

Creating a sensation on paper and television

'Every character a writer creates has a bit of himself in'

THE mild-mannered, gently spoken man who opened the door resembled neither Dr Jekyll or Mr Hyde — yet admitted to being both.

Author Winston Graham lives and writes in Buxted, and has become a household name to millions of TV viewers who follow the Poldark series.

But the man who has created this expansive, enthralling story of Cornish life on which the series is based, has also created some of the most compelling psychological thrillers of recent times.

"It's the Jekyll and Hyde side of my personality," explained Winston Graham, "and I find the change stimulating."

In fact it takes most people some while to register that the author of Poldark is also the author of, among others, *Marnie*, and *The Walking Stick*, both of which have been filmed.

He did consider writing under a different name, but then decided that Winston Graham might just as well get the credit for both sides of his "split personality."

Mr Graham has lived in Buxted since 1961, coming to Sussex after 28 years in Cornwall.

"I decided to leave Cornwall because it was becoming too comfortable for me. I chose Sussex because, after Cornwall, it was the only other county in England where I would want to live."

The second Poldark series to be televised is likely to draw even larger audiences than the first, but is hardly likely to make Winston Graham's fortune.

That was made way back in the late 1940s when the Poldark books first appeared. There was a break of 18 years before he decided to embark on further Poldark novels and it was during that time he wrote thrillers.

His thrillers are taut and disciplined. "But I enjoy the breadth and freedom of the historical novel," he explained, "and that is why I returned to Poldark in 1973."

The new series began only a few months from the point where the first one finished, and there was no indication at all of the 18-year-gap in the writing of them.

Winston Graham is delighted with this second television version — particularly as he managed to persuade the producer to stick to the original script.

In fact he is supervising each one himself, and has spent several weeks on location with the cast.

He is one of those rare beings — an author who approves the choice of cast by a producer. In fact he has become firm friends with them all, and took time off on location in Cornwall to photograph some of the stars himself.

Is Ross Poldark in any sense a self-portrait? "Not really," Winston Graham replies, "but every character a writer creates must contain

a tiny part of himself." If this were not so, the characters would be wooden and unconvincing, he believes.

Ross interests him as a character because behind the colourful, swashbuckling figure there is always an element of self-criticism.

Winston Graham has been fortunate enough to spend all his working life as a writer. Helped by some money left to him, he began writing for a living while still in his teens and every book he has ever written since then has been published — though he refuses now to have some of those early novels reprinted.

He cannot remember ever wanting to do anything else with his life except write, but admits that long periods of illness as a child, plus the promptings of a mother with a very vivid imagination, fanned the flame.

It takes him up to three years to complete a novel — principally because he cannot communicate on a typewriter and writes every word by hand.

The study where he works at his home in Buxted overlooks a vast garden which extends to several acres and includes a tennis court and swimming pool.

Most of his writing is done

between the hours of 4 pm and 8 pm and the only person with whom he will discuss the problems of a novel is his wife, Jean.

The Graham's have a son and a daughter — their son is an economics don at Oxford and their daughter is married and lives in Crowborough.

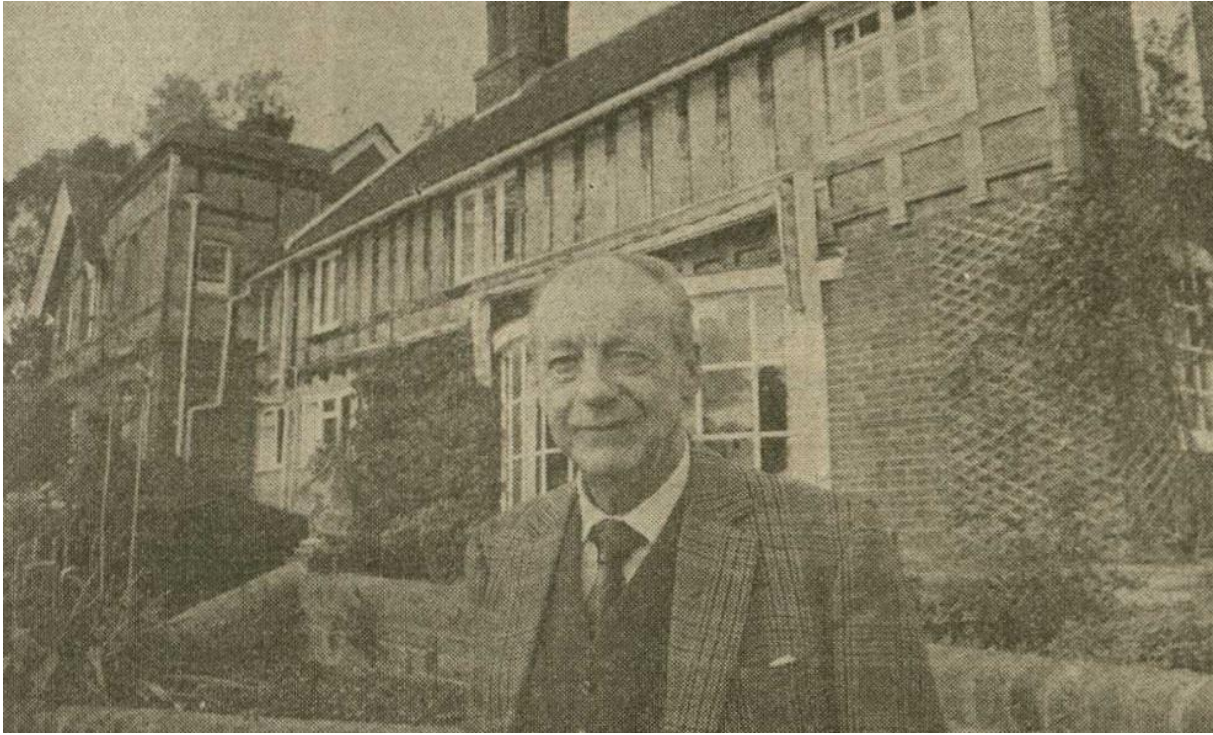
Regretfully, Winston Graham has little time to participate in the village life of Buxted, as he travels up to London a good deal, and is often away on location.

In addition he has been writing one final book in the Poldark series, *The Angry Tide*, completed in April.

Winston Graham looks back on his highly successful career as a writer without regrets. He admits there is a danger that a writer may live someone else's life more vividly than his own and feels that one should write as one lives — not live first and write about it later.

The committed writer, he says, will write whatever happens. Nothing will stop him. Without that kind of commitment, he will fall by the wayside.

"I have lived a marvellous life," says Winston Graham "and would not have had it any other way."



Caption: Author Winston Graham and his Buxted home with several acres, tennis court and swimming pool.

* * * * *