in a row of houses off Pennyfields and kept a restaurant which, during the Second World War, was reduced to serving very un-Chinese dockers breakfasts and lunches to survive'. Her friend Charlie Cheung owns other long established restaurants in Limehouse.

The earliest Chinatown was in the Pennyfields and Limehouse Causeway area, not many yards from the St Anne's church bus-stop. Chinese sailors began to settle in this area from the 1890s, and to marry local girls, many poor and themselves incomers into Docklands. Most Chinese sailors worked for the Blue Funnel Line which operated from West India Docks. A community of no greater than 400 settled near the dock gates. The mysterious man the Jillies met in the fog might well have been the father or uncle of Gladys Farmer or Charlie Cheung. Whoever he was, he represented a community struggling against poverty and considerable bomb damage and surviving against the odds.

The next person to meet is Chaing Yee[16], an artist from China describing his experiences in London. I have chosen his piece on London Fog, since someone like him met the Jillies on that dark corner in 1948. He writes,

> '…without the slightest warning the sky suddenly became enveloped in a thick, yellowish shroud, which grew still thicker in the darkness of the gathering twilight. I wondered why the day-time should be turned into night so soon, as it was only about three o'clock. Tempted by this strange sight, I got down from the bus and preferred to walk. Hardly seeing anything, I walked on the pavement and had many amusing adventures; once I struck a pillar-box, then I found myself clutching a man's hands; as we bumped into each other we broke into a laugh, but could not see each other's face clearly.' (pp.56-7)

He described how he, and how the Chinese in general, enjoyed fogs, but this one 'is not the pure white colour I used to know, but yellowish grey and sometimes blackish. The particles of it do not strike the face with coolness and refreshment, but my nostrils detect in it the presence of smoke and a very oppressive air'. He liked to let the fog feed his imagination. Then he could imagine Londoners as much nicer and more civilised than they really were:
'lovely creatures, with nice looking faces, very friendly, neither rich nor poor, carrying on their duties as they should be, without class or difference in age. I always think imagination should be one great comfort of human beings nowadays, but people are losing their sense of wonder, so that they only see London fog as a foe or as a matter of rage. For myself, it always leads me to imagine what life must lie underneath it'.

Imagine a world without the likes of Septimus Bland… On better days, he too liked to wander through the streets looking at the moonlight but without any great sense of wonder, hoping that he wouldn't get stopped by the police.

Mandy need not have been worried. Her Chinaman may have been enjoying the fog or looking at the moon, or going quietly home to his family. Chiang Yee comments that many Chinese found

---

[14] Two Fair Plaits. The inn is wrongly placed on his map, probably deliberately.
[15] *The Illustrated London News Book of London's Villages,* Secker & Warburg, 1980, p.186-7
[16] *The Silent Traveller in London* (1938)

it difficult to adapt to London life as it was hard to make friends, so they keep themselves to themselves. They enjoy their families and their children (the core of Chinese values) and wondered if the British really liked children (witness their behaviour on London buses). He observed, quoting Confucius, 'I will not be afflicted if people do not know me; but I will be afflicted when I do not know people'. This stimulated Chiang Yee to try to get to know Londoners; the Jillies at least made friends with the working class Burtons - but the Chinese were apparently one step too far.

Wapping Wall is a street, not a wall. The warehouses on the left as you look from The Prospect of Whitby towards Wapping are like huge cliffs – Pelican Wharf, Metropolitan Wharf, Great Jubilee Wharf, New Crane Wharf. The other side contains smaller workshops, now gentrified into expensive housing. It is most certainly not the mean street of terraced housing depicted in both Jillies and Buckingham's books: this is more typical of Limehouse next door. There is no number 39: the last house before the Shadwell Basin, opposite the 'Prospect', is clearly and historically number 37, with a date of 1890, the managers house of the London Hydraulic Power Company (est.1871) whose pumping station and industrial buildings still remain. This company produced the hydraulic power for dock, industrial and domestic use until the 1970s, for example cranes, lifts, and 'dumb waiters' (such as Philip Pullman features in his Sally Lockhart adventures). The number 39 was deliberately chosen because it does not exist.

Wapping is now a mixture of refurbishment and new build, with pleasant walks from St Katherine's Dock along the canals and basins to Shadwell to reach the Prospect of Whitby. Or you can walk the Thames Path[17] . You will see the girder swingbridges which joined the island of Wapping to the rest of the city. You can visit Edward VII Park, started in 1911 and completed in 1922 ("for the use and enjoyment of the people of East London for ever") on the site of the old fish market: "you can walk in the little park at Shadwell and watch the tugs, launches, and great boats flying unfamiliar flags…" [18] The park contains, near the riverside, ventilation shaft 3 of the Rotherhythe Tunnel, mentioned in the Jillies' foggy walk, a splendid industrial monument. Old Chinatown is further down beyond Limehouse Basin (where Belinda arrived as prisoner on the barge The London Pride). There Victorian King Street became Ming Street as the Chinese sailors, with their British wives, settled alongside Jews, Irish and today Bengalis and Bangladeshis bringing life and variety into multicultural London. To the middle class from the suburbs, however, this was a hearty shock to the system. The residents were poor and working class (difficult enough) but also looked different. Saville fostered a sense of Britishness, but it was not inclusive but demonised the Chinese through stereotype. The British Septimus Bland was no stereotype – dishonest, greedy, without honour, quite capable of a racist attach on Chang when things went against him.

[17]The East London Visitors' Guide is most helpful

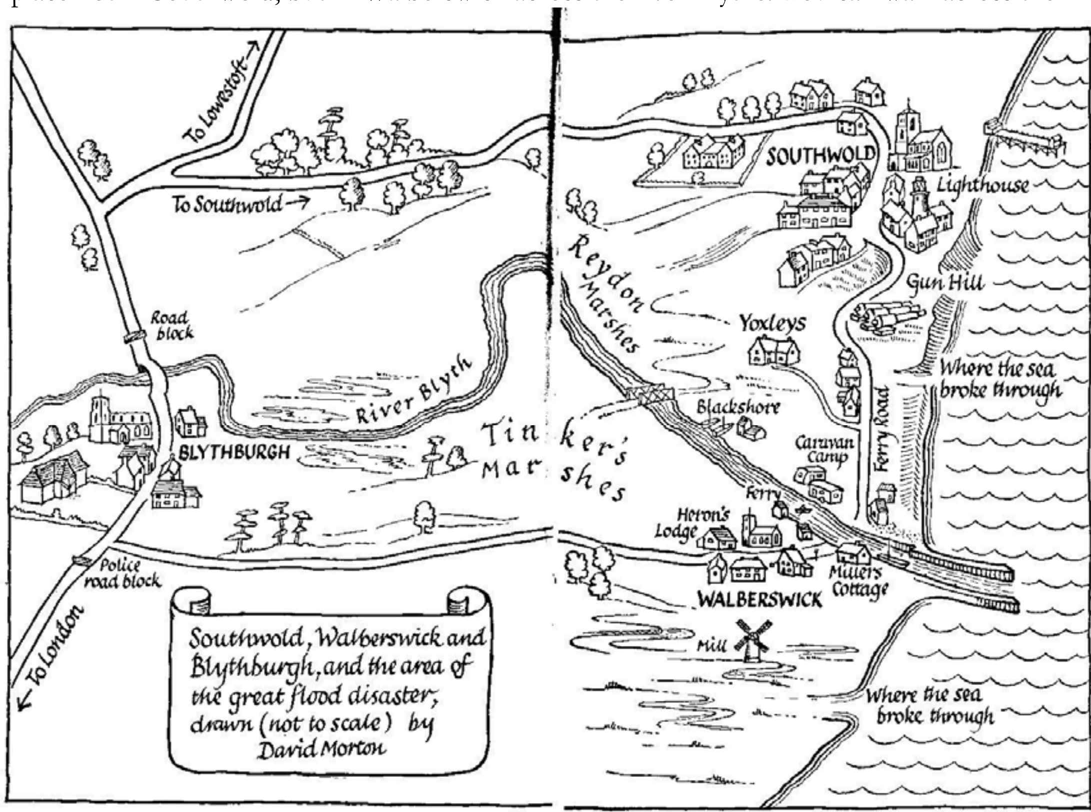
[18] Foreword to *Two Fair Plaits*

10. GOOD PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER: THE LESSON OF *SEA WITCH COMES HOME*

STEPHEN BIGGER, SOUTHWOLD GATHERING PROGRAMME, 2010.

Sea Witch Comes Home has divided opinion. It is structurally different from any other story, and of the lone piners it only involves the Mortons. David is asked to go to Suffolk (Walberswick near Southwold) to support school-mate Paul Channing and his sister Rose as their father Richard Channing has disappeared. They had apparently visited the year before. The mystery deepens when their father returns to pack a bag when they are out, but goes without leaving a message. Paul suspects criminal activities, Rose denies this. The book opens in Holland showing us the master criminal art thief, and his plot. We gradually see Richard Channing stupidly but innocently involved in the crime, discovering this too late, and putting himself in great danger. The story swings between what happens to him, and what the children do to solve the mystery.

I will examine some of the problems, but first a word about locations. The main action takes place not in Southwold, but in Walberswick across the river Blythe. You can walk across the



marshes via a bridge, or take a long drive around via Blythborough, visiting the church described so well at the end of the story. Inside this church can see the broken quarry titles and horse tethering rings whose origins the preface and story describes. It is an enormous wool church for such a tiny village, a common feature in Suffolk. As you head from here towards Walberswick, the frontpaper map is your guide. The Channing house is marked just before Walberswick church, identified as the third house you come to as you enter the village. Today, many more houses have been infilled in more recent years. What would have been the third house in 1960 is more or less as the book described, with veranda, now hidden behind high trees, described in the story as brushing against the windows in the wind – an old house named Elm Gables. Its position has been changed in the book, though, set back 50 yards from the road, the position as it happens of the house next door. A track leading off the road opposite eventually comes to the Red Mill across farmed fields. The main road past the church leads to the village and the quay. The Miller's cottage on the shoreline is as marked on the map, except that it is a row of cottages

rather than a single one. There is no doubt that research was done *in situ.* The first edition dustjacket consists of a photograph of the river and boatyard by Saville, with Rose and David superimposed in the foreground, each looking resolute and purposeful. Presumably this is just before Rose fell into the water. Over in Southwold, Ferry Road exists but the road to Yoxleys, and Yoxleys itself (if these ever existed) are no more. The nature of the marsh makes it difficult to imagine a house built where the map suggests. Blythborough Church is the scene of the story's endgame. Down the coast at Orford, the harbour exists as it did then, protected by Orford Ness, the location of secret world war 2 research (and well worth a day's walking over). There are various cafes and a pub near the harbour, so it is not difficult to imagine Harbour Lights.

And why 'Sea Witch'? Was Sea Witch a boat which MS spotted on the quay at Walberswick and made its way into his diary? We don't know, so we can speculate. The Thames boat *London Pride* (in *Two Fair Plaits*) has something symbolic to say about the emergence of London after the war, as does The *Pride of Brentford* in *The Riddle of the Painted Box,* a celebration of the bargee life. My guess is that *Sea Witch* is a significant name rather than a chance name. The Sea Witch could conjure up a tempest and had control of the weather. The storm could be potentially good and bad – a storm helped Sir Francis Drake defeat the Armada, and was, some stories say, conjured by sea witches. That conjured by the sea witch Ursula in Hans Christian Anderson's 'The Little Mermaid' was with evil intent: she was defeated only when a boat was steered into the heart of the whirlpool, that is, her body. *Sea Witch* is a common boat name. It was a record-breaking clipper ship in 1849. The boat that rescued the Chalet School girls from the Channel Islands in 1941 was called *Sea Witch* – (*Chalet School Goes To It,* 1941). This *Sea Witch* limped over, shot at by Nazi planes. By the end of our book, Channing's *Sea Witch* is crushed and sunk by the storm, a kind of sacrifice to end the disaster. Mr Channing becomes a reformed character and dad. In the chaos of life, good and bad are mixed up, and finding calm waters can sometimes be difficult.

One factual change is that the January 31 storm and flood has changed to September, before term starts, so allowing David and the twins to visit Walberswick. The complaint has been made that Malcolm Saville should not have profited from a disaster that claimed many lives. Yet writers over the ages have written about wars, disasters, pestilence and fire that this is not an unusual thing to happen. The question is more, was it done in good taste. To take a parallel, a tacky disaster movie of 7/11 would be rather different from a film celebrating the bravery of the fire fighters. For us, the question should not be whether the topic is proper, but whether it was done well.

Some years ago (2003), on the 50th anniversary of the 'great flood' of 1953, I wrote [i] 'Sea Watch at Southwold' in Acksherley! (chapter 14). This highlighted a number of other books describing the real events on 31st January 1953. I focused there on the facts of the floods, due to the combination of high tide and gale force winds from the north. In a later article (2004, chapter 4), I commented on the explicit references to J. M. Barrie's play *Dear Brutus*, and in particular the phrase "daughters are the thing", referred to by JD in *Redshanks Warning*, and by Richard Channing to his daughter Rose in *Sea Witch Come Home*. This play is also referred to in Saville's book on amateur dramatics in 1937, implying that he might have seen or been involved in a stage production. In this play, visitors to a country house go into a magic garden of make-believe, and live out their dreams of alternative lives. The message is that we are not prisoners of fate, but that even if we are given a second chance, we will probably mess up again. Channing identifies with the childless character symbolically named Dearth who becomes an artist with a make-believe daughter Margaret. He, a feckless artist, prefers his daughter to his wife. She is a reminder to him that a romanticised image is not the reality – daughters, she says, grow up, become independent and move away. Margaret is abandoned by her thoughtless father to return to her oblivion. Channing identifies himself in the book with this artist Dearth (this had been the model for JD as well) – and both are not given wives. However Channing's own daughter, named Rose after a character in a different play, *Mary Rose* is not a disappearing vision but a girl with feet on the ground. Her vision of her father as feckless but honest turns out to be reality. Saville wants to show that people can change when offered a second chance.

Paul Channing is six months older than David at 16, intelligent, highly strung, emotionally on the edge, who wants a career on the stage. David and the twins had spent a holiday in Walberswick the previous year (though it's hard to know how they fitted this in), so Paul came to David when he suspects his father is involved in shady activities. When David is late at Liverpool Street he snaps, but relaxes when David tells him off. This touchiness is part of his character, and throughout the story, arguments are never far away. He is described as rather dependent on others, and when left to his own devices, usually gets the wrong end of the stick. Rose is 12, more independent, and loves walking around the coastland looking at birds. She is fond of her father and is said to give him more love and trust than he deserves. She is convinced that he is not a criminal, and she is proved right. But nevertheless Richard Channing is in trouble, because he had been duped into delivering stolen paintings to Holland. He had discovered the truth too late, which made him a target for the gang. He must be silenced, since he refused to be bought.

Why were only the Morton's involved? One answer is that Malcolm Saville was bored with the normal format. This was Lone Pine number 13, in 1960. In letters to adult 'fans', he often says something like, 'I've done 15 Lone Pine books now, surely that's enough?'. Of course his fans and his publisher disagreed, so more experimental books had to run in other series. Whilst Lone Pine books continued with Shropshire and Rye adventures, the natural successor to Sea Witch (in creativity as well as in time) was Marston Baines, whose series grew from 1963. Rose Channing was a competitor for David's hand in marriage – so she unfortunately had to go, not even invited to the farewell party in 1978. She morphed into Rosina, the strong girl figure in Marston Baines.

The main characters are not cooperative – a bit of collaboration would have solved the mystery sooner, since together they had all the clues. It starts when Paul Channing meets David Morton at Liverpool Street Station. He moans and mopes until David tells him to snap out of it. The two boys continue non-communicating throughout most of the book, and pressure on the Mortons to go home comes from both families. Paul and Rose also are at loggerheads, Paul regarding his father as a criminal, Rose insisting he was innocent and in trouble. Both are right in a sense – he had been engaged in criminal activities without being aware of it and without caring. This book depicts the beginning of a moral sense. Richard Channing decides to resist criminality. The readers know this, but his family do not. Rose in particular regards the journalist James Wilson as an enemy and not a friend, because he seemed to be assuming the guilt of her father. His ejection from the cottage is somewhat violent, with the telephone wires ripped out of the wall. The readers however know which side he is on, because they have been let in on his thoughts and campaign. Rose and the twins work well together, though Rose keeps her journey to her father a secret from them. The younger ones see the black car leaving Orford with Richard Channing on board, the older ones see it coming in to Southwold. But on the day they could and should have talked and compared notes (as the lone piners would have done) they are short tempered with each other. They never became lone piners, as Harriet Swallow from London did. They did not come to the party in Witchend in the final book.

That *Sea Witch* was off-message is not, I think, a problem. It was as if Saville was being badgered by his publishers to write yet another of the beastly things (almost his own words in his letters) and his retort was to write a "not-a lone-pine book", where the Mortons do something else. They have another life. They had holidayed with the Channings before, and we the reader did not know of it. This has produced to my mind one of his best books, breaking the mould. The scene shifts, as if in a film, between Holland, the criminal network, Richard Channing and James Wilson. The reader has no ambiguity, but knows who is good and who is bad. What they don't know are the consequences, and here there is real tension. Will the criminal gang be foiled or get away with it? What will the storm do? Will Richard Channing drown in his basement prison with open window? Or will he be arrested? These tensions are maintained until the latter stages.

Another principle is at work. If the good person does nothing, the evil, the criminal will succeed. If the good begin to stand up to them, cooperation can bring them down. The reader has seen missed opportunities for cooperation – it seems that the criminals will win because people cannot act together with urgency. But once they do, all changes. Richard Channing has refused to be

bought, with a significant sum of money. In Southwold, the local cook/cleaning woman who is described so unheroically decides that she cannot go along with it, so lets the prisoner out with a head's start, and delivers vital messages. In doing so she potentially makes herself a target. James Wilson is investigating to find the truth and not worthless press copy: in doing so he puts himself into danger. Finally, the children tackle crises of both criminals and weather. For Rose it means the hair-raising journey to her hiding father; for James Wilson it means risking Rose's wrath; for Paul it means doing rather than complaining; for Rose and David it means getting wet and muddy; for the twins it means infuriating the criminal by shadowing him closely.

The chapter on The Sole Bay Disaster is almost poetry. It condenses the power of the storm into short pictures. It could exist on its own, except for the powerful reference to the sinking of *Sea Witch* in Orford harbour. When it says that the water "poured through the unglazed barred window of the cellar" at Yoxleys, we the reader knows what this means had Richard Channing not escaped. The water broke through the sea defences "with a roar of triumph" and surged around the old red mill – where Richard Channing would have been trapped if he had not come out of hiding to help the local community. This is all highly symbolic. Good people do not win by hiding, but by working together for good.

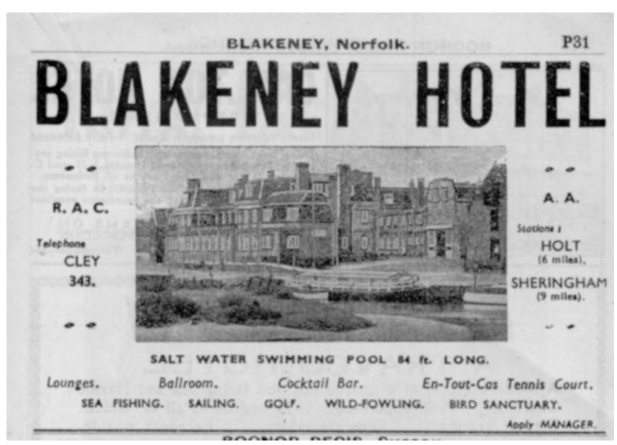
The dustjacket of the Newnes first edition is a colour photograph of Walberswick quay by Malcolm Saville, with artwork of Rose and David by Terry Freeman superimposed.

PART 3. LOCATIONS

11. WHY CHOOSE BLAKENEY?
BIRDS, ARTISTS AND HOLIDAYS IN DIGS

By Stephen Bigger

Blakeney is the setting of just one Saville story, Redshanks Warning, the first in the Jillies series. We ask why Malcolm Saville chose Blakeney, the only excursion to the Norfolk coast for his story settings. We know that Malcolm Saville knew Cromer, since a boat on the shore, Petronella, gave its name to a central Lone Pine character. Cromer was a seaside holiday centre for the well-to-do, with eight hotels advertising in Bradshaw's pre-war Railway Guide. [Bognor Regis had just two]. Anyone looking for reasonable hotel rates had to travel beyond Sheringham. Blakeney was an ancient port, once embarking xenophobic Crusaders intent on murder in the name of Christianity; and more peaceable pilgrims to Santiago in Spain, offered hospitality by a thriving local Friary. The port had long since become silted up.



Blakeney Hotel Advert, 1930s and 1940s (1947)

I am drawing on a book that might have been on Malcolm Saville's shelves, *People and Places in Marshland*, by Christopher Marlowe (1927), the record of a bicycle journey across the salt marshes. It was dedicated to "the girls of East Anglia who by their charm and courtesy have contributed so largely to the success of my recent tour". This tour included the area surrounding Blakeney to remedy the lack of books nationally which 'sing East Anglian praises'. Malcolm Saville starts the foreword of 'Redshank' with a rhyme(abbreviated) included in full in Marlowe. It ends

> "And the Blakeney people
> Stand on the steeple
> And crack hazel-nuts
> With a five-farthing beetle"

The beetle is a mallet, not an insect. Marlowe found this rhyme on the wall of a pub and reproduced it (p.189). Malcolm Saville moves from Cromer crabs to Salthouse ditches, but misses out the villages north of Blakeney, including the entry 'Blakeney bulldogs'. Morston (next to Blakeney) men are 'dodmen' (snails) and Wells men are 'bitefingers' after the man who bit off a wrecked man's finger to get his ring off. Marlowe describes how he saw and was almost killed by the 'Shuck Dog', a ghostly apparition of a black dog with yellow eyes the existence of which he stayed out all night to disprove. Malcolm Saville says of Mrs. Holt: "So she…told them first of the mysterious Shuck Dog, which is said to haunt the coast roads of Norfolk. ' 'Tis said he's large and black with great yellow eyes, and that there's some that can see him and some that can't…'Tis just a stupid old tale, of course; but they say that the Shuck Dog carries death within the year to those who set eyes on him'". Stupid it may be; but it scared the life out of Marlowe.

Marlowe also speaks of the lighthouse tower of Blakeney church, and describes a walk through the bird sanctuary under the very strict eyes of the National Trust warden.

> "The best haunt of wild birds that I have yet seen is the great sanctuary at Blakeney in the salt marshes – an official watcher is in charge there and it is very difficult to gain admission. To reach it you have to tramp miles over the marsh, and when you do you have to obey the regulations minutely" (p.56-7).

Malcolm Saville says, 'This tract of the country [is] the home of many rare and lovely birds': it is Prue who decides the holiday venue –

> 'I want to go and see some birds, and I know a good place… Let's go where we've never been before. Let's go to the seaside in Norfolk. I've been reading about it and it sounds awfully romantic. And I've been reading a lot about birds and what fun it is to watch them without taking their eggs. I looked on a map when I was reading the bird-book, and there's a lovely place called Blakeney' (pp.25-26).

Prue reads passages of books (unattributed, but which sound like guidebooks) and maps are consulted. Mr Jillions (JD) had heard that the area was good for sketching. So Blakeney it was, thanks to the National Trust bird sanctuary, created in 1912.

The children walk freely to Blakeney Point without regard for regulations or wardens. The story reports very free access to the reserve, in contrast to Marlowe's experience of restrictions. Even a dog is allowed. The post-war National Trust review (1945) notes that visitors had to sign a declaration of good behaviour before entering. Their journey to the point is an interesting one: they "took the rough cart track which led them out on to the point" (p.69). There is no such track, but it looks as though there might be on the OS map, and from the quay. This 'track' is the sea wall embankment which is prevented from getting to the Point by the deep Cley Channel to Blakeney Eye. The path skirts the golf links and heads for Cley via a chapel, now demolished. The embankment heads towards the main road north of Cley. The river Glaver prevents access to Blakeney Point. Access is found south of Clay (i.e the other side, at Salthouse) to reach the shingle spit (not 'dunes'). Marlowe is right – it is a long walk. This detail can only be made out on the 1946 OS map under high magnification. On his map, Malcolm Saville also mistakes the windmill for a church.

Marlowe generally praised Norfolk people (in contrast to the 'surly' Suffolk villagers). He travelled south to north, staying in the inn at Cley, 'The Fishmongers Arms' for a 'reasonable price'. From there he cycled to next-door Blakeney:

> "Blakeney might be compared in every particular with Rye – its quaint street leading to the decayed harbour – its ancient houses – its atmosphere of sleep and its hostility to any modern improvement. Here you are back in Elizabethan days and you must avoid any action which would jar on the susceptibilities of the inhabitants. You must creep noiselessly from point to point – you must take time about every move and never give any suspicion of hurry or worry – you must adapt yourself to the customs of the place and remember that you are there on sufferance. For the first time on my tour I felt a distinct reminder of my status as a stranger – a tolerated nuisance, whose money might be useful but whose presence was resented. Blakeney people wish to be left alone – they have no use for artists or sportsmen (viz. wildfowlers) – they do not welcome visitors – they fear the incursion of the vulgarian as a result… I have no quarrel with Blakeney for seeking to keep out the vulgarians, who have ruined Rye and Winchelsea." (pp.182-4)

Malcolm Saville, born in Hastings, knew Rye. The first lone-pine book includes The Hope Anchor Inn (the setting of the Gay Dolphin in Rye and still in business) as the unlikely name of the pub in landlocked Rattlinghope, at the foot of Longmynd. The surly attitude is reflected in deaf Mrs Roberts who refuses rooms to the Jillions family as Mr Sandrock has taken all rooms. The day is saved by the children's chance meeting with George, the hotel boatman, ex-Navy during the war, whose mother Mrs Holt they stay with. By vulgarians, Marlowe means 'the vulgar rich' who flaunt their wealth, look down on those with less and on those who do not dress a la mode; their presence has inflated the price of hotels in "the popular sport of 'fleecing the visitors'". This, he said, applied from Cromer (the most expensive at 10 guineas a night), throughout 'Poppyland' to Sheringham (5 guineas). You could buy a reasonable house at this time for under £100.

Blakeney was not a place for artists: but Cley-next-the Sea, next door, was:

> "You might imagine yourself in Sussex, for there is little to distinguish Cley from Romney or Rye or Winchelsea. Yet there are one or two features which convince you that you are not in the sophisticated South Country. No char-a-bancs hoot and scream in the narrow streets; no postcard sellers nor would-be "guides" seek to molest you as you wander to the historic church; no pretentious hotels mar the beauty of the landscape…
> As opposed to Romney Marsh, however, Cley has two distinct advantages. The tripper has not yet discovered the little paradise and the pseudo-artist has forborne to build his "studio-cottage". You will find one or two genuine artists… but of mountebanks and pretended geniuses there are none. No frivolous-minded person would come to Cley – there is no opportunity for striking a pose or for getting your photograph in the London papers, as an artist at Rye would for instance – you can do nothing but serious work here." (p.177-8).

Blakeney/Cley as an unspoilt Rye might have been tempting for Malcolm Saville, although it is hard to see which hotels were pretentious. Malcolm Saville does not show great knowledge of Cley, which is the most inaccurate part of his map. The Blakeney Hotel, on the Quay, described as 'new' in guides such as Arthur Mee, clearly encouraged 'vulgarians' with its swimming pool, tennis courts and billiards, promises of trout fishing, wild fowling, sailing, sea fishing, and golf. The pre-war hotel advert in Bradshaw's Railway Guide (published monthly and used by all rail travellers) boasted 'electric lighting', dropped in post-war adverts as no longer a novelty. Telephones had increased since pre-war Cley 43 becomes post-war Cley 343. Trout fishing, presumably in the River Glaven which reaches the sea at Cley, had also disappeared. Billiards were replaced with a ballroom. The Jillions preferred 'digs'; the Standish family, with a decent car, preferred the Hotel, particularly as Mr Standish wanted to play golf. During the two summers after the war, families flocked on holiday so the system could only cope by people opening their homes, and by using railway carriages as holiday homes (see *Susan, Bill and the Vanishing Boy*), and holiday camps. Similar overcrowding was prevented in the summer of 1947 by petrol rationing.

Compared with Cromer (The Royal Links Hotel) the Blakeney golf course was feeble, barely big enough for nine hole 'pitch and put'. It is marked in the 1946 OS map as just inside the sea defence causeway in an area which is now reclaimed salt meadow, impossible to imagine now as lush greens. It was close enough to walk to, although Mr Standing had a lift for the hundred or so yards – so Guy could borrow the car from his very trusting (but unaware) parent. This golf course is not marked on Saville's frontispiece map. He clearly thought the golf course was further away.

About the redshank. Redshanks are common but shy, with subtle variations in colour and size depending on where they come from. Waders, they live off shrimp, ragworm and small crustaceans. Mandy heard an alarm cry at night 'like the quick pipe of a frightened blackbird' (p.65). This was mimicked by Mark as "a clear high whistle, which sounded like 'tu-lee, tu-lee'" (p.81). According to W.G Hale, *The Redshank,* the redshank "is perhaps best known for the clamour it makes when disturbed. Springing from some marshy creek or water meadow, it rises yelping into the air to alarm any other birds in the area" (p.2). Or as Mark puts it: " it's the first bird to give warning of strangers or danger". This is the 'Redshank's warning' that has earned the bird the nickname 'warden of the marsh'. The Field Guide notes the alarm to be an "incessant yelping teuk". Like a blackbird but not like Mark's imitation. Pauline Harvey (the dog-kidnapping villain) wrongly identified a redshank as an oyster-catcher, indicating to Mark that her claim to be a bird expert was false. The words 'Redshanks Warning' was written on Pauline Harvey's paper, and was heard by Mandy when Pauline made contact with Sandrock. The book's title has therefore several layers of meaning.

Why choose Blakeney? Primarily to teach readers about seabirds and how to treat them, based on reading about the bird reserve. Malcolm Saville was however unaware of reserve regulations. The hotel is not described in detail, and Malcolm Saville did not know that the golf links should have been included on his map. Malcolm Saville would have known about the Hotel from the adverts in his Bradshaw (every rail traveller had one). The map was drawn from distant memory, not

using the OS map issued after the war and only just available as *Redshank's Warning* was written. (Maps had been handed in and destroyed early in the war so as not to help invaders). Details in the story are vague or wrong: only the church stood out in his memory. His visit is likely to have been a day trip before the war, before travel became difficult. Had he travelled from Cromer, he would have come through Cley and seen the village, church and windmill which so inspired artists. So he probably came down from Wells (mentioned in his preface). Interestingly the Jillions (and Standish's) journey to Blakeney could not have been made as the book was written in 1947. The summers of 1945 and 1946 were a riot of enjoyment. This was feared to threaten petrol supplies so journeys by car for holidays were forbidden for that year and petrol rationed to give priority to rebuilding the economy. Therefore, Saville offers his readers a virtual holiday to remember.

12. COPING IN DANGEROUS WATERS: DEFINING GENDER ROLES IN THE ELY FLOODS

STEPHEN BIGGER

The Luck of Sallowby (1952), the fifth Jillies book, set in Ely in the fen country during floods is about coping with danger, and about boys and girls growing up to become part of the adult mid-century world. It is modelled explicitly on the floods of 1947, with the final crisis in the book being accurately based on the events of Saturday March 22 1947. The Jillies series covers six adventures within a calendar year, and then stops, so issues about the characters growing up do not have to be faced. Saville the writer explores with his readers vicariously through his characters how to cope in dangerous situations, whether these are physical (floodwaters) or social (with crooks). The children reading the book identify with the characters and share experiences, hopes and fears with them. The hope is that readers become more aware of the dangers of floods, and more knowledgeable about what to do and how to help. The danger of crooks is more subtle. Crooks can be plausible (Mandy is taken in at first, in *Redshanks Warning*), and threatening (Mandy is physically threatened by Beale in Ely Cathedral),; but crooks can be defeated and should be called to account. Children may need adult help, but they can take the initiative and overcome evil.

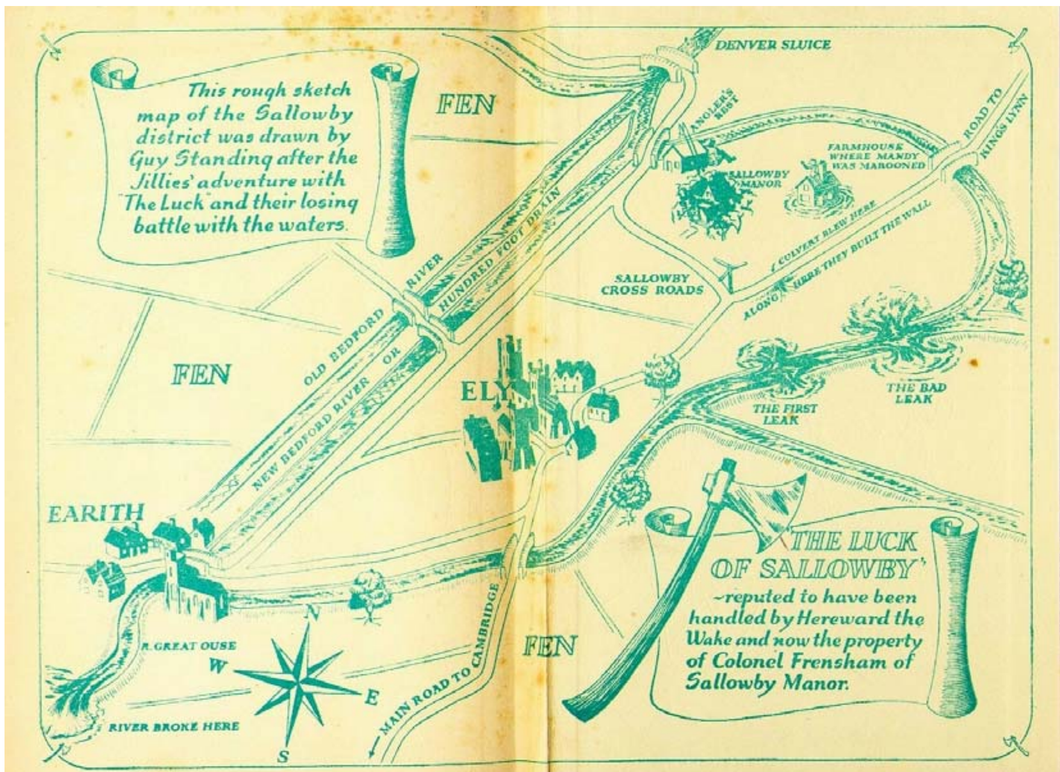
The character of 16 year old Mandy enables Saville to develop his concept of postwar 'girlhood'. We might contrast her with Blyton's George, the active tomboy who disliked anything feminine. Mandy was all girl and very attracted to Guy, an aspirational but awkward relationship never quite realised. We could also compare her with another fictional young woman of the early 1940s, 18 year old Joan Worralson (W.E. Johns). In Savill'e war fiction, we could compare Mandy with Peter (Petronella Stirling), bravely saving the runaway Romany caravan, riding miles alone on her pony, and looking after her obsessive widower father. The question of 'girlhood' in all of Saville's fiction deserves a longer study.

The boys, Guy and Mark, in *The Luck of Sallowby*, were free to cycle from Huntingdon to Ely, a journey full of interest and adventure – and not an uncommon boys activity in the 1950s. They were able to do 'men's work' helping to secure the banks and becoming heroes of the hour. Coming to the Society's Gathering in Ely (April, 2002), we followed the boys' cycle route, driving through the catchment areas of the Great Ouse and Nene rivers, to Huntingdon, where we stopped both to look at the river, Oliver Cromwell's museum, and the wartime Pathfinder Headquarters. All have a resonance in Ely – the river, Oliver Cromwell's House, and the wartime RAF stations at Mepal (Sutton) and Witchford (Ely) from which Lancasters flew with the Pathfinders bombing railheads and oil depots (against 'Bomber' Harris's better judgement since he was rather focused on flattening cities[19]).

Onwards to St Ives, and Earith, where we met the southern end of the Old and New Bedford 'rivers', and turned, as the boys did, along the byroad following the straight 'Hundred Foot Drain' towards Sutton. There we turned, as the boys did, to the bridge over the cuts at Sutton Gault, accessed by a raised walkway designed to avoid the worst of the floods. There we could see the twin straight cuts designed to handle vast amounts of water, with lower level drains (the River Delph says my pre-war OS map). The Great Ouse Catchment Board was formed as a direct result of the Land Drainage Act of 1930. The Catchment Board bought out existing rights – for a peppercorn – and set about to improve both drainage and navigation by dredging and repairing the banks, culverts and locks. A steam dredger worked flat out to deepen the channel, but nevertheless failed to prevent flooding, such as in 1938, so further plans were mooted to save

[19] Max Hastings (1979) *Bomber Command* (Pan); and Henry Probert (2001) *Bomber Harris: His Life and Times* (Greenhill Books). See also Graham Smith (1997) *Cambridgeshire Airfields in the Second World War* (Countryside Books); and Air Vice-Marshal D.C.T Bennett (1958) *Pathfinder* (Frederick Muller Ltd).

valuable farmland so needed during the war[20]. The boys noticed that the water was high and alerted the authorities to possible danger.



The boys work with the blue clay, or gault, from clay pits to strengthen the embankments – in fact from Roswell Pits in the north near Cuckoo Bridge.

> "The pit was below the next bend in the road – a great lake of brown, muddy water, whipped into little waves by the wind and lapping against a wall of blue clay perhaps over a hundred foot high. On the brink of the pit was a big crane carrying a scoop which was biting lumps out of the clay cliff, lifting it up and then dumping it in a waiting lorry. On the lake were four steel barges already full of clay, and mark pointed out a canal from the pit to the flooded river where there appeared to be wharves and sheds. They went on down the road, crossed the railway line and looked at the wharves…" (p.75).

Then the boys passed RAF Mepal. In *The Luck of Sallowby* the RAF 'boys in blue' were called from Mildenhall in Norfolk. Both Mepal and Witchford were built from farmland in 1941-2 for Bomber Command. Witchford was closed in 1946 (now there is a small museum and road names such as Lancaster Way); Mepal was mothballed and not sold off until 1962 – and so only a few caretakers would have been around. It is now a heavy industrial 'park' with a gateway plaque to the squadrons which flew from there, notably the New Zealand Air Force who supported 75 Squadron so well that they were presented with the Squadron name to take back to New Zealand as a commemoration. At Ely, our first glimpse was a look-alike 'Copper Kettle', a seeming half-timbered building matching the illustration in *The Luck of Sallowby*; but on closer inspection the 'timbers' are painted onto a rendered surface and were not there in an early photograph. Who did this? Had the owners read the book? Surely so.

For Guy and Mark, this was a great adventure, working alongside the engineers trying to prevent the flood breaking through. Although kidnapped, Mark valiantly fought back and prevailed. In contrast, Mandy, Pru and Tim were protected. They travelled to Ely by express train from Liverpool Street to Cambridge, were picked up and escorted door to door. Tim enjoyed the train and the guard (he had a soft spot for the LNER, Redshanks Warning says). The train would have continued, stopping at Ely, to March, Hunstanton, Kings Lynn or Yarmouth. Tim grieves that

[20] W.E. Doran (1941) 'The Ouse Flood Problem', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society.*

he could not talk to the guard longer, since the train was continuing. Yet they were picked up at Cambridge Station and driven across the fens to Ely. This may have been a device to enable Saville to describe the fen landscape they were driving through; it may also reflect Saville's own journey where he either stopped in Cambridge or he travelled on a Sunday when the train terminated at Cambridge. But for the girls, the journey was routine, without adventure. Mandy was 'coping' in another way. Her mother had died a few year's before, and she as a teenager had the job of bringing up her siblings as a surrogate mother (much as Peter Stirling did with her father in *Mystery at Witchend*). Both fathers needed looking after in different but demanding ways. Girls coping practically with family loss is a theme to be taken seriously in Saville's depiction of girlhood and femininity.

The action in Ely focuses around the 'Copper Kettle' tea rooms, 'Minster Street' where Mandy serves the customers. Vernon Cross ran Ye Old Tea Room on Fore Hill (founded by his father Frank) and another in Minster Place near the west door of the Minster (the Cathedral Education Centre is now on this site). The general shape of the Fore Hill tearoom is used in the picture of the Copper Kettle. In its heyday, it had two large black teapots hanging down as signs. It held inside a small local museum around the tea tables. The Fore Hill tea room closed in the 1960s and is now part of the Royal Standard public house. However, the Copper Kettle was depicted as a half timbered beamed building quite unlike the pretentious Edwardian commercial premises of Vernon Cross. Half timbered buildings in Ely were generally rendered over at this time, with the Oliver Cromwell museum a rare exception. The fictional half timbered Copper Kettle, transposed onto the Fore Hill location, may be a mix of the two, or have been taken from elsewhere in Saville's experience.

Mandy is presented as victim on several occasions. She is harassed by Beale in Ely Minster to warn her off. trapped in the crumbling house with the villains in the floods, and rescued by the policemen in a boat. She came out of these incidents uncowed. Two clearly significant incidents illustrate a degree of 'girlish' emotional uncertainty attributed to her. Guy, stripped to the waste and covered in mud, 'looked on her as a stranger', a curious comment given Saville's matchmaking, and prompting a strange illustration by Lunt Roberts. He was a man, saving the day; she was a mere girl. Later she was firmly castigated by the 'officious' Women's Voluntary Service lady[21] for chatting and not pulling her weight. This efficient lady was trying to deliver thousands of drinks and sandwiches provided by Mrs W Comins, President of the Women's Institute from their base in the Peacock Inn, close to the Catchment Board headquarters in Ely[22]. Helping the refugees in Sallowby Manor, Mandy soon gets distracted from her work and has to be rescued from disaster. The depiction of girls gives them limited horizons, serving tea and looking after children, protected, in need of being looked after. The boys are presented very differently.

There is another side to Mandy. In *Redshank's Warning* as surrogate mother, she is responsible for organising her vague and war-injured father, and her younger siblings. In London (*Two Fair Plaits*) she was trapped by fire and threatened with death but still managed to achieve the reconciliation and redemption. In Snowfell, she is brave if weepy and faint. She is a likeable, strong-minded but seemingly frail daughter. A slip of a girl who brings out the paternal in men. But we don't have to dig far to find her coping with inadequate male egos and championing the right and just. Characters in fiction are role models or role examples. Mandy informed readers, girls and boys, what girls are really like. She was reasonably studious and reasonably sporty, without being precocious so child readers would relate to her. She had to balance home responsibilities with

[21] The Women's Voluntary Service was founded by Lady Reading in 1938 to prepare for the war, and especially for evacuation of children. W.V.S. catering vans were a frequent sight during the war, and made an enormous contribution to troops, disasters and homelessness. Aluminium food urns were gifted in huge numbers by the Canadian government from army surplus. They reappear to do sterling work during the Southwold floods in *Sea witch Comes Home*.

[22] Rotary Club of Ely, *The Battle of the Banks: the Story of the Fen Floods around Ely 1947* (Cambridge Libraries Publications Reprint, 1992)

school. Saville presents in part a fatherly view of girls who are vulnerable, to be protected, whom men cannot accept as being grown up. But she is old beyond her years, with a future latent with possibilities. She finds learning fun (an important Saville theme), and has learnt not to worry: and with six dangerous adventures in a calendar year, this is an asset. She is solid, dependable, dominated by family values and a caring ethos.

We can draw a contrast with the fictional 18 year old Joan Worralson, created by W.E. Johns in 1941. 'Worrals of the WAAF' is summed up thus: 'If I'm going to be shot, I'd rather take it in uniform' (1943). Worrals is always polemical about women's potential, rights and responsibilities, as in the following:

> 'What you'll lose, my gal, if you go playing with fire, is your life,", snorted the C.O..
> 'Did no one tell you that, when you were collecting all those ribbons on your chest?' asked Worrals evenly.
> The C.O. bristled. 'That's nothing to do wi'it. I'm a man'.
> 'Being a man doesn't –'
> 'Get out of my office….

Worrals worked on occasion behind the lines in France, both for Intelligence and SOE. There were not a few young women who similarly worked behind the lines, and some barely out of their teens were tortured and executed, summarily or in concentration camps – such as Violette Szabo ('Odette') and Denise Bloch ('Ambroise') in Ravensbruck and Noor Inayat Khan ('Madeleine') in Dachau[23].

Mandy was created, and 'lived', after the war when traditional values were being reasserted. Her horizons were housekeeping, serving in the café and the Women's Voluntary Service, delivering tea and sandwiches. This is no slight on this efficient and valuable service, in which women made a tremendous contribution and suffered both hardship and physical danger. But as a role model, it is less exhilarating than the WAAF. The boys, striving next to engineers and RAF 'boys in blue', were given a more exciting deal, through a depiction of a masculinity that valued service and physical achievement. Nevertheless, Mandy shows great spirit. Her pursuit of the villains into danger is classic junior Worrals. Yet even Peter Stirling, able competitor with the boys, ends up as a stable girl; Penny Warrender studies domestic science. Mandy is depicted as unacademic but resourceful and a good and practical carer.

Her situation cannot have been uncommon in a period when parents and loved ones had been killed and injured, and survivors had to cope the best they could. She typifies the spirit of resistance and rebuilding at a time of adversity and crisis:

> "The entire family and most of their friends were, to some extent, dominated by Mandy, who, because of the responsibilities which came her way after her mother died, was much older than her years. Mandy was very pretty, with steady, grey eyes under dark lashes, a sensitive mouth and black, shining hair worn to her shoulders. For the last three years she managed to be a normal schoolgirl – intelligent rather than clever, and good at games when she cared to take the trouble – while keeping their lovely but untidy home going with the help of her sister and a succession of 'daily helps'." (*The Ambermere Treasure*, p.1).

Not with Tim's help, you notice. Mandy was trapped in her time, allowed only domestic ambitions and even at sixteen looking for a husband.

[23] See Leo Marks (1998) *Betrween Silk and Cyanide* (HarperCollins)

13. ROMANTICISED LANDSCAPE: MALCOLM SAVILLE'S CORNWALL

STEPHEN BIGGER 2003

Landscapes are imbued with history, myth, people and events. We find them in all of Saville's books – whether familiar like Shropshire and Rye, or out of the way, like Lyme Regis, Marazion, Helston or even Watford. The GWR railway poster (1925) beckoned people to 'Cornwall, Land of Legend and Romance'; in competition to the Southern Railway, whose posters beckoned holiday makers to France and the Riviera, GWR coined the name Cornish Riviera. We first visited Marazion in Cornwall in the early 1970s, and Mont St Michel in France. We became regular visitors to the Penwith peninsula and the coastal paths, the Marconi pyramid, Lamorna, Mousehole and the Sennen wheelhouse. I encountered Malcolm Saville's *The Flying Fish Adventure* (1950), in the Michael and Mary series, and his *Come to Cornwall* only later.

Michael and Mary Bishop. aged 12 and 10, began fictitious life in the film *Trouble at Townsend*, by Gaumont-British, the book of the film published by Noel Carrington of Royle Publications for Transatlantic Arts (1945). Two London children experience life on a farm for the first time. Mrs Bishop is a war widow, her husband killed in Normandy, bringing up children by herself (later joined by her brother 'Uncle Jim' Green, demobbed from the RAF). The second book of the series *The Riddle of the Painted Box* became a serial on radio's Children's Hour. Michael and Mary experience a canal narrowboat for the first time, having an adventure with Vicky White on the Grand Union Canal not too far from Watford. *The Flying Fish Adventure* (1950) was book 3, published by John Murray who republished the earlier two books. Then came *The Secret of the Hidden Pool* (1953) about a visit to Lyme Regis, *Young Johnie Bimbo* about a circus (1956) which returns to Vicky White and the Grand Union Canal in 'Midchester' (between London and Birmingham); and finally *The Fourth Key* (1957) set in 'Ashfield' (Cooksbridge, near Lewes) where they had gone to live for Uncle Jim's health, meeting up with Harry and Clare. There is no farewell party, so the series may have petered out rather than deliberately ended.

Michael and Mary are from North East London. Clacton was the normal holiday destination. They lived in 69 Laburnum Road, one of a series of suburban tree streets (Acacia, Lilac etc) on the city fringes (the road at the end is not made up). They love London, so Cornwall is a daunting prospect. In *The Flying Fish Adventure*, the children are recuperating from whooping cough, that once killer of younger children. The fashion of the time was to send people away to the country or to the sea to recuperate.

In this third book, they go to Cornwall, 'Land of Romance', as chapter 1 is titled. The foreword talks of stories, exciting history and mysterious coves. Saville would have collected a few guidebooks to get him started, some published nationally, some bought locally. Possibly the Ward Lock Red Guides to Penzance and South Cornwall; Arthur Mee's ('The King's England') Cornwall which combines churches with stories; and Highways and Byways of England. And of course the OS maps, the 1946 series replacing those maps destroyed during the war in case of invasion.

Michael likes maps and bought one; Mary hated maps and "hated Geography" (p.19). In fact, she doesn't like school at all. Michael's map called Marazion 'Market Jew' – an old name that appears on some 17th, 18th and 19th century maps. The 1946 and pre-war OS maps don't use this name; the pull out map of the Ward Lock Red Guide does. The main street in Penzance is Market Jew Street home of Humphrey Davy's statue, a famous son. Ward Lock tells the popular story of Jewish tin miners (Marazion interpreted as 'Bitter Zion' being so far from Jerusalem). Legend says also that Joseph of Arimathea passed through en route to Glastonbury.

Can we find evidence of Jews in Cornwall? The answer can be found in the excellent *The Lost Jews of Cornwall* (Pearce and Fry 2000). They find no substance and a great deal of anti-semitism in the old mining legends. A German-Jewish mining expert spent three years in Cornwall from 1586

and was hounded out. The first immigrant was Alexander Moses, a silversmith, and his wife Phoebe, in 1740 (nicknamed Zender Falmouth). A trickle of pack merchants circulated between the Falmouth and the slightly later Penzance Jewish communities. Jewish graveyards can still be found (though well hidden): in Penzance, it is beautifully kept, in a small high-walled enclosure with a window peep-hole in the door, not far from the station. In Falmouth it is more exposed and out of town. The Penzance synagogue was founded in 1807 and now incorporated into the Star public house. The Jewish community was colourful, but tiny and late.

Ward Lock gives an alternative etymology from Cornish ('Little [Vean] Market' for Marazion; Marghasdiow, 'south market' for Market Jew. Michael Sagar-Fenton, an St Michael's Mount islander, says in About St. Michael's Mount, that the Cornish Marghas Yow, 'Thursday Market' became Market Jew, and Marghas Btghan 'small market' (= Marghas Vean) becomes Marazion. Pool's The History of Penzance (1974) adds that Marghas was pronounced Maraz. Its spelling in 1257 was Marghasbigan (and Marchadyou); in 1337 it was was Marcasion. In the 15th century it was 'Markesew' on a map reproduced in John St Aubyn's 1978 guidebook. St Michael's Mount was first owned by Syon Abbey, Twickenham. In 1602 the name Markasiew is found. The punning of 'Zion' and 'Jew' are most likely deliberate: sometimes rival villagers (e.g. from rival Penzance) invent insults which stick. Marazion was the first borough in Penwith (the Charter is from 1595) but within two years, an unauthorised Saturday market in Penzance brought about Penzance's growth. 'Jew' and 'Zion' may be deliberate corruptions of the Cornish names, growing out of the bitter dispute between the markets in 1595 and prompted by the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1594. 'Market Jew' is a product of an anti-semitic period in Europe which touched England and touched Cornwall.

In 1950, Michael judges the name Market Jew a mystery: 'It says on the map that Marazion was once called Market Jew, but I don't know why'. In *Come to Cornwall*, Saville says:

> 'Just across the bay is the village of Marazion. It is also called Market Jew, but in spite of legends about the Jews, including Joseph of Arimathea, coming here fore the tin trade, the name almost certainly derives from the Cornish words for 'market' and possibly 'Thursday' or 'two. There is a similarly named street in Penzance. Marazion must once have been an agreeable place to which to retire, but unfortunately it is built on each side of the main road from Penzance to Helston, so the traffic in the tourist season is heavy.'

No book I have come across suggests 'two', presumably 'second market'. The town is now bypassed but still busy.

By train to Marazion. The children take a train to Cornwall to visit cousin Jennifer Pascoe, a painter – the same day as they received the invitation. "But you can't go to-night " Mrs Bishop said. "It's impossible. It's unreasonable and besides I can never get you ready." But they did. Mike figured out the trains (man's work); Mary and Mum packed ("women's work", p. 17)[24]. Telegrams sorted out communications then as well as email can today. The train left from Paddington late at night, scheduled to call at Marazion station: this seemed improbable, the night sleeper stopping at a tiny station. Bradshaw's British Railway Official Guide, published every month, throwaway ephemera (albeit 1200 pages) indicates that their departure time was 11.50 p.m. with sleepers in first class only. It stopped[25], Michael rightly notes, at Reading, Bath, Bristol, arriving in Taunton by 4.35a.m. and Exeter by 5.17a.m. where Mike woke up. Dawn at Plymouth (7.25am) Close to Easter first light is around 5a.m. GMT. Maybe double summer time (2 hours ahead) still applied. The sun came out after murky mist at Truro (9.40a.m.) and they alight at Marazion (10.54am) – yes, this is one of the few Paddington expresses that stops at Marazion, the station before the terminus of Penzance. The station is not in Marazion itself: it is on the bend as the line entered the marshalling yard before Penzance station. The station site can still be seen, and the station car park is now used for tourists. It was a healthy walk for Cousin Jennifer: with a face 'brown as a gypsy's and wrinkled like a walnut', she was clearly fit and used to the open air. Gypsies in Saville's stories add a touch of romantic Bohemianism, whether in caravans, fairs or circuses. The

[24] All references are to the John Murray hardback edition.

[25] Only the Cornish Riviera Express (10.30a.m. departure) was non-stop to Plymouth.

first glimpse of St Michael's Mount has the tone of the GWR guide, Through the Window to the Cornish Riviera:

> "There was the sea in front of them and standing out in the bay a pyramid of rock clothed in green at its foot and rising to the battlements of a great, grey building. "It's like a fairy tale come true' Mary gasped" (p.22)

Marazion geography[26]. The story sends the children to Marazion to live with cousin Jennifer, in her shop/house 'The Fuchsia Tree', selling artistic materials and souvenirs. The Fuchsia Tree was a shop with living quarters, with prominent bow windows opposite the entrance to the beach and causeway to the island, and next to Mrs Harvey the baker (p.136).

> "The 'Fuchsia tree' was a double fronted, whitewashed cottage with bow windows on each side of a gay scarlet front door. The painted sign hung over one window and hard against the other was an actual fuchsia tree of extraordinary size. In each of the windows hung an enormous witch ball of shimmery, coloured glass" (p.22)

There are two entrances to the beach, one near the post office (Helston side) and the one near the Godolphin Arms. There is appropriately a small art gallery opposite the second (with picture on the website), without bow windows, next to a house with prominent bow windows. The only shop with prominent bow windows, near (next to rather than 'opposite') the first beach entrance, a jewel shop, has been reconstructed in 1960s taste leaving few signs of its earlier form. It is however next to a bakery. The wild Cornish *Fuchsia magellanica*, originally from South America (and hence the Magellan connection) are in flower throughout summer absolutely everywhere across the Penwith peninsula, but there would be less flower at Easter in this exposed spot[27]. The pub by the beach ('The Star' (p.77), frequented by Tom the fisherman) is the Golophin Arms, said to be 'down the road', as it is from the first beach entrance, rather than opposite, as it would be at the second. The beach leads to the causeway to St Michael's Mount. When Saville visited, the Mount was privately owned by the St Aubyn family (Lord St Leven) and not open to the public, although the island and the village could be visited. The house was gifted to the National Trust in 1954. There is a small village near the harbour, now partly taken over for National Trust use.

John Shelley now joins the story. His journey from Helston took him by bus to the junction to Prussia Cove, near an inn, mentioned in a different context by Michael, and identified on the OS map. This is The Falmouth Packet. John's new friend Marigold's farm is said to be about a mile from Marazion, close by the Helston road. We need to go to large scale maps to check possibilities – Trevelyan Farm[28] on the main road now has a farm shop, or Ednovean Farm down a lane has a thriving tourist business[29]. Since John doubted he could find the farm again, it was probably the latter, off the main road. John walked on the main road from here into Marazion. He went across to the Mount with disastrous consequences which I will not give away here. Marigold is an unusual girl's name: it was the name of a daughter of Sir Arthur ('Bomber') Harris, who was very much in the public eye during the 1940s.

Helston geography[30]
John Shelley runs away from boarding school near Helston, and goes by bus to Marazion where a relative lived on St Michael's Mount. "Train might be better but he remembered that Helston to Penzance was a slow and roundabout journey" (p.37). Bradshaw has a map – the 8 mile line winds to Gwinear Road, near Hayle before joining the main Penzance line. It is now defunct but its line can be traced on the OS map. The line had 9 passenger trains a day, mainly morning and evening, with a bus connection to the Lizard. The timetable did not tie in with main line connections. On the 9.30am train, he could have joined our train at 10.33am. But if he caught the

---

[26] http://www.marazion.net
[27] Sue Bell in nearby Madron reports fuscias in bloom throughout the year in her sheltered garden.
[28] http://www.foodfromcornwall.co.uk
[29] http://www.ednoveanfarm.co.uk
[30] http://www.helston-online.com; http://www.helstonhistory.co.uk/

11.50 train his connection to Penzance would be at 2pm. Both trains stopped at Marazion. John liked timetables like Michael liked maps.

The school was presumably on north edge of town with the sea was 'away to the south'. John had to come into Helston for the bus. There is an ancient school in Helston – now the comprehensive, Helston College – on the northern edge of the old town (see the 1946 OS map) whose history has been written (1996) by Deirdre Dare. The main building is imposing granite with several Cornish coat of arms emblasoned in relief on the walls. The walk to town is downhill, about three quarters of a mile. It is now residential but was less so in 1946. The incompetent History master Theodore Simpkin is drawn savagely, almost certainly from Saville's own memory of school, as an insecure sarcastic bully, giving Saville the opportunity to propound his own educational philosophy – that real education is not about schools but about experience of life and of people. The real school in Helston cannot have been too amused at the publicity.

John's grandfather Professor Armstrong lived south of Helston, in a lonely house in the woods above the river – Trevasson. Tre- names are very common in Cornwall. There are more than fifty within five miles of Helston. Trevenon, Treverry, Trevitho, Trevessa. Trevorion. Trevasson is not a name that seems to exist, at least in Cornish maps and gazeteers: -vasson is likely borrowed from the Gay Dolphin (1945). The river Cober flows into an inland freshwater lake, Loe Pool, blocked from the sea by the shingle and sand Loe Bar. A granite house stands in the woods, Penrose, set in an estate overlooking the lake. Trevasson is "high in the woods above the river, isn't it?" (p.63). The house is

> "quite light because it's got wonderful windows stretching right across the room, which has been built so that it bulges over the edge of the cliff. Did I tell you that the house is miles away from any other place and that all the rooms have windows looking down this cliff which is thick with trees and bushes, and has a stream at the bottom?" (p.64)

At Penrose, the wooded valley stretches above and down to the coast, one section being a cliff falling down to the lake. The wooded path from the sea ends up as a valley palm garden. From the windows to the stream is a paddock. Trevasson, perching on a cliff is said to have a rugged steep path, 'Jacob's ladder' from the 'river' to the study windows. St Michael's Mount has a steep climb like Jacob's ladder with windows overlooking the cliff; and there are many rough paths in Penrose through the woods to be the inspiration for Jacob's Ladder. Was there also, I wonder, a link to Cragside in Northumbria (owned by Lord Armstrong, inventor of hydraulics and the rifle) whose house and garden closely resembles Trevasson and Jacob's ladder? Details and photographs could be found in magazines like Country Life.

Penrose, meaning 'head of the valley', is an ancient house, founded by John of Penrose and seat of the Penrose family from Norman times (King John's Charter was granted in 1201), but sold to the Rogers family in 1771 when the Cornish Penrose line died out. There were other Penroses, the most recently famous being Guy Penrose Gibson VC, leader of the dambusters and author of Enemy Coast Ahead[31]:

> "Guy's first name was prompted by that of a family friend in Simla [India]. Penrose, his middle name, derives from a place on the high road between Helston and Porthleven, once the seat of the Penrose family"[32]

There is a William le Petit print (1831) from *Cornwall Illustrated* showing a distant white house in a landscape garden identifying J Rogers as the owner. By the 1950s, the owner was the elderly John Lionel Rogers (High Sheriff of Cornwall, 1935) and his wife Caroline whom he married in 1911. By 1964, there is no further entry in Kelly's Landed Gentry and 1974 Lt Cdr J.P. Rogers gave the estate to the National Trust. This is a beautiful woodland walk through the grounds of Penrose, says the pre-war Red Guide to South Cornwall. Saville's gazetteer in *Come to Cornwall* says: 'Nearby is Loe Pool, separated from sea only by shingle bank; pleasant place for walking.' Elsewhere he adds: 'An aquatic plant, one of the stoneworts, found nowhere else in the British

[31] Published posthumously in 1946

[32] Richard Morris (1994), *Guy Gibson: the story of one of Britain's most celebrated wartime pilots* (Penguin), pp.7-8.

Isles, grows here'. The Red Guide calls it the Strapwort, adding 'the Bar is not pleasant walking'. The bar is actually sand, as Saville says in his text (p.35) and the Strapwort can no longer be found.

Penrose was by coincidence used by the writer Howard Spring in his own period novel *The Houses in Between* (1951) in which he names it Tresant, near 'Porteven'. His descriptions of the estate and lodges, and the bar, are precise. Both Spring and Saville were researching and writing about Penrose in 1949 – Spring visited at daffodil and bluebell time (which fill Penrose valley), and Saville later since he does not mention either even though his story is set at Easter. As we think of John's miserable time at Trevasson, here is Spring's heroine Sarah explaining why she loved it:

> "The woods and the lake, the bar and the sea: I can do back to them for refreshment in any weather. I can see the swans upon the summer water and hear the curlews in winter at their desolate piping. The bluebells in the springtime woods, and here and there white wood-anemones, cool under the new-fledged wings of the beech-trees; the noble pines whose roots writhe up out of the ground and down in again, wrestling for a grip in fissures of rock" (p.75).

What is a refuge for one (Sarah) is a prison for another (John Shelley) thanks to uncaring parents and guardians, although the end of Saville's story promises a new beginning of sorts. On the adaptation of the landscape for the purpose of the story, a passage of Spring's foreword could go for Saville too:

> "The beautiful Cornish estate here call Tresant exists and is unchanged to this day … I have never been into the house on the estate, and know nothing of it. So I have had to invent a house. The reader must take that, and the Gaylord family living in it, as fictitious. There is not anywhere on the estate which I here call Tresant a chapel such as that which is described as housing the Gaylord tombs. That chapel exists in all its mouldering melancholy. I have scraped mildew from the tombs there. But it exists in another part of Cornwall, many miles from 'Tresant'. For the purpose of the book, I have permitted chapel and estate a marriage of convenience."

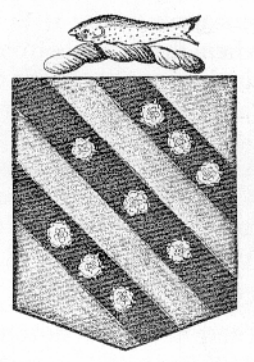
Trevasson exists, but in a fictionalised form, a legend anchored in a real location.

Later, John runs away with the fair which pitches in a field between Helston and Porthleven. Michael and Mary meet in a village near Helston, probably Ashton, set off for the fair across the fields, get lost, go to a farm and are taken to the fair by nubile Dinah. They go through a wood on a hill and then down to the fair. The only wooded hill in the area is Penrose Hill: so John has in fact run away to a fair next door to his grandfather's house Trevasson.

The flying fish in heraldry.

Finally, what of the flying fish? A detailed search of medieval and Victorian heraldary produced a range of fish (pike, barbell, dolphin and others), but no flying fish if we exclude a peculiar German flying eel. The nearest I found was a nouveau riche crest from Somerset with a dolphin standing on its tail with fins that look like wings, standing on a chess piece (the gentleman clearly enjoyed fishing and chess). So the flying fish is not a classic motif in heraldry. The best known flying fish are on William de Morgan's ceramic tiles of fabulous beasts. However, the lake, Loe Pool was known over the centuries for its trout, said to be larger than ordinary trout and unique. They have not been conserved well, as the lake is polluted with nitrates. But the single trout had pride of place on the crest of the Penrose coat of arms. But the trout does not fly, nor could be confused, as the awful Mrs Starkens did, with a bird. The Helston coat of arms depicts the winged St Michael slaying a dragon, so the two have become merged. The winged trout may also allude to Kipling's flying fish on the river Irawaddy in Burma ('the road to Mandalay where flying fishes play').

Penrose Coat of Arms



Helston Seal

Romanticism

Romantic Cornwall is a gimmick to support tourism, sponsored particularly by the Great Western Railway. Behind it lies a real Cornwall with people earning their living, working their farms, and risking their lives on the sea. Cousin Jennifer is the archetype of many today combining creativity with business. Some like John learn to cope with inadequate adults. Some like Mary and Michael strive to contribute to those around them. A final Cornish connection however goes to Mr Bishop, killed in Normandy in the D day landings. East of Helston lies Trebah Gardens, from whose beach battle-green troups set out for Omaha beach to free the world of Nazi racist tyranny. Most of the first waves of troups died in heavy machine gun fire. A moving plaque marks the determination of these and the following waves to carried on to victory. "By 10.30 am., the British Second Army had landed fifteen infantry battalions, seven commandos, seven tank regiments, two engineer assault regiments, nine field artillery regiments and detachments of scores of supporting units."[33] Mr Bishop would have died either in the landings on Gold, Juno or Sword beaches, or in the subsequent battle for Caen in June 1944 through a primrose filled landscape rather like Devon or Cornwall. The advance hampered by indifferent Allied leadership on the ground with little strategic vision and inadequate communications, his death was probably avoidable.

[33] Max Hastings (1984) *Overlord: D day and the battle for Normandy 1944*. Pan [Michael Joseph] p.131.

14. SEA WATCH AT SOUTHWOLD.

STEPHEN BIGGER, 2003

I am writing this on the fiftieth anniversary of the great storms in the north Atlantic which resulted in the enormous tidal surge which wrecked most of the North Sea coast between Yorkshire and Kent on 31 January 1953 and killed about 300 people. Radio 4 have just run an hour of oral history of the time, and I have taken from my shelves six books:

The Great Storm by Lennox Kerr (1954)
The Great Tide. The Story Of The 1953 Flood Disaster In Essex by Hilda Grieve, from Essex CC, (1959),
The Sea Came In. The History of the Lord Mayor of London's National Flood and Tempest Distress Fund. Date around 1957, from the Mansion House.
Wall of Water. Lowestoft & Oulton Broad during the 1953 Flood by Royal Flaxman (1993)
The Norfolk and Suffolk Weather Book by Bob Ogley and others (1993)[34]
and
Sea Witch Comes Home by Malcolm Saville (1960).

Sea Witch Comes Home is set in a fictional storm in autumn (to fit in with the school holidays) which is modelled on the 1953 storm, which Saville discusses in his Foreword. Some details have been changed to help the plot. The 1953 storm struck at high tide around 11.00p.m, but Saville places it in the afternoon so that a villain can be apprehended in daylight with the children awake. He assumes a level of organisation that was missing that night: the police put up notices and had loadspeaker vans, and rescue services like WVS were set up before disaster struck. In 1953, people were not systematically evacuated or informed. The tidal wave struck an unexpecting population. The very limited switchboards were soon jammed and many were under water and inoperable. But hindsight makes a better story.

The problem started a few days earlier with a deep low pressure system in the north Atlantic, which itself raised the sea level by a foot. This caused the worst storms in years, sinking for example the Princess Victoria ferry off Stranraer with the loss of most hands and passengers. The Low stayed around for a long time, moving slowly towards Denmark. This caused enormous winds from the north, measuring between 80 and 120 mph (75 mph is a Force 12 Hurricane). As the morning tide turned on Jan 31st, the wind drove the water from the north and people noticed that the tide did not properly ebb – low tide was much the same as a normal high tide. At this point the Meteorological Office issues a flood warning at 11 am by telegram to police forces along the coast. By the time this message was received and disseminated, there was little time for preparations before dark, and anyway nobody anticipated just how bad it was going to be.

The sea level was 8 foot higher than normal as the point of high tide approached. The hurricanes pushed more water from the north at the same time through the narrowing North Sea funnel. A tidal surge, a tidal wave, resulted. It moved down the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire coast, breaching inadequate sea defences and devastating low lying areas. Sutton on Sea was devastated. Hunstanton, where 32 died, was the site of a remarkable railway escape, as the driver managed to coax steam from his swamped firebox and eventually nudge aside floating beach huts and bungalows. The brave exploits of non-swimming American rescuer Reis Leming won him the George Medal.[35] There were awful scenes near Yarmouth. Many lives were lost. One man saw his bungalow with wife and 3 babies disappear, with all drowned. Another at Sea Palling lost the baby he had strapped to his back when wading to safety. His elder daughter was drowned

[34] Lennox Kerr, *The Great Storm* concentrates on the sinking of the passenger ship the *Victoria.* Michael Pollard's *North Sea Surge* I haven't seen.
[35] He was reunited with the victims he saved in a BBC2 documentary to mark the anniversary.

delivering evening papers. One elderly women spent the night on her roof and died of exposure. Another stood on a table in her lounge with water up to her chin for four days. She survived.

The wave struck Southwold shortly before midnight. It struck and washed away an electricity van (see picture) whose driver John Crisp was fortuitously saved. It smashed beach huts, bungalows and houses, and damaged the pier. On Ferry Road, where Saville sites the villain's house, one bungalow was carried quarter of a mile inland: the occupants, seven Americans and a baby (Mr & Mrs Sorick and house guests) sat on the roof until a boat managed to get them off lit up by a car's headlights. Ferry Road was the most damaged area and five died – three elderly ladies, and a mother and child. If Richard Channing in the story had remained imprisoned in the basement, he would have died. Saville hints at this by evocatively describing the water coming in through the open grill. Southwold became an island for two days, and many were cut off. Many animals were killed, especially pigs trapped in their sties, rabbits in their hutches and dogs leashed in their kennels. At the pier end (Saville is right there were breeches either end of town) every bungalow was destroyed, washed out to sea. Most were wooden summer homes, or the casualties would have been greater.

The emergency services surveyed the damage next morning, seeking the living first and then the dead. This was a time of communal solidarity with people helping neighbours, and marvellous work by the Lifeboats, WVS (Women's Voluntary Service), St John's Ambulance, the Red Cross and others. People needed shelter, dry clothes, food and tea. In some cases their sewage-contaminated homes were uninhabitable for some time. In case we think of the WVS as tea ladies, spare a thought for the flying squad – a WVS team of catering van, rubber dinghy and motor cycle that toured distant houses, with people stranded upstairs or on roofs, bearing food and keeping up spirits. It is a great pity that Saville didn't enrich his story with these intrepid ladies.

The Armed Forces helped rebuild the breached defences, and ferried in by air millions of sandbags. The RAF flew photographic reconnaissance over the east coast and Holland and brought back their wartime photo interpreters. The Salvation Army and Church Army joined the WVS. The RAC and AA warned many to evacuate. The RSPCA rescued, in addition to farm animals three ferrets clinging to the top of a tree and five tortoises, still asleep. Journalists were for the most part a nuisance, using much needed resources and phone lines, making up more than they discovered. James Wilson echoes this thought: Dickie had said, " An' I don't mean to be rude but are you on our side or are you just rushing round for your newspaper and upsetting everybody?". "All of those things, I expect, Dickie. I'm on your side all right – the side of the Channings who are being helped by you. You're a good chap, Richard. I remember now what a good detective you're going to make one day…Dickie nodded again. He liked being called Richard." (p.237)

After the usual promises in the House of Commons, the Lord Mayor of London set up a disaster fund – the National Flood & Tempest Distress Fund. Such events are Acts of God and uninsurable. This was the Victorian compromise that allowed insurance companies to stay solvent. Funds were raised for local authorities to clear up the mess and rebuild. The account books are interesting. The largest donor was New Zealand at £170,000; USSR was high up with £90,000 and China high at £15,000. The USA gave bits and pieces, but the US Air Force, who had many casualties, gave £12K; and many commonwealth countries gave what they could. The Vatican spared £1000, the women of India raised £2,620, and Ethiopia nearly £15K. One Aborigine gave a year's salary – about £1. Money came from anonymous individuals, companies, county councils and groups. Some the government matched pound for pound so £7 million was raised, mainly to assist recovery. Southwold received £36K. Besides the obvious rebuilding and repairs, land covered in salt water took at least a decade to recover if farmers were able to work on it without profit. [36]

[36] The Blakeney golf course (see *Redshanks Warning*) was swamped and abandoned at this time.

The story in Sea Witch I leave to another time. Enough to say it is based in structure on *The Luck of Sallowby* (the Ely floods) but borrowing the theme of the picture-thief from *Redshanks Warning*, where the stolen picture is again found in the church. Martin the policeman becomes Wilson the journalist with police friends. Paul Channing is not painted as a sympathetic character and never appears again. Motherless Paul and Rose Channing are interesting and complex characters and this is a pity, as their sibling bonds are strong, children supporting each other through adversity. Their father Richard Channing is a feckless innocent, 'used' by criminals but who redeems himself in the end, maybe. The book opens with a journey in a small boat to Holland: Saville's continental interest was growing, already evident in the Buckingham's trip to Amsterdam. For sea watchers, Saville's sea is benign – it is a disaster under control. The real disaster was not. The Channings, who fell the tidal wave in at the culmination of the tension, would not have survived. Nevertheless, the story celebrates the great and real credit due to all the rescue workers who in real life put their lives on the line to help others.

Stephen Bigger, February 2003.

15. Dartmoor Secrets.

Stephen Bigger, 2005

Malcolm Saville has as the central theme of the children's book Saucers over the Moor (1955) secret research bases in remote areas in Dungeness and Dartmoor. The cover shows four children (Penny, Jon, Peter and David), plus Macbeth, looking at a bright saucer flying over the secret Dartmoor base. The Hamlyn/Merlin paperback has a sombrero-like flying saucer rushing through the picture whilst Collins satisfies itself with chasing helicopter. The end paper maps show the secret station with over-flying helicopter. Where's My Girl (1972) has a redrawing of the same map, but with the Secret Station now ruined. This article will explore ideas and literature about flying saucers in the early 1950s to see what might have inspired the story. I won't retell the story for this audience, except to note the happy accident of seeing a mysterious tweed-hatted Mr Green in Rye observing the first flying saucer seen by the lone piners, and finding him again near Kings Holt on Dartmoor where they were staying. The rest is for you to read.

In Saucers over the Moor, page 127, the physics student Jon talks about a book he had read:
"I'll tell you" Jon said quickly. "If you didn't know this either, Dan, maybe you'd like to know about a book I've just read. I've read lots, of course, and papers from America, and our science master at school is very keen."
Jon then gives some examples, from Coniston and Norwich; and "about the chap called Adamski who was an astronomer in California and says he has spoken to a being from Venus who landed in a saucer". Jon goes on to explain that "travel by space rocket may soon be out of date and that the saucer is the new way of conquering space and it looks as if somebody in this country knows it" (and was clearly building such machines in the secret stations). Through Jon and his science teacher, Malcolm Saville makes the idea of flying saucers seem credible.

The book is given in a footnote as Space, Gravity and The Flying Saucer by Leonard G Cramp (published by Werner Laurie who specialised in UFO books). It has a foreword by Desmond Leslie, of Castle Leslie in Ireland, a collaborator of Adamski. This was published in 1954, sold well for it went into a second impression the same year, and is explicitly part of Malcolm Saville's inspiration for the story. Readers might be interested in the Leonard G Cramp website (www.leonardcramp.x5g.com) where he is described as a maverick but respected inventor interested in anti-gravity. Cramp was a physicist who claimed to have seen a saucer and believed that extra-terrestrials had become interested in the atomic explosions. Cramp was convinced that rockets were not the long term answer to defeating gravity and explored scientifically what gravity is and how similar forces might be used to neutralise I t– for example light modulated by ultrasonics. Cramp ends: "This then, if we will it, is our glorious heritage. The more we delve into the mysteries of life with modern science, the more wonders we are likely to unfold. We stand on the brink of understanding the structure of space and matter, and with it the marvels of creation. Research into the subject will go on to its final conclusion, or until, perhaps, we are privileged to be helped in the work by those shining ones who ride the highways of the universe." (p.179).

The flying saucer and Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) began to be news in the 1940s. Johannes von Buttlar, Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, using official reports, recounted (The UFO Phenomenon, 1979) how both allied and axis pilots reported weird sightings, noted they were harmless (i.e. did not attack) and assumed that they were enemy devices. Up to 1959

UFO reports were taken seriously and resulted in official investigations and reports (Project Blue Book, US government). There were attempts to capture or shoot down UFOs, to no avail, and some pilots lost their lives in mysterious circumstances. Much of the serious evidence came from experienced pilots and radar operators. After 1959, the failure to find answers, some crazy media publicity, and embarrassing UFO enthusiasts persuaded governments (the US in particular) to take the whole matter out of the public domain and turn it into a military top secret.

Of the UFO enthusiasts, the classic work is that of Desmond Leslie and George Adamski, The Flying Saucers Have Landed (London: Werner Laurie 1952). This tracked UFO sightings back through history and used contemporary sightings published by The Flying Saucer Review. The term 'flying saucer' goes back to 24 June 1947 when 10 circular disks travelling around a thousand mph were reported in Washington State. By 1952 there had been 3000 official sightings to be investigated in the USA. There was talk about US government projects to build a flying saucer. There was talk too of crashed UFOs, all officially denied. Dr. J. Allen Hynek was a government investigator in this period, a professor of astronomy at Ohio State University, and later, chairman of the astronomy department at Northwestern University. When US government closed UFO investigations in 1969, he set up the Center for UFO Studies (www.cufos.org) and produced The Hynek UFO Report and The UFO Experience: A Scientific Study (1972). The lack of official clarification on all this data has led to over-the-top films (e.g. Close Encounters of the Third Kind) and television (The X Files and of course Star Trek).

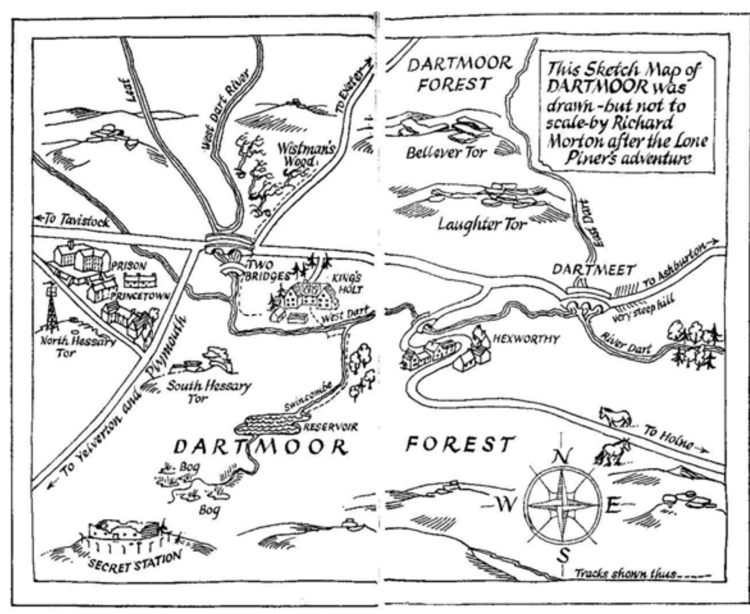
On 8 January 2005, BBC2 showed a Timewatch programme entitled Britain's X Files. This revealed that Clement Attlee set up 'The Flying Saucer Working Party' in 1950 which ran a secret operation until the end of the 1960s. The first files were opened in 2004 under the Freedom of Information Act, and the rest will open in 2005. This secret group (operating within the Official Secrets Act) compiled detailed official reports of UFO sightings. An official agreed in the programme that there were sightings, corroborated by radar, that still remain unexplained. Two RAF pilots from a Gloucestershire base, Sweeny and Croft, reported (and described in the interview, showing their log books) three 'saucers' in 1953, still unexplained. A sighting of a single saucer in 1954, by pilots Smythe and Thomson (both interviewed in the programme), made the national news and this publicity caused the government to label these reports as official secrets, so services personnel could not talk of their sightings in public. 1954 was the year that Malcolm Saville wrote Saucers over the Moor. A prototype saucer-shaped craft was developed at Farnborough in the 1950s but in ten years never got off the ground. Another prototype was developed in Canada by A. V Roe (AVRO who built the delta-winged Vulcan bombers), and was effectively a circular Vulcan. It was clearly not very successful and never built in full size.

Science Fiction was fuelled by comics and magazines such as Astounding Science Fiction, and Analog Science Fact and Fiction from the 1940s, and Dan Dare of the Eagle (first Eagle annual 1951). Two writers who as science students cut their writing teeth in these magazines began to write stories and books in their own right. These were Isaac Asimov and Arthur C Clarke (of 2001 fame). Asimov at first wrote short stories which sold as composite collections. Very fond of robots, these are never far from his plots and titles, and it can be hard to know who is real and who is robot. Star Trek's android 'Data' is derived from this tradition. Asimov's star creation at this period was however The Foundation Trilogy, the future history of the universe charted in three slim volumes to which he later returned to fill out the detail. This tended to unify his work by providing a conceptual map into which many of his occasional stories slotted. This is the story of the colonisation of the universe with a poisoned Earth becoming a distant half remembered memory. Arthur C Clarke, a scientific colleague of Cramp, wrote serious science books on Interplanetary Flight: An Introduction to Astronautics (1950) about the rocket technology needed to leave the atmosphere, and about satellites and space propulsion. It is interesting that the second edition in 1960 (after the successful launch of the USSR's Sputniks and the USA's Explorer I satellites) needed little rewriting. His The Exploration of Space (1951) dealt with space refuelling, space stations and radio beacons. He turned this into the novel Prelude to Space (1953), his third novel after The Sands of Mars and Islands in the Sky (1952 about cities in

space). Prelude to Space recounts the work of 'Interplanetary', culminating in the launch of the first manned moon-mission in 1985, which established moon colonies and cities. Islands in the Sky follows the adventures of a boy who wins a competition prize of free travel anywhere, and chooses to go to an orbiting space station. This is a vision of colonies or cities established in space and on planets such as Mars, Mercury and Venus. Clarke's The Young Traveller in Space came in 1954.

Most 1950's schoolboys knew most of this. Probably Malcolm Saville did not in detail, although he was probably aware of the Eagle and radio programmes such as Journey into Space. He was likely to have seen the work of a rival, Capt W.E. Johns (of Biggles) – starting with Kings of Space (June 1954). This series is not Capt. John's best work but its subtitle, 'A Story of Interplanetary Exploration' and much of the detail indicates a superficial debt to Arthur C Clarke. A father and son stumble over a secret station while lost stalking deer in the highlands of Scotland where Professor Lucius Brane had developed a flying saucer, 'the spacemaster'. His spiel is of 'cosmogration' (emigration to other planets) 'cosmobiles' and 'cosmodromes (space bases). Brane accepts that Flying Saucers are from other planets and we need to copy their idea for vertical flight. He builds a flying saucer (or rather, he says, a 'basin'). Johns drifts quickly from (pseudo)-science to fantasy. His moon is populated by cactus and turtles, Venus was full of dinosaurs and the humanoid population of Mars was threatened by enormous mosquitoes. (Arthur C Clarke had played with the idea of experimental insect growth in conditions of weightlessness in 1952). Kings of Space probably came across Malcolm Saville's professional desk in 1954. My guess is that he scanned the early chapters, thought it rubbish, but borrowed the idea of flying saucers from secret wilderness bases as the germ of his new plot. There are no other connections of detail.

He probably read Cramp on the train to work. Cramp ends: "This then, if we will it, is our glorious heritage. The more we delve into the mysteries of life with modern science, the more wonders we are likely to unfold. We stand on the brink of understanding the structure of space and matter, and with it the marvels of creation. Research into the subject will go on to its final conclusion, or until, perhaps, we are privileged to be helped in the work by those shining ones who ride the highways of the universe." (p.179).

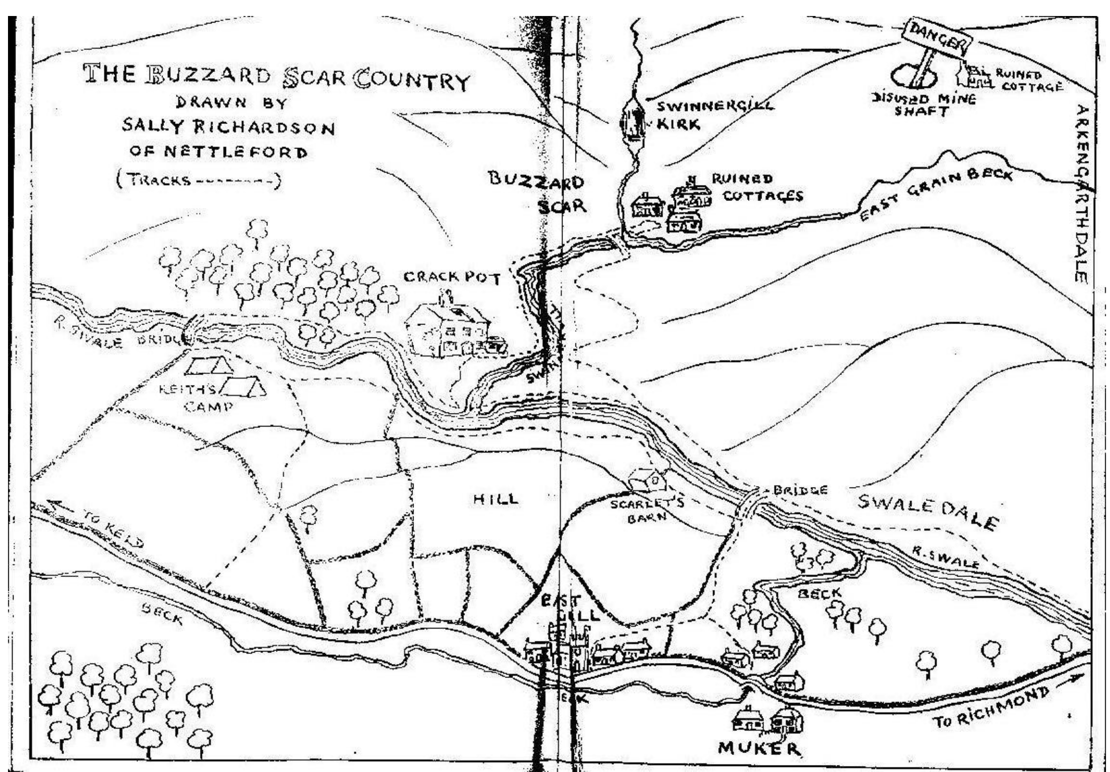


Malcolm Saville tames the flying saucer concept into a government sponsored secret project, made plausible by the many secret wartime and post-war defence bases behind barbed wire. He mentions an army firing range on Dartmoor near Oakhampton in Come to Devon. As a boy in Lincolnshire I lived close to a base full of Bulldog ballistic missiles pointing at Russia (Duncan Sandys' 1958 policy of pilotless death), joining with the constant noise of Vulcan bombers. I remember as a schoolboy tales of hovering lights in the air in the Lincolnshire wolds which turned out to be hovering vertical take-off/landing Harrier jump-jets being tested, a very novel idea at the time and still awe-inspiring. If a flying saucer had been developed, it has never yet appeared at an air show. But it may be a secret still! Alternatively my late grandfather might be right – believing all this to be an official conspiracy with the moon landings filmed in Arizona.

16. THE MYSTERIES OF MUKER
OR
WHICH STEPS, WHICH BARN AND WHICH CRACKPOT?

STEPHEN BIGGER 2007

Around 1954, Malcolm Saville came to Richmond and Muker in the Yorkshire Dales on his holiday. He thought it a good location for his next Nettleford story. It was certainly different from anything he had ever seen before. Just as Nettleford was incognito, resembling any small market town (it was near Guildcombe (p.12), which is presumably Guildford where the Savilles lived when Nettleford was born. Malcolm Saville invented a new village for his story, half a mile from Muker in Swaledale, between the village and the "buttertubs" turn. All other locations are accurate and can be plotted on an OS map.



The end-paper map, original in pale green.

East Gill is described as a tiny village, a hamlet really although he moved the church and rectory there as on this holiday two vicars were to exchange parishes for a couple of weeks. There are some useful nearby locations – a map location up in the hills called Buzzard Scar; a ruined farmhouse called Crackpot Hall (simply Crackpot in the story); a river flowing through, the Swale; and miles of fields each containing a stone barn. In Muker is a mysterious house with cobbler's workshop, George Green, at the top of fifteen steps. All these are spun into a story ending with a great storm.

The Secret of Buzzard Scar takes the Owlers (the Nettleford children of the vicar and bookseller who owned "The Wise Owl") to the fictional village of East Gill near Muker for a fortnight holiday cum parish exchange. There are mysteries concerning Mrs Quegley of a Richmond antiquarian bookshop, of a rude fellow traveller "Ginger Whiskers" who turns up in tiny East Gill, of mysterious goings on in the ruinous Crackpot Hall, and a cave behind a waterfall leading into caves and mine workings. I won't give away his secrets here.

“This place is stiff with mysteries” (p.68). Fifty years later, 2006 to be exact, we retraced Malcolm Saville’s steps with local friends. We walked around Muker, across the fields passing hundreds of field barns, and spotted Crackpot Hall up in the distance. Of course I had my book in hand, following the endplate map, and trying to find the house with the fifteen steps. The book has a picture of the children climbing the 15 steps. We had a good start, for there were many houses with outside steps leading to an upstairs door, just like in the picture. I counted, and ten was the maximum (pictured. Normally it was seven or eight. It stands to reason, really. The first floor is about eight foot from the ground floor, the height of the ceiling; each step is about a foot high; so only seven or eight are needed.

In despair, I approached two gardening locals with the picture in the book. One said, predictably – “I don’t know where that might be, there are far too many steps”. The other said, “Sorry, we have lived here all our lives and that house doesn’t exist. He must have made it up”. Anyway, I took a photograph of one house, with ten steps. You can see some similarity. There were many others with fewer, and cruder steps like this.

Climbing the fifteen steps,
drawing by Joan Kiddell-Monroe.

We moved through the village, past the church to find the path across the fields to the river. The fields were grass, for the cows that were to produce Wensleydale and Swaledale cheeses. The path is marked on the Saville map, although there is a spurious junction with the path to the non-existent East Gill. There, near a bridge, the Saville map assured us, would be Scarlet’s Barn, temporary home of Richard Scarlett whom they called Uncle Grizzly, or Redbeard. After he rescued Hugh from the river, he explained how his family had owned Crackpot, and now he was a painter and explorer: the girls, especially the infant Veronica, fell immediately in love. His barn had wooden steps at the back, and he looked after little 6 year old Hugh who had fallen into the river. Each field had a barn, presumably for hay, animals and the farm workers, and each are carefully preserved today – not even converted into des res holiday cottages. *The Secret of Buzzard Scar* says,

> “On each side of the Swale were little green fields divided by stone walls. In each of these fields was a stone barn and when they asked Charlie [the bus driver] why there were so many he explained that when the hay was cut – it was waiting still to be cut because the summer had been so wet – it was stored on the top floor of the stone-built barns. In bad weather in winter the cattle could shelter underneath in the byre”.

The barn marked on the endpaper map as Scarlett's Barn is here photographed. It is a stone's throw from the river, and not far from the bridge, also pictured.

Scarlett's Barn and the Bridge.

So, we have patently not solved the mystery of the steps, but the barn seems sorted. What about Crackpot? Crackpot Hall appears on the map and is a distant dot in the distance from the bridge. It can just about be made out on my photograph, taken in August when the river Swale was very low. It is a seventeenth century farmhouse which partly collapsed through mining subsidence (*Buzzard Scar* claims that it happened during our story). It was stablised by the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (see photographs in http://freespace.virgin.net/ elaine.rigby/crkpot.htm).

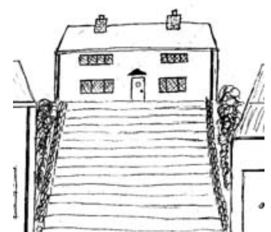
The river Swale at Muker looking towards Crackpot Hall.
This is the point where Hugh fell in.

However, five miles away on the road from Richmond to Muker is another Crackpot, a village of that name. Our friend said, as we went past Crackpot mine that she had once gone down there into the mine workings. She described how she slithered down a wet shaft in a scary way and ended in a cave system. It is mainly for the young and hearty. I read to her (*Buzzard Scar*, p.165):

> "On hands and knees she crawled into the water which was not as cold as she expected. It was, after all, a kind of little stream and when she licked a splash it tasted soft and peaty. She ducked her head, crawled forward and grazed her elbow on the rocky side of the tunnel. She closed her eyes for a second of sharp fear and she realised she was at the heart of Buzzard Scar and that the solid rock was close around her. Elizabeth was

> gasping and splashing just behind and then she saw ahead of her a soft radiance of light outlining the end of the tunnel. “You can stand up. There’s about thiry feet of air above you…”.

Yes, she said, it was just like that. So, there is a Buzzard Scar; but the tunnel into the mine works is five miles away in Crackpot mine. The whole mine has in fact been relocated to Crackpot Hall, Muker.



The story ends with a storm, and so did ours. Back in the village the heavens opened. As we dived into a shop I spotted a flight of steps, not going up the side of a house, but a rugged stone staircase going up to a cottage in the main street. The downpour meant a photo was not possible, so I have drawn it.

I must have passed it earlier, but I was looking for my Kiddell-Monroe picture instead. I admire the work of Joan Kiddell-Monroe greatly; but Muker was a long way from London and her instructions or assumptions were incorrect. It is likely that she worked from photographs.

In the photograph, the steps are on the far left just beyond the black workshop door. In the story the instructions are given: “Straight across the green there, and don’t take no notice of the geese, and turn right up by Mrs Grooms with ‘Board Residence’ in her parlour window and you’ll find George’s place up some steps…And take care crossing the road” (p.152).

Muker main street, 2006.

The children crossed the green, “a strip of common bordering the road”. pictured here on the left, to reach them. Perfect, the final mystery is solved. The picture here is their approximate starting point but we have to imagine the geese. Heading across the strip green, the big three storey house is Mrs Grooms’, with a black garage/workshop door beside. Turn right here and the stone steps, quite wide, are in front of you with the cottage at the top. Veronica and Hugh could only have seen the open door from the top steps.

Nevertheless, Malcolm Saville has made a sleight of hand. Housekeeper Mrs Thornton said when describing where Mr Green the cobbler lived, “The odd thing about it is that t’steps go up *outside* the old place and not inside” (p.151). That is actually true, but for dramatic purposes deliberately gives the wrong impression that led to the book illustration: these outside staircases are unusual, and it would be a pity not to use one in the plot. Kim Spencer reports with photograph an outdoor flight of 15 steps in Keld, offering access to two storeys.

The younger children, Veronica and Hugh mimic the lone pine twins when they accidently give the game away to their ‘enemy’ Ginger Whiskers:

> “Acksherly”, she explained, “Acksherly they’ve gone out exploring by thesselves and left us alone by usselves. Acksherly they’ve been rather beastly” (p.155).

The spelling Acksherley also appears elsewhere in the book. Their adversary quickly ran out and drove madly up the main road.

The Secret of Buzzard Scar introduces two new older boys, George and Keith, but not so much romantic frissance as angst about age and gender. The eldest girls, 13 year old Sally and Elizabeth, feel the responsibility of their age: when they meet the wild looking stranger (Uncle

Grizzly) she has to decide whether he is safe or not. He looked like a tramp, but his speech was gentle and refined (he turns out to be a schoolmaster). This incident (chapter 5) is full of stranger-danger; Liz feels safe as much because of his class as his body language. They feel annoyed that they let themselves be led by the boys, and feel patronised by the older newcomers. "Beautiful" Liz is called by Keith on one occasion during a rescue. She retorts:

> "My name is Elizabeth Langton" the victim said in her best vicar's-daughter's voice. "And I'll be glad if you'll get me up as soon as you can." (p.117)

After the rescue she didn't rise to the name "blondie" in case her leg was being pulled. The invisible narrator adds "*Wisely* she decided to be her usual friendly self" (my italics). The teenage girls suffer their names being shortened to diminitives – especially Elizabeth/Lizabeth/Lizbeth/Lisa/Liz. She doesn't seem to mind. George is described as a silent type, never with much to say. The inner voice of the girls often sounds scared to death; but they behave courageously and give as good as they get.

> "She knew she would be terrified to go down the tunnel by herself, but the idea of another unexplored cavern was particularly thrilling; she knew how proud she would be to tell her father later what they had done." (p.119)

When the boys brag about how they rescued Elizabeth, Sally retorted 'indignantly':

> "And lucky for you that *we* came along just when George was falling through the rotten floor at Crackpot into the cellar" (p.118)

Once the adventure is over, the teenage girls put on their best frocks so George and Keith are suddenly shy and tongue-tied: on the hills they were in charge; now they enter unchartered territory which the girls command.

The little ones, Hugh and Veronica, are greatly annoyed at being left out of adventures because they are too young and small, so when the opportunity came to steal a secret message Veronica took it. We feel smouldering anger here. Ginger Whiskers was older and felt very superior – he is rude almost throughout. In a lovely touch, Elizabeth says,"He's *very* superior, Mummy…He's only an undergraduate after all" (p.189).

The fathers in the story, a vicar and a bookseller, are hardly sexy in literary terms (with apologies to both callings) and are described as being in genteel middle class poverty. This is a touch of reality for most of us in the 1950s – families couldn't afford much, rationing was only just over, cars were ancient and unreliable, and war reconstruction was still struggling forward. Holidays had to be cheap affairs. The Nettleford saga was more like the Archers than Dick Barton, with domestic crises becoming the dramatic realism – although it is the most action-packed of the Nettleford books. It would be a few years only before a new Dick Barton figure returned, as the super sleuth Marston Baines in the 1960s.

S Bigger, 25 November 2007.

PART 4. LIFE IN THE 1940S

17. SPIRIT OF THE PLACE: WRITING ABOUT ENGLAND.

STEPHEN BIGGER, 2009.

The children were allowed to lead the horses along the rows of stooks while the men pitchforked into the carts. The loaded carts went to where they were building the stacks, there another crew pitchforked the sheaves up to the rick-builders

Malcolm Saville taught through stories, feeling he had a responsibility to his child readers. Geoffrey Trease in 1948 remarked on this, quoting Malcolm Saville saying: "we, who write for the men and women of tomorrow, have great responsibilities and must recognise them". Later he said,

> "Malcolm Saville is an author with an intense feeling for the English scene, and a determination to share it with his readers...But the essential Saville, I think he himself would agree, is contained in the book *Jane's Country Year,* where the story is subordinate to the country-lore. Here is didactic fiction if you like ... Yet having watched the effect of the book on a child ... who possesses if anything rather less than the average interest in Nature, I feel that the purpose has been achieved." (1948 pp.12,66)

My title is not chauvinistic: Malcolm Saville did not write about Wales, Scotland or Ireland. He did set some stories abroad but his object was not to write *about* Rome, or Venice, or Amsterdam or the Alps but to provide background for adventure. His approach to England was different. Throughout all of his work, his topic was England, which in 1943, when he began to write seriously, was threatened by a terrible enemy: the defence of the land broke up families temporarily or permanently, killing for example Mary and Michael's father in Normandy. His child readers would have had through their letterboxes a government guidance sheet on what to do in case of invasion. Stay at home, do not impede the army by clogging the streets. The population felt vulnerable.

His works thereafter were variations on a common theme, the English landscape. This was not an 'original' theme, as Elgar would have said, but it marks Saville out from other writers both at the time and today. There is something of Wordsworth's Romance about

it, with wilderness and natural beauty; but there was more – history, continuity, labour in the fields, labour at crafts. England was *a working man's land* and his fiction is full of routine jobs – the farmer, the labourer, the station-master, the porter, the carpenter, the reservoir custodian, the fire fighter. In war we also get the fire watcher, the tank driver, the sailor, the fighter pilot, the landgirl. There are not so many working women represented, apart from farmers' wives, although a third of women worked before the war, and far more during the war, in factories, farms, and transport. The English landscape is produced by people at work. In *Come to Somerset* we also are shown the cheese-maker, the shoemaker, and the docker at Avonmouth. The countryside that results, the quaint villages, are seen as vulnerable to progress. The child readers area addressed as the vanguard of future conservation policy. Yet the urban scene has its own importances – Avonmouth Docks, like London Docks in *Two Fair Plaits* is a vital part of England's prosperity.

The '*Come To*' books give a glimpse of Englishness located in particular counties. *Come to Somerset* explains how the country has ancient roots, prehistoric, Roman, medieval. In fact we know now that the DNA of the prehistoric sketelons is still found in local people. Such continuity is important and a two way road – we need to remember the past, and carry things on into the future. This is of course a conservative view. There have always been newcomers, immigrants from elsewhere, the Normans, commonwealth citizens, and now Europeans – so our view of Englishness is changing. *Come to Somerset* reveals also the importance of tourism, and eulogises the development of the M5, just being planned (1970). We take motorways for granted today, and see more of the down-side – the traffic jams, pollution, and carbon footprint. Cheddar is a main attraction – we note here the Cheddar pinks and alpine pennycress growing wild, and a steep cliff path called 'Jacob's Ladder' (p.32) which he cunningly had earlier transported to Helston, Cornwall in *The Flying Fish Adventure*, as a path going from the river to Trevasson House.

Much of the countryside and seaside were out of bounds during the war, as barbed wire took over and transport was difficult. He wanted to prepare children for new freedoms in the outdoor life both through stories of farms and wilderness, and through Scrapbooks. *The Country Scrapbook* (1944) imbues the countryside with *significance.*

> "It may seem strange to tell you at the beginning of a book about the country and wild-life that England is yours and that when you are grown-up you will have to look after her. But this is so, because England is one of those countries where the people who live in it have a share in its planning and government I am sure you know, too, that there is no country in the world for which so many sacrifices have been made and which holds so many treasures... And because of the war you may never have had a chance to see our own countryside, which is the loveliest and rarest of Britain's treasures" (p.5)

"Our own" is significant. These places are 'your heritage'.

> "They are the Britain for which so many of her sons have fought and died. One day the countryside will pass into your keeping to guard and cherish in your turn, and it is important to remember that it is very easily spoiled" (pp.5-6).

A poem illustrate his Romantic and heroic vision and values. England is being saved from an enemy, and he praises those who involved, through purple prose of his own, a 'poem' under his D.J Desmond pseudonym. He describes "the English wind" which blew across sea and land,

> "He greeted sleepy firewatchers in the towns and tore at the hair of a green-jerseyed land girl at the gate of a Hertfordshire field."

From: *Jane's Country Year.*

Jane had a turn on the binder

This is Malcolm himself both firewatching and surveying his farm. The piece reminds me of two other works – the description of the wind is reminiscent of George Macdonald's *At the Back of the North Wind* – the wind, personified as 'she' on this occasion, is a threshold to the mystical state surrounding death. As the storm wind, she is neutral, sometimes helpful, sometimes destructive. Saville's wind "gave a helping hand to a flying boat of Coastal Command" but "nearly smothered a convoy, homeward bound". Indeed, D-day was to be a victim of that very neutral wind. In style and intensity (but not content) of the 'prose poem' reminds me of a favorite text, James Agee's *Knoxville, Summer of 1915*, "It was that time of evening when people sat on their porches..." – written in 1935 in America and later set to music by Samuel Barber in 1948. Agee was the screenwriter for *The African Queen* and other films, but social comment about the dignity of working families comes in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, serialised in the late 1930s and published in 1941. Here, despite worldly low status and the inequities of their society, all people, even the poor and deprived, have worth and should be recognised as images of God. The density of writing, the evocativeness, the underlying philosophy stand out in these prose poems by Agee and Saville. For James Agee, writing as if an infant within an urban family one summer evening, "no one will ever, ever, tell me who I am". For Malcolm Saville, whatever petty struggles we have, the world will always be as it is and will go on and on.

Malcolm Saville has also caught something of Agee's philosophy. In both fiction and non-fiction, Malcolm Saville describes workers as heroic and shows readers how to run a farm (*Trouble at Townsend*), how to milk a cow (*The Story of Milk*), and how to harvest (*Harvest Holiday*). 'The Eternal Romance of Farming' (for girls) shows this picture as idealised. Lambing may be romanctic but it is cold hard work. Being a farmer's wife is no easy option – ask Hannah Hawxwell. Landscape and country villages are as they are for practical reasons, and our well-being depends upon this. He links this with wildlife, the backbird in the hedgerow, the many named wildplants to be seen on nature walks, common then in schools but crowded out today by the National Curriculum and health and safety. Only now, after twenty years of state-run National Curriculum, are they admitting that igniting an interest in the local environment is more important than focusing on far off Aztecs and Incas. So nature walks may return, since our current fear of obesity is stronger than the fear of dangerous strangers. *The Country Scrapbook* was quickly written, to come out in 1944 when a new desire for country holidays hit the

country. As petrol was hard to come by, and money too, holidays had to be local, in farms or digs, and even holidays from home. A second edition came out quickly, with corrections (the Welsh W.D. Davies is no longer called an Englishman) and a new chapter added on rivers, ponds and streams.

The Open Air Scrapbook and *Seaside Scrapbook* soon followed to broaden children's experiences. "I want you to enjoy every hour you spend out of doors" Saville starts "...to discover the beauties of our own countryside and the treasures it contains". This book "sends you [children] out to gather memories" – a lovely phrase. The England he privileges is (in chapter 1): Romney Marsh, Yorkshire, The Pilgrims Way, Lakeland, the South Downs, and The Shropshire Highlands – all of personal significance to the author and become settings for stories. He also deals in the chapter 'The Open Road' with walking, picnics, countryside manners, dogs, cycling youth hostels and 'finding your way' (map reading often figures in stories). After a full discussion of the countryside, he ends with hints on camping. As minefields were cleared and barbed wire dismantled, he did a similar job with the seashore.

It was Elizabeth who, when she wandered off on her own, found the nest and the harvest mouse

Nature study both develops understanding and encourages conservation of habitat. *Small Creatures*, the 'Truth in a Tale'(see ch. 18 below), opens eyes to what is around us, with the father character presented as a fairly formal teacher. Set in Lyme Regis, not far from Somerset, *The Secret of the Hidden Pool* features the protection of a rare wild flower (as well as finding gold coins...). *Spring Comes to Nettleford* foils an egg collector, particularly looking for peregrines but getting more than he bargained for. For Michael and Mary, *The Fourth Key* set in Ashfield (Barcombe) recounts the discovery of the rare birds Bee-eaters and their protection by the authorities. Plants, birds and animals are littered through the stories.

The urban environment was more difficult to handle, but he made some attempts. Of course he describes villains in London, for there to be an adventure, such as Bland and his henchmen in 39 Spice Lane (really Wapping Wall). However, his article on firefighters in London (1948) praises people who risked their lives daily to cope with disaster.

> "While there are men who will choose dangerous jobs for the service of others and obey orders without argument, there is hope for the future.
> Salute with me the men of the London Fire Brigade.

Cities are full of shopkeepers, and the story of Mr Sparrow and his daughter Harriette in London lets us into their world. Saville's account of London docks (the Port of London) raises the dignity of dockers and the economic importance of city workers. This was to transfer neatly into fiction with *Two Fair Plaits* set in Wapping and Limehouse, featuring the positively described Burton family, whose son was a messenger, and father managed a tug. True the bargee family were pretty nasty and common, but the opposite is shown in the heart-of-gold bargee family in *The Painted Box*. The canals provided another

example of working folk in action. This was a powerful and important message for young, middle-class readers: respect the workers and emulate their industry and values.

His vision of cities is also worth noting.

> "As you read this book [*Open Air Scrapbook*:6] I want you to remember that our straggling cities surrounded by mean slums are neither worthy of our heritage nor are they natural places in which to live. Every ugly house in a drab street and every advertisement hoarding in a green field is something to be hated because it is ugly and need not have been made that way".

His is a call to action, to clean up our cities. One answer was the suburban estate, another the new town. Mary and Michael lived in Laburnum Road in the suburbs:

> "Laburnum Road is a long road. It is the same length as Acacia Road to its north and just like it, and as long as Lilac Avenue which runs precisely in the same direction to the south...All the houses in Laburnum Road are the same" (Trouble at Townsend,p.7).

These are the suberbs, with a cinema in one direction, and a wasteland the other, covered with rubblish. The 'Susan and Bill' series was set in a new town, where new friendships and accommodations had to be made.

Malcolm Saville therefore was preparing his child readers to play their part in conservation and appropriate development. He was in short a mouthpiece for the Campaign to Protect Rural England, formed in 1926. That England is gone; its stooks, and small mixed farms like Townsend, Ingles and White Gates are no more than a nostagic memory. My uncle ran such a farm, his children do not. Even the small shops are gone or going. Families have fragmented. Yet we have to look forward, not back. Globally we have to feed ourselves, and feed the world. We have to make things, and prepare for a twenty-first century which will be so different from the twentieth that we cannot imagine it. Then, natural energy (horses) were giving way to oil (tractors), and soon oil will give way to the natural energy that must come next, as oil diminishes. Even our strategies with money have been brought seriously into question. Our children have the very serious job of planning for their own survival, in which preserving quaint country lanes for nostalgia's sake do not figure.

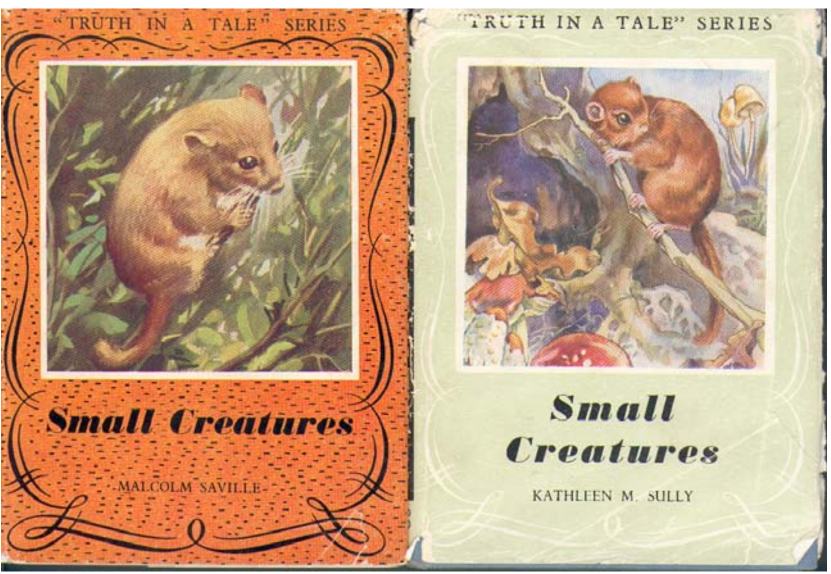
Malcolm Saville's fiction prepared children to be active citizens; no less should modern fiction prepare strong-minded heroes for the future, young people prepared to become involved positively with their emerging world and be forces for good. There are many problems that they must help to solve during the coming generation. *That England* has gone; the next England has to be created. Cities as well as the countryside need to become places enjoyable to live in. Villages need affordable houses. Partly such developments involve buildings; but the spirit of a place is more about people – how people relate to each other, treat each other and help each other.

References.

Geoffrey Trease, *Tales out of School* (1948)
The Story of Milk, in *Discovery and Romance* 3 (1948)
The Eternal Romance of Farming, in *Discovery and Romance* 2 (1947)
Harvest Holiday in *The Wonder Book for Children* (1948)
Country Scrapbook (1944)
Come to Somerset (1970)
The World's Greatest Port in *Adventure and Discovery* 3 (1948)
W. Mitchell, *Hannah Hauxwell - 80 Years in the Dales*

18. *SMALL CREATURES,* AND THE TRUTH IN A TALE SERIES.

STEPHEN BIGGER.



One of Malcolm Saville's smallest, rarest and most expensive books is *Small Creatures* in the Truth in a Tale Series. The Truth in a Tale series of 15 books were published post-war by Edmund Ward (Publishers) Ltd in the 1940s and 1950s. *Small Creatures* in the original run was written by an up and coming writer Kathleen M Sully and delightfully illustrated by Rene Cloke, as were the first five books in the series. The series is given the following description which appears inside the back flap in early editions, and on the back in later editions. The wording changes slightly in 1959 editions (e.g. Malcolm Saville's *Small Creatures*) so this is the version I use here. (For purists, the earlier form uses the word 'series' in various places):

> "All children have enquiring minds and, rightly, want to know the truth about everyday natural things and conditions around them. "Truth in a Tale" books are designed to give this information in a pleasant story form which can easily be understood and enjoyed. Each book is illustrated in full colour and strongly and uniformly bound so that young children can have the delight of collecting their own small libraries."

The 15 titles, 64 pages, 5 ½ x 4 inches and 10 colour plates are[37]:

1. *Stories of the Elements* (1946) by Marion Tree illustrated by Rene Cloke, later replaced by *Wind and Weather* by Sylvia Little (1959) illustrated by Astrid Walford
2. *Small Creatures* (1946) by Kathleen Sully illustrated by Rene Cloke later replaced with Malcolm Saville's version (1959) illustrated by John T. Kenney
3. *The Stony Stream* (1946) by Kathleen Sully illustrated by Rene Cloke [38]
4. *Birds in Our Garden* (1948) by Mary Kerr illustrated by Rene Cloke
5. *Birds of the River* (1948) by Mary Kerr illustrated by Rene Cloke
6. *Butterflies on the Wing* (1950) by L. Hugh Newman illustrated by W. J. Popham
7. *Wild Flowers* (1950) by Moira Savinicus illustrated by W. J. Popham
8. *Moths on the Wing* (1950) by L. Hugh Newman illustrated by W. J. Popham
9. *The Grey Pony* (1954) written and illustrated by John T. Kenney
10. *Wild Animals* (1955) by Eric Leyland, illustrated by John T. Kenney
11. *The Shetland Pony* (1955) written and illustrated by John T. Kenney

[37] The first editions of 1 - 4 were undated but full printing history is given in later editions.

[38] I haven't been able to discover if volume 3 by Kathleen Sully was replaced in 1959 also but I can say that its title was not changed according to the list on the cover of Malcolm Saville's *Small Creatures*. Volumes 4 and later books were definitely not replaced.

12. *Seabirds* (1956) by Eric Leyland, illustrated by John T. Kenney
13. *Dogs* (1957) by Eric Leyland, illustrated by John T. Kenney
14. *Flowers in the Garden* (1957) by Moira Savinicus illustrated by W. J. Popham
15. *Farm Animals* (1958) by Laurence Meynell illustrated by Jennifer Miles

The early books were fairy stories. *Stories of the Elements* tells fairy stories about the Wind Elf, the Fire King, rainwater, sun, fire and forests. The blurb did its best by claiming that the story gently leads a child to an understanding of the elements. The book was re-written in more prosaic form in 1958 as *Wind and Weather* by Sylvia Little (a pseudonym of Eric Leyland for his girl's school stories) and illustrated by Astrid Walford. Why did Eric Leyland use his feminine alter ego when he also contributed books in his own name? There are examples of him using this pseudonym for stories he contributed to collections he was himself editing (e.g. *Coronet Girls' Annual* from 1956). The relevance to ourselves is that Malcolm Saville was similarly commissioned to replace Kathleen Sully's *Small Creature*. The gentle anthropomorphic fairy tales were reshaped to resemble school textbooks. Sully had strengthened her writing career through the 1950s and 1960s, so could have re-written it in a different style. She might have refused, or the publisher might have preferred big names. I will quote the blurb at the front of Kathleen Sully's *Small Creatures* so you can get a feel for the book:

> " The first part of this simple Nature Book for young children tells how Dormouse, having learned from other wild creatures that they will sleep all through the long, cold Winter, himself collects a food-store in an old hollow oak tree and makes a nest. When Winter comes, he retires with his family to this snug, warm home and dreams of Jack Frost and the North Wind. His dream is so vivid that when he wakes up in the spring he cannot believe that he has been to sleep. The second part of the book deals with the life of the Dragonfly which is continually flashing up and down the stream, scornful of such drab, slow-moving creatures as the snail but rather envious of the mighty East wind."

The animals, insects and elements all speak in a creative dynamic story wonderfully illustrated by lively wildlife pictures. Here is a chapter by Kathleen Sully:

CHAPTER IV
The Next Morning

The next morning the sun shone so brightly that even the bare trees looked gay and the smallest Dormouse felt quite cheerful.

As he wandered about the wood he met Grandfather Rat, who told him that he was moving into the farmer's corn stack for the Winter as it would be warmer and would assure his family of their Winter food.

He also met a Humble Bee, who was moving ever so slowly and was not making any attempt to use her beautiful wings. "Where are you going, Humble Bee?" said the smallest Dormouse.

"Home," said the Humble Bee in a very tired voice.

"You are not going very fast," said the smallest Dormouse. "Your children will be crying for you if you do not hurry."

"Oh, they are all snugly tucked in and will not wake until next Spring," she said.

"And you," said he, "will you sleep too?" "Yes, I shall go to sleep presently, but I've still a little more work to do yet," she replied.

She was still slowly crawling along when he left her, and he spent the day in the ploughed field, where he met some Fieldfares and some Pink-footed Geese.

The Fieldfares had flown from Norway and the Geese from Iceland; they were both going to spend the Winter in South-East England, where the Dormouse lived.

The Fieldfares did not like very cold weather; and when the smallest Dormouse asked what Winter was like, they said,

"The snow is very soft and white
And really is a pretty sight,

But, small Dormouse, you will find
It really is not very kind;
It numbs your toes
And chills your nose.

The cold creeps right into your chest
And does not give you any rest;
All through the night
It grips you tight,
You stay awake
And sneeze and shake,
Eagerly waiting for the day
Hoping the snow will melt away."

"Oh, do not listen to such tales," said the Pink-footed Geese, "we will tell you what the Winter is like."
And they told him of Spitzbergen far north of Iceland, where they were born, how beautiful it looked on starry nights when the ice and snow sparkled and shone like a thousand million jewels and how beautiful curtains sometimes draped the sky, changing their shapes and colours in so many amazing ways, it would be impossible to tell of them and that they were called the Northern Lights.
And they told him of the wonderful journey south each year to England where they usually spent the Winter; of its strange excitement they said much; but of its perils they said little, and they explained how they flew in formation all the way.

So home went the smallest Dormouse with all kinds of strange ideas in his head about the Winter.
He was thinking about the long flight of the Pink-footed Geese from Spitzbergen,

when he came upon the Humble Bee.

She was standing quite still and was dead. The smallest Dormouse felt sad for he was fond of the Humble Bee.

And here is a section of Malcolm Saville showing the very different style. Charles is 8 years old, and the 'Daddy' in the story is his. They lodge with the Browns, whose daughter is Julia. Daddy is a bit of a teacher and even gives Charles a work-book.

CHAPTER 5

The Pond

Charles was thrilled with the pond at the bottom of the field and knew exactly why Julia called it her ocean. It was quite big and on two sides was fringed with rushes. Across the water were two willow trees with their leaves gleaming like silver as they were stirred by a gentle breeze. The bank was muddy because it had been broken down by the hooves of the cattle when they came to drink. Away on their left was the wood, and when Charles looked back Honeysuckle Cottage was out of sight.
'We can spend the rest of the morning here, if you like,' Charles' father suggested. 'We shall find lots of creatures, and I suggest we make a camp on the bank under the willow trees.'
Almost before he had finished speaking the children had their sandals off and were splashing in the shallows, and it wasn't long before they saw a frog swimming towards the bank and scrambling up into the grass.

'I think frogs look sillier than toads,' Charles said. 'Shall we follow him?' 'We'll see him again,' Julia said. 'Let's stay in the water now and I'll show you the tadpoles. Last year I collected some in a jam jar because I wanted to see them turn into frogs. They just died.'
They waded round the edge of the pond, and soon found a black mass of squirming tadpoles in the water by the rushes.
Charles' father said, 'I was waiting for you to find them. These tadpoles are growing up. They're putting their heads out of the water to breathe.'
And so they were, and when Charles looked carefully he saw that they were no longer little wriggling, pear-shaped blobs of black jelly but very nearly tiny frogs. He could see their heads and little stumps that would soon be legs.
'What happens when their legs are big enough for them to hop, like the one we saw just now ?' he asked.
'They hop out on land,' his father laughed, and then he told them that both frogs and toads lay their eggs - which are called spawn - in the water and don't bother any more about them. Frog spawn is laid in thick clusters looking like lumps of jelly in the water, but the toad lays eggs in long strings looking almost like necklaces of beads. Almost the only time the toad comes near water is at spawning, but frogs are never far away from it. They like it and their skin is smooth and moist.
'Tadpoles hatch out of the spawn without any help,' he went on, 'and just before they get to *this* stage they breathe by sucking in water and pushing it out through their gills as a fish does. Just at this age they are developing lungs and that's why they come up for air. . . . You can write Frog and Tadpole in your book, Charles. What shall we look for now? Have you seen the dragonflies flying over the water? I suppose a dragon-fly is an *insect,* but I don't see why you shouldn't add him to your collection, Charles. Let's sit here and watch them while the sun is shining.'
'I see them now!' Julia said. 'But do you mean that we can't see them when the sun goes in?'
'Dragon-flies love the sun and when it's covered by a cloud they disappear. Wait and see if that happens. I think I read that there are over forty different sorts of dragon-fly in our country. Look at them now, because I can see several different sorts of sizes and colours. They look very fairy-like, but some of them are very fierce. The bigger ones-but look! There's one now. Like a pirate!'
They could see this one quite clearly as it zoomed across the surface of the water. It was brown, most beautifully marked with black, yellow, green and blue, and very striking. The smaller dragon-flies soon got out of his way. One of them had a slender blue body and lovely gleaming silvery wings, and flew so close to the bank where they were sitting that Charles was sure he could have caught it. And as they watched they saw others coloured red and black and yellow and black, and then suddenly the sun went behind a cloud and they all vanished ! Charles' father moved over to the willow tree and pointed to one of the leaves on a low-lying branch.
'There's one!' he said. 'See how its wings are folded over its back so that it hardly looks like a dragon-fly? As soon as they close their beautiful wings they seem to become invisible. When the sun comes out again he'll fly back over the water.'
'What do dragonflies eat ?' Julia asked. 'Other insects - and sometimes each other. The different females seem to have different ways of laying their eggs. Some lay them on the under side of a floating leaf by first piercing the surface with their tail. When the leaf dies and sinks the eggs will hatch under water. Some lay their eggs on the surface of the water. Those eggs which are not snapped up by hungry fish hatch into ugly grubs and then turn into nymphs rather like a butterfly's chrysalis. If we searched in the rushes I expect we should find some of the empty skins from which our dragon-flies broke free on a sunny morning like this. Here comes the sun again. Watch them fly over the water.'
'Now I'm hungry,' Charles said. 'Let's have our explorers' rations under the tree and I'll write FROG, TADPOLE and DRAGON-FLY in my book.'

The new blurb on the inner front flyleaf on the cover reads:

> "Charles was looking forward to his stay at Honeysuckle Cottage with Mr and Mrs Brown and their little girl Julia – but he did not realise just how much fun he was going to have in the country. On his very first day, he, Julia and Daddy set off to explore the surrounding countryside, and soon they saw and learned about many hedgerow

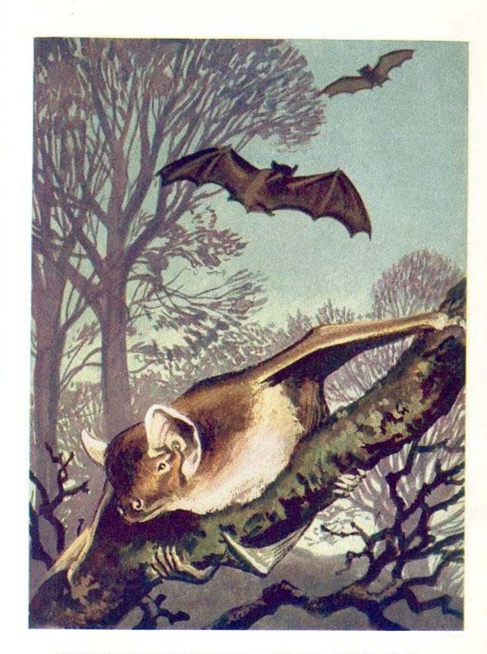
creatures: the snail, the grass-snake, the dormouse, the shrew, the dragon-fly, the glowworm and other interesting animals. To Charles the country was a wonderful place, it was so full of surprises."

The chapter titles are: Honeysuckle Cottage; House on His Back; Mr Rat and Mr Toad; In the Meadow; The Pond; The Snake; The Robber in the Wood; and Creatures of the Dusk. Other books feature different children, but the concept and style is similar. Only one picture by Rene Cloke has survived, and relates to this chapter, a gorgeous tableau of a dragon-fly and snail which had the original caption 'what a slow creature, he thought'. This caption is changed to 'One of the dragon-flies had a slender blue body'. This is the picture I use to illustrate this piece and contrasts with John Kenney's more prosaic school-textbook style depictions of the other small creatures (including the dormouse on the cover pictured, here pictured alongside Rene Cloke's version).

Most 'Truth in a Tale' books can be bought for about £3. Malcolm Saville's *Small Creatures* in good condition ranges from £30 to £85 currently.

This Rene Cloke illustration survived into Malcolm Saville's edition, there being no fairies in it! The other illustrations were the work of John Kenney, of Thomas the Tank Engine fame.

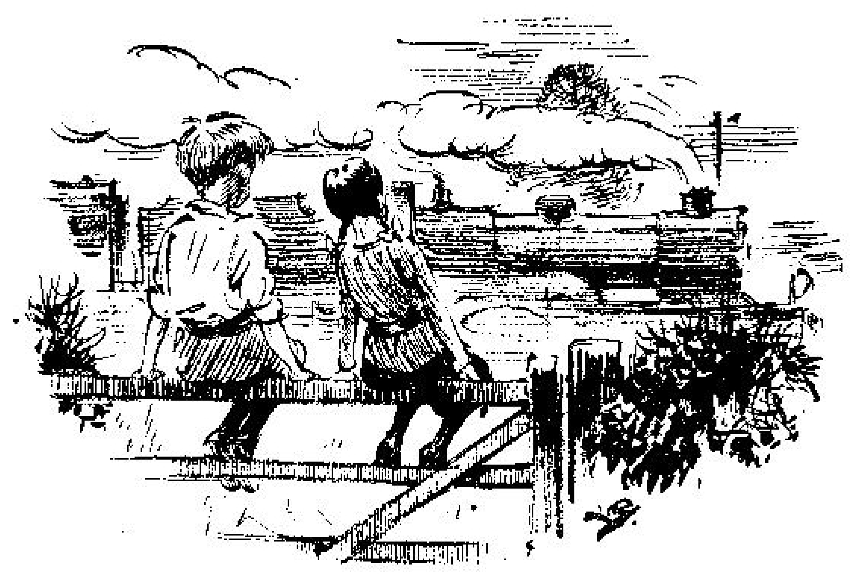
A. Rene Cloke B. John Kenney



19. Railways of Adventure

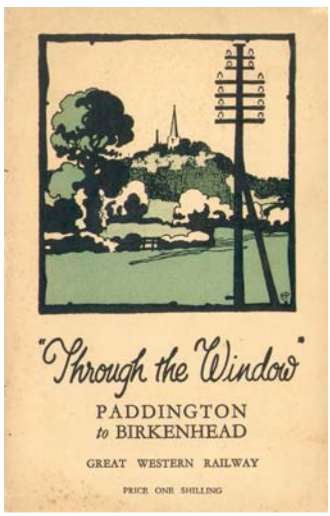
Stephen Bigger

A."They Changed Trains in Shrewsbury": The depiction of Shropshire railways in Malcolm Saville's fiction.
Easter 2004.



Watching the trains go by

Malcolm Saville's *Mystery at Witchend* starts at Shrewsbury station, arriving from London to change trains for Onnybrook (=Marshbrook) on the Ludlow/Hereford line. The sailor Bill Ward happened to travel with them in the train and related the folk tales of the Long Mynd and the Stipperstones. He reappears in the story later. Tiny Marshbrook station clearly has a ticket office and station-masters house, with the level crossing very close to the platform. Strange Jacob, searching very loudly for a package marked 'Thurston' sets up the plot for the book. The tiny village station of Onnybrook, named after the nearby river Onny, was where the Morton family alighted, met the station porter whose son was away in his tank in Africa in the sixth army, and where the agitated 'spy and sabateur' totally fails to remain incognito. Why such a badly trained and ill-disciplined spy, apparently Jewish, should support the Nazis is not clear. Later, a phony airman spy was caught out because he claimed to have arrived on a non-existent train – the early morning timetabled train being discontinued in war years.



In The Secret of Grey Walls Jon and Penny travel from Paddington to Shrewsbury meeting Alan Denton and his dog Lady, demobbed from the Navy to his farm near Clun. All three travel to Craven Arms where the Morton's meet them and they all begin the journey to Clun. Wings over Witchend (1956) starts with a detailed description of the rail journey, with stations named and passing features described. It may be that Malcolm Saville was referring to copy of the GWR's Through The Window guide to the line (by Felix Pole in 1925, the second of that series produced). This journey plays the 'like as two peas' gag at length with two grumpy ladies. Met by Peter, all three go on the

Marshbrook train, retelling the Bill Ward story. They arrive in thick snow, without a lift to Witchend, to be met by an unpleasant young porter whom, like Jacob in wartime, we expect to meet again.

Strangers at Witchend (1970) marks a substantial change. Harriet Sparrow and her grandfather meet the Mortons at Euston station to catch the Shrewsbury train. Paddington-Birkenhead trains had been discontinued in 1967 after which GWR ran a very sparse and poor service to Shreswbury, the expresses being taken over by the Midland region based around Euston, and going through Birmingham New Street and not Snow Hill station. Dickie is by now a keen trainspotter (Harriet somewhat dismissively saw him "excitedly writing in a notebook details of what she supposed was a grubby shunting locomotive". What is more, Mr Sparrow was an expert on railway locomotives which led to a lively but unreported conversation. Clearly Dickie was also, for Mr Sparrow says, "Really, David, this boy has an astonishing knowledge of railways. I've been telling him what Euston station looked like years ago. It is remarkable to think that he's never actually seen any of the big steam locos of the Midland Region which used to run on these tracks. They were a fine sight. Nothing like steam…". [This is unlikely, for Dickie was born around 1933!]. Instead of the GWR Didcot, Oxford, Banbury, Birmingham Snow Hill, Dickie reports that they were in Kings Langley. "We shall be stopping at Rugby, Coventry, Birmingham New Street, changing at Wolverhampton to arrive in Shrewsbury at 18.01". Saville has clearly consulted the timetable. "The train then crossed the Severn into Shrewsbury and gave them time to see its graceful spires against the summer skyline. Here they changed trains once more and there was time to take Macbeth for a walk in the station yard before the two-car diesel train started for Church Stretton, Craven Arms, Ludlow and Hereford.".

Mike had gone to the barrier to get the number of a great engine

Shrewsbury was, and is, a crucial staging post, a hub through which trains have to pass to get anywhere. From London via Wolverhampton, from Swansea via Craven Arms, from Hereford and beyond via Ludlow; from Aberystwyth and mid Wales; from Birkenhead via Chester; and from Manchester via Crewe. Shrewsbury was a train-spotters delight, with excursions going through to Devon and Cornwall, Bournmouth, Aberystwyth, northbound to Manchester, Blackpool and the Lakes – and even to Margate. The Cambrian Coast Express was well known. The London to Birkenhead is the one that opens Malcolm Saville's first children's novel, with its chocolate and cream carriages bringing them from Paddington and going round the bend at the north end towards Chester and Birkenhead. The line is described for passengers in a Through the Window guide to the line (1925).

Shrewsbury was at the junction of the Great Western Railway (GWR) and the London and North Western Railway (LNWR). Originally built in 1848, with its present exterior by Thomas Brassey and T K Person, under the shadow of the Castle and the Buttermarket, it was then the terminus of four separate railways: the Shropshire Union; the Shrewsbury and Birmingham; the Shrewsbury and Hereford; and the Shrewsbury and Chester.

The station was built with parapets, battlements, Jacobean chimneys and an ornate clocktower – a municipal building of some pre-eminence. In 1904 it was remarkably extended by RE Johnson to have an extra floor: so as not to disturb the exterior, the extra floor was built downwards, the rest of the building being supported throughout from this savage onslaught on its foundations. The platforms were extended at this time to bridge the river Severn. Expresses arrived at the central island platforms (1-6); the Marshbrook train went from platforms 8 or 9. By the 1970s platforms were renumbers and the old platforms 8-9 became platforms 1-2.

Other lines were added in the Victorian age: the Shrewsbury and Welshpool, which linked with the Snailbeach District Railways at Pontesbury; the Shrewsbury & Montegomery Light Railway terminated at the Abbey station (which served ammunition depots during WW2); the Severn Valley line went from Shrewsbury to Hartlebury in Worcestershire. Mergers brought these lines into two of the four national companies, the GWR and the LNWR. By 1923, all railway companies were grouped: GWR remained the same, but the LNWR became part of the London Midland Railway. This was the situation in 1942, when Malcolm Saville began writing. By 1948 these four independent companies became regions of the integrated British Railways – the Western Region; and the London, Midland and Scottish Region (LMS). The Paddington to Birkenhead was steam hauled until 1967, when it was phased out.

But with a horrid thud it fell plumb upon the head of the gentleman in the corner

Malcolm Saville had little time for trainspotters. Jon once admitted to being keen, in Charing Cross, but he was declared silly: "you can go and talk to the engine drivers and unscrew the engines or whatever it is you do when you play your little baby railway games…" raved Penny.. No 'namer' is every named in any book, even though he had an absolute obsession with boat names, from the Sea Witch to the Saucy Jane, via London Pride. For the average boy of the period, who lived for steam engines, stood in stations and on bridges 'spotting', and if very fortunate 'cabbing' and 'shedding', this was not an endearing aspect. Some boy may have written to tell him, for he puts things right in 1970 (see above). To Saville, trains were functional, hardly worth a mention unless exciting things could be made to happen on them – like kidnapping or spying. This first journey was ordinary, although the children did meet a 'spy', Jacob, at the end. We boys would want to know which Castle class pulled the London to Shrewsbury GWR stage (7029 Clun Castle would have been a good fit, and is still around in preservation); and which LMS Jubilee took over for the Birkenhead stage (perhaps a province of Empire like (4)5600 Bermuda or better still a navy name such as (4)5679 Armada. (British Railways from 1948 added the initial '4').

Shrewsbury station has a central island platform, with services looping out from each end to the north, south, west and east. The GWR signal box to the south was huge and high; the separate LNWR (Midland) box was to the north. The separate sheds for each company were side by side, each trying to outdo the other in its cleaning, painting and finishing. There were differences in railway architecture between the two companies, most notably on signalling apparatus: the GW gantries had a Prussian spike, and signals fell downwards whereas most other companies pulled their signals upwards.

The war years brought many changes on the railway. Traffic doubled in many areas thanks to the movement of freight and munitions, troop movements, and the general lack of petrol to run cars. The public were encouraged to make only necessary journeys. This extra working, together with a general lack of renewal, maintenance and cleaning, really wore the engines and stock out. All rolling stock were in poor condition by the end of the war, which prompted a programme of scrapping and dieselisation. In addition, trains were straffed and bombed. They were sitting targets, the lines clearly visible from 20000 feet, the smoke in daylight and the fire at night. The RAF too attacked enemy rail centres to slow down movements of troops and munitions. When British lines and stations were attacked, they were brought back into service in a remarkably rapid time. Even in Coventry, which suffered worse bomb damage than even the east end of London, railway traffic began to flow again after only and few days. On the night of the Coventry raid, which destroyed the old cathedral, Wolverhampton should also have been hit. Believing that it was more heavily defended than it was, the Nazis cancelled and redirected the planes to Coventry.

Shrewsbury was not immune, as bombers bound for Liverpool overflew the city. A regular Nazi night bombing run to Liverpool was controlled by a directional beam from the Knickerbein transmitter. This gave the crew their true bearing and indicated at which precise moment the bombs had to be released. Our own radar boffins quickly found a way of interfering with the beams, either jamming them or ‘bending’ them, so the bombs were dropped in the sea or in Snowdonia in error. Although jamming was patchy at times, when frequencies changed, the enemy pilot’s belief that their beams had been bent, even when the weren’t, led to this strategy being abandoned prematurely.

The greatest problem for railway staff was the blackout. Workmen and linesmen were vulnerable to being knocked over in the dark. The light from the steam engine fires had to be shielded, or the engine would be a sitting duck for night bombers. Canvas covers enclosed the cab which made the heat unbearable. At the end of the day, the ash and clinker had to be dropped out of the boiler before it set hard. Normally done outside, the fire would be visible for miles, so this job was done in the sheds, where the smoke and heat was unpleasant and unhealthy. Signalling was also a problem. Night signalling used lamps which enemy bombers used for navigation to their targets. So these were dimmed to the point of being barely visible to train crews. Signal boxes had to be blacked out with only a slit to see engine lamp signals. If one was missed, the signals ahead could not be confidently set, which slowed journeys down. The fast trip from London to Shrewsbury timetabled around 3½ hours in 1938 could have taken double than in 1942.

Saville does not allow his trains to be bombed, in contrast to Elinor Brent Dyer, who believed that the best way for children to come to terms with danger was to meet it in fiction first. So, the highland twins’ journey to the Chalet School, now near Armiford (Hereford) had a frightful journey from the north, were bombed and shot at, but arrived safely and fairly cheerfully.

Another major difference was that in war women replaced the men who went off to fight. No job was too difficult, except for engine driving which involved apprenticeship and experience. The women in the sleeper yard ‘man’-handling railway sleepers terrified one suited official from head office who had never seen anything like it. We might speculate that Agnes Braid doubled as a ticket collector and track-layer when the children were at school.

From Marshbrook to Craven Arms, the line divided either to Hereford or Swansea. On this train Jon and Penny went on their journey to Clun, with Alan Denton and Lady the dog. This station had an enormous station sign, saying: “Craven Arms and Stokesay: Junction for Central Wales Route to Llandrindod, Brecon, Llanelly, Swansea, Carmarthen, Tenby, Pembroke Dock etc”, with a smaller sign pointing to Much Wenlock, Buildwas, and Wellington. A Bishop’s Castle Railway from Craven Arms barely made a living and closed in 1935.

Finally, to wrap up the Lone Pine series, Shrewsbury ends as it started – in centre stage:

"…thanks to your description of the man Josef we have him. The booking clerk at Shrewsbury station didn't like the look of the twenty pound note he offered for a ticket to London" (Home to Witchend)

Illustrations by Lunt Roberts from the Mary and Michael books, and Through the Window: Paddington to Birkenhead, Great Western Railway.

References and Further Reading.

British Railways Press Office, 1944, British Railways in peace and war.

Christiansen Rex 2001 *Chester & North Wales Border railways: A View from the Past.* Ian Allen Publishers. Chapters 4 and 5 on Shrewsbury and branch lines.

Crump, Norman, 1947 *By Rail to Victory: The Story of the LNER in Wartime.* London North Eastern Railway.

Darwin, Bernard, 1946, *War on the Line: the Southern Railway in Wartime* The Southern Railway Company

Morriss, Richard, 1986, *Rail Centres: Shrewsbury.* Ian Allen Publishers.

Pole, Felix 1925 *Paddington to Birkenhead* (Through the Window Guide 2). GWR.

Semmens, Peter: *A History of the Great Western Railway 3.Wartime and the Final Years 1939-48.* Allen & Unwin/Studio, 1990

Walker, Colin 1971 *The Steam Railway*, volume 2, Shrewsbury Oxford Illustrators Ltd.

UPTON MAGNA TO SHREWSBURY

AT UPTON MAGNA **(1)** where we have crossed the SHROPSHIRE UNION CANAL **(2)**, we are within two miles of the ruins of the famous Roman station of URICONIUM **(3)**, out of sight on the left close to Wroxeter. This important station was the northern destination of Watling Street, which we crossed a few miles back. The site has proved very rich in objects illustrating both the military and domestic sides of Romano-British life, and travellers who halt at Shrewsbury will find in the Museum, less than five minutes' walk from the station, many interesting relics of Uriconium. The Museum was formerly Shrewsbury School, one of the famous public schools of England.

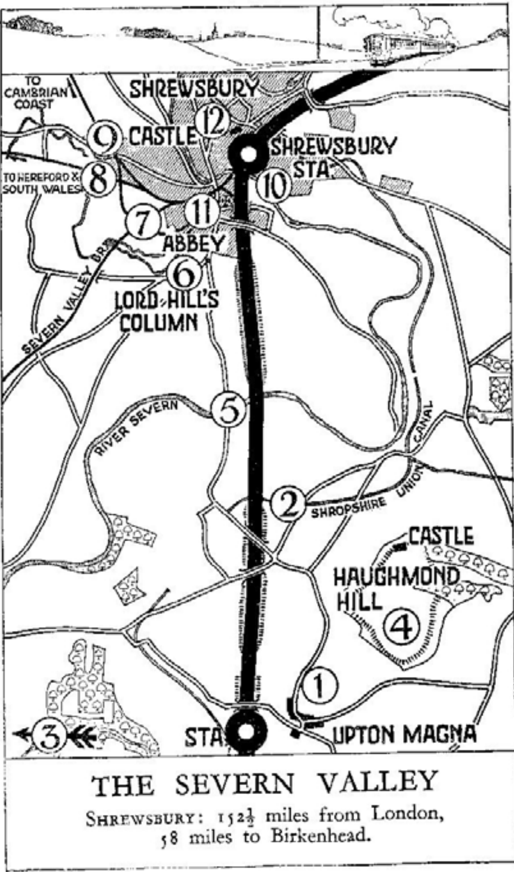
HAUGHMOND HILL **(4)** and its "castle" remain prominent on the right for some distance, and as the view-point changes the long line of the wooded hill is seen extending northwards.

As we approach the picturesque capital of the Welsh Marches the RIVER SEVERN **(5)** passes under the railway—a broad, coffee-coloured stream. We shall cross it again, less obviously, at Shrewsbury Station, which is partly built across the river. A very prominent object hidden by intervening houses and trees until we have passed beyond it (the best view is from the station itself) is LORD HILL'S COLUMN **(6)**, rising high above the eastern outskirts of the town. The substantial column, 133 feet high, supports a great gilded figure of Lord Hill, a Shropshireman who won distinction at Waterloo, Vittoria and other battles of that period.

Shrewsbury is an important railway junction and at the great triangular concentration of lines at the entrance to the station the lines leading from the SEVERN VALLEY **(7)** from the West of England and South Wales *via* HEREFORD **(8)** and from the Cambrian Coast and mid-Wales *via* WELSHPOOL **(9)** come in on the left. The enormous number of rails here impresses every traveller.

As the line curves into SHREWSBURY STATION **(10)** a number of the chief buildings of this historic old county town are seen close ahead, notably the ABBEY CHURCH **(11)** and CASTLE **(12)**. Falstaff boasting of his fight with Percy said "but we rose both at an instant, and fought a long hour by Shrewsbury clock." (Shakespeare's First Part of King Henry IV, Act V, Scene IV). The clock being supposed to be that of the Abbey. A splendid broadside view of the Abbey Church is gained on the left just before entering the station. Shrewsbury Castle, which was founded by Roger de Montgomery, was rebuilt in the reign of Edward I.

68



THE SEVERN VALLEY

SHREWSBURY: 152½ miles from London, 58 miles to Birkenhead.

69

B. The Wonderful Green Electric Train from Victoria.
Stephen Bigger. 2007

The railway at Cooksbridge/Barombe

As anyone who has seen The Importance of being Ernest knows, the 'Brighton line' runs from Victoria Station in Pimlico - Ernest Worthing was found in a handbag in the waiting room there. Malcolm Saville knew his railways and railway timetables ("Bradshaws"): he lived on the Downs in Barcombe near Lewes from 1956 to 1964, and commuted to and from London by rail from there. This line therefore appears in his stories.

Mary and Michael, in *The Fourth Key* (1957) were going to "Ashfield" [combining in real life Cooksbridge station and Barcombe village to which Saville had just moved]. They arrived in Victoria Station. "Ashfield" is said to have a small station at which few trains stopped – so Uncle Jim checked carefully that their train stopped there, the stopping train to Eastbourne and Hastings via Lewes. In fact Bradshaw's timetable of 1948 has only two such daily trains from Victoria, the 6.40 am and 7.45 pm, a journey of about an hour (today's service is more frequent). Using poetic licence perhaps, rather more stopping services are assumed in the story. (Commuter services from London Bridge stopped there more frequently). The "long green electric train" was waiting. In fact, on the Victoria to Hastings service, only the 7.45 pm commuter train stopped at Cooksbridge; more stopped at Lewes. Stops at East Croydon and Haywards Heath are mentioned

> "and soon after that they swung over the points and headed east instead of south. Now the long, smooth line of the South Downs stretched as far as they could see in each direction when they looked from the right- hand windows. On these hills the grass still looked green and above them the sky was clear and blue. The fields between the railway track and the Downs were already golden with the rippling harvest, and Mary suddenly realised why her mother and uncle loved the country in which they had been born. They stopped at a station with a race course beside it [Plumpton] and Mike told his sister to get ready because Ashfield was next" (p.6).

The village they were going to (Barcombe in real life) was two miles from Cooksbridge station, with a connecting bus, a green single decker, that was "always late on Thursdays". This is well-reported, a journey Malcolm Saville knew well. Cooksbridge station is still used, but the old station buildings now house a village shop, nearby an excellent orchid nursery.

On the 'pull' of the South Downs to those born there, the Buckingham parents were homesick enough to leave Ludlow for Brighton in *The Long Passage* (1953). The journey to Sussex is by car, 'The Vehicle', brightly painted for the occasion, pulling a caravan: this journey takes in (day 1) Worcester (to put Mrs Buckingham on the train), and Stratford (a theatre visit); on day 2 Oxford (3 hours sightseeing), Henley, Twyford, Bagshot (the A30 to Salisbury is mentioned), and Guildford, Saville's home at that time. Then on day 3 to Chanctonbury Ring on the South Downs, and the imaginary village of Stunnington, where Foxy Simmonds awaits, the villain from The Master of Maryknoll. ("Stunnington" is based on Storrington although its actual location has

moved a few miles eastward according to the frontispiece map.) This is an optimistic itinerary on 1950s roads. Wallingford incidentally has been wrongly placed after Henley. Mrs Buckingham is due to come, unreported in the book, by train from Victoria. Mr Buckingham talks nostalgically about the "wonderful electric trains" that enabled people to live in Sussex and work in London (p.17).

Malcolm Saville starts *Four and Twenty Blackbirds* (1959) on the long platform of Victoria Station, with Humf and Lucy Grey (in later versions Brown) from the midland's town of Midchester, their Aunt Flo with cherries on her hat and their cat Pickwick in a wicker basket. The electric train glided in "like a green snake". They were heading up the Brighton line to "Malling" (real life Lewes) which is "the third stop". (Incidentally, South Malling is even today a suburb of Lewes). The scene is set with an apparently friendly old man Dr Wilber in the carriage, and a dark conversation about whether their father was likely to settle down at last, as he so often changed his job. He appears to deal in 'ideas'. The train crosses the Thames, speeds through the suburbs, passing a big airport (Gatwick), over a bridge (viaduct) over a valley forested on either side and into 'a big station' (Haywards Heath). Then it crossed the Downs, through tunnels into Malling Station, a "very remarkable railway junction" with six sets of rails and "a long curving platform". At Lewes the Portsmouth to Hastings line crosses the London, Newhaven and Tunbridge Wells lines. All this is described by page 18, followed by a walk across Malling (Lewes) via the castle to their new home.

A 1858 map I have on my wall of the London to Brighton Railway from The Dispatch Atlas terminates the line at London Bridge Station. The explanation is this. The London and Brighton Railway was planned and built during the 1830s as Brighton's popularity was growing and opened in 1840. The route, surveyed by Rennie, was direct and quite difficult, with tunnels and viaducts, and its builder Robert Stephenson preferred a 6 mile longer course avoiding obstacles – but this was rejected. From London Bridge station the line used existing track. In 1846 the Brighton line formally merged with the London and Croydon Railway to form the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway joining with branch lines to Portsmouth, Hastings, Eastbourne, and Worthing. After the Great Exhibition in 1851, it was decided to build a central London station north of the Thames to join up the major railway lines, including a Thames crossing. By 1854, there were 10 million passengers per year into London Bridge station – but it was claimed in parliament to take as long to get from there to Paddington as from Brighton to London. A bridge over the Thames was built to Charing Cross, a tiny station. Victoria Station was eventually opened to Brighton traffic in 1860, and to Kent traffic in 1862. Each company occupied a separate station on the site, into which other contributing companies also had running powers. The Brighton line station was the finer, and included the Grosvenor Hotel. This side was given an Edwardian rebuild in 1908, with the Kent side following a year later. These Edwardian red brick buildings were the ones Malcolm Saville would have known. The Brighton line from Victoria crossed the river north-west of Waterloo and London Bridge stations to Clapham Junction, rejoining the old Brighton line at Croydon. Commuter traffic (stopping trains) still went from London Bridge southwards, even to Lewes and Brighton.

The post WW1 railway grouping placed the Kent, and Brighton lines with the London & South Western Railway (to Southampton and beyond) which terminated at Waterloo. The group were re-branded Southern Railways and carried a mid green livery for express engines and carriages. Trainspotter Jon (in The Gay Dolphin), lamented on Charing Cross Station going to Hastings, that he had not collected many Southern numbers. The lower engine numbers (1-939) were LSWR engines given at first the prefix E (for Eastleigh Works). LBSCR numbers at first took the prefix B and by the end of the 1920s were numbered 1000 and above[ii]. After nationalisation in 1948, all were united into a five number sequence beginning with 3 (e.g. 30915 Brighton).Some new engines by the engine designer Oliver Bulleid carried very idiosyncratic numbers: 21C123 (=34023, Blackmore Vale) is still around on the nearby Bluebell Railway, Sheffield Park which has three of these types, Eddystone and Sir Archibald Sinclair being the others). Also preserved is 21C116 (34016 Bodmin) which has been on the Watercress Line in Alton. Of the Merchant Navy Class, 21C5 (35005, Canadian Pacific and several others have been preserved – including

(almost appropriately) 21C9 (35009 Shaw Savill). The streamlined casing of these engines earned them the nickname "spam-cans".

The first Southern Railway line to be electrified was the Brighton line, in 1932-3. An electrified third rail was used, with green electric multiple units. The express Southern Belle (later Brighton Belle) was of Pullman standard, but branch lines used plainer coaches with occasional first class Pullmans which had central gangways. The advice to grab corner window seats in a Non-Smoker compartment (*Four-And Twenty Blackbirds*, p.13) suggests a compartment. Some had corridors to toilets: when Humf feels sick he is advised to run along the corridor, presumably to the toilet. For Michael and Mary, Uncle Jim "found them a compartment with corner seats" (The Fourth Key, p.5). War austerity coaches bulged outwards at elbow height so that compartments could cram in six abreast.

Malcolm Saville comments in his Foreword to *The Fourth Key*: "you can travel on the green electric train from Victoria towards the south and, as Mike and Mary did, see the bare-backed Downs stretching green and hazy in the sunshine between the woods and fields of the Weald and the sea. I hope you will one day.". And I hope you get a seat.

Note: for further information see David Wragg, The Southern Railway Handbook, 1923-1947 Sutton Publishing. Southern Email-Group: http://www.semg.org.uk

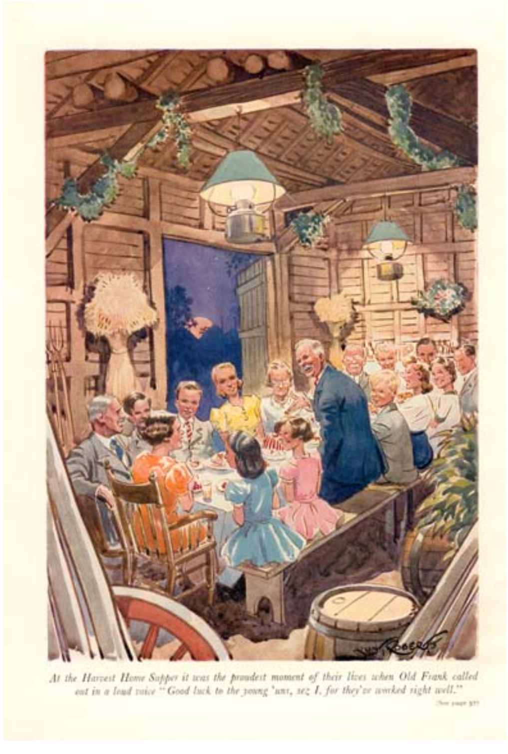
EASTBOURNE—SEAVIEW HOTEL

From LONDON to THE SOUTH COAST—Week Days—*continued*

	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m		a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m	a.m
																				F										F
VICTORIA .... dep.	6*40	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	7 47	..	8 0	..	..	8*0	8 28	8 45	..	..	..	..	..	8b48	8b48	..	..	9 0
Clapham Junction ....."	6*47	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	7 52	..	8 5	..	..	8*5	8 33	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
LONDON BRIDGE ... dep.	7 0	..	..	..	..	7 20	..	..	..	..	..	..	7 35	..	7 55	..	..	[illegible]	[illegible]	8 35	..	..	..	..	..	8 48	9 0	9 0	..	..
New Cross Gate ....."	7 6	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8 0	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 5	9 5	..	..
Norwood Junction B "	..	..	..	..	..	7 32	..	..	..	..	..	..	7 48	..	[illegible]	..	..	8 30	8*30	8 49	..	..	..	..	..	9 2	9 14	9 14	..	..
East Croydon .... dep.	7 17	..	..	..	..	7 39	..	..	..	..	..	..	8 5	..	8 20	..	..	8 36	8 44	9 1	..	..	..	..	..	9 8	9 18	9 18	..	..
Purley	..	..	..	..	..	7 44	..	..	Saturdays excepted	..	..	..	8 10	..	8 26	..	..	8 40	..		..	..	..	..	..	9 13	..		..	
Coulsdon South	..	..	..	..	..	7 48	..	..		..	..	..	8 14	..	..	..	..	8 44	..		..	..	..	..	..	9 17	..	Sats. only	..	
Merstham	..	..	..	..	..	7 54	..	..		..	..	..	8 20	..	..	..	..	8 50	..	Saturdays only	..	..	..	..	..	9 23	..		..	
Redhill 280	7 32	..	..	..	..	8 2	..	..		..	..	..	8 27	..	8 37	..	..	8 57	9 1		..	..	..	..	..	9 31	..		..	Saturdays excepted
Earlswood	..	..	..	..	..	8 4	..	..		..	..	..	8 29	..	..	..	..	8 59	..		..	..	..	..	..	9 34	..		..	
Salfords	..	..	..	..	..	8 8	..	..		..	..	..	8 33	..	..	..	..	9 3	..		..	..	..	..	..	9 37	..		..	
Horley	..	..	..	..	..	8 12	..	..		..	..	..	8 37	..	..	..	..	9 7	..		..	..	..	..	..	9 41	9 38	9 38	..	
Gatwick Airport	7 40	..	..	..	..	8 15	..	..		..	..	..	8 40	..	8 45	..	..	9 10	..		..	..	..	..	..	9 44	..	..	..	
Three Bridges (*below*) 261	..	..	..	..	..	8 19	..	..		..	..	..	8 45	..	..	..	..	9 15	9 12		..	..	..	..	..	9 48	9 44	9 44	..	
Balcombe	..	..	..	..	..	8 23	..	..		..	..	..	8 53	..	..	..	..	9 21	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 55	..	..	..	
Horsted Keynes ..... dep.	..	..	..	7 58	..	..	8 30	8 30		..	..	..	..	..	..	8 56	9 21	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
Ardingly	..	..	..	8 2	..	..	8 34	8 34		..	..	..	..	..	..	9 1	9 20	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
Haywards Heath C 266 ..	7 54	..	..	8 6	8 18	8 32	8 39	8 39	8 44	..	..	..	9c 2	..	8 59	9 0	9 20	9c30	9 23	9 32	..	..	..	..	..	10 1	9b58	9 54	..	..
Wivelsfield (*below*)	..	..	..	Stop	8 22	8 36	..	Stop	8 45	..	..	..	9 6	..	..	..	Stop	9 34	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	10 5	..	..	..	..
Burgess Hill	..	..	..		8 25	8 39	..		8 51	..	..	..	9 9	..	..	..		9 37	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	10 8	..	..	..	..
Hassocks D	..	..	..	..	8 29	8 44	..	..	8 55	..	..	..	9 13	..	..	..	..	9 41	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	10 12	..	..	..	..
Preston Park	..	..	..	..	8 35	8 52	..	..	9 3	..	..	..	9 21	..	9 15	..	..	9 49	9 37	..	..	..	..	..	..	10 20	10 11	..	..	..
Brighton (*below*) ..... arr.	..	..	..	..	8 41	8 56	..	..	9 6	..	..	..	9 24	..	9 19	..	..	9 52	9 41	..	..	..	..	..	..	10 23	10 14	..	..	10 0
Haywards Heath ... dep.	7 54	..	..	..	Stop	Stop	8 40	..	Stop	..	..	..	Stop	..	Stop	9 12	..	Stop	..	9 33	..	..	..	..	..	Stop	Stop	10 4	..	..
Wivelsfield (*above*)	..	..	..	..			8 45	..		..	..	..		..		9 16	..		..	..	..	..	..	..	..			..	..	..
Plumpton	8 3	..	..	..	..	..	8 52	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 22	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Cooksbridge	8 8	..	..	..	..	..	8 57	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 27	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Lewes 268 .... arr.	8 13	..	..	..	a.m	..	9 3	..	..	..	..	..	a.m	..	..	9 33	..	..	..	9 48	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1021	..	..
Brighton .... dep.	..	..	8 0	..	8 14	..	..	..	..	8 44	8 48	..	9 14	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 46	..	10 3	..	..	..	..	..	..
London Road (Brighton) ..	..	..	..	..	8 16	..	..	..	..	8 46	8 51	..	9 16	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 49	..	10 5	..	..	..	..	..	..
Falmer	..	..	..	..	8 20	..	..	..	..	8 50	..	..	9 20	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 52	..	10 9	..	..	..	..	..	..
Lewes .... arr.	..	..	8 16	..	8 25	a.m	..	..	..	8 59	9 6	..	9 28	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	10 0	..	1017	..	..	..	..	..	..
Lewes .... dep.	..	..	[illegible]	..	..	[illegible]	9 4	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	[illegible]	..	..	..	[illegible]	..	..

20. Harvest Holiday: A Happy Return to Townsend Farm.

Stephen Bigger. 2008



At the Harvest Home Supper it was the proudest moment of their lives when Old Frank called out in a loud voice "Good luck to the young 'uns, sez I, for they've worked right well."

In Malcolm Saville's *Trouble at Townsend*, the two intrepid London youngsters go to a farm in the mid 1940s and learn the ropes. Young Petula Clark played Mary Bishop in the 1945 film. It is much less well known that Mary and Michael retuned to Townsend Farm the following summer to help Mr and Mrs Dixon (Uncle Charles and Auntie Kate) with the harvest. The story comes, admirably illustrated with no less than 14 black and white illustrations by Lunt Roberts, and the full page colour frontispiece depicting the harvest supper, in *The Wonder Book for Children*, published by Odhams, probably in 1948. The story shows a summer on a farm, in the tradition of Jane's Country Year, and like the *Country Scrapbook* gives children the information of life on a farm and how a harvest is gathered in. Description, sights and smells predominate. At 6 a.m. "the grandfather clock in the kitchen below struck seven times, but the real time was only six, for the August sun was not yet high enough to chase the mist away". The tractor and binder were at work. Mary had a black Scottie dog called Dougal.

Friends John (11) and Elizabeth (Liza) (13), more or less the same ages as Mary and Michael were set to arrive "at the junction" (the railway): because of the harvest they had to be collected by bus "or you'll have to walk if buses don't fit in, and I reckon they won't for they never have yet". They set out on foot with the help of a map. (Another item in the book tells children how to read OS maps).

John and Liza's best clothes and heavy luggage caused some mirth, but they sent the luggage ahead on a friendly bus and wandered home via a smithy, a field of cows, a pair of goldfinches, and a field being harvested before they arrived at Townsend Farm. They all go around the farm to see chickens, pigs and milking, and in the evening go out on badger watch. They went hiking to a stream, which they dammed, and saw a kingfisher. When the stooking was done, and the grain ready, the stooks built into ricks. Then they put on their best clothes for the Harvest Home party.

Many children, even Londoners, had got to know the country during the war, and farm holidays were becoming a regular inexpensive family holiday. My first, aged 5, was in the Lake District in 1953, although I also at that time lived in the country surrounded by farms, and 'helped' each harvest.

Here is a sample passage, about George the cowman and Polly the dairymaid milking the cows:

> "The first six cows were tethered in their stalls, which had already been washed and scrubbed until they were spotlessly clean, and then the two milkers scrubbed their hands, put on white caps and overalls, and began to milk. Each sat on a three legged stool, leaning their head on the cow's flank and, with practised fingers, squeezed and coaxed the milk in a thin jet from the cow's teats into a clean zinc pail. They noticed that both the milkers washed their hands before passing to another cow, and that as soon as a pail was full it was carried into an adjoining shed, and poured into the big metal "cooler". Mr. Dixon explained later that if the fresh milk was not cooled at once the germs in it would multiply, and that it would not be healthy to drink. Cold water from the nearby well was being pumped by a little oil engine into the cooler; and they watched the milk being emptied into the top of the container, and then flowing in a thin film over the water-cooled surface. As soon as the milk was thoroughly chilled it was run off into churns, which had been sterilized with boiling water. When the churns were full, they were wheeled on a trolley to a little wooden platform by the farmyard gate, and later collected by a lorry, and taken to a milk depot.".

Very well observed!. We must also remember that Malcolm Saville was at this time writing, "The Story of Milk", one of a range of non-fiction he was involved with at that time.

The story is unsentimental. As the binder circles around to the centre, the rabbits run out, to be shot by the farm workers. The story explains that rabbits do great damage, and will be eaten. The whole story evokes a past and lost farming world of binders, stooks, haystacks and harvest supper. These practices of horse ploughing, binding and threshing, are still to be seen at museums and country fairs (I was recently at such an event in Singleton Open Air Museum in Hampshire). Malcolm Saville helps children to understand the relationship of their food to the land in ways which are now easily forgotten.

28 HARVEST HOLIDAY

They went close and watched how the wooden blades of the reaper and binder beat down the grain on to the knives

21. A DEATH IN NORMANDY.

STEPHEN BIGGER, OCTOBER 2009.

Plaque from Normady repositioned in Exbury when a new one was made

Trouble at Townsend introduces Mary and Michael Bishop in their garden in suburban 69 Laburnum Road. Publication date is September 1945: the book published by Transatlantic Arts, went hand in hand with the movie of the same name. In ruminating about her naughty kitten, Mary remembers that her father promised her a dog "before he had been killed in the war" (p.10). Mother receives a telegram and "turned a little pale", remembering I am sure a telegram she had received from the war office a year before. The telegram announced her mother's illness in Yorkshire. The stage is set for the children to go to the farm of Charlie their father's brother. He had offered them sanctuary during the blitz (not taken up, they were not in a hot spot), and offered again "when your Dad was killed in Normandy" (p.18).

By the second book in the series, *The Riddle of the Painted Box*, also published by Transatlantic Arts in 1947, Uncle Jim, mother's brother had moved in "since their father was killed in the War" (p.11). By this time she has a Scottie dog called Dougal. Uncle Jim had been demobbed from the RAF a year previously. The 'killed in the War" introduction continues in the next two books, but the War is dropped by *The Fourth Key* in 1957, in which their father 'died'. PDLE, *Pas devant les enfants*. The war had become a distant memory. Uncle Jim is also ill and has to get out of London (this was the period of smog and the Clean Air Act) to become a rural market gardener, using talents he does not appear to have used in his own suburban garden.

This article is about their Dad. He is not named, unlike his brother Charlie. Nor given a rank, or even a Service, like Uncle Jim who was in the RAF. But to be killed in Normandy makes it pretty likely he was in the army, although the RAF were involved in missions there. At the time of writing, late 1944 or early 1945, the Normandy landings were very topical. D-Day began on 6 June 1944 with overnight paratroop landings, and beach landings starting at 6.30 a.m. double summer time. Before that had been a complex period of preparation spread across the south coast as far across as Cornwall, where American troops embarked. The Normandy coast was split into code-named beaches, each targeted by troops from different set-off points. The beach we are interested in is Gold Beach, where British troops landed, near Arromanches.

The headquarters for organising the British and Canadian operation in the D-day landings was HMS Mastodon, a land-based 'frigate'. These were shore bases located in suitable houses, often stately homes. HMS Mastodon was in Exbury Hall, then the home of the Rotheschild family,

with gardens featuring rhododendrons and azalias, which were bred there. The house and garden are still open to the public, and contain public tributes to the HMS Mastodon days. One incident was the chopping down of a cedar tree which had been planted by royalty. Blamed on the Canadians, it later was shown to be the work of two dissident Irishmen. The construction of the landing pontoons (Mulberry Harbours) took place at nextdoor Lepe, and some evidence of this still remains. There is today a memorial to the men who set off from here for D-Day, especially to those for whom it was their last view of England. This memorial was originally placed in Normandy, but replaced there, allowing it to be relocated here. There is a memorial also in Cornwall, in Trebah Gardens, to the American troops who set off from there.

Nevil Shute located crucial actions in his story *Requiem For A Wren* at HMS Mastodon (Exbury). The Wren is found dead in Australia and her back story is given. As a schoolgirl in Portsmouth (where Shute had lived in pre-war and war years), Janet Prentice joined the Wrens as a maintainer of big guns. She demonstrated natural flair by hitting a glider target with an Oerliken gun (a standard any aeroplane and naval gun) when the male ratings all missed. The Wrens are generally declared better than the male ratings, partly because they were better educated. Her scorn about their lack of ability, and pride in her own skills leads to her downfall, when she shoots down an enemy plane (which might have been photographing D-Day preparations) only to find that its crew were escaping allies, who had therefore been killed by friendly fire. This must have been a common dilemma at the time, but Janet was unable to cope with her sense of guilt. [Nevil Shute was Nevil Shute Norway, founder and director of Airspeed, the aeroplane construction company that produced Airspeed Oxfords and Horsa gliders used to airlift troops across the channel.]

A direct record of the action in France is given by John Pudney, in *World Still There* (1945). John Pudney was in the RAF and, in addition to active service as an intelligence officer, he was tasked by the Air Ministry's Creative Writer's Unit (H.E. Bates was also a member and wrote the memorable *Flying Officer X* stories) to write poetry about the war for soldiers, as a morale raiser. These exist in single slim volumes, published annually, and later a collected edition. His best known poem, *For Johnny,* first in the *Daily Chroinicle* featured in the 1945 tear-jerker war film *The Way to the Stars*. Do not grieve these noble deaths: pour all your efforts into caring for the children orphaned in war.

Do not despair
For Johnny-head-in-air;
He sleeps as sound
As Johnny underground.
Fetch out no shroud
For Johnny-in-the-cloud;
And keep your tears
For him in after years.
Better by far
For Johnny-the-bright-star,
To keep your head,
And see his children fed.

Pudney followed the troops into Normany. He noted how local people had dignified the death of a young airman, under the noses of Nazi troops billeted on them, with a hero's funeral and a floral tribute of a red, white and blue roundel bearing the word 'Gratitude'. Some were thrown

into concentration camps for similar floral protests. Caen was difficult to take because the enemy knew it to be the beginning of the end if taken, and were given suicidal orders to defend it at all costs. Apart from the beaches, most casualties happened here, on both sides. Pudney reports bodies everywhere, finally tidied up by bulldozers. Pudney dropped into a slit trench to dodge mortar fire:

> "The Sargeant with whom I shared a slit was awaiting his relief from this pastoral, if vicious, scene. When we had hopped into the hole together, and emerged, he took me wistfully into his confidence. He would have been an aviator but for his wife and child, he said – a modest reflection after two spells in the front line. Then he shouted: "There they are, the sweethearts!" and Lancaster [bombers] streamed out of the clear pallor of the evening light to drop two thousand three hundred tons of bombs less than five miles in front of us. Great curds of smaoke went up. Flak roared. Soldiers'voices cheered thinly in the din." (p.92).

The people of Caen were asked later what they thought of the bombing. "It was necessary" they replied. Of the enemy, one stout lady commented: "we considered it our duty... to disobey". Teenagers were on active service in the Resistance, one 16 year old leading enemy prisoners, anxious to hand them over to get home to his mother who didn't know he was out.

Malcome Saville did not hide from child readers what the effects of war were. It killed fathers, dislocated families, caused psychological problems in combatants, and made it hard to know who could be trusted. Michael and Mary's father made the supreme sacrifice: it was up to others to "see his children fed".

HMS Mastodon (Exbury House) today.

[i] Both these papers are available on http://eprints.worc.ac.uk/800.