

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.¹

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,² 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

SWORD

A NOVEL OF CORNWALL

1815-1816

∞

With best wishes,

Winston Graham

The Sleeping Partner

WINSTON GRAHAM

Winston Graham
27th May, 1966

Walking Stick

by

Winston Graham

Winston Graham
30th March, 1967

Winston Graham
25th 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

(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*

The Rev John Tarplee
from the Author.

with good wishes, and in
friendship.

Easter, 1954.

WINSTON GRAHAM

for Greg & Veronique
from Winston,
affectionately.
2nd December, 1963.

(1) In a Ward, Lock *Cordelia* (2) In a copy of *The Grove of Eagles*
gifted to Mr and Mrs Gregory Peck

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*

Mr. Grime

October, 1934.

With love
from
the Author.

M. Grime
9 Burlington St
Blackburn

With love from
the Author.

12th March, 1935.

With love,

Winston.

16th October, 1935.

With love

from

Winston

April, 1936.

With love from

Winston.

18th January, 1938.

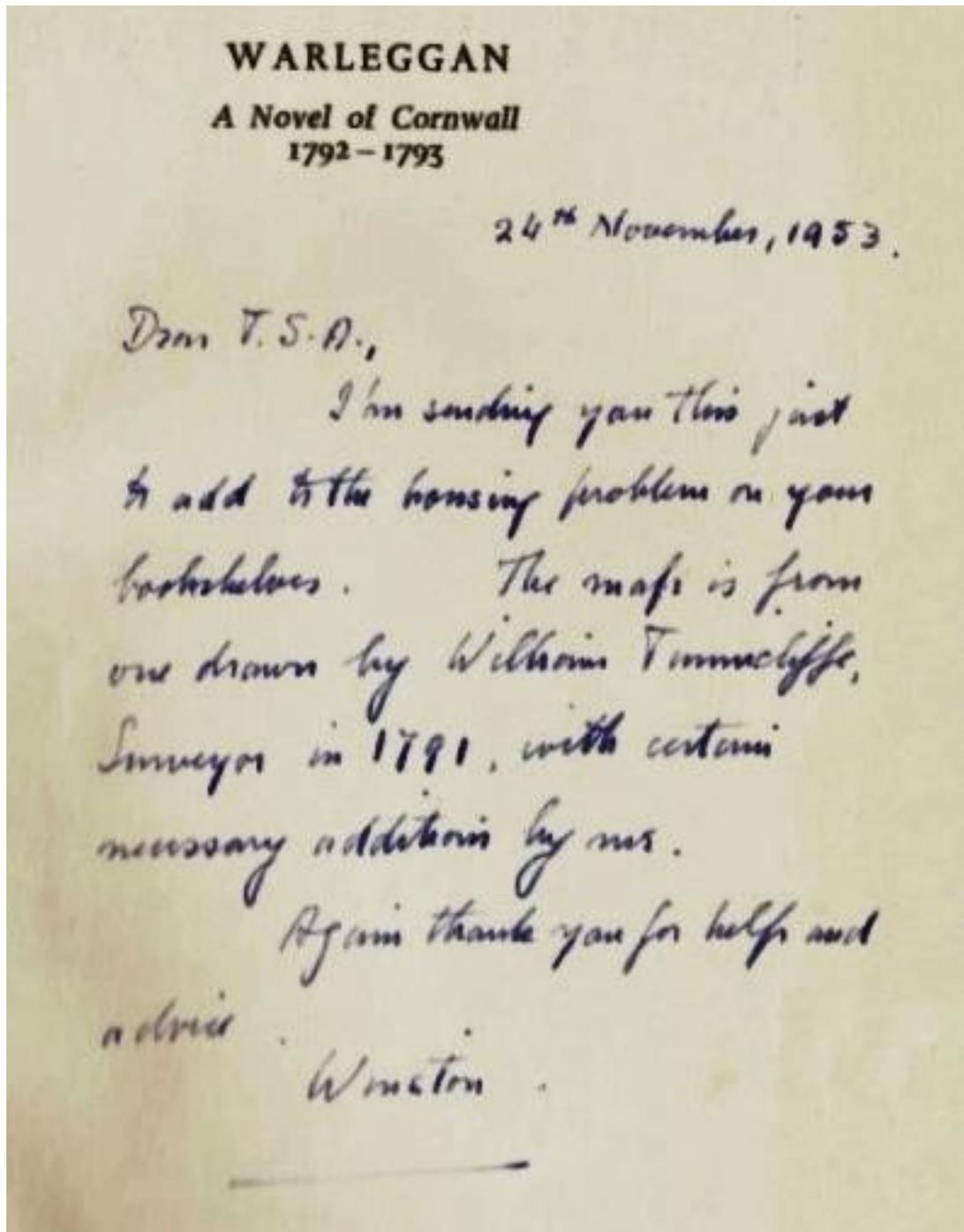
With love from
Winston.
6th January, 1939.

Mollie
from Winston.
with love. 19/2/53

from Winston.
with much love,
23rd June, 1955.

Pages 7-9 above: dedications from WG to his Aunt Mollie in Blackburn in respectively *The House with the Stained Glass Windows*, *Into the Fog*, *The Riddle of John Rowe*, *Without Motive*, *The Giant's Chair*, *Keys of Chance*, *Fortune is a Woman* and *The Little Walls*. She died in 1959.

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 (it was drawn by William Tunncliffe, Surveyor, whose name has no "e" on the end), though he did annotate it.

Below: lines added by its author to a copy of *The Renegade* (Doubleday, 1951) gifted to Ward, Lock chairman Eric Shipman.

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:

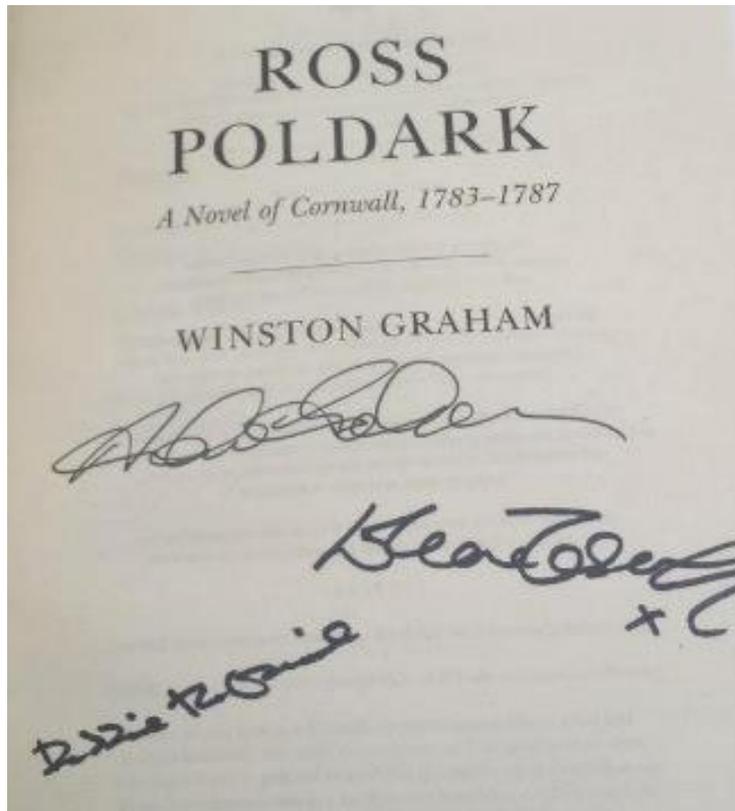
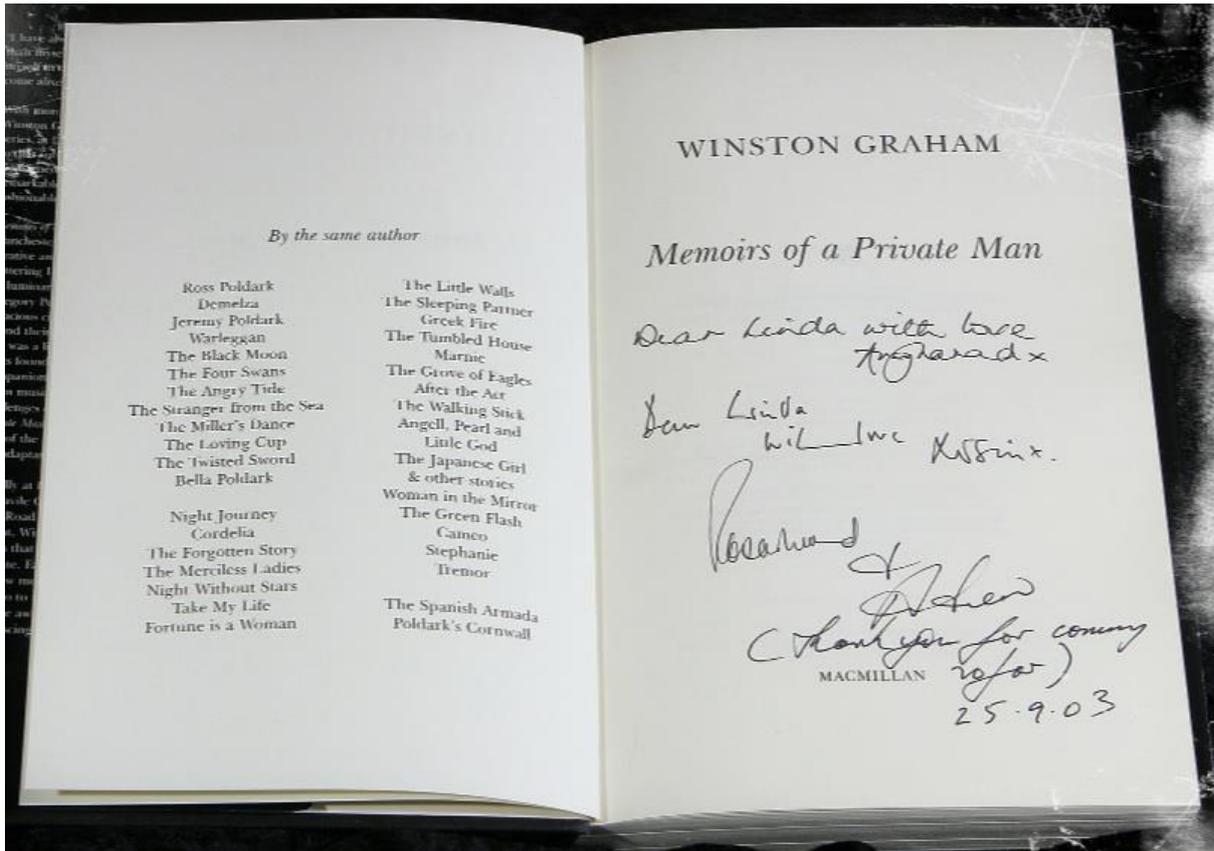
To Dawn
Winston Graham
Robin Ellis

To Rachel,
with best wishes,
Winston Graham
Robin Ellis

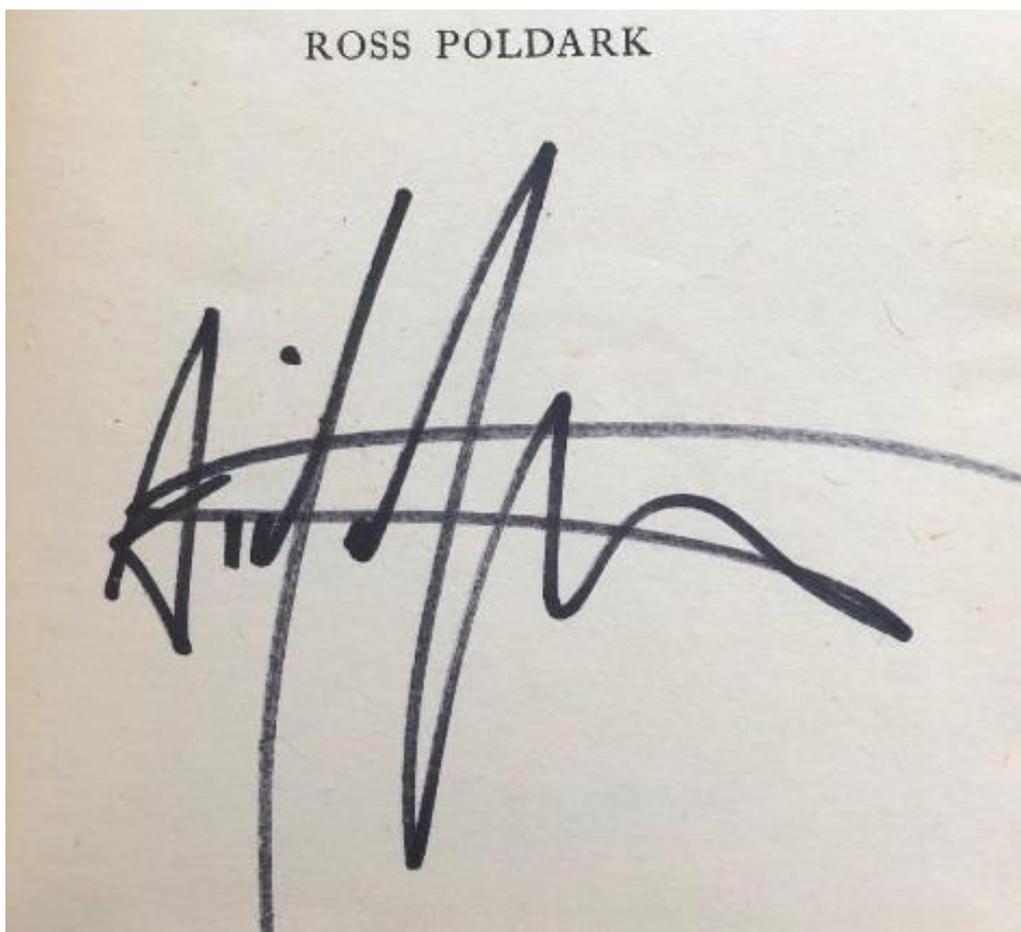
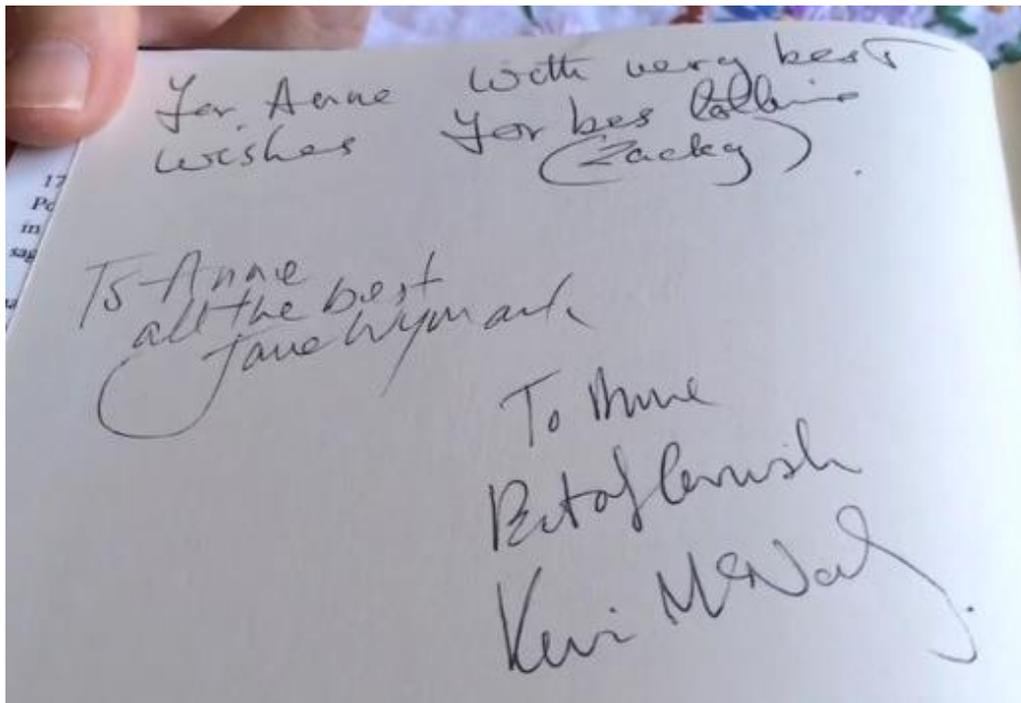
These two copies of *The Angry Tide* are signed by both their author
and *Poldark* actor Robin Ellis

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 Aidan Turner. The asking price for this book is £1,250!

THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

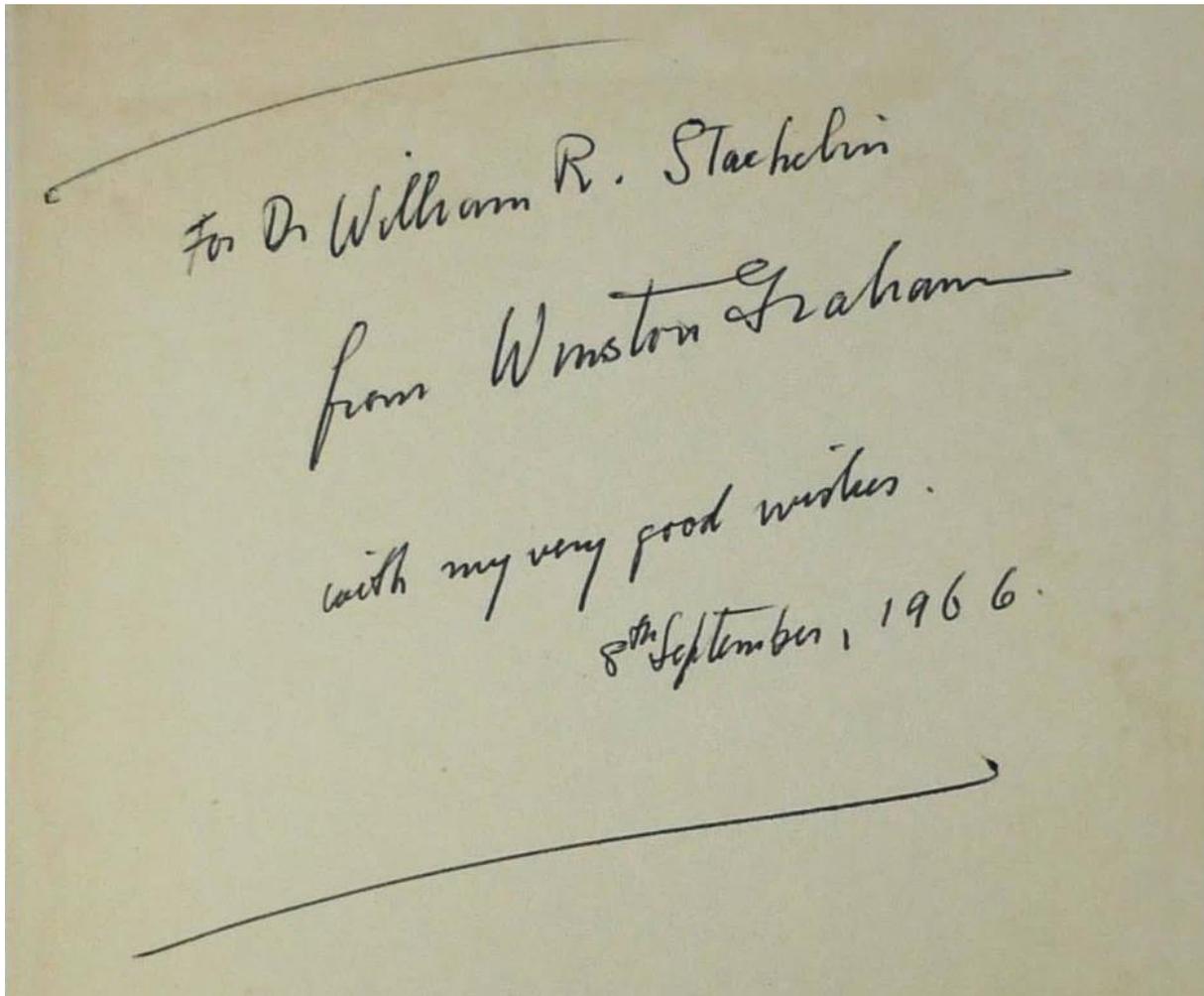
BY
WINSTON GRAHAM

Winston Graham
Xmas. 1934

This copy of WG's first novel is inscribed on its front endpaper by the author and on its back by his mother, who gifted it (date unknown) to Vera Polgreen.

To Vera
with love
from
Mrs. Grinne.

You may stumble upon a mystery:



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



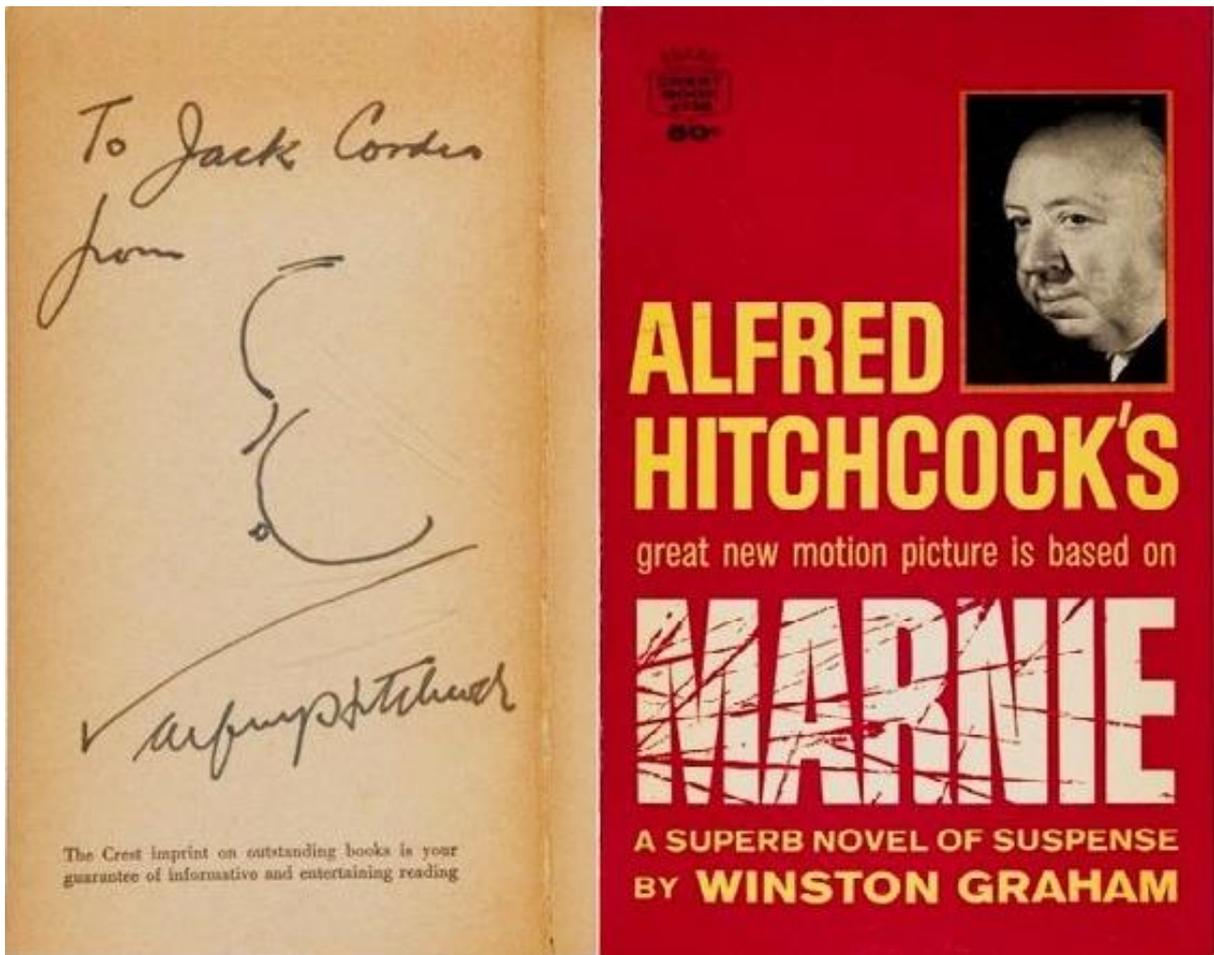
DR. WILLIAM ROBERT "WILLY" STAEHELIN (1917-1996) (left) was a Swiss lawyer, art collector, big game hunter and honorary Consul-General for South Africa in Zurich who managed investments for celebrity and other clients.

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.

Lothar
from Winston
with every good wish.
1955.

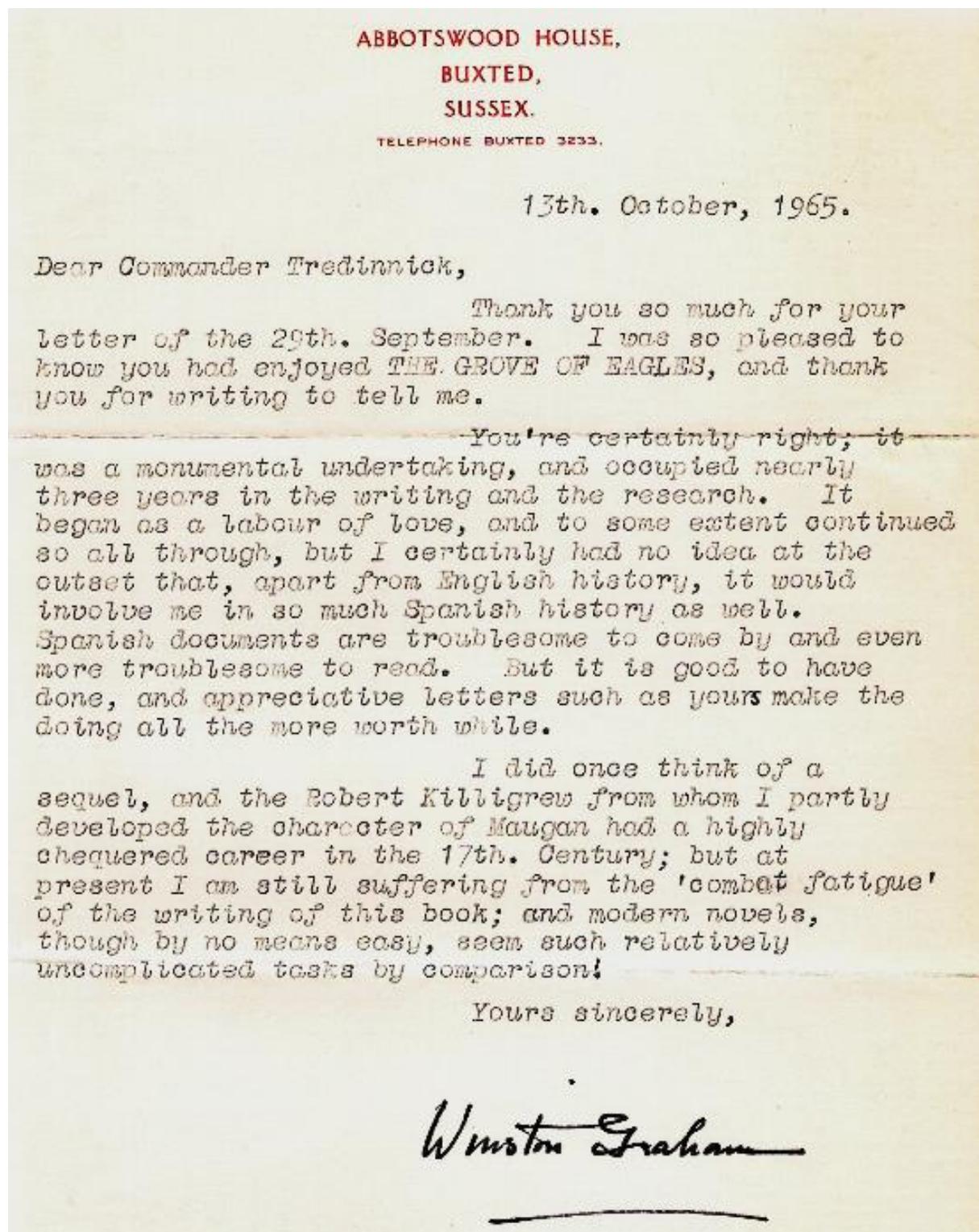
(in a copy of *The Little Walls* – but who is Lothar?)

or a surprise:



A Crest *Marnie* with Hitchcock signature

Perhaps best of all are unexpected items of 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:

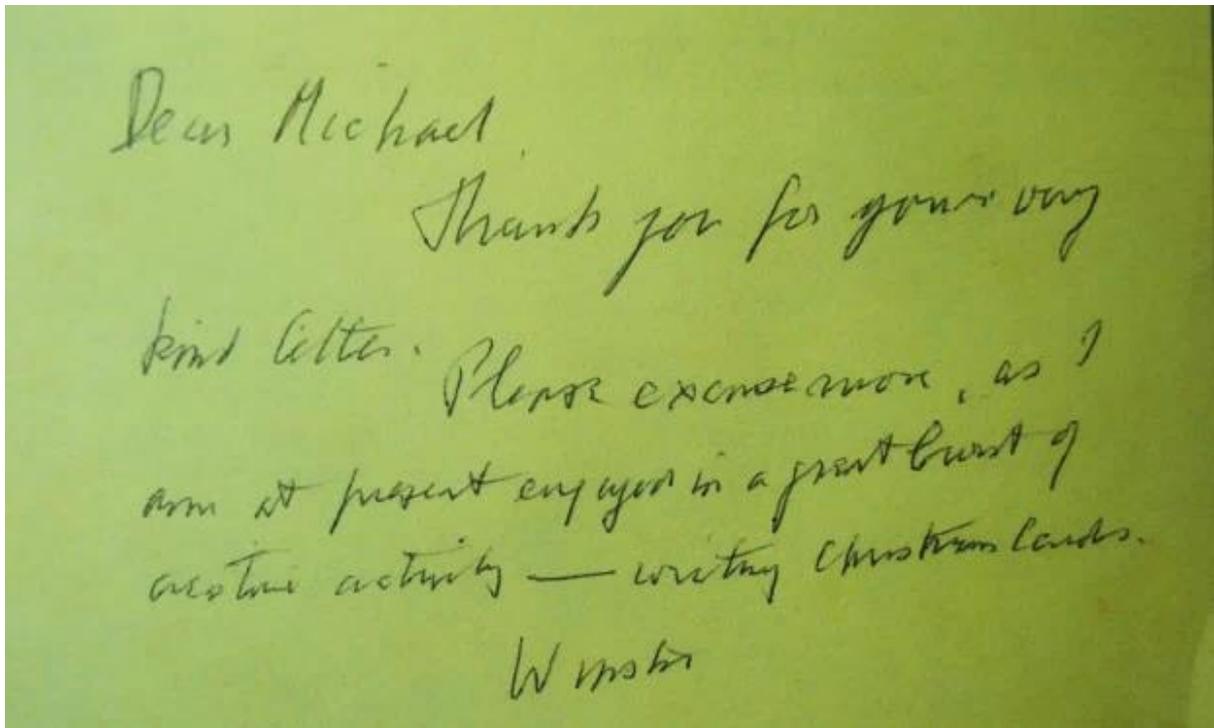
Dear Readie, this book is rather a change from my usual style but I think you must have a copy. Have you read The Small Back Room by Nigel Balchin? About the back room boys and other things right up your street. Rings the authentic note all through. Fran joins us, all the best.

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*

Savile Club
SODALITAS CONVIVIUM

Dear John,

This is not meant
to be tit for tat, but
just a friendly gesture.

Winston

10/10/96

69 Brook Street,
Telephone 01

John,

from

Winston

Con amore

10th October, 1996

This handwritten note (above) and inscription (right) were in a Carroll & Graf (US) Stephanie given by WG to fellow Savilian John Cluckrose.

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."³



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

Kind regards -
Sincerely,
Winston Graham

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

DELTA
BUCKFIELD
7 OCT
1968
"Ανακτορῶν ὁ Υἱός - Αἰ. 1400 π.Χ."

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

¹ John Dewing (text slightly adapted).

² 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 ...

³ From Mr. Hodges' son John, with thanks.