

## Jocelyn Brooke

### Part 1 - Biography

Bernard Jocelyn Brooke was born on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1908 and baptised in the following January at Christ Church Folkestone. He was the third child of May and Henry Brooke who lived at 9 Radnor Cliff. Down the years, the house numbers changed; it swapped from odd to even and moved up via No 16 to the present No 22. They also owned a cottage in Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, which featured prominently in Brooke's writing.



22 Radnor Cliff

Henry had been educated at Dulwich College and Trinity, Oxford and was chairman of the wine merchants JH & J Brooke Ltd. The Brookes' ancestors were a mixture of entrepreneurs and hard-up clergymen in the best traditions of 19<sup>th</sup> Century novels. We include amongst them a certain Joseph Hewlett of the 1830s and 40s who had 18 children. His wife dying, no doubt of exhaustion, Rev Hewlett was forced to subsidise his meagre stipend by writing serialised three volume novels in order to support his family. Hewlett's main work was *Peter Priggins, The College Scout*, a satirical novel about clerical life at Oxford.



Ivy Cottage and Forge Cottage

Henry retired from running the family firm in 1926 and died in 1936 aged 68. Of May née Turner there is little that can be dredged up. She was a Christian Scientist and had a phobia of fire. She was

born in Blackheath and as she and Henry moved there upon his retirement it suggests that there was family or family property still there.

Jocelyn had two siblings: sister Evelyn and brother Cecil of whom more later. Evelyn was born in 1897 and she only wafts through Jocelyn's books. She married in 1923 into the very martial Brabazon Urmsworth family and died in 1977 in Oxfordshire. Jocelyn was fascinated by her friends, who all being ten or more years older than Brooke seemed simultaneously silly and glamorous to the young boy.

Elspeth, Violet, Hertha, Dolly – they sprawled their big athletic bodies on deckchairs in the sunlight, talking; the more daring of them smoked cigarettes – which was still considered a little 'fast'...

The other key character in Brooke's life was his nurse Emily Ford ( née Fagg ), whom he called 'Ninnie'. She remained a constant factor in his life, as mentor and protector when he was young and as a refuge for him when older. She was a confirmed Baptist by religion and would go to lectures by visiting evangelical luminaries. When Brooke retired to Bishopsbourne, it was to the cottage where he had spent his holidays and that had been given to the widowed Ninnie. She died in 1961 and his mother in 1963 – living together in this peculiar *ménage à trois* for the last years of their lives



Perhaps some early speech-difficulty had resulted in my calling her Ninnie; but Ninnie she remained, and I fiercely resented any attempt, on the grown-ups' part, to call her by any other name. I loved her with a jealous and exclusive passion: with my mother and brother, she completed the complex trinity of those whom, alone in the world, I would admit to my affection.

Ninnie and Jocelyn in 1909 'The Dog at Clambercrown'

The firm of Messrs Brooke dated back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. They were a well established firm of wine and spirits purveyors and had offices initially at 25 Sandgate Road and later at 134 Sandgate Road ( the site of the Williams and Glyn's Bank) as well as a presence at 36 Hythe High Street. The company earned a royal warrant in 1947 and was acquired after the war by the Corney and Barrow company which ran it as a subsidiary. In turn Corney and Barrow was bought by Gilbeys Gin and incorporated into International Distillers and Vintners. Messrs Brooke disappeared as a company in 1967-8 and Corney and Barrow eventually escaped the clutches of IDV via a management buy-out.



Painting of 'The Office'

Brooke described his father's business premises in 134 Sandgate Road as 'the office' and is at pains to explain that it is not some sort of off-licence, but an establishment where one ordered wine and it was *delivered*. Although such trade was discouraged they did sell over the counter to day trippers. Brooke claims that because his father was 'in trade' he was never part of the social *milieu* of west Folkestone and Sandgate although his elder siblings did go to have tea with their neighbour HG Wells.

Brooke was a delicate child. Labelled as 'not too strong' he was rather sickly, with a fragile digestion. He was not a – and indeed professed to detest them – 'hearty' type, who loved games and sports. His brother and sister seemed to fall into that category. He would avoid bathing in the sea and proved a thorough duffer as a sportsman. The house on Radnor Cliff has a long terraced garden that reaches down to the beach; here his siblings would play and return 'in their Mackintoshes' to have tea on the 'quarterdeck'.

He took a keen interest in botany and describes his expeditions, during and just after the Great War, to explore the hills around Folkestone, looking for flowers and especially the elusive Military Orchid. The family holiday cottage in Bishopsbourne proved likewise a happy hunting ground for him in his floral studies. Another passion was the building of fireworks. He was not allowed to have them or let them off during the Great War but, once old enough, he spent his pocket money on the incendiary components from the local chemist. There were few children of his age in the immediate vicinity, or whose parents were known to his, so he spent the first few years rather solitary with really just his mother and nurse for company. This led to him becoming mollicoddled, indulged and protected and, as a result, reserved and awkward amongst his peers when he did meet them.

His first school was the kindergarten at 'Gaudeamus', which was in reality *Conamur* on the site of what became the *Riviera Hotel* and is now *Zarena Court* on The Riviera. This was quite a progressive school as befitted someone whose religion was as forward looking as Christian Scientism.



At the beginning of the autumn I began to go to the Kindergarten at Gaudeamus. I was agreeably surprised to find that this institution was by no mean the Udolpho\* which I had anticipated. Miss Pinecoffin, though stern in her demeanour showed no signs of wishing to devour me; yet I was but ill-adapted, by temperament, to communal life and though I encountered none of the Gothic horror that I had expected, I lived in a perpetual tremor

of nervousness...

\**Udolpho*: a haunted castle in an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Gothic horror novel

When not in the school, he would busy himself with a small plot at the bottom of the terraced garden, where he would attempt to transplant some of the flowers that he had collected. There was much precociousness in his relationships with plants. He carefully studied Edward Step's *Wayside and Woodland Blossoms*, a standard work, later progressing to Bentham and Hooker's *British Flora* and could quote their Latin and Greek names as well as the vernacular. He developed a vivid fantasy world, inhabited by people he met or observed from afar, partially in order to escape from his life at school but moreover to distract from the world of grown-ups and the distant rumour of the Great War.

From *Conamur* he progressed to prep schools in Folkestone. The town was replete with private schools of various kinds and Earl's Avenue/Shorncliffe Road area possessed quite a number. He moved onto The Grange and St George's (the church dates from 1938, this is over twenty years before) which proved quite traumatic for the sensitive and dietarily challenged child. After a very serious bout of digestive problems he was removed and sent as a boarder to St Michael's at Uckfield, which moved to – and stayed in – Tawstock Devon during the war and only closed its doors in 2011.

Jonathan Hunt describes Brooke of the time as having 'the manners of an Edwardian spinster' and his spindly legs provided him with the nickname 'Matchsticks'. After Uckfield, Brooke moved to King's, Canterbury, which he hated and like Tomkinson in Michael Palin's *Ripping Yarns*, attempted to escape - twice. In desperation, his parents sent him to Bedales in Steep, Hampshire.

Bedales was then, as now, a highly progressive school. Founded in 1900 it soon became a favourite for - as the journalist Jonathan Miller recently described it - "British and European progressivist-bourgeois-bohemian-leftist artists, writers and intellectuals. It has been chi-chi ever since."

Bedales opened Brooke up. It offered him, through the enlightened biology teacher FR Browning, whom Brooke calls Mr Bickersteth, a proper education in botany and the revelation of a Military Orchid for which he had searched fruitlessly for so many years. The establishment also encouraged his love of literature and he became obsessed with reading Huxley and attempting to emulate him in his own proto-novels.

I had never been so happy or felt so well in my life before...  
I had become, in fact, a different person. Even my physical and social timidity had largely been cured by the tolerant, easygoing atmosphere of Bedales. I learnt to swim; and I began to make friends. My stupidity at Arithmetic, instead of being regarded as a breach of Honour, or an insult to the Master concerned, was treated with helpful kindness.

He gave lectures on botany, appeared in school plays and won praise as Demetrius in *Midsummer's Night Dream* for his 'humbug'. The student magazine was *The Ray* to which he also contributed, but had to have an article removed for its raciness. This newly confident Brooke took his literature seriously and attempted poems and novels and to the dismay of his biology teacher, with whom he was quite close, these pursuits took precedence.

He even had a letter published in the school magazine in 1927 that is very revealing indeed.

I do not know how long ago "O.B." left Bedales, but he seems to be quite misinformed about the present state of affairs at the School. I can only speak from four years' experience, but I think that there is more keenness in the games than there has been for a very long time. Far from it being *infra dig* to shew enthusiasm in sport, it is becoming more and more *infra dig* to lack physical skill and strength, and we are, I feel, well on the way to adopting the system of Our Greatest Public Schools - doubtless a most desirable tendency. Soon, perhaps, the games captain will be given the privilege of wearing purple socks, or an extra button on his waistcoat, but this is but an idle dream of Utopia. No, we are only in the early stages at present, but there is much good work being done. We have four clubs keenly competing in every form of sport. We have a regular galaxy of white caps, blue shirts, scarves and "colours" - all very effective bribes to urge the younger generation to exert itself in what the big men consider to be the right direction. Concerning the large supply of players, the lack of which "O.B." so unwarrantably laments, I would mention the fact that we are now at the beginning of a school year; our veteran heroes have departed; and, as I remarked above, there is more enthusiasm than ever. Undoubtedly there is an outbreak, at present, of feverish enthusiasm. And I am convinced that this is our very worst danger. Nothing is so easy to magnify out of proportion to the rest of the picture as the team-spirit. This team (or sporting) spirit is always a danger at Bedales; for although Bedales has, for the most part, kept games in their place, there have always, I suppose, been times like the present when they threaten to exceed their proper bounds. It is especially a pity that this should happen at Bedales, because training of sport was one of the evils that it opposed at the beginning of its career, and one with which it still must fundamentally disagree. Nobody disputes the fact that exercise and physical development are just as essential as intellectual growth. But the two kinds of training must be in proportion to each other. And the game, surely, should be played for its own sake - not for a possible reward and promotion, not for a bribe. The apparent keenness that we see in Public Schools and which, I am afraid,



is insidiously creeping into Bedales, is at bottom corrupt, and must be unmasked. We want keenness in everything, not only in games ; but it must be the right kind of keenness. It is impossible to inspire this keenness in one who dislikes football ( or cricket ), whether or not his dislike is due to physical disability. Granted, he must take enough exercise ; but why should he not pursue that occupation as beneficial, if not more so, than football ? I decline to believe, incidentally, that football helps in the execution of a woodcut, which needs a certain amount of special talent, and is constructive. And footballers are as critical of their neighbours, as ready to pry into their co-ed friendships ( a rather superfluous criticism of " O.B.'s," I thought ), as are those who do not play the noble game.

Furthermore, the instinct to play is primitive, and play, in our modern communities, is a relaxation, an outlet for excess energies, as well as a physical exercise. For this reason it should not be too much intellectualised ; it should not be held symbolic of the entire school's moral code, as it so often is. Games should be games, and they should be played for their own sake ; they should not be scientific processes, with a moral object. And they are very seldom even this, though they try to be ; for their devotees are notorious for losing sight of their own principles.

And " O.B." I think, is too much inclined to generalise. Bedalians are not divisible into three groups, as he implies—those who play hard, those who play badly, and those who do not play at all. Some of the best Bedalians have not played football or cricket; and some of the worst types, in many schools, are those who are, athletically, the flower of the community.

It is a mistake, at the best of times, to label people.

And I do not believe that people who do not play football " infect the unvaccinated minds " of their fellows. They are not specially interested in games, naturally - any more than the footballers are interested in woodcuts and water-bugs. And if they do poison the minds of the Elevens, do not the Elevens in the same way poison the minds of the Woodcutters and collectors of " Bugs ? " One man's meat - but let it pass.

If we are going to stimulate keenness by bribing, let us at any rate bribe thoroughly ; let us give colours for arithmetic, scarves for poetry. But I am inclined to the opinion that competition on a large scale is bound to fail; in any case it is corrupt. And it is very nearly impossible to *moderate* competition ; it is indeed a question of " to be or not to be."

Let us have proportion then, and let us be careful to keep it, for it is the easiest thing to lose, and the most difficult to regain.

Yours sincerely,  
B. J. BROOKE.

Brooke passed the entrance for Trinity Oxford but did not achieve a high enough result to enter. Instead he went up to Worcester College reading Law. The Provost at Worcester was slightly reluctant to take Brooke on and in a letter to Henry he stated his "hope he will justify my decision." Needless to say young Jocelyn did not. He lived a Bridesheadian existence. He was a contemporary of WH Auden at Oxford, but there is no evidence that they met. He had few friends, the most notable being Jonathan Curling, whom Jonathan Hunt maintains was the model for 'Eric Anquetil' and as such features heavily in Brooke's works – especially *The Goose Cathedral*. The pair created a literary magazine called *The Flux* where Brooke tried to produce more of his Huxleyan work, but also starting to be heavily influenced by Proust. Anthony Powell describes Brooke's life there as being "the fairly typical life of a Proust-Joyce-Firbank-reading undergraduate."

Brooke was sent down in 1928 for failing his first year exams and returned to the bosom of his family, who had by now left Sandgate. Henry Brooke had retired in 1926 and the parents had moved to Blackheath in 1927, but retained the Bishopsbourne home, which was let out to paying holidaymakers and later to Ninnie ( Emily Fagg married but was soon widowed ). We then have a period of short-term jobs until the war. Cecil Brooke remained in Folkestone and took over the running of the firm.

The rest of this inter-war period is one of failure for Brooke. He singularly failed to get any of his works published and was incapable of keeping down a job. He worked for a while in the family firm, but that too was not a success. He lived in rooms in Westbourne Gardens and in a house he called “*Glencoe*, in one of those rather déclassé squares in the ‘West-end’ of Folkestone.” ( In



reality *Glenrosa* 48 Earl’s Avenue, since demolished and now a block of flats ). He claimed that his brother had rooms below ( he actually lived in Priory Gardens on The Bayle ) and his landlady whose name in the books is ‘Miss Bugle’ ( real name Mrs Greenstreet née Chapman ) who is a malapropian character and there for comic relief. ‘Eric Anquetil’ made frequent appearances and if it is indeed Jonathan Curling, then he suffered the same problem of not publishing his works, although Curling did eventually make a living as a biographer.

Brooke’s salvation came with the Second World War. The Register of September 1939 has him employed as a ‘stretcher bearer’ in the ARP Casualty Service. The service actively started recruiting staff, identifying where women would be best deployed as part of Casualty Services. In many cases, the role of ambulance attendant and driver was adjusted to become a female role, allowing male volunteers to be diverted to the first aid and rescue parties. He was called up and enlisted into the RAMC a few months into the war and did his training at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Netley, Hants. He was posted to Palestine in 1942, where he joined a VD clinic; his journey on the troopship involved a layover at Cape Town. The unit was sent to North Africa and followed the Eighth Army to Tripoli and then on to Sicily and Italy. His descriptions of the absurdities of Army life echo many who have written similar memoirs. He took the long periods of boredom to compose poems and read his now favourite author – Ronald Firbank. We are fortunately spared the medical details of his cases, but he does take us on off duty travels in search of a drink and some decent food. Judging by his itinerary it is likely that he was attached to the 66<sup>th</sup> General Hospital, which travelled from Leeds in May/June 1942 to Gaza, then accompanied the Eighth Army to Tripoli, on to Syracuse in July 1943, then up to Catania and across the straits to Taranto, on to Ancona and finally Rimini.

It is a curiosity that Brooke, with his health record, was accepted at all into the Army, let alone never progressing beyond private or medical orderly throughout his nearly six years service. As he admits, soldiering became a habit and its mundanity and his refusal to progress is his representation of rebellion and resistance. The non-combatant’s position in the RAMC suited him ideologically and temperamentally. The prospect of civilian life seemed to terrify Brooke, but once the War had ended, soldiering lost its meaning and he hankered to be free of the constrictions: of the daft catch-phrases, the monotony and the stupidity of the average Tommy.

The pre-war years had lapsed into a colourless vagueness; by contrast, the War, my time in the Army, seemed sharply defined. Tangible and real.... Perhaps, I thought, I should never break myself of it entirely: perhaps the mark of the soldier, like a tattoo was indelible.

Indeed Brooke was sorely tempted to stay in the Army, when the offer was made at his leaving camp in Italy. The trauma of leaving ( i.e. the actual experience of leaving, ) was horrendous and chaotic, as was so much of Army life and soon disabused him of that notion. He longed to be back in England and Kent. He returned in November 1945, according to Jonathan Hunt.

Like many people who had had an experience of war, Brooke found it difficult to adjust back to civilian life. He managed to have his book of poems *December Spring* published by The Bodley Head in 1946 and just afterwards *The Scapegoat* was accepted for publication ( much delayed due

to paper shortages ). With his meagre income from the books, he managed to travel to Italy in 1947. He continued to live in Folkestone ( apparently with his aunt ), with its familiar haunts, but depression and aimlessness got the better of him and he re-enlisted into the RAMC.

His assessment meant that once more he returned to working in a VD clinic, but this time at the Royal Herbert Hospital in Woolwich. This meant that he had the luxury of living at home in Blackheath. As an ex-regular amongst conscripts and having a medal ribbon from his wartime service, Brooke found himself in a privileged position and rapidly moved up to corporal. He describes his time at Woolwich hilariously as having to help his C.O. write a treatise on a genital disorder. While in the RAMC, he managed to have both *The Military Orchid* and *The Scapegoat* ( a version had already appeared in the journal *Orpheus*, but was now finally out as a book ) published and was asked to do a talk on the BBC's Third Programme. On this basis, he was offered a job and using the newly reactivated right for regular soldiers to buy themselves out of the Army. He joined the BBC as a Talks Producer in 1949.

Brooke frankly admitted that he had no idea what he was doing and left soon after. However he had made a number of invaluable contacts at his time in the Corporation and could exploit these to find work. He therefore became a regular contributor as a critic to journals and occasional speaker on the wireless. It also meant that he started being taken seriously by the publishing industry. In an extraordinary period between 1948 to 1956, Brooke published most of his novels ( the last, *Conventional Weapons* coming in 1961 ), another volume of poetry, a text book on *Wild Orchids of Britain* ( 1950) and the comic collage-novel *A Crisis in Bulgaria* ( 1956 Chatto and Windus ).

In a 1954 article in the *London Magazine*, he described his impressions of working for Auntie:

The Army had seemed to me very much like going back to school, and so too, did the BBC, though the school in this case, was of the more human, progressive type, a kind of grown-up Bedales. In the Army one's mental age was assumed to be that of a rather backward prep-schoolboy, and one was treated accordingly; here, on the contrary, one was flatteringly assumed to be almost grown-up.

Brooke had at last found the perfect *modus operandi*; having established himself as an author, he could afford to retreat and retire back to Bishopsbourne. There he edited anthologies and collections of other authors such as Denton Welch or Ronald Firbank and was a great proponent of the works of Elizabeth Bowen, who often wrote about her life in Hythe. He had a steady living as literary critic in magazines such as *The Listener* and later on in *The Scotsman* newspaper.

As mentioned, he lived at Bishopsbourne ( slightly more isolated since the closing of his beloved Elham Valley railway in 1947 ) where he looked after his two 'old ladies': his mother and Ninnie. May Brooke had always been known as 'The Owl' by the children, due to her large horn-rimmed glasses. She died in Barham Nursing Home in August 1963 aged 96 . Ninnie died in June 1961, aged 80 in a Thanet nursing home. Evelyn's husband Edward was the responsible solicitor.

Brooke had always been a heavy drinker, though not an alcoholic, as well as a smoker. His delicate constitution eventually caught up with him and he died a month short of his 58<sup>th</sup> birthday at the end of October 1966. He had chronic atherosclerosis and had been found dead in bed by his housekeeper. He left an estate worth just over £9,000.





Brooke in the 1920s  
'Letters from Bishopsboirne' C Scoble



Brooke in 1964 on a BBC talks programme  
'The Strangers All are Gone' A Powell

## Jocelyn Brooke

### Part 2 Works

#### 1. Poetry

Brooke's poetry and also that of his friend Jonathan Curling seem to have had two main influences: Ezra Pound and TS Eliot. The shadow of these two titans of English-speaking modern verse lie heavy upon all authors of that period and it is clearly visible in early, undergraduate, efforts by both Brooke and Curling.

*For a Lady on a Horse* ( extract )

( Brooke )

How arrogantly  
the sunlight of the February afternoon  
spread its broad sheaves  
of lucent brightness  
over these flooded fields  
(gilding their silver mirrors, emerald enshrined  
with what premature summerstolen gold !) &c

*Street*

( Curling)

Night  
White  
Strange  
Change  
from solecisms, eyes, revolvers, sex. It  
Seems  
(Streams  
Of facial platitudes bump by grinning )  
That  
Fat  
In  
Thin  
By,  
Hot with nips of port, string bags, caresses  
Of  
Men,  
When  
Who look between shuddered shapes of matrons,  
We  
See  
Till tight-hatted women seeking patrons  
By  
Eve  
Of white disdain or rude ruddy laughter

-- Adown titanic glooms of chasmed fears,  
From those strong feet that followed, followed after.

Brooke was a good French reader and also took Baudelaire's *poesie* as an influence. The Frenchman's work is dominated by the themes of sex and death, which were also preoccupations of many of the mid-Twentieth century poets, not least Brooke himself. Baudelaire was a man beset by neuroses and illness exacerbated by drink and an addiction to laudanum. Brooke was similar in constitution, although it was just the alcohol that played a dominant role in his life.

As we have mentioned earlier, Brooke was a contemporary at Oxford with Auden and Betjeman, but their styles differ, with the other authors being more conventional in form and even with Auden, in his early works, his poetry *rhymes*.

Brooke was, in reality, seen in the 1950s as a War Poet. His works from the Second World War – especially *Landscape Near Tobruk* and *Soldier's Song*- feature regularly in anthologies of war poetry. *Soldier's Song* is a rather sub-Kipling effort, that attempts to capture the futility of the soldiers existence. It does not express the futility of war as such and thus does not compare to Rupert Brooke or Owen in its power, but is rather a paean to the obstinate and obdurate Tommy. There is a good use of alliteration and a memorable phrase in "tent of flesh and bone." that nicely exhibits the inherent fragility of the soldier's life.

*Soldier's Song* ( extract )

O Death, be kind to the swaddie  
The man with a load of bull -  
Be kind to the muscled body  
Thumbs up and belly full  
Browned-off with bints and boozing  
Sweating on news from home,  
Bomb-happy, and scared of losing  
This tent of flesh and bone.

Far stronger as a war-poem is *his Landscape Near Tobruk*, which does portray the futility of war, by pitting the armed might of the Eighth Army and Afrika Korps against the pitiless Desert. Brooke spent much of the war in the Middle East and it is to be remembered that in the heat and the flies and the unsanitary conditions, skin diseases proliferated just as much as the venereal kind and Brooke's clinics also handled these 'clean' cases.

*Landscape Near Tobruk* (extract )

This land was made for War. As glass  
Resists the bite of vitriol, so this hard  
And calcine earth rejects  
The battle's hot, corrosive impact. Here  
Is no nubile , girlish land, no green  
And virginal countryside for War  
To violate.

The structure of Eliot is plain to see in this poem and it has a great strength. Brooke uses a rather bizarre metaphor in the middle, which detracts from the effect, but the power returns at the end with a description of the 'lion-coloured' soldiers. In *Three Barrow Downs*, Brooke takes us into a daydream, where he visits once again his familiar haunts in Kent, but war is never far away and his reverie is interrupted by the harshness of military life as it superimposes itself upon his bucolic idyll. Again we see Eliot writ large in the selection of seemingly unconnected images and symbols.

*Three Barrow Downs* ( extract )

O betony and self-heal  
 Be near to salve the wounds  
 Of warrior and rookie  
 In the embattled hour  
 And give them to the queer and lonely  
 The brief and phallic power.

We will revisit *Three Barrow Downs* again later, because there is a particularly apt description of a landmark that features prominently in his prose.

## 2. Prose

Jocelyn Brooke has often been described as 'Proustian' in his writings. By that is meant that he uses fictionalised autobiography to tell a story. There is no plot as such in many of his works and his books are often rambling and indeed a ramble through his life and its many landscapes. The most *proustian* section is in *Mine of Serpents*, where, on a train as it passes through Montreux – where the Brooke family spent their only foreign holiday – Brooke sees a firework shop. He then meanders into a discourse on his experiences building fireworks as a child and how he had to wait until 'the war was over' before he could let them off. Fireworks become Brooke's *madeleine*. The debt to Proust is enormous and he vowed at Oxford that he would one day write a great Proust-style novel, having grown-out of Huxley and his influences.

Anthony Powell described this technique in a London Review of Books article :

All writers, one way or another, depend ultimately on their own lives for the material of their books, but the manner in which each employs personal experience, interior or exterior, is very different. Jocelyn Brooke uses both elements with a minimum of dilution, though much imagination. However far afield he went physically, his creative roots remain in his childhood. He was by nature keenly interested in himself, though without vanity or the smallest taint of exhibitionism.

And indeed it is true that the books lack vanity. Brooke is his own lead character, he writes about what he knows best: himself. His other characters tend to be composites or caricatures ( we have already mentioned Mrs Bugle ) and their names are often drawn from an encounter: Medlicott, for instance ( a character who dominates Brooke's description of the late Twenties and Thirties ) was the name of a family lawyer, Anqueril probably comes from a novel by Vita Sackville West and Hunwick is a town in County Durham where his sometime lover was stationed.

This makes the narrative thread of his books difficult to find and sometimes perplexing. It leaves one at times to think "What is the point of this story?" Often there is no *denouement* and it even seems as if some of the stories are there just to fill the space, because the threads are rarely joined together at the end. In fact his books are jigsaw puzzles and the pieces make up a whole and one skips sections at one's own peril. *The Orchid Trilogy*, *The Dog at Clambercrown* and *Private View* belong firmly in this fictional autobiographical category.

Strangely Brooke is on slightly flimsier ground with his 'plotted' novels, although they are still heavily based on his own experiences. In *The Scapegoat* it becomes melodrama. A ( possibly incestuous ) relationship between an uncle and an orphaned nephew harks back to Victorian novels such as those by George Eliot, but with a heavily sexualised undercurrent and a sort of ritualised sacrifice ( hence the title ).

*Image of a Drawn Sword* is described as 'Kafkaesque' in that it has a fantastical plot, with events that seem to make little sense, but happen nonetheless. The ending does indeed mirror Kafka's *Der Prozess* in that the hero meets an unfortunate end

Aber an K.s Gurgel legten sich die Hände des einen Herrn, während der andere das Messer ihm tief ins Herz stieß und zweimal dort drehte. Mit brechenden Augen sah noch K., wie die Herren, nahe vor seinem Gesicht, Wange an Wange aneinandergelehnt, die Entscheidung beobachteten. »Wie ein Hund!« sagte er, es war, als sollte die Scham ihn überleben.

"As if the shame should outlive him." And although the hero in *Image of a Drawn Sword* does not die, he might as well have had, given the shame of his public punishment. Brooke himself denies a direct influence by Kafka and states that " I can cross my heart and say that I have never, as yet, succeeded in getting through one of his novels. The Kafka influence has, I suspect, been 'in the air' for so long".

What *The Scapegoat* and *Image..* have in common is progressive mental disintegration, which reflect Brooke's own mental health issues. Although never in a position to be committed or suicidal, he was in a constant state of anxiety and was by nature depressive and found it difficult to make and keep friends. He had a short span of attention, which is one reason why he failed to hold down jobs, but the order and control of military life allowed him to develop a routine and it brought his neuroses under some form of control.

*Image...* is indeed the story of one man's journey into a hell of his own making. Traumatized by war and convinced that a new war has started in his rural idyll, the hero, whose name is Reynard, has a life of dull routine, where he lives with his mother. It is disrupted by a mysterious visitor from his past and causes him to fall further and further into a dystopia existing disturbingly in his own corner

of Kent. It is the unfamiliar happening in the familiar context that drives the narrative and the landscape is something that we will discuss later on.

*Private View* in contrast is in fact four character studies. As with his *Orchid* books, the characters are fictionalised and composite. A fascinating study is of Kurt Schlegel, an Austrian Jew who fled to Palestine in 1939 and in the course of the story discovers that his family has perished in Auschwitz. There is a moving scene when in a port town on Italy's Adriatic coast, they discover an old Jewish cemetery outside the city walls.

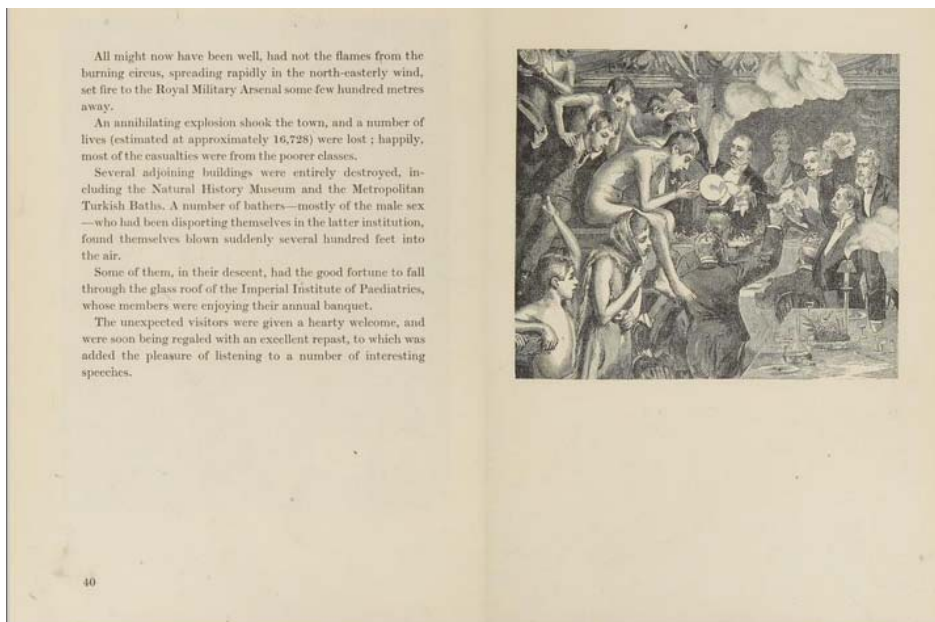


Suddenly Kurt began to speak again

‘Ach you are English, you do not know,’ he exclaimed. ‘You do not know what it is to be like I am: one who is always outcast, one who does not belong to one place, one country. I am like the poor blokes that lie under the grass, I am always outside the walls of the town.’

In many respects, Kurt is a cipher for Brooke himself, someone who is “always outside the walls of the town.” In many respects, Kurt is also what Brooke would wish to be himself: he stands up to the sergeants and officers – as much good as it does him – and he escaped persecution, possessing an initiative and desire for freedom that Brooke had not mustered himself.

The great contrast is *A Crisis in Bulgaria*, which seems more akin to a Beachcomber article in its surreal ludicrousness. The premise being an attempted coup by anarchists in Bulgaria in 1886 who succeed in blowing up a circus thus letting the animals escape and take over Sofia. It falls to the intrepid playwright Henrik Ibsen to restore order. The illustrations are mostly collages cut out of old magazines from the Victorian and Edwardian ages.



“A Crisis in Bulgaria”

### 3. Influences

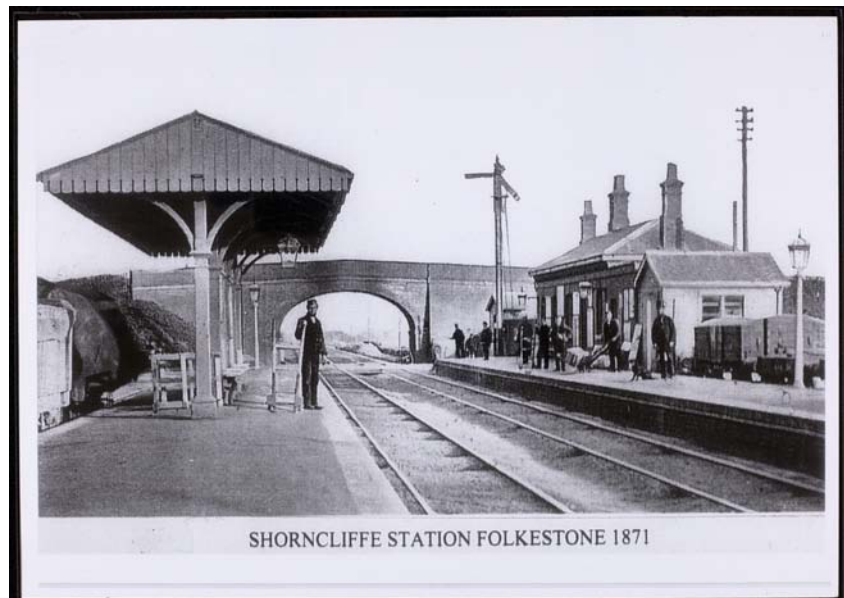
#### Sandgate

The village of his birth and its environs provided rich material for Brooke. It is almost Joycean, the way he conducts us around sections of the village. His early memories of walking with Ninnie usually involved trips to Folkestone. Along the Radnor Cliff they would progress, past Lord Radnor's property, Cliffe House ( pictured ) which he called "our nearest local equivalent, I supposed, to Buckingham Palace." On to the Lower Sandgate Road they went to the old toll-gate. The boy was fascinated by the prices for carriages, mules and pedestrians and its keeper, whom he called Mrs Mawby. This was the frontier, beyond it lay the uncertain land of Folkestone and the temptations of the Switchback and 'slot machines' by the Pier. The Lower Road and Leas Park had not as yet been fully developed as a park, although there was a lift at the Metropole until 1941. The world beyond the



toll-gate remained a kind of mystery world for Brooke, part of his 'Forbidden Kingdom' to which he, as a child was not permitted to visit.

Up the Radnor Cliff Crescent, one reaches Cooling Lane. This provided Brooke with a baroque world to excite his imagination. He believed that the local branch – or coven – of the Suffragettes had ensconced themselves in Cooling Lane, based upon being shown the smashed windows of a Suffragette ( "degraded and anti-social aunt-witches" ) attack on a large house. In those days around the time of the Great War, Cooling Lane was still quite rural, with open fields and glimpses of distant woodlands. But it was haunted by "terrifying viragoes who broke windows, flung themselves under racehorses and chained themselves to the railings of Buckingham Palace." When he and Ninnie travelled up to Shorncliffe Station ( as Folkestone West was then named ), they would always take a cab, weighed down as they were with luggage and the fierce steepness of Cooling Lane would prove too much for them both. Cooling Lane was the "semi-rural prelude to the 'real country', haunted by wicked suffragettes." At the top of



Cooling Lane are the fine villas, where his mother was wont to collect for charity and where "stood a squalid and rather forbidding public-house, needless to say we didn't call there, and indeed seldom penetrated so far." Piece by piece Cooling Lane became developed, with modern villas and asphalt roads criss-crossing the countryside. During his childhood, a number of schools became

established and he shied away from the sports fields, but became fascinated by its proximity to Shorncliffe and the romantic world of the Army, which held far fewer terrors than 'school'.

The grim grey barracks were visible across the valley... and the far cries of the bugles would be borne to us, faintly across the aery pastures which separated us from that community of males which, even more than the world of school, was associated with ideas of violence, nudity and a kind of vicarious-yearning for danger and adventure.

Army life kept Brooke in an impossibly romantic thrall. The bugles were the voice of the camp calling out over the fields, carrying out a dialogue with the fog horns on the Channel. It is their sound to which Brooke frequently hearkened in his writing.

Leading up to Shorncliffe is Horn Street, which again before the War was much more rural. It led to the mysterious territory where "the soldiers lived" and he would meet, whilst on a walk, groups of red-faced men in khaki who might laugh or shout rude remarks. His terror began to give way to excited imagining of what it was to be a soldier, inhabiting the windswept plateau of the camp. Horn Street was somewhere for him to engage in his botany, the woods in those days were full of foxgloves, bluebells and primroses watered by the Seabrook stream. The Britannia pub was a frequent haunt, whilst in Shorncliffe.

At the foot of Horn Street is the Fountain pub, to which Brooke would often retire, especially on his second stint in the Army, when Shorncliffe was a holding camp. The pub was reserved for officers in former days and he was well known there. Across the road on Battery Point was the *Goose Cathedral*.



He had always known of this place - the old lifeboat station, towards Seabrook - but he really 'discovered' it when Eric Anquetil ( i.e. Jonathan Curling ) would come to stay in the early Thirties. It became the "breeding ground for a series of fantastic legends: an elaborate superstructure of nonsense not unsuited to the gimcrack, hey-nonny Gothic of the 'chapel' itself." By that stage the 1875-built lifeboat house had been made redundant and been converted into a house. A little time

after it became a cafe and is still remembered with affection by older Sandgate residents. The incongruity and *bogus* nature of this building is what attracted the two young aesthetes. A boat house disguised as a Gothic chapel, was a spectacular anachronism. It was only just before the War that the house became the cafe and Brooke never had the chance to patronise it with Eric. It was not until he rejoined the Army that it became somewhere for him to frequent, it now being at the bottom of the hill from his barracks. The building itself was eventually demolished in 1956.

Brooke's botany expeditions took him ( and the long suffering Ninnie ) beyond the reaches of Sandgate. Up by bus along Black Bull Road he would alight and turn into a farm behind the Black Bull pub, which had a plethora of chalk-loving flowers especially orchids. Further on into the hills beyond and Caesar's Camp – the not-at-all Roman earthworks – offered the young Brooke further opportunity to explore and collect plants. He found in a chalk pit on one of the expeditions a Bee Orchid and the rarer Late Spider Orchid.

His childhood revolved around two places : Sandgate with its Little Paths that took him to the Leas or the beach and beyond which lay the terrifying Forbidden Kingdom; and the place where he really felt at home and was the Land of Lost Content – Bishopsbourne.

#### Bishopsbourne and the Elham Valley.

Nestling in the Elham Valley, just six miles south of Canterbury is the pretty village of Bishopsbourne. A couple of streets and a couple of grand houses, some cottages and a pub ( which the young Jocelyn considered rather ugly and squat, but in fact *The Mermaid* is quite pleasant ). At one end is the closed railway station and the old school. In the middle is a truly stupendous church dating from the thirteenth century with Medieval wall paintings depicting St Michael and a glorious Victorian altar surrounded by mosaics designed by William Morris. The village lies to the north west of the larger and no less ornate Barham and the A2 passes nearby. This was the place where in two properties: Forge Cottage and next door Ivy Cottage, the family spent their vacations at Easter and in Summer.





St Mary's

This was the 'real' countryside for Brooke. The few remaining rural parts of Folkestone were an *ersatz* version, with the station at Shorncliffe ( now Folkestone West ) being the boundary between his everyday life and his 'country of the mind'. He describes hiring a horse and cantering around the woods off of Horn Street and admitted to having "an odd sense of being isolated in some ambiguous territory between two worlds...", caused by not being in the 'real country', which lay beyond the hills – an "impassable barrier along the northern sky-line."

As a child, Jocelyn's world had had strict boundaries: he was not permitted to venture to Folkestone alone, with its temptations of funfairs, slot machines and music halls; with Bishopsbourne it involved the distance one could easily walk. Sometimes the family would take the car and journey – but never too far – to have a picnic. For the young boy, the Boundary at Bishopsbourne was marked by the Watertower. This structure occupies a whole chapter of the book *A Mine of Serpents*. Brooke imagines it as a kind of 'beacon to guide us', in the thick woods that surrounded it were primroses and bluebells. The tower features in *The Barrow Downs* poem that we mentioned earlier :

Their eyes unheeding  
Of storm-dark horizon,  
And white-capped water-tower  
Pricking the sullen line  
Of the wood whose trees conceal  
Tombs of an older time.

The tower itself still stands, now used for mobile communications rather than feeding the burghers of Margate with fresh water. It is situated near Adisham, slightly to the north east of Bishopsbourne and about a mile away. It was built in a very eclectic style. To quote a baroque description by Wikipedia

The structure was built in 1903 in an Edwardian Italianate Revival style for the Margate Corporation District Waterworks

The architectural style and its mundane use encapsulates the early Twentieth century mania for disguising water pumping stations and towers for other things ( Streatam and Hampton pumping stations and the tower at Littlestone are prime examples ). It is now obscured fully by trees that had probably grown considerably since Brooke's childhood, but it served as a local landmark, visible from the valley ridges.



In a depiction of immanence, worthy of the English Romantic poets, Brooke describes one of the family picnics where he wandered off and approached the 'august and inviolate mass' :

...with a start of astonishment saw, at the end of the path only twenty yards away and presenting to me ... an aspect of itself which I had never seen before, the brick arcades and the white peaked summit of the watertower.

Because I had never seen it from just that position, and because I was alone with it, the tower seemed more than ever, to be offering me some extraordinary and desirable secret...

Ruskin tells us of a concept which he calls 'pathetic fallacy' which is where a person describing an object or place becomes overwhelmed by the emotion that that place evokes or of some incident associated with it. Brooke uses pathetic fallacy with great abandon in his works. This area of East Kent

and especially the Elham Valley is 'real country' and a place where he feels comfortable and safe. He muses whether it would ever be called 'Brooke Country' in the same way Dorset and its neighbours are 'Hardy Country'. Even the regular and mundane journey to Bishopsbourne on board the SE&CR trains assumed for Brooke an excitement and anticipation of adventure.

Joseph Conrad lived in Bishopsbourne for the last five years of his life and the village hall is named after him, yet strangely he never featured in Brooke's musings. A towering figure such as Conrad should surely have piqued the interest of the literary minded youth. As it was the young Jocelyn was friends with the Bell family, who lived in Oswalds prior to Conrad and also owned Bourne Park, the



local stately home. The Bells were local benefactors and the war memorial outside the church at Bishopsbourne is to one of their fallen scions. They had rented out Bourne Park to a family called Toynbee and lived instead in the dower-house of Oswalds in the village.

One of the local phenomena which preoccupied the young Jocelyn was the village stream. It only intermittently flowed and when it did in any strength, it was known as the 'woe-water' as it was the harbinger of bad times ahead. Rather than announcing imminent doom, the Nailbourne river instead suggested nature renewed and the presence of moor hens, frogs and water rats. A later war-poem depicts the rising of the woe-water and its legendary consequences :

The Woe-Waters ( extract )

The woe-waters foretold  
This troubled Spring, and I  
Have sat by the waters at sundown  
Beneath the cold green sky

And have seen the sadness of waters  
And heard the crying of wind,  
And wondered that this loved country  
Seemed suddenly unkind

The village was for Brooke the 'Land of Lost Content' ; a symbol of happiness that would only reappear when the next holiday began, Brooke is full of contradictions and one such is that for most children it was the seaside that was the ultimate goal of any holiday and thus the progenitor of happy memories, but for him it was the 'real country' .

If the village of our summer holidays was an afternoon land, tranced in a perpetual and postprandial drowsiness, our real home at Sandgate was by contrast matutinal: my memories of it are bathed in the keen, windy light of spring mornings, a seaside gaiety and brilliance haunted by the thud of waves on the shingle...

This feeling of drowsiness and languidity is surely what attracted him to another great geographic love of his: Italy.

Italy

Much to her astonishment, this hole kept spreading wider and wider, and growing deeper and deeper, until it really seemed to have no bottom; and all the while, there came a rumbling noise out of its depths, louder and louder, and nearer and nearer, and sounding like the tramp of horses' hoofs and the rattling of wheels... and soon saw a team of four sable horses, snorting smoke out of their nostrils, and tearing their way out of the earth with a splendid golden chariot whirling at their heels... In a moment, Proserpina lost sight of the pleasant vale of Enna, in which she had always dwelt. Another instant, and even the summit of Mount Ætna had become so

blue in the distance, that she could scarcely distinguish it from the smoke that gushed out of its crater.

The story of Proserpina being snatched away by Pluto haunted Brooke. He had read it in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Tanglewood tales* - a sort of American version of Kingsley's *The Heroes* - and he made it his goal one day to find Enna and poor Proserpina's grotto.

His first experience of Sicily in 1943, though, was a disappointing one. He travelled on a hospital ship and disembarked to be transported to a huge building, which, to his amazement, turned out to be an airship hangar. But they were no longer in the harsh and hard world of the North African desert but in Europe and the soft airs of the Sicilian morning seemed to infect him and indeed the entire army. Everything seemed to move more slowly. Olive orchards and fields now dominated their vista, once inland. Brooke tells us that this land represented the 'bare bones' of nature - a hard landscape still, like Africa, but with "primitive candour which concealed nothing."

Brooke travelled to Syracuse and was attached to his appointed General Hospital, opening up shop. Soon they had four hundred patients and he was too busy to explore the island further, apart from Syracuse itself or a beautiful cove along the coast.

Before long they had been ordered north and crossed into Italy proper, landing at Taranto and moving along the coast to Bari and then Foggia eventually ending up in the Abruzzo region, about halfway up on the Adriatic coast. Here for Brooke was 'real country' once more with low hills and lush fields and woods, brimming with fruitfulness.

Brooke ended his war in Italy, sent to the north, which he said he loathed. His demob meant travelling by train to Naples and there he had to wait for weeks until he was transported to Milan and thence home by train.

Despite the hardships of war and the incompetence of the Army, Brooke resolved to return to Italy and did so again in 1947. Now as a civilian, he found the country a different place. It proved too difficult for him to return to Abruzzo, but contented himself with the glories of Florence. He noticed that living in Italy was a surreal experience: everything that was rationed or unavailable in Britain was in abundance in Italy - but at a price.

Was it possible that the individuals comprising this conquered and bankrupt nation might in time, re-establish their traditional way of life, in spite of corrupt government and in defiance of economic law ?

Italy had effectively become a Mafia state - the very poor starved and only the clever or crooked could make a living. The middle-classes were the ones who suffered most, unused to hustling and haggling they were easy prey for the black marketers that infested the cities. The journey to Italy unsettled him and it was afterwards that he determined once more to rejoin the Army. After he left the Army and had earned some money from his writings, he returned to Italy - this time flying - and resolved to travel to Sicily to find Enna. Travelling from Syracuse by a snail's-pace train and bus, he reached the village

Here, more than ever, one was haunted by a sense of some ancient, immitigable tragedy; more even than the hills of Santa Panagia, or the mountain hideout of the *capo di Mafia*, did this landscape breathe an air of deadness and desolation; here, at the 'navel of Sicily', the whole dark and vengeful spirit of the island seemed gathered into a central nucleus of potential terror and violence.

The journey to Enna was a disappointment, the site of Proserpina's abduction, high up in the hills of central Sicily was now a lake ( Lago di Pergusa ), rather than some grotto as Hawthorne had described it. Pergusa is actually famed for being scenic and for its wide biodiversity, but Brooke had travelled there at Easter when it was not yet in full bloom.

Sitting upon the rocky bank I became aware of the silence as something positive, a ponderable element brooding, like some heavy, inert gas, in the lower levels of the atmosphere. 'The sense of emptiness, of utter negation which had haunted me in the cafés of Syracuse, and again at Enna itself, had become, in this place of death, dominant and inescapable.

### Sexuality

It is clear from Brooke's writing that he was a homosexual. His writing is not high camp, as one would find with EF Benson or JR Ackerley, or even purposefully outrageous as with Ronald Firbank. It is whimsical and fey. The clues abound throughout the books. In his drinking escapades in London after Oxford, he takes us on a tour of gay bars in the West End and Bloomsbury. The description in *Mine of Serpents*, where he accidentally meets an old ( and rather louche ) Oxford acquaintance on a train is in fact one long pick-up attempt. Women, apart from Ninnie, his mother, a platonic friend or two and various schoolboy crushes do not feature much in his works. Brooke prefers the company of men, which is another reason why he was drawn to the Army. He felt uncomfortable around women, except for his 'old ladies'. Even his sister does not feature in the books after Brooke's schooldays, although he does write to her from his Army postings. Furthermore, the endings of *Image of a Drawn Sword* and *The Scapegoat* are direct homosexual fantasies of sado-masochism. His 'discovery' of his own sexuality in *The Dog at Clambercrown* is itself an act of self-scourging.

He was also a great proponent of other gay writers: Ronald Firbank and Denton Welch owed their later acceptance to Brooke's critiques. A good example is an article on his influences in *The London* magazine of 1955:

Later came Christopher Isherwood, whose easy, colloquial prose provided a much-needed corrective to the 'mandarin' styles of Proust and Huxley. His 'tea-tabling' method, as he calls it—the reduction of stirring or dramatic events to the scale of a drawing-room comedy — itself owes something to E. M. Forster, for whom I have an unbounded admiration...

This is not to say that Brooke lived only in some 'gay bubble', but he was quite naturally drawn to these writers and their styles. Indeed Brooke does not seem to have been particularly promiscuous. In fact we might even consider him something of a prude, as he complained about the abundance of sex in Proust and in Huxley ( over done in the former, there to shock in the latter ). There is a hilarious description of how he travelled to Paris, met up with a friend there and the pair were bamboozled by a taxi driver into attending a bordello, from which they fled in horror. Jonathan Curling probably was a lover and we can identify one specific lover, Albert Heron. He was a soldier in the Seaforth Highlanders, based in Dover and would often tap Brooke for money. Heron was a template for the character of Bert Hunwick in *Military Orchid*.

In fact along with the descriptions of the Twenties gay scene in London, Brooke was also attracted to Dover – for much the same reason as Noel Coward was. This 'vulgar' town offered easy access

to young men in uniform. Its working-class pubs and Hippodrome music hall became frequent haunts for Jocelyn – the doors to the Forbidden Kingdom that lay beyond Folkestone had at last been opened for him and in this he was abetted by an unlikely ally.

Jonathan Hunt maintains and there is no reason to disbelieve him, that Jocelyn’s brother, Cecil was also homosexual. There are plentiful descriptions of how the pair of them would hang out in ‘sordid’ Dover. Cecil was the antithesis of Jocelyn : he was a ‘hearty’ attended the macho Rugby School and joined the army, being commissioned into The Buffs in 1917. He was ten years Jocelyn’s senior and because of his position in the Army and later as Chairman of the family firm, he was supposed to be more discreet.



Cecil was a reservist and returned to the Army at the outbreak of the war as a captain. In March 1941, he was being driven in a taxi from The Esplanade Hotel in Folkestone back to his unit based in Dover, when the car hit a lorry in Capel le Ferne. Cecil was killed instantly – one of the thousands of victims of the Blackout. There is no mention of this tragedy in Brooke’s writing, as far as has been noted by the author. The character of Geoffrey Greene is possibly a representation of his brother in *Conventional Weapons*, a soldier who also dies without honour, but in this case of a heart attack. What effect his brother’s death had on Jocelyn, one can only surmise, he was doing his medical training at the time and did not attend the funeral. Geoffrey complains of something similar in *Conventional Weapons*, he could not attend his brother’s funeral. Gerald Brockhurst in *Private View* is another macho who is a closet gay and suffers a breakdown, alcoholism and after being caught in an homosexual act in the Army in post-war Germany - “splashed across the News of the World” - commits suicide while awaiting court-martial. It is also possible that Cecil provides the template for one of Brooke’s characters: Basil Medlicott, who is also a sporty type, takes

Jocelyn on pub crawls and rejoins the Army, to meet an undistinguished end ( in Medlicott's case dysentery ).

#### 4. Conclusion

Bathos, anti-climax and disappointment are all regular themes in Brooke's literature. *The Dog at Clambercrown* is especially guilty of providing us with disappointment. The pub that he searches for is closed and has been for some time, the Lago di Pergusa – so early in the season – is drab and dead. He even leaves the Army for a job at the BBC that he discovers he cannot do.

These disappointments are the results of quests, searches for things or goals that prove unfindable. The elusive Military Orchid is symbolic of his search for something that will give his life meaning. It is as if everyone finds the orchid but him.

The characters in his stories often meet disappointing ends: disease, heart attacks, breakdowns and beatings are their unfortunate fates. A pattern emerges. One does not go to Brooke looking for a happy-ending. Whether or not this disappointment is a true reflection of his own life is debatable ( the authoress Olivia Manning was certain that it was ). He seemed to retreat into purposeful obscurity, writing his critiques and talking occasionally on the wireless or television.

Brooke's writing is pleasant to read. It is easy-going and witty, his characters are well drawn, but he suffers from reproducing the same trope – the hidden or shamed homosexual who meets a sticky end. His descriptive powers are excellent and he has a good eye for satire and the acidic comment. He has left us a strong body of literary criticism and he was a well respected and regarded critic, in the days when critics such as C Day-Lewis or Cyril Connolly were as famous as the authors. His writing style is impeccably polite and thorough and he was a frequent guest on the television and wireless.

The danger with reading Brooke's novels is to take them at face value. We must always remember that these are works of fiction. Brooke left no real memoirs, nor has an authoritative biography appeared ( Jonathan Hunt had been working on one ). His papers at Christchurch Canterbury and University of Texas do not really help us with a rounded picture: a few letters and mostly business correspondence. Few people really knew him well: Anthony Powell and Olivia Manning have written at length about Jocelyn, but even they knew him professionally and only occasionally met him. He was friends with Betjeman and the composer John Ireland, but again their meetings were perfunctory. It is also too tempting to quote verbatim from his work and sometimes difficult to treat them critically, simply because he is so convincing. We must remember that everything we read by Brooke is embellished – it may not be outright lies, but it is also not quite the truth either.

From Brooke's 'Wild Orchids of Britain' 1950 Bodley Head

Monkey Orchid



Military Orchid





## Bibliography

### Books and Articles

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Airstrop, Jack   | Bugle Blast An Anthology of War Poems ( 1947 )   |
| Bentham, George  | Handbook of The British Flora ( 1937 )   |
| Brooke, Jocelyn  | The Orchid Trilogy ( e-book 2017 )   |
| Brooke, Jocelyn  | Private View ( 1989 )  |
| Brooke, Jocelyn  | The Dog at Clambercrown ( 1955 and 1990 )  |
| Brooke, Jocelyn  | The Crisis in Bulgaria ( 1956 )  |
| Brooke, Jocelyn  | The Scapegoat ( 1948 )   |
| Brooke, Jocelyn  | The Image of a Drawn Sword ( 1982 )  |
| Brooke, Jocelyn  | Conventional Weapons ( 1961 )  |
| Brooke, Jocelyn  | Ronald Firbank ( 1951 )  |
| Brooke, Jocelyn  | Coming to London, <i>London Magazine</i> vol 4 Issue 1 ( 1957 )  |
| Brooke, Jocelyn  | Orpheus vol 1 ( 1948 )   |
| Day-Lewis, Cecil   | The Chatto Book of Modern Poetry ( 1978 )  |
| Dobson, Roger  | Library of the Lost (2018 )  |
| Edwards, RD  | Ronald Firbank and the Legacy of Camp Modernism <i>PHD Thesis Birkbeck</i> (2020 )   |
| Eliot, TS  | Selected Poems ( 1954 )  |
| Furbank, PN  | Flower Power <i>London Review of Books</i> vol 25 No 9 ( 2003 )  |
| Gardner, Brian   | The Terrible Rain The War Poets 1939-45 ( 1966 )   |
| Hamilton, Ian  | The Poetry of War ( 1972 )   |
| Hawthorne, Nathaniel                                     | A Wonder Book ( 1909 )   |
| Hewlett, Joseph  | Peter Priggins The College Scout ( 1841 )  |
| Hoffmann, Catherine                                      | Jocelyn Brooke's The Military Orchid a Literary Hybrid in <i>Polyseme</i> 19 ( 2018 )  |
|  | Jocelyn Brooke's Country: 'Topologies of the Self , <i>Etudes Britannique Conrtemporain</i> 55 ( 2018 )                                |
|  | Jocelyn Brooke's The Image of a Drawn Sword: A Paradoxical Narrative of Dislocation, <i>Etudes Britannique Conrtemporain</i> 64 (2023) |
| Hunt, Jonathan   | Jocelyn Brooke A Sketch of his Life and Work ( 2001 )  |
| Kafka, Franz   | Der Prozess ( 1998 )   |
| <a href="#">London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art</a> | LAMDA Anthology of Poetry and Prose ( 1951 )   |
| Manning, Olivia  | Times Literary Supplement , 8 May 1969   |
| Parsons, Clere   | Oxford Poetry 1928 ( 1928 )  |
| Powell, Anthony  | The Strangers All are Gone ( 1983 )  |
| Powell, Anthony  | Brooke's Benefit <i>London Review of Books</i> vol 3 No 7 ( 1981 )   |
| Scoble, Christopher                                      | Letters from Bishopsbourne ( 2010 )  |
| Step, Edward   | Wayside and Woodland Blossoms ( 1933 )   |

### Primary Resources

- Bedales School Yearbooks 1922-28
- International Distillers and Vintners Accounts 1966–68
- Jocelyn Brooke Collection at *Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre* University of Texas Austin, TX
- London Gazette
- Sandgate Society Archives