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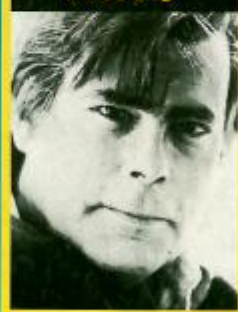
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WINSTON GRAHAM

AUTHOR OF THE 'POLDARK' SERIES

BY TIM SCOTT

Ross Poldark first rode across our television screens in the autumn of 1975 — almost thirty years after Winston Graham had written the first book of the Cornish family saga which has only just concluded with the publication of *The Twisted Sword* (Chapman, 1990).

There was little doubt the television series would be a success. Graham's story of the Poldark and Warleggan families in late eighteenth-century Cornwall contained all the right ingredients — passion, romance, adventure, suspense, and an element of humour, all dressed up in period costume. Set against a background of rugged picturesque Cornish scenery, the series soon found a captive audience who avidly followed the fortunes of Ross, Demelza (the urchin he rescues from a fair-ground scuffle), Elizabeth, Francis, Verity and arch-enemy George Warleggan.

BEST-SELLERS

Although the first four books of the saga — *Ross Poldark* (1945), *Demelza* (1946), *Jeremy Poldark* (1950) and *Warleggan* (1953), all published by Ward Lock — had been best-sellers, the television series introduced the story to a whole new generation. It is not really surprising, therefore, that the titles have never been out of print. Nevertheless, first editions are quite scarce today and very collectable.

Whilst the Poldark books may have brought Graham's name to a mass audience, it was not these historical novels but later classic suspense stories that brought him literary respectability, and made him financially secure as a professional author.

Born in Manchester before the Great War,



in the late 1920s Winston Graham moved with his parents to Perranporth, a small village on the north coast of Cornwall. After he finished his education he began writing, and by the time he was twenty-three he was able to make a reasonable living. All his manuscripts were produced in longhand.

Like so many writers and artists before and since, Graham quickly became caught up in the aesthetic and inspirational atmosphere of the region, and spent many hours researching Cornish history, becoming particularly interested in its most prosperous period

during the eighteenth century. In the early days of his career, though, he published just a few contemporary thrillers (only one of which was set in Cornwall) — novels which as his popularity grew he ensured remained out of print. He later wrote: "My early novels — and Heaven help me they were all published . . . I have mercifully been able to suppress."

Although some of these stories were later rewritten and published under different titles, the original pre-1940 books must be regarded as extremely scarce, if not virtually unobtainable. Graham's 1941 title was a spy story written in the dark days of 1940. It sold just a few hundred copies before the printer's master type was destroyed in an air-raid!

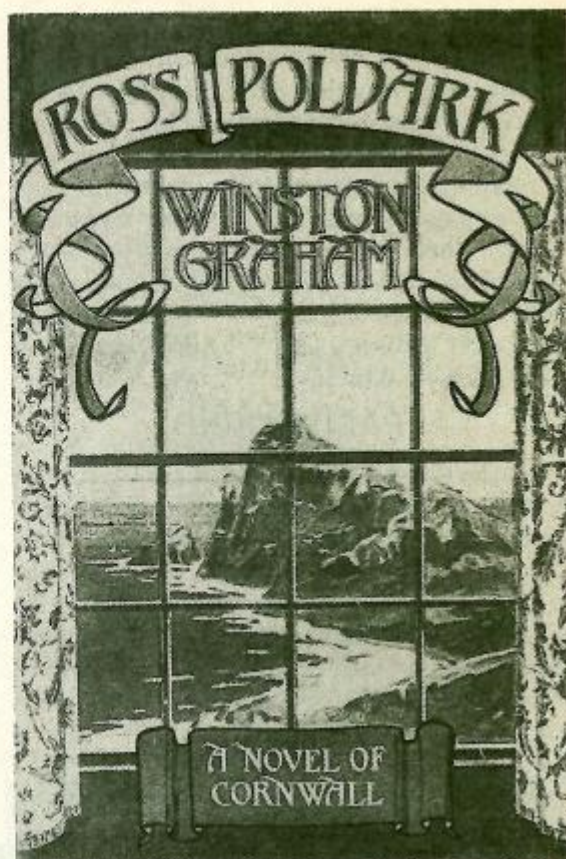
CONFUSION

The book was reprinted by The Bodley head in 1966, who have also reissued many of Graham's titles. Some confusion exists here for I have seen these reprints referred to as first editions. The problem is created because the publishing history printed in the book is not always accurate and explicit, and in some cases only the 'first published' date is shown. Some Fontana paperback editions also give inaccurate or contradictory information.

It was Winston Graham's first historical novel published just a few months before *Ross Poldark* that brought him an early taste of success. *The Forgotten Story* (Ward Lock, 1945) is set in Falmouth at the close of the last century, when the Cornish town was a major trading port. Graham recreates the atmosphere of a bustling sea-port during the last decade of sailing ships superbly. As in so many of his books the prologue sets the final background to which the story builds.

Of particular interest in the book is the name 'Sawle Graham' he used for a Cornish village, because 'Sawle' was also used in the Poldark books. *The Forgotten Story* was made into a 6-part serial by ITV in 1983. It starred Welsh actress Angharad Rees who so perfectly portrayed the role of Demelza in *Poldark*.

After *Warleggan*, the fourth book in the series, Graham tired of the story, and his interest turned more and more towards the modern suspense novel. By this time he had already written *Take My Life* (1947), *Night*



The first title in Winston Graham's epic saga appeared in 1945. Very Good copies sell for around £15-£20 today.

Without Stars (1950) and *Fortune is a Woman* (1953). The film rights to all three were sold and the films produced between 1947 and 1956.

Over the next few years he more than made his mark with this genre, producing other titles like *The Little Walls* (1955), *The Sleeping Partner* (1956) and *The Tumbled House* (1959). A film version of *The Sleeping Partner* was made in 1958, and a television version produced in 1967. Perhaps his best-known title, though, was *Marnie*, published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1961.

Although the critics like *Marnie*, with the *Spectator* describing it as "... an immensely readable character study of a young woman thief", and it is rightly regarded as a classic, I personally find this story of kleptomaniac Margaret Elmer a little dull. Much of its international success comes from Alfred Hitchcock's film version starring Tippi Hedren

(who also starred in Hitchcock's film version of Daphne du Maurier's *The Birds*) and a young Sean Connery, still flushed with his success as James Bond in *Dr No* and *From Russia With Love*.

Unlike the book the film met with little critical favour, and one reviewer described the production as "curiously artificial". Although the book itself reached the top of the best-seller lists, a first edition is not particularly easy to find today and could cost up to £20 complete with its dustjacket.

PAINSTAKING

After *Marnie*, Winston Graham returned to historical novels with *The Grove of Eagles* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1963), the story of the famous Cornish family the Killigrews in Elizabethan times. A three-page "Postscript for Purists" is included at the end of the book detailing Graham's obviously painstaking research for the book. A.L. Rowse was moved to write: "Winston Graham has such a knowledge of Elizabethan Cornwall . . . that I am conquered, as no doubt his many readers

will be." *The Grove of Eagles* was also a Book Society choice.

Winston Graham's next 'modern' novel appeared in 1965. *After the Act*, a "penetrating study of human relationships", showed the author at his story-telling best. He quickly followed this novel up with *The Walking Stick* published in 1967. This latter title was filmed by MGM in 1970, starring David Hemmings and Samantha Eggar. This title also marked a change of publisher. With the odd exception William Collins have published all his books since then.

Although Graham's love affair with Cornwall has never ended, after many years living in the county he increasingly felt the creative need to move on. He initially moved to France for a year before settling in Sussex. Visits to Cornwall were still made frequently and he found that by not actually living there he began to discover different areas. This was to prove useful for, paradoxically, it was his absence from the place that drew him back to the Poldark family!

In *Poldark's Cornwall* (Webb & Bower,



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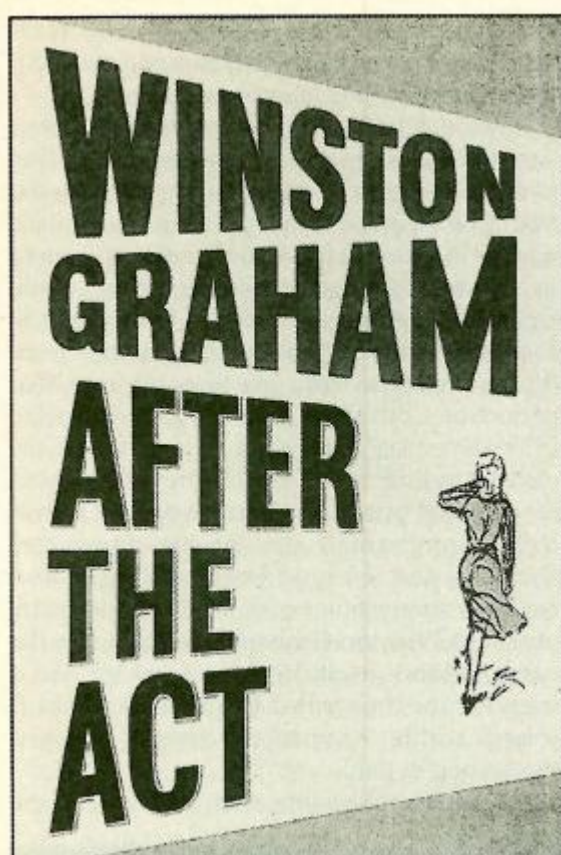
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After the Act was published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1965. Very Good copies are worth £5-£7.

1983), the nearest Graham has ever come to an autobiographical title, he describes how he made the decision to continue the Poldark saga in 1971, and how he picked up the threads of a story that had been left for almost two decades. "I found to my surprise," he wrote, "how much had been remembered: it was as if the characters had remained dormant in the subconscious waiting for the word. Even so, for the first hundred pages it was like breaking the sound barrier."

Two further books were already in the pipeline at this time; another suspense story entitled *Angell, Pearl and Little God*, and a book of short stories called *The Japanese Girl*. This was the first of only two volumes of stories Graham has written.

Having also completed a history of *The Spanish Armadas*, published in 1972 with some superb illustrations, maps and plates, Graham once again immersed himself in 18th century Cornwall. The result was *The Black Moon*

(Collins, 1973). Graham included a short preface to the book by way of explanation before continuing with the story of Nampara, Trenwith and the next generation of the Poldark dynasty.

It had been a successful period for Winston Graham. After the financial success of his suspense novels he had actually contacted his accountant and advised him that his decision to return to the Poldarks would be a loss-making project, but he was wrong. His readers responded enthusiastically to *The Black Moon*, and the book formed the basis of a second television series in 1977.

This series covered two further titles: *The Four Swans* (1976), the title of which referred to the four principal female characters in the book; and *The Angry Tide*, published in 1977. As a matter of interest, the latter title hadn't actually been completed when filming was

As well as the Poldark series, Winston Graham has built up a reputation as a great suspense writer. One of his best titles in this genre is *Angell, Pearl & Little God*.



under way, and it was a measure of the producer's respect for Graham's work that the outcome of the final episode was left open as long as possible until he had completed the book.

These three titles continue to evolve the love story of Ross and Demelza, and the rivalry between the Poldark and Warleggan families. Covering the years 1794 to 1799, the books were set against a background of the French Revolution and the growth of Methodism in Cornwall.

Two interesting spin-offs came out of the television series. One was David Clarke's *Poldark Country* (Bossiney Books, 1977), which featured many photographs of the actors and actresses involved, the locations used for filming, and an interview with Winston Graham, who was much more involved with the production of the second series than the first which he felt had suffered from inconsistent script-writers. The second title was actor Robin Ellis's personal account of the production of the series *Making Poldark* (Bossiney Books, 1978). Ellis portrayed Ross

Poldark in the television series and his well-written little volume contains some excellent 'behind-the-scenes' photographs.

David Clarke's book includes Winston Graham's description of how he found the names that seem to fit his characters so well. Both Demelza and Warleggan are actual place names in Cornwall. Warleggan is a remote hamlet on the edge of Bodmin Moor, while Demelza is signposted just off the main A30 road at Goss Moor. Many other names from the books come from his research into that period of Cornish history. In fact, Demelza ('thy-sweetness'), an unusual and very Cornish-sounding name, hasn't only been used for fictional purposes. Cornish author Denys Val Baker named one of his daughters Demelza, and it would be interesting to find out how many other girls of the same name owe it to Winston Graham's heroine. For the name Poldark itself, Winston Graham had a friend at the time called Polgreen. To make it sound a little 'heavier', he simply changed the second syllable.

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television series is *The Complete Poldark*, the first five novels in the sequence published in attractive paperback editions by Fontana in 1975. All the book covers and the slip-case for the set feature photographs from the main characters in the dramatisations.

In all, twenty-nine episodes were filmed for television over a period of eighteen months. A third series was considered, but Graham declined to be involved, declaring that thirteen new episodes "would have introduced a new element of haste and contrivance into the series".

SUSPENSE

Although he was to write a further six volumes before the conclusion of the saga, his next title was a return to the suspense story. *Woman in the Mirror* is well up to Graham's high standards. Norma Faulkner, who has just lost her father and broken up with her boyfriend, takes a job as secretary to a friend whose isolated house is in the heart of the Welsh mountains. The odd characters she becomes involved with, and the unexplained noises in the living room of her attic quarters provide plenty of suspense as the story builds to its climax. The book was published by The Bodley Head in 1975, and is partly based on an early 'suppressed' novel entitled *The Giant's Chair* (1938).

Despite Graham's apparent dislike of his early books, he also used the theme of his 1942 title *My Turn Next* for one of his latest and most successful novels, *Cameo*. The storyline of this particular title spans just a single week during the dark days of war in Blitz-shattered London.

Despite these successes, *Woman in the Mirror* was to be Graham's last suspense title for several years — between 1976 and 1982 he produced nothing but Poldark! *The Four Swans* and *The Angry Tide* were followed by *The Poldark Quartet*, published by Collins in 1988 as part of their Collectors Series. The eighth title in the saga, *The Stranger from the Sea*, followed in 1981.

The gap of four years between *The Angry Tide* and *Stranger from the Sea* was the longest there had been without a new Winston Graham title since those early beginnings in

WINSTON GRAHAM

Woman in the Mirror



This 1975 title was based on *The Giant's Chair*, a novel Winston Graham suppressed after its publication in 1938.

the mid-1930s — a notable achievement made more so by the fact that most had been best-sellers, and six titles had been filmed. In addition to almost forty books published up to this date, he had also written a stage play called *Circumstantial Evidence* in 1977.

Despite the fact that Graham was now in his seventies, two new titles appeared in 1982 — the pace was certainly not slackening. These were another Poldark, *The Miller's Dance*, and his second volume of short stories entitled *Cornish Farm*.

In contrast to many authors, there are few reference works to give the reader an insight into the life of Winston Graham. There has been no autobiography to date; the only semi-autobiographical title being *Poldark's Cornwall*, published in 1983. Although Graham goes to some lengths to point out the book is not an autobiography, he gives a background to his years in Cornwall which, he says, can be divided into three phases: "The first might

be called the phase of delighted discovery; the second that of sun and sea addiction; the third that of nostalgic return."

The book is extremely well produced with superb illustrations throughout, and gives many clues to Graham's Cornwall as well as the locations used in the television series. It is, therefore, an essential addition to any collection of Winston Graham's works and, although there is a little overlap occasionally, it's a useful companion to Clarke's and Ellis's titles.

PENULTIMATE

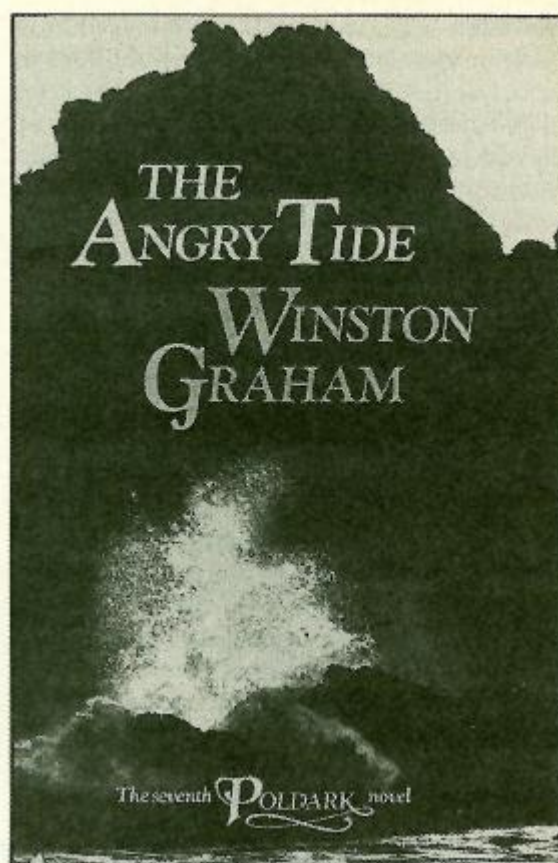
During 1984 the penultimate Poldark title appeared. *The Loving Cup* continues the story of the family, with cousin Geoffrey Charles returning from the war in France with a young bride. One of the Poldarks' mines, Wheal Leisure, re-opens under the supervision of Jeremy Poldark; whilst father Ross continues his successful career at Westminster.

The loving cup itself is a small two-handled silver cup, part of the haul from a stage coach robbery carried out by three of the main characters in the story. The robbery finances their immediate future, but as the stolen strong-box is the property of the Warleggan Bank the threat of discovery continuously hangs over them.

One of the major criticisms of the books is that some of the characters are a little too good to be true, particularly Ross Poldark, who's "more in the sun than the shadow", according to his creator. In a notable postscript to *Poldark's Cornwall*, Graham answered this criticism by explaining that his own experiences of life have been worthwhile and rewarding and, he says, "if in the Poldarks I have tended to show too much of the warmer side, that is my own fault — or my own truth."

In 1986 Graham once again showed his diversity by producing a lengthy modern novel of some 400 pages. *The Green Flash* is set in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and his main character walks a tightrope between legitimate business and the underworld. The story brilliantly recreates the atmosphere of the time, and takes the reader from the world of the wide boys of London to the Scottish Highlands.

The last book in the saga, *The Twisted Sword*



The Angry Tide was the seventh Poldark novel. The saga ended last year with *The Twisted Sword*.

was published last year and is still in print. Other than saying that the year is now 1815 and the background is the Battle of Waterloo, I will leave it to the reader to see how the saga which has dominated Graham's life is brought to a close.

Winston Graham has had a long and distinguished career, and his contribution to the literary world was marked by his appointment as Chairman of the Society of Authors between 1967-69. In 1983 he was awarded the OBE. His books have been translated into 17 languages and have been best-sellers all over the world; but for some reason he seems to have been overlooked by collectors.

For the time being prices of his first editions remain reasonable; but whilst titles published by Collins are fairly easy to find, his early books are rather more scarce. This is particularly true of the first four books in the saga. It's highly likely that prices for these books could rise steadily in the future.

WINSTON GRAHAM

COMPLETE UK BIBLIOGRAPHY

A guide to current values of first editions in VG to F condition with dustjackets

POLDARK SERIES

ROSS POLDARK (Ward Lock, 1945)	£15-£20
DEMELZA (Ward Lock, 1946)	£15-£20
JEREMY POLDARK (Ward Lock, 1950)	£15-£20
WARLEGGAN (Ward Lock, 1953)	£15-£20
THE BLACK MOON (Collins, 1973)	£6-£8
THE FOUR SWANS (Collins, 1976)	£6-£8
THE ANGRY TIDE (Collins, 1977)	£6-£8
THE POLDARK QUARTET (Collins, 1980; omnibus edition)	£8-£10
THE STRANGER FROM THE SEA (Collins, 1981)	£6-£8
THE MILLER'S DANCE (Collins, 1982)	£6-£8
THE LOVING CUP (Collins, 1984)	£6-£8
THE TWISTED SWORD (Chapmans, 1990)	in print £13.95

OTHER TITLES

THE HOUSE WITH THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS (Ward Lock, 1934)	£15+
INTO THE FOG (Ward Lock, 1935)	£15+
THE RIDDLE OF JOHN ROWE (Ward Lock, 1935)	£15+
WITHOUT MOTIVE (Ward Lock, 1936)	£15+
THE DANGEROUS PAWN (Ward Lock, 1937)	£15+
THE GIANT'S CHAIR (Ward Lock, 1938)	£15+
KEYS OF CHANCE (Ward Lock, 1939)	£15+
STRANGERS MEETING (Ward Lock, 1939)	£15+
NO EXIT, AN ADVENTURE (Ward Lock, 1940)	£15+
NIGHT JOURNEY, AN ADVENTURE (Ward Lock, 1941)	£15+
MY TURN NEXT (Ward Lock, 1942)	£15+
THE MERCILESS LADIES (Ward Lock, 1944)	£15+
THE FORGOTTEN STORY (Ward Lock, 1945)	£15-£20
TAKE MY LIFE (Ward Lock, 1947)	£10-£12
CORDELIA (Ward Lock, 1949)	£12-£15
NIGHT WITHOUT STARS (Hodder & Stoughton, 1950)	£10-£12
FORTUNE IS A WOMAN (Hodder & Stoughton, 1953)	£8-£10
THE LITTLE WALLS (Hodder & Stoughton, 1955)	£8-£10
THE SLEEPING PARTNER (Hodder & Stoughton, 1956)	£8-£10
GREEK FIRE (Hodder & Stoughton, 1957)	£8-£10
THE TUMBLING HOUSE (Hodder & Stoughton, 1959)	£8-£10
MARNIE (Hodder & Stoughton, 1961)	£15-£20
THE GROVE OF EAGLES (Hodder & Stoughton, 1963)	£8-£10
AFTER THE ACT (Hodder & Stoughton, 1965)	£5-£7
THE WALKING STICK (Collins, 1967)	£5-£7
ANGELL, PEARL AND LITTLE GOD (Collins, 1970)	£5-£7
THE JAPANESE GIRL (Collins, 1971; short stories)	£5-£7
THE SPANISH ARMADAS (Collins, 1972; non-fiction)	£6-£8
WOMAN IN THE MIRROR (Bodley Head, 1975)	£5-£7
CORNISH FARM (Collins/Chivers, 1982; short stories)	£8-£10
POLDARK'S CORNWALL (Webb & Bower/Bodley Head, 1983; non-fiction)	£8-£10
THE GREEN FLASH (Collins, 1986)	£6-£8
CAMEO (Collins, 1988)	£6-£8

ESSENTIAL READING

POLDARK COUNTRY by David Clarke (Bossiney Books, 1977; paperback)	£2-£4
MAKING POLDARK by Robin Ellis (Bossiney Books, 1978; paperback)	£3-£5

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