

## Second-hand books : inscriptions and inclusions

One of the joys of browsing through second-hand books is that you never know what you might find. One bookseller expressed it like this:

*Antiquarian books are history-in-your-hands. Fly leaf inscriptions can be very moving; dates maybe 100 years before the present and the previous "life" of books all make them special for the collector ... Books live lives by themselves, harbouring thoughts, revealing feelings, meetings, secrets and ideas to be fathomed. Sometimes a book's subject matter is secondary to the inserted mysteries held within its pages.<sup>1</sup>*

When online retailer Abebooks asked sellers to report on findings (other than author and owner inscriptions) in recycled books, the list included a will, a suicide note, recipes ancient and modern, a sock, stamps (franked and not), share certificates, cancelled cheques, savings bonds, a driving licence, a marriage certificate, banknotes (domestic and foreign, current and historic), Monopoly money, Christmas cards, postcards, business, calling, playing and cigarette cards, golf scorecards, innumerable letters, poems, photos and press cuttings, medical prescriptions, grocery lists, store receipts, seed packets (empty and otherwise), maps and ration books, used and unused tickets of every description, boarding passes, pressed flowers and leaves (commonly marijuana leaves) and four-leaf clovers, coins, medals and keys, fingernails and carpenter's nails, toothpicks, cotton buds, a pair of scissors, locks of hair, condoms (wrapped and loose), banana peel and rashers of bacon (usually but not always raw).

All very well, and offering perhaps engaging testimony concerning the past lives of both the book and its former owner(s). But of particular interest are those findings that relate back to the book's author. Most commonly these will comprise a simple inscription to a family member, friend, acquaintance or stranger, though a note, postcard, letter, poem, photo or other piece of ephemera may occasionally surface too.

So what, realistically, might the prospective WG buyer hope to find? Most likely, of course, a simple author's signature,<sup>2</sup> with or without a date, such as the five below (the last from a copy of *Poldark's Cornwall*):

# MOON

*A Novel of Cornwall*

1794-5

WINSTON GRAHAM

*Winston Graham*

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# SWORD

A NOVEL OF CORNWALL

1815-1816

*∞*

*With best wishes,*

*Winston Graham*

---

*The Sleeping Partner*

WINSTON GRAHAM

Winston Graham  
27<sup>th</sup> May, 1966

*Walking Stick*

by

Winston Graham

Winston Graham  
30<sup>th</sup> March, 1967

Winston Graham  
25<sup>th</sup> July, 1983

You may find a personalised dedication, with or without added sentiments:

Ellie  
from Winston, with love.  
28.6.56

From a first edition *Sleeping Partner*

District Officer S. J. Coombes,  
from a very junior  
coastguard.

17/9/42.

---

WINSTON GRAHAM

To Robert  
from Winston . Oct. 1976 .

(To pass an idle hour or two)

with affection

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(1) A neatly inscribed dedication in a copy of WG's rarest book, *Night Journey* (Ward, Lock, 1941) (2) From a Bodley Head edition of *Greek Fire*

For Alan & Winifred  
with my love.  
W.

January, 1958

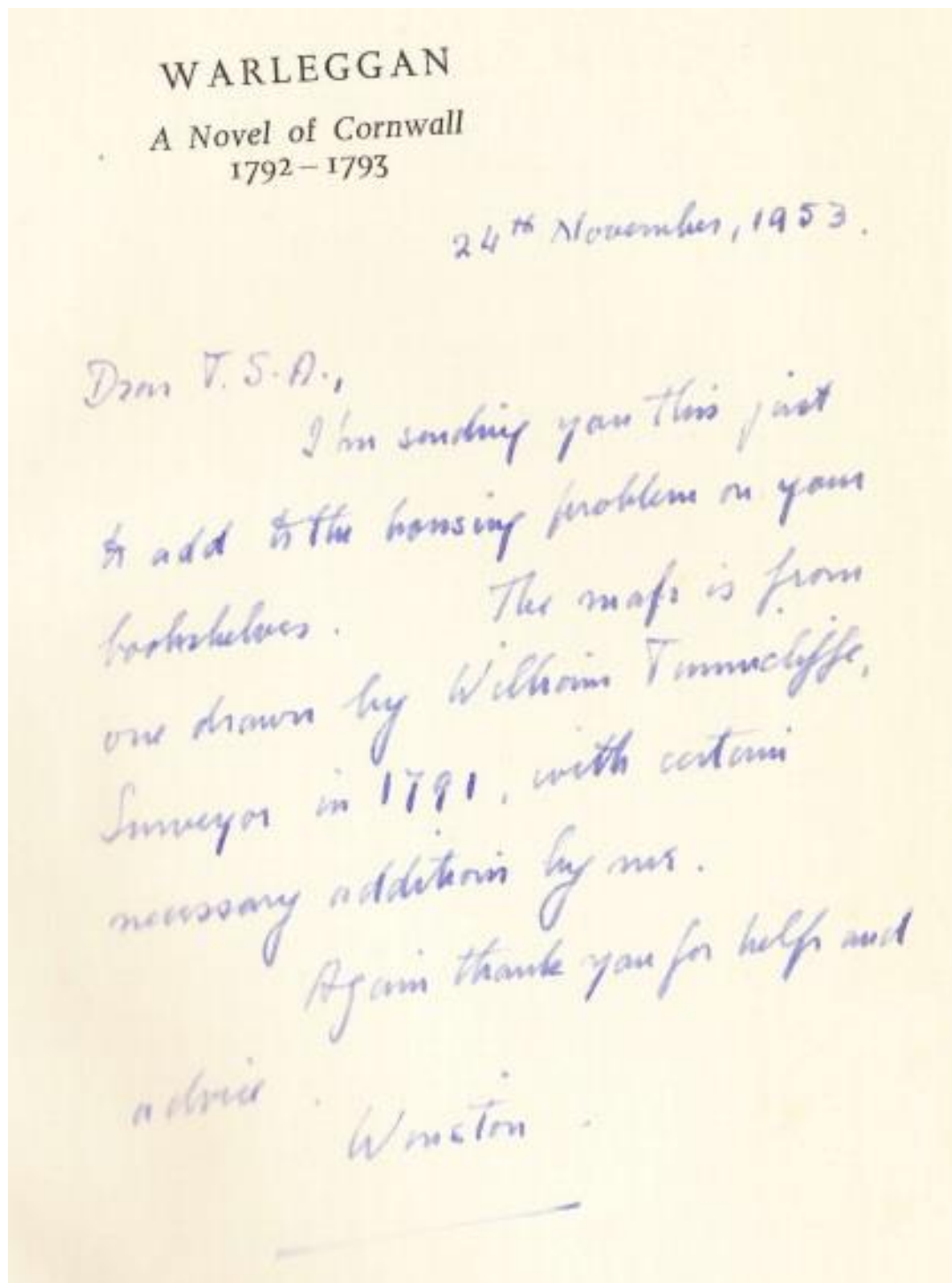
To Robert  
from  
Winston

with love.

September, 1977

From first editions of *Greek Fire* (top) and *The Angry Tide*

The author's handwritten comments may be informative:



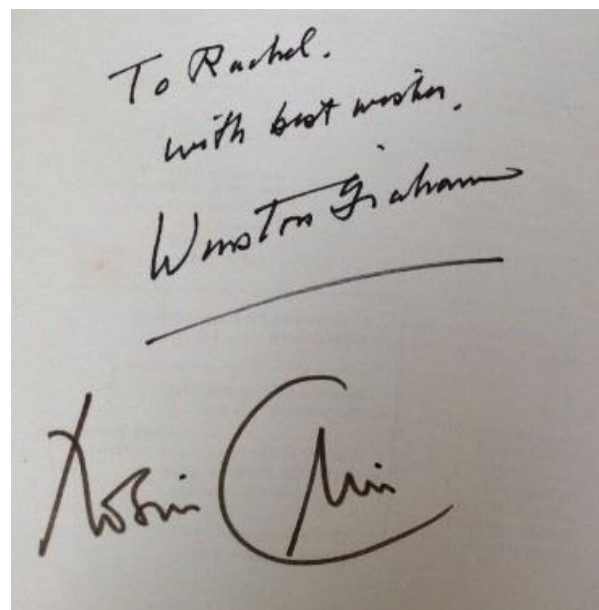
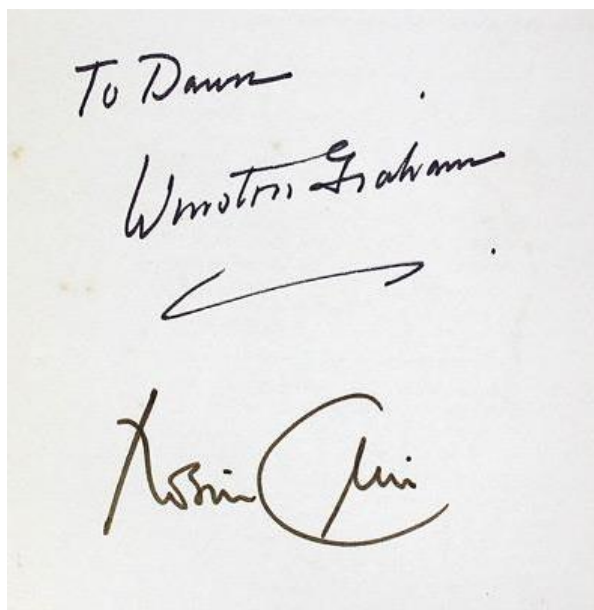
Above: WG presented a first edition copy of *Warleggan* to his friend and mentor Tom Attlee with this inscription, which confirms that he did NOT draw the map in that book, though he did annotate it.

Below: lines added by its author to a presentation copy of *The Renegade* (Doubleday, 1951).

My dear Eric,  
This is the American version of  
'Ross Poldark', and I send it as being  
more decorative than the English  
The story I suspect is the same.  
With best wishes,  
Winston

1952

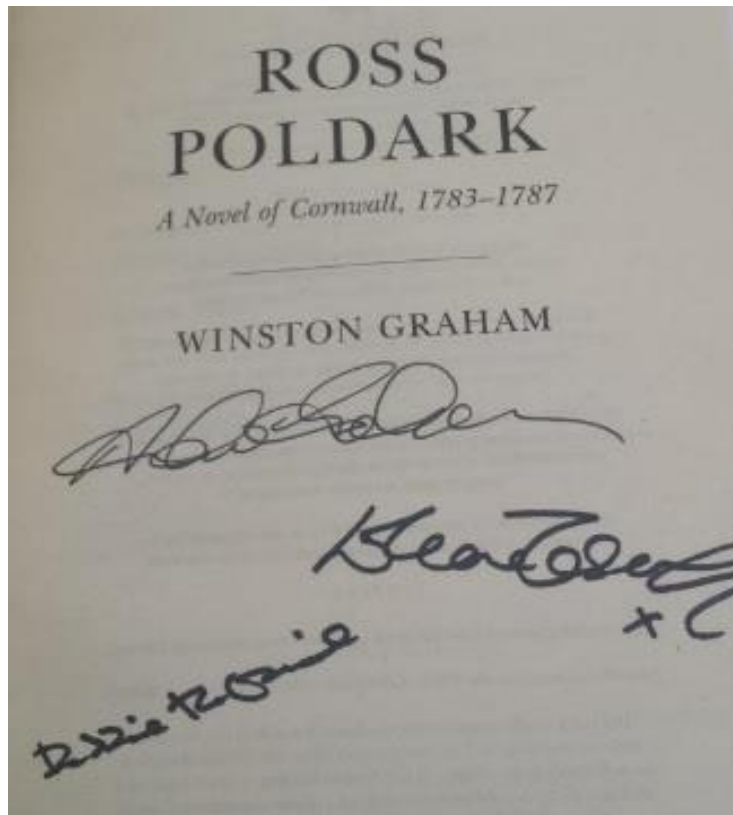
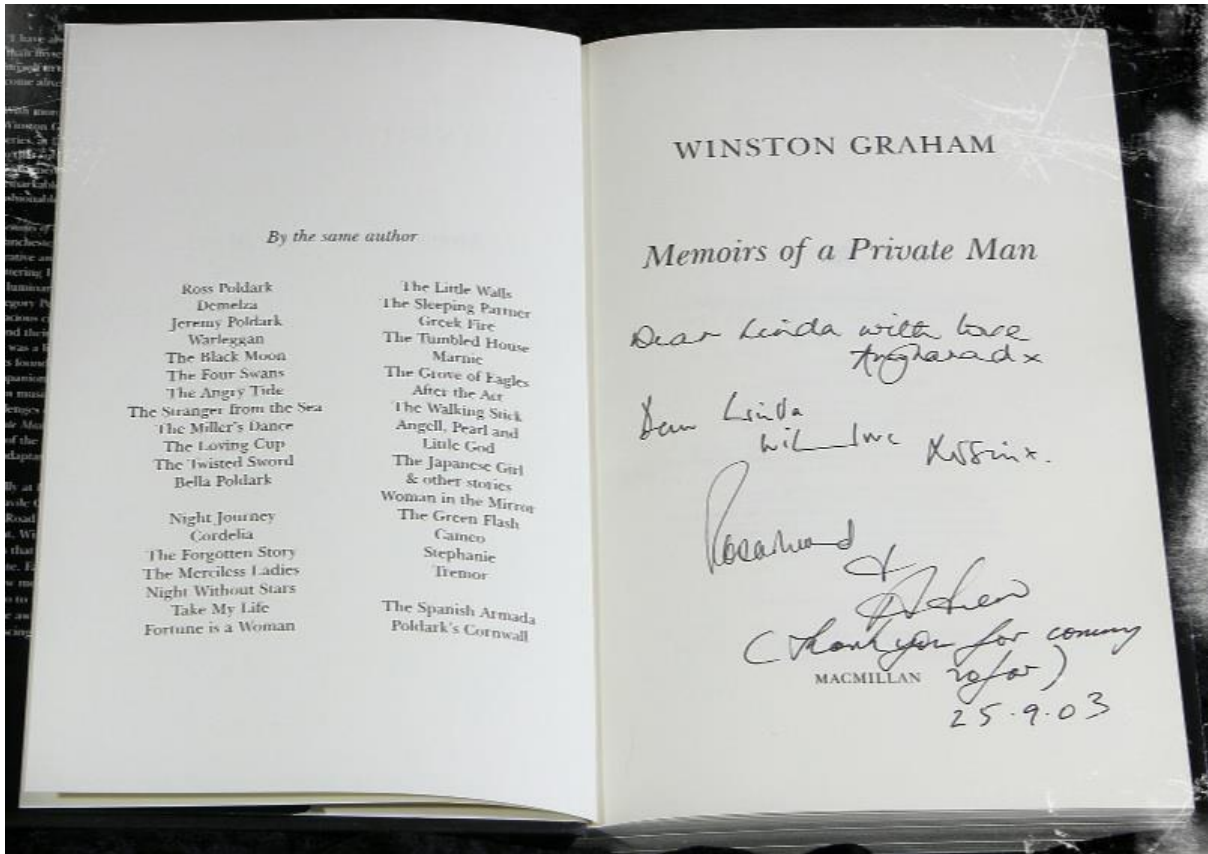
You may find two or more signatures for the price of one:



These two copies of *The Angry Tide* are signed by both their author  
and *Poldark* actor Robin Ellis

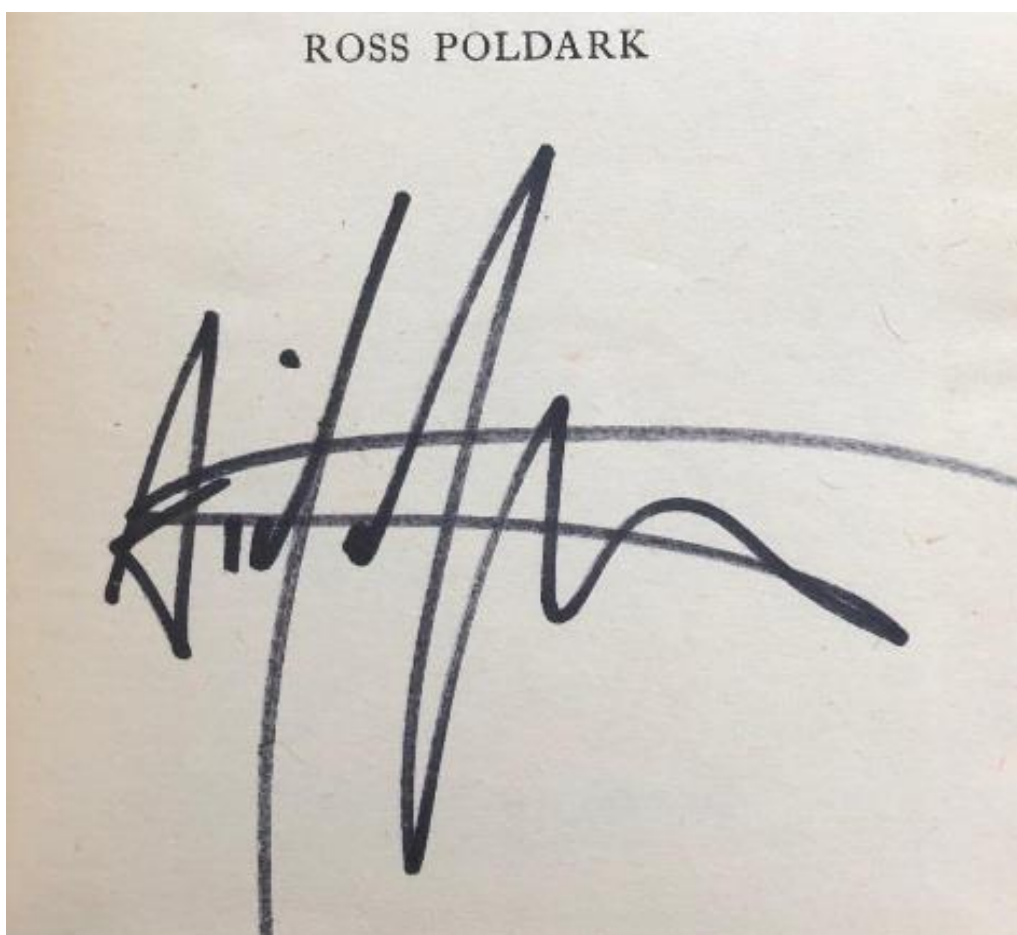
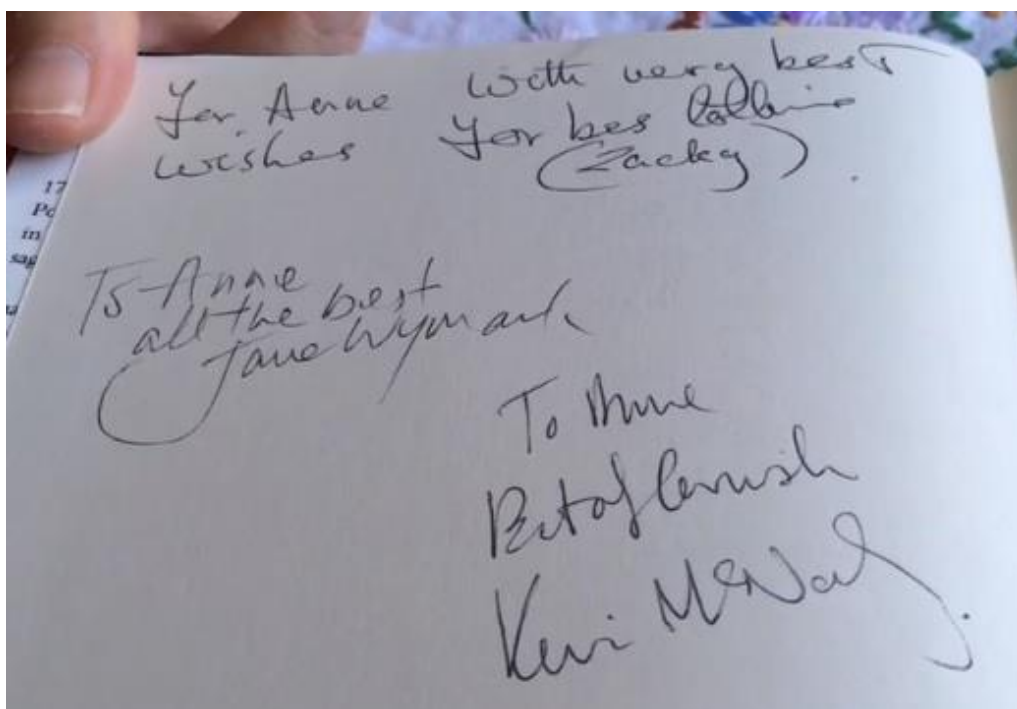
Or one or more signatures you didn't expect:

Below: *Memoirs of a Private Man* signed by *Poldark* actors Angharad [Rees]  
and Robin [Ellis] and WG's two children Rosamund and Andrew in Truro on  
25 September 2003.



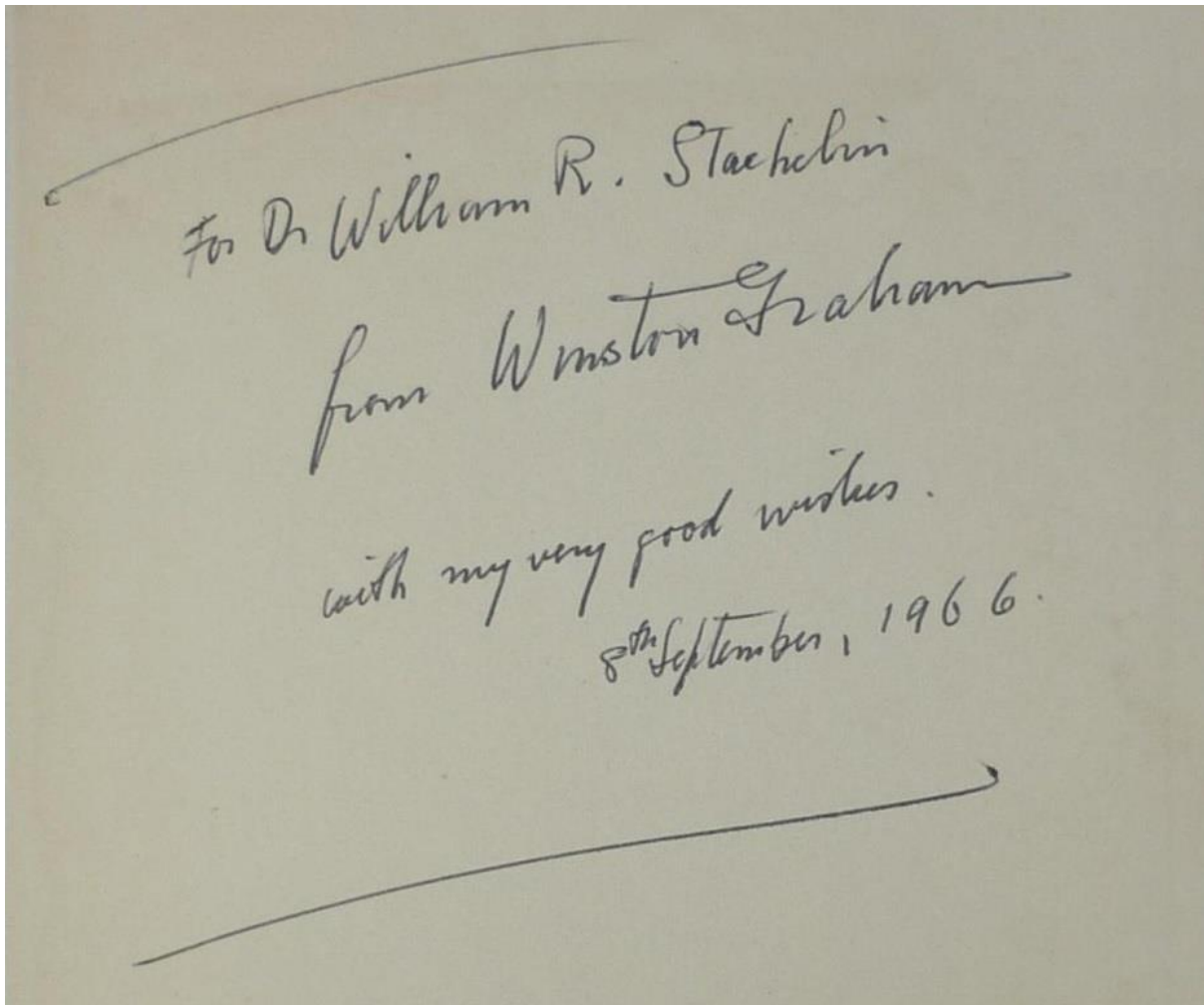
Above: a paperback *Ross Poldark* signed by Andrew Graham, Eleanor Tomlinson and Debbie Horsfield (the last two Mammoth Screen's Demelza and scriptwriter respectively).



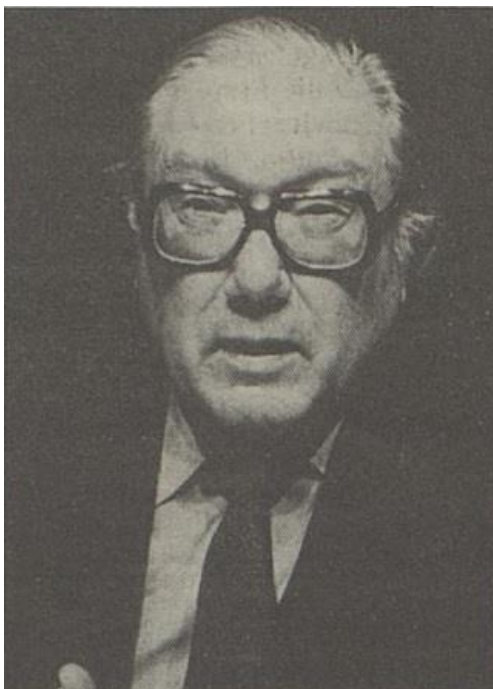


(1) A copy of *The Twisted Sword* signed in April 1991 by BBC *Poldark* actors Forbes Collins, Jane Wymark and Kevin McNally [aka Zacky, Morwenna and Drake] (2) A WL first edition *Ross Poldark* signed by third screen-Ross Aiden Turner. The asking price for this book is £1,250!

You may stumble upon a mystery:



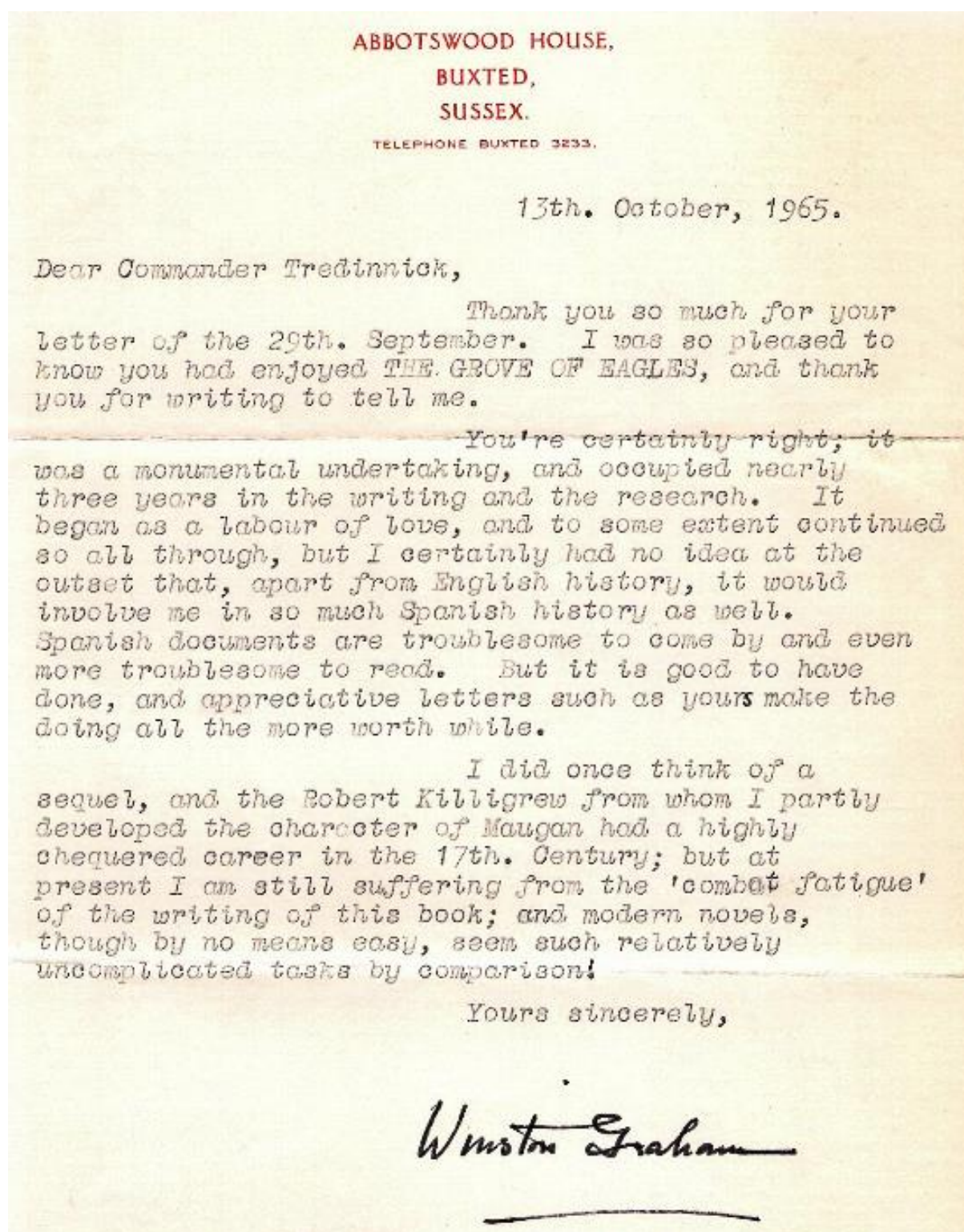
For Dr William R. Staehelin  
from Winston Graham  
with my very good wishes.  
8<sup>th</sup> September, 1966.



DR. WILLIAM ROBERT "WILLY" STAEHELIN (1917-1996) (left) was a Swiss lawyer, art collector, big game hunter and honorary Consul-General for South Africa in Zurich who managed investments for celebrity and other clients.

WG presented Staehelin with at least four inscribed volumes of his work: an H&S 1961 *Marnie* in September 1966 (see above), a Doubleday 1960 *Tumbled House* "with cordial wishes" in May 1968 and two copies of *The Walking Stick* (Collins, 1967) on date or dates unknown.

Perhaps best of all are the surprise pieces of bonus memorabilia – e.g. this letter, tucked inside a bookseller's copy of *The Grove of Eagles*:



Along similar lines, a copy of WG's 1944 novel *The Merciless Ladies* recently offered for sale online was described thus:

A good reading copy of the first edition with a literary letter in the author's hand to his friend H. S. Read. The letter is pasted down on the free front end papers and reads:

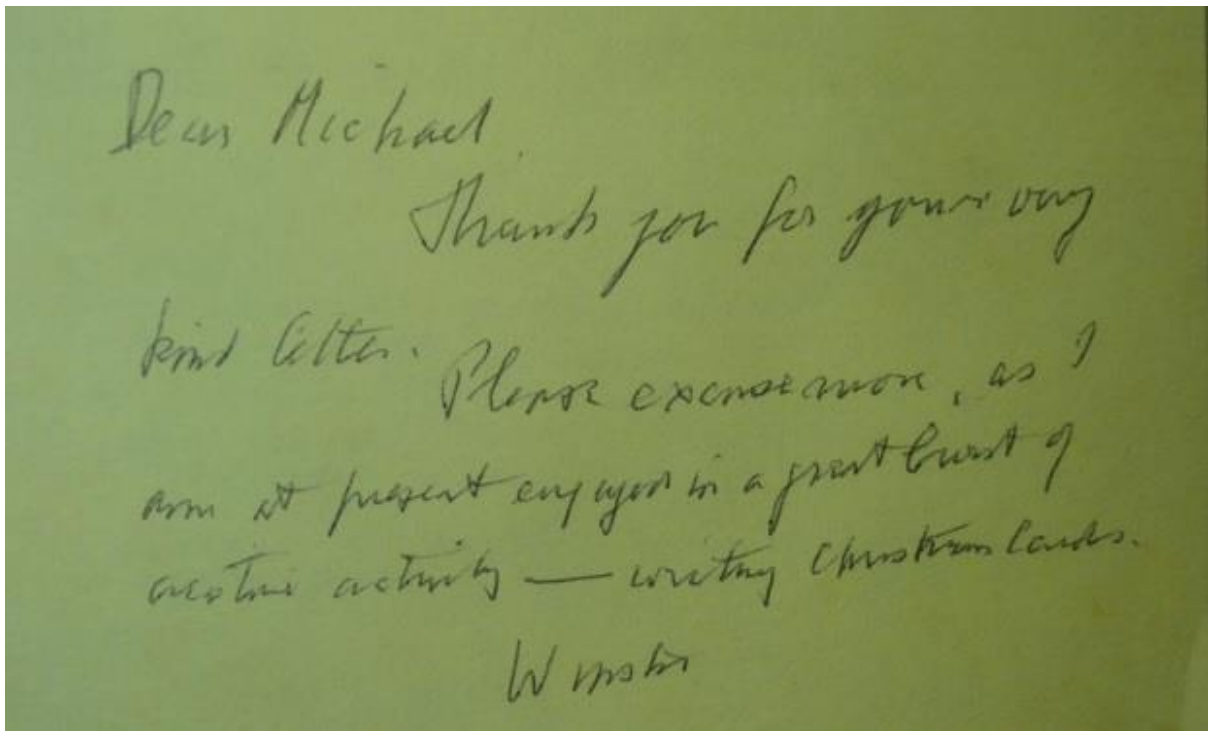
*Dear Readie, this book is rather a change from my usual style but I think you must have a copy. Have you read The Small Back Room by Nigel Balchin? About the back room boys and other things right up your street. Rings the authentic note all through. Fran joins us, all the best.*

*Yours Winston*

On the opposite free front endpaper Graham writes:

*H. S. Read with the compliments of the author, 22/1/44*

WG's friend Michael Williams sold a hardback copy of *The Four Swans* with this Post-it note laid inside:



*Dear Michael,  
Thank you for your very  
kind letter. Please excuse me, as I  
am at present engaged in a great burst of  
creative activity — writing Christmas cards.  
Winston*

WG writes: *Dear Michael, Thank you for your very kind letter. Please excuse note (?), as I am at present engaged in a great burst of creative activity – writing Christmas cards. Winston*

This surprise inclusion changed hands inside a signed first edition of *The Black Moon*. The card's addressee, Mr. Frederic Stanley "Stan" Hodges, was a "well-known Sussex bookseller in regular contact with WG through the late 1960s and early 1970s."<sup>3</sup>



Thank you so much for the very nice dinner which I enjoyed, undeservedly, all the more having to do nothing after it! It was good to meet the all yours' family, & we thought the Chairman as well as the speaker, excellent.

Kind regards -  
Sincerely,  
Winston Graham

183.  
ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΟΝ. (Μουσείο). "Ο Πρίγκιπς τῶν Κρινῶν. Τοίχο-γραφία Ἀνακτοῦ Κνωσῶν.  
HERAKLEION (Musée). Le prince des Lis. Fresque du Palais de Cnossos  
HERACLION (Museum). The Prince of the Lilies. Fresco of the Cnossos' Palace  
HERAKLION (Museum). Der Prinz der Lilien. Freskomalerei des Palasts der Knossos  
ERACLIO (Museo). Il Principe dei gigli. Affresco del Palazzo di Cnosso

DELTA  
DICKFIELD  
7 OCT  
1966

Mr Hodges,  
Messrs Mason & Hodges,  
6, Goring Road,  
Worthing.

Finally, you'd need to be very fortunate to have something like this fall from a newly-acquired book into your lap:



WG's old Harrods store card – provenance unknown

\* \* \* \* \*

## NOTES AND SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> John Dewing (text slightly adapted).

<sup>2</sup> In *Just Biggins : My Story* (John Blake Publishing Ltd, 2008) Christopher Biggins relates how, for one unsuspecting reader, such a signature appeared as if by magic:

*Once I joined [the Grahams] on holiday in Menorca ... We were all laughing because a lady sunbathing near us was reading one of Winston's ... novels. So when she went into the sea for a swim he dashed over and signed it. Did she see him? Did she ever notice the signature? Did she dismiss it as a joke? Who knows, but it was lovely to conjure up a mystery for her ...*

<sup>3</sup> From Mr. Hodges' son John, with thanks.