

Jocelyn Brooke

Was born on 30th November 1908 and died 29th October 1966, he was born in Kent and lived for many years in Sandgate at Radnor Cliff. He wrote many novels the most famous include the Military Orchid (1948) A Mine of Serpents (1949) & The Image of a Drawn Sword (1950). His Bibliography is 10 works of Fiction, 7 of Non-Fiction and 3 books of Poetry.



Jocelyn Brooke

He was educated at Bedales and Worcester College Oxford. He enlisted in the Royal Army Medical Corps and became involved in working to treat venereal disease. He was also decorated for bravery.

THE ATTRACTIVE AND SUBSTANTIALLY BUILT

Unique Bungalow

KNOWN AS

"Graftonette,"

Seabrook, Hythe, Kent.

Occupying a Bold and Prominent position on main London to Folkestone road on North side with a frontage of about 234 feet, and on South side an uninterrupted view of English Channel. Within easy run of Folkestone.

The Bungalow is entered through Front Garden and Conservatory Porch on North side and other entrances from the Beach end. The ground is enclosed by open fence and privet hedge.

The Exceptionally Spacious accommodation comprises:—

In the Belfrey, which commands a fine view, a collapsible seat, and floor with means of access fitted.

Two Balcony Rooms, 10ft. by 13ft. 6in., with separate staircases; fitted with Lavatory Basins, Gas Fires, Electric Light, water, etc.

Ground Floor, 42ft. by 17ft., with Kitchen, Bathroom, Larder, Coat Cupboard leading off from same, all well fitted.

Separate Entrance through small Lobby to Bathroom for bathing.

The well-built floor stands 18ins. above a concrete bottom with good air passage between and makes a splendid dance floor.

The room is ornamentally lit by Electric Light and has Gas Fire and large square Anthracite Stove.

There is a **Verandah** on either side, and the Bungalow gets sun from every aspect.

The Bungalow is well carpeted and suitably furnished.

The Garden

on West side.

Full size Croquet Lawn and full size Tennis Lawn adjoining on East side.

Large well stocked Rockery and Ornamental Lily Pond; Large Flower Beds and a second Smaller Rockery; remainder all grass.

The House is in Excellent Structural and Decorative Repair, the owner having expended large sums of money in converting the property.

This Lifeboathouse

was erected by

Miss Hannah de Rothschild

in memory of her father

and is so inscribed.

Also Large Garden Ground by the Sea with sectional (movable) Garage for cars or boats; with Lavatory, Workshop and Gardener's Toolhouse at end; a converted 'bus furnished for two with kitchenette etc.

Rose Bed, Rose Pergola and Ornamental Garden; Greenhouse; range of Three Fowl Houses; Aviary House and Aviary, etc.

The Ground is Rented from the Hythe Council at a low rental.

The Freehold Bungalow and Ground
can be sold separately if desired

Apply **O. V. FLATHER,**
Grafton House,
42, Clarendon Road,
Lewisham, S.E.13.

Filling Station At Seabrook

—With reference to the published in last week's "The Goose Cathedral," concerning the old rook bathhouse, I fall to why anybody should call dilapidated eyesore a "bathhouse," the last few years it was to deteriorate and lowered on of the Prince's Parade, as soon as anybody wishes lid a safe, clean filling station they are bombarded with se criticism and accused making a "beautiful ornate lifeboat house," to quote ous writer. my opinion the replace- of the overgrown, weed- bathhouse by a modern station will not only be improvement to the par- will contribute greatly safety. s amazing that "admits decay this most com- the effort to tidy up a portion of the landward Prince's Parade, which long has resembled a

PROGRESS

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It figured in a recent best-seller by Jocelyn Brooke, as "The Goose Cathedral," the term which he gave it as a small boy when he saw some geese marching into it.

Mr. Brooke entitled his book largely autobiographical, "The Goose Cathedral."

ROTHSCHILD

Built of Kentish rag with stone facings in 1875, the bathhouse lies just inside the gate boundary, near Seabrook. It was erected by Baroness



"The Goose Cathedral."

Meyer de Rothschild to house her presentation lifeboat, which was manned by Sandgate coastguards and fishermen.

The War Department gave the ground on condition that if ever the boat was removed to another station the whole property reverted to the Crown.

This eventually happened in the early nineties, when several influential patrons succeeded in having the boat transferred to Hythe.

Sandgate opposed this transfer, meetings were held and so strong was the opposition that Sandgate finally accused Hythe of "stealing" the boat.

The military authorities then used the building as a bathing point for soldiers, until it was finally put up for auction; it has changed hands several times since.

FIRST CALL

The following services rendered by the lifeboat, *Meyer de Rothschild*, while stationed at Sandgate are worth recording:

The boat arrived in June, 1876, and the first call was in January, 1876, when two foreign timber ships were driven ashore at Littlestone in a freezing easterly gale.

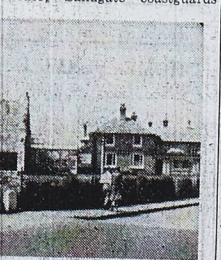
The lifeboat was launched at 6 p.m., and the crew endured nine hours battling with icy seas in the dark, until they

could render no assistance. The next call was for the German ironclad, *Grosser Kur-furst*, named on May 31st, 1878, by her sister ship *Koenig Wilhelm*, while exercising five miles off Sandgate.

She sank in 10 minutes with a loss of over 200 of her crew. Folkestone fishing boats nearby picked up most of the survivors.

SAVED CREW

Another call was in 1883 when the full-rigged ship, *Plassey*, was wrecked near the boat-house; Sandgate coastguards



saved the crew with the rocket apparatus.

One of Folkestone's Customs officers, named Baker, and two lascars, were drowned.

The last call before the boat was transferred to Hythe was on November 11th, 1891, when the full-rigged ship, *Benvenue*, was wrecked off Sandgate in the greatest hurricane within living memory.

We are indebted to Mr. Victor Foley, of Sandgate for much of the above information. In 1891, Miss Hannah de Rothschild and was named *Meyer de Rothschild*.

It consisted of an old wooden shanty called the "Fountain Inn" and an old gasworks on the canal bank.

DEMOLITIONS

"A few years ago the planners levelled that sturdy ornamental building on the Sandgate Peninsula, known as 'Seapoint,' which was equipped with a restaurant, public cloak-rooms, bathing facilities and shelters."

"They put nothing in its place but a barren concrete and brick building, which resembles a first-class skittle alley."

"Today we see the planners in action again, this time demolishing that gem of architectural beauty, the Sandgate lifeboat house."

Goose Cathedral Life-boat House At Sandgate Is But A Memory

IT was pulled down in 1956; in its place today is a petrol filling station; it stood at the apex of Prince's Parade and Seabrook Road, just within the Hythe boundary. It looked like a chapel.

Many readers will remember Sandgate life-boat station, with its beltry turret, gables and ornate masonry, though they may never have seen a life-boat launched from it or indeed even a life-boat in it.

BUILT IN 1875

Hythe and Sandgate branch of the R.N.L.I. was formed in 1876, according to records of the R.N.L.I., but there is no doubt that the house was built in 1875, for that was the date inscribed in the stonework over the porch.

It was equidistant between Hythe and Sandgate, built on War Department land.

At that time, of course, Sandgate was not part of Folkestone and did not become so until 1943. The Sandgate boundary with Folkestone was then at the foot of Sandgate Hill.

It was stipulated that the crew of the life-boat at Sandgate should be formed from coastguards (these were stationed at guard station at Sandgate for many years) and from fishermen of Sandgate and Hythe.

The life-boat was named after Miss Hannah de Rothschild and was named *Meyer de Rothschild*.

FIRST CALL

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ships were driven ashore at Littlestone in a freezing easterly gale.

The life-boat was launched at 6 p.m. and the crew endured nine hours battling with icy seas in the dark, until they anchored close to the wrecked ships.

Owing to floating timber they could render no assistance.

The next call was to the German ironclad *Grosser Kur-furst*, named on May 31st, 1878, by her sister ship *Koenig Wilhelm*, while exercising five miles off Sandgate.

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THE BENVENEUE

The last call before the boat was transferred to Hythe was on November 11th, 1891, when the full-rigged ship *Benvenue* was wrecked off Sandgate in the greatest hurricane within living memory.

In 1891 the life-boat house was in some danger because of wrecked sea defences due to fierce gales. The launching of the life-boat presented much difficulty because of lack of protection.

A proposal was made that the life-boat should be moved to Hythe, and in spite of strong

opposition in Sandgate a decision to do so was reached. The site chosen was on land belonging to the old Hythe and Sandgate Gas Company at the end of the parade, where, in fact, the life-boat house still stands, though it has not housed a life-boat since the Viscountess Wakefield was lost at Dunkirk in 1940.

MAYOR OBJECTS

The Mayor of Hythe in 1892, however, would not have the Sandgate life-boat house moved to Hythe at any price.

He declared it was too ornamental and would not be suitable for the town. The best thing to do, he suggested, was to leave it where it was and use it as a "pedestrian shelter."

For a short time it was used by troops as a bathing station.

The life-boat house was sold by the R.N.L.I. in 1894 and converted by the new owner into a private residence.

Its ornate Victorian appearance was undisturbed in later years by the addition of a conservatory at its western end.

Finally, the building became the "Life-boat Cafe," with teas served on the lawn on fine summer days.

So it continued until 1956, when the whole place was demolished to make way for a petrol filling station.

GEESSE

Jocelyn Brooke, the well-known author, made the old life-boat house famous by her book, "The Life-boat House at Sandgate," published in 1950.

The name "Goose Cathedral" was given to the building by a boyhood friend of his, Eric Anquetil. "We called it the Goose Cathedral on account of the geese which, in that period, waddled about the single patch surrounding it."

"Anything less like one's idea of a life-boat station," wrote Mr. Brooke, "would have been hard indeed to imagine. Seeing it from a passing bus one might have supposed it to be some kind of Nonconformist tabernacle—a spiky Ruskinian Gothic."

Stamps Of Many Countries Were On View

OWING to weather and other factors, few were able to be present at the Members' Night at the Royal Philatelic Society at Strickland's Cafe.

Apologies for absence were received from the Secretary (Mr. J. H. Gowers and other Members. The President, Mr. J. C. B.

interesting as he had obtained them himself, when visiting these countries.

All members are asked to note that the Society will be visiting the Isle of Thanet Society Wednesday next, those who wish to go should inform the Secretary in good time.

Jocelyn Brooke Impressions

By Ann Nevill

Jocelyn Brooke was the most evocative, nostalgic and most Proustian of writers. He published some fifteen books but his masterpiece was his three volumes of autobiography, recently republished together by Penguin Modern Classics under the title "The Orchard Trilogy". This a patchwork of impressions, of his childhood in Sandgate in the early years of the last century, of some of his friends and his Army experiences as a private in World War II working in a VD clinic in Sicily. (Surprisingly enough he even re-enlisted like T.E. Lawrence for a short period after the war). He was a passionate botanist since the age of four, asserting he preferred flowers to people, and wrote much on the flowers he had identified wherever he stayed. In Sandgate some of these were Horned Poppy, Bristly Oxtongue, Tree-Mallow, Henbane and Vipers Bugloss.

Radnor Cliff. His father was the owner of the well-known wine merchants in Sandgate Road, J.H. & J. Brooke. This was a solemn place more like a bank where the purchase of fine wines could be discussed. However the fact that one could theoretically buy a bottle of beer over the counter caused his father to be ostracised from the tea parties of Radnor Cliff as being in trade. The family also owned Ivy Cottage, Bishopsbourne, where he died in 1966. However, Sandgate also had its delights, the memories "bathed in the keen windy light of spring mornings, a seaside gaiety and brilliance haunted by the thud of waves on the shingle and the tang of seaweed." The tall green-shuttered Victorian house perched on the edge of the cliff seemed to be perilously suspended between two worlds, "the tame 'country' world of the undercliff and that other uncharted universe - inimical and threatening - of the sea. The sun blazed in one's face, the wind



rushing from the windows lifted the hall carpet and flapped the tiger skin hanging on the wall. From the french windows one seemed to be perched above an abyss, an immense void of air

beyond the enormous sweep of the bay, the sea rising like a wall against the sky, the gulls wheeling in the empty air".

From here the small boy could bathe (which he hated) or take tea with family and guests on one of the garden terraces, the QuarterDeck. "Quarter Deck teas were not popular with the parlour maid who, at four o'clock, would mince disapprovingly down the garden carrying one of those curious wicker work contraptions like portable pagodas, laden with cakes and sandwiches." (As a child at No. 4 in the 1930s I can remember exactly the same ceremony, but for us it was lunch rather than tea.) A few years ago there was a Day of Brooke with readings and a talk from his biographer. Reverently we walked down to the rustic summer house, which had been impregnated with the odours of creosote and paraffin, housing a miscellaneous collection of objects, garden tools, a ball of string, a Breatrice store. An admirer had brought a selection of the flowers he described.

His first school which he attended for mornings only was Gaudeamus (its real name Conamur). The building at the end of the Riviera later became the Marine Hotel. Under Miss Pinecoffin, its founder, the school inculcated a breezy and strenuous optimism. She was a progressive headmistress, Corot and Greuze hung on the walls, while the singular flora of Art Nouveau, sprawling water lilies and fleur-de-lis, burgeoned unexpectedly in corners. Little girls in sage green djibbahs were perpetually tearing breathlessly to and fro as though

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Sandgate Garden News Letter

A PUBLISHER WANTS TO KNOW MORE ABOUT JOCELYN BROOKE AND SOLVE A MYSTERY

Do you have memories of this author?

THE MYSTERY surrounding the life of Folkestone novelist Jocelyn Brooke is to be explored in a forthcoming book – and Herald readers are invited to help solve the enigma.

Oxford-based journalist and publisher Roger Dobson is researching the work of the Sandgate-based author, best remembered for *The Orchid Trilogy*, in which he provides a poignant and affectionate portrait of Folkestone and Kent countryside between the First and Second World Wars.

Although it is autobiographical, since it chronicles his boyhood, Brooke described the books as novels.

Brooke seems to have fictionalised the Sandgate residents he describes so charmingly, though perhaps his disclaimers in each preface were to stave off libel suits.

Many of the town's characters are presented as figures of fun, and Brooke was candid about their love lives and little scandals.

Roger Dobson explained: "It's very odd. Brooke asks his readers to believe the accounts of his childhood are generally authentic, but when he deals with his adult years he claims his characters are 'composite constructions'."

"It doesn't ring quite true. "It's possible older Herald readers know the actual identities of Brooke's acquaintances such as his Folkestone landlady 'Miss Bugle', 'Esme (Pussy) Wilkinson', said to live in Shorncliffe Road, and Esme's cockney valet and chauffeur 'Bert Hunwick' who ran off to London to live with Esme's sister."

"Brooke's fellow writers in the trilogy 'Eric Anquetil', 'Hew Dallas' and 'Edward Hooper', may have been famous in their day, though he's disguised them with invented names."

"Nowadays if an author published his memoirs this way and included such racy details the Sunday press would rapidly track down his real-life characters, but things were obviously more sedate 50 years ago. If there was any fuss in Folkestone about Brooke's trilogy, it isn't remembered now."

Brooke was born in 1908. His family lived in Radnor Cliff, Lower Sandgate Road.

Mrs Ann Nevill of the Sandgate Society is a keen Brooke fan.

She believes she's identified the Brooke family's former home since it's described in detail in his memoirs.

"There really should be a plaque on the house," said Mrs Nevill. "Brooke was a very fine stylist."

Folkestone residents are still clearly interested in Brooke.

The 1981 edition of *The Orchid Trilogy* – consisting of *The Military Orchid* (1948), *A Mine of Serpents* (1949) and *The Goose Cathedral* (1950) – has been borrowed at least 70 times from Folkestone library.

The Goose Cathedral deals with the now-demolished Gothic-style lifeboat station at Seabrook, which fascinated Brooke.

A photograph of this Victoria curiosity can be seen at the Sandgate Society office in the High Street.

Henry Brooke, the author's father – Brooke's mother was called May – owned a wine shop in Sandgate Road, Folkestone, and after studying at Oxford, Brooke worked there learning the business before concentrating on writing.

Interspersed with his boyhood memories in the trilogy are his amusing accounts of



PUZZLING: Radnor Cliff, where Brooke had a house, and an illustration of Brooke by Tony McSweeney which appeared on the cover of *The Orchid Trilogy* published by Penguin



wartime service. Brooke enlisted in the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1939 and served in Africa, the Middle East and Italy.

He re-enlisted in the late 1940s and was based for a time at Shorncliffe Camp, which features in several of his books.

When his books became increasingly popular he bought himself out of the army, became a radio producer with the BBC and moved with his mother and nanny to the family's country cottage at Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury.

His novels include the Kafka-like fantasy *The Image of a Drawn Sword*, *The Scapegoat*, *The Wonderful Summer* and *The Passing of a Hero*.

Part of a broadcast in which Brooke interviewed the novelist Elizabeth Bowen was broadcast in a Bookmark programme on BBC2 last year.

The Orchid Trilogy and his other fictionalised memoir *The Dog at Clambercrown* (1955), contain lyrical descriptions of his boyhood wanderings in the Elham Valley.

Brooke died in 1966, aged 57.

Roger Dobson said: "I'm writing a magazine article on Brooke which will later be published in a book devoted to neglected and cult authors."

"Nearly all Brooke's works are currently out of print because he's unfairly regarded as a period author; but some enterprising publisher will discover his books some day."

"His portrait of society between wars is enchanting: it really conjures up a vanished world."

"Unfortunately, as Brooke was a reserved man who didn't have many close friends, it's probably impossible for anyone to write a full-length biography of him, even though he died comparatively recently."

"Many of Brooke's letters may exist in private hands, however, and these would be useful in shedding light on his later years."

"The strange thing was, when I visited Folkestone, a member of the Sandgate Society suggested I contact Mrs Nevill to ask her about Brooke, but I didn't know where she lived."

"I wandered down Radnor Cliff and called at a house on the slim chance someone might know something about the Brooke family – and the house turned out to be Mrs Nevill's."

"I'm taking this as a good omen."

Anyone with any memoirs of Jocelyn Brooke, his family or his friends are invited to write to Roger Dobson at 50 St John Street, Oxford OX1 2LQ.

The Herald

Thursday, May 11, 2000

Parents need to keep an eye on their kids

ON Saturday a messy fight broke out on the Road of Remembrance.

The brawl involving about 30 — possibly drunken — teenagers ended in tears when at least three people were injured and six were arrested.

Folkstonians will undoubtedly react to this story differently.

Some will roll their eyes and say: "The youth of today. We were never like that when we were their age."

Others will rant about the police and how they don't do enough to stop underage drinking and anti-social behavior.

A few probably couldn't care less in an I'm alright Jack kind of way. "It wasn't my son or daughter who was dragged down to the police station on Saturday night," they will think.

And many of these people will blame the parents of the children who were involved.

They might even feel smug about how well their own little Jane or John is turning out — and perhaps they are.

Or maybe their children have just never been caught.

Most young people get into trouble at some point, but surely it is better to be aware of potential problems sooner rather than later.

So perhaps, as Sergeant Pat Geary suggested, the questions every parent should seriously be asking themselves are: Do you really know where your children are and what they're doing?

And if not, maybe you should find out.

UNRESERVED PRAISE FROM STAR BILL

Globe-trotting bird watcher says 'I like
the way the Pfizer Monks' Wall project
has been set up... it's a lovely place'



ON MAP: Duncan Foster and Dr
Martin Griffiths with Bill Oddie

A PEACEFUL haven for wildlife, right next to the busy Pfizer complex at Sandwich, has been officially opened by bird watching TV presenter Bill Oddie.

The former 'Goodie' show star toured the Pfizer Monks' Wall Nature

By EMMA LONGMAN

Bill Oddie, who travels the world bird watching, was very impressed.

He said: "I'm really pleased to open this reserve because I like the way the project has been set up.

"Pfizer has taken control of it by hiring wildlife experts to do the job properly, which doesn't happen very often.

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Ivy Cottage, Bishopsbourne, the boyhood home of Jocelyn Brooke.

JOCELYN BROOKE (1908-1966)

THE son of a family of wine merchants who had their business in Folkestone but who lived along the coast at Sandgate, Brooke also spent much of his boyhood at Ivy Cottage, Bishopsbourne. This family cottage eventually became his home and is now marked with a plaque. Brooke was educated at Bedales and Worcester College, Oxford. After Oxford he worked in the family wine business. At the outbreak of the Second World War he enlisted in the Royal Army Medical Corps. When the war ended he re-enlisted as a regular soldier. He was able to buy himself out of the army in 1948 following the success of *The Military Orchid*, published that year. He completed this book's recollections of school and army days in two subsequent works: *A Mine of Serpents* (1949) and *The Goose Cathedral* (1950). After his death all three works were published under the title *The Orchid Trilogy* (1981).

Brooke also wrote two volumes of poetry: *December Spring* (1946) and *The Elements of Death* (1952). Like passages in *The Orchid Trilogy*, many of the poems capture the topography of Dover, Folkestone, Hythe, the Romney Marsh and the area immediately around Bishopsbourne. The poem 'Gorsley

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Wood', for example, depicts 'the wimpled oasts like nuns / Huddled by the wood's edge'. Throughout his life Brooke had something of a Proustian sensitivity to wild flowers, especially, in his case, orchids. In *The Orchid Trilogy* this sensitivity was matched by the urge to re-capture the past. Memories of his walks as a child from Bishopsbourne eastward over Barham Downs, past Cold Harbour Farm to the Water Tower, are especially potent. In this extract from the trilogy's second volume he is describing a walk made around 1914, when an 'extraordinary phenomenon' appeared in the area:

There was no mystery about the way to the watertower. On the days when we undertook the great expedition, we started off up the lane, beneath an arching avenue of beeches, towards the main Dover road. The lane was known, after about 1914, as Boring Lane: not because it was particularly tedious, but because of the extraordinary phenomenon which, at about this time, appeared at the top of it, where the lane joined the main road. The Boring had risen suddenly, portentous and sinister, in the corner of the field known as Forty Acres: a chimney which belched a volcanic plume of smoke, a group of sheds, and an exciting contraption of wheels and pulleys. Occasionally one caught a glimpse of strange, black-facéd men entering or leaving it. They didn't belong to the village, and were generally held to be dubious characters.

It was the pioneer-period of Kent coal: in a few more years, it was commonly predicted, East Kent would become Black Country. It never did; the few collieries which were developed remained localized,

remote and (unless one lived near them) unsuspected. Our own Boring was shortly disused: bryony and Traveller's Joy festooned the rusting headgear, the chimney smoked no longer. After a year or two, the sheds and chimney were removed, and the ground levelled.

The Boring disappeared: but the name remained. Further afield, however — in the remote lands beyond the watertower — other 'Borings' remained perpetually: Snorodown, Tilmanstone, Betteshanger. We were not connected with them — they didn't belong to 'our' country; only occasionally, from the higher places of Barham Downs, would one glimpse a far-off chimney, its plume of smoke hanging like a pennant, dimly discernible in the mysterious distance ...

The downs themselves, after the tree-muffled, post-prandial atmosphere of the village, had a quality of wildness: the wide, uneven plateau of chalk stretching away towards Dover, punctuated by the diminishing telegraph poles. Larks sang perpetually in the high emptiness of the sky, and peewits circled, plaintively crying, above the further ploughland. The downs were partly cultivated, partly aboriginal chalk, clothed with the tufted lawgrass and, in August, with the delicate, waxen-pink Squinancy-wort (which had inspired a rather coy little poem by Edward Carpenter, whose boarded but crypto-Uranian talent my father much admired). At this time, the uncultivated tracts had just been laid out as a golf-course; little red pennants fluttered gaily in the