

## BRIDESHEAD REVISITED – A COLLECTION, AN OBSESSION

### (A True Story)

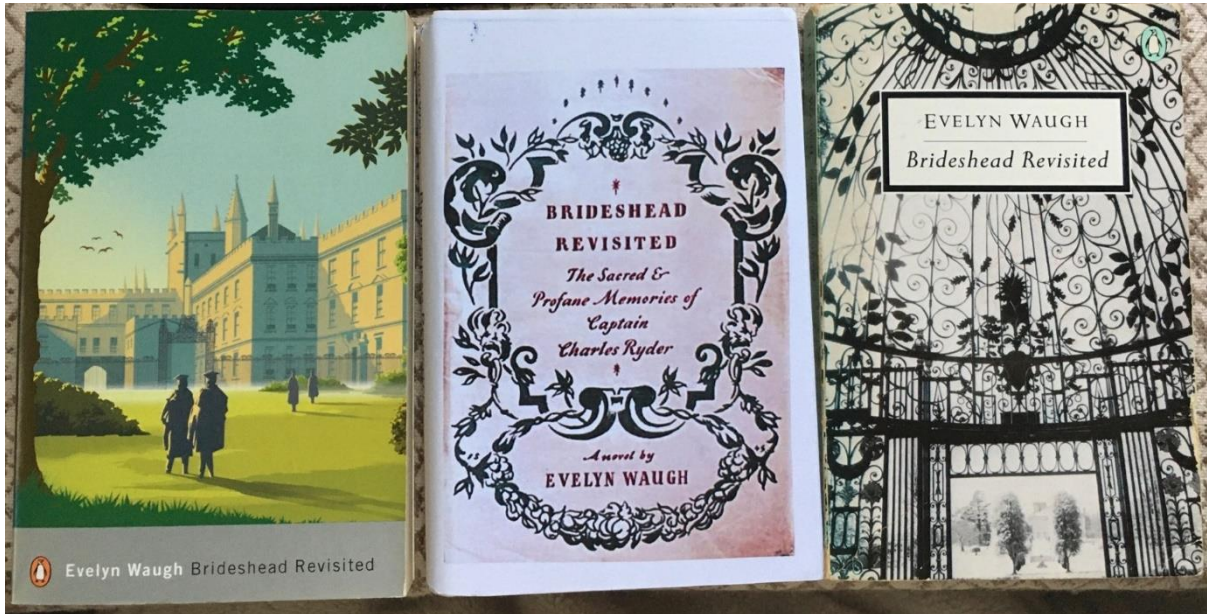


Image: Left: the excellent Penguin Classic Edition, 2000; Centre: The original 1945 1<sup>st</sup> Edition (Chapman and Hall); Right: A good Penguin Edition, 2010.

In the summer school holidays in 1980, I volunteered in the gardens of Cliveden – the National Trust gardens just above the Thames in Taplow, near Maidenhead. I lived in High Wycombe in those days and as the crow flies (via Wooburn Green) High Wycombe was only 5 miles away, so cycling to Cliveden was easy.

During the lunch breaks and occasional warm afternoons, I would sit under the trees of the Ilex Grove (with only the statue of Joan of Arc for company) and read. On my summer reading list were two books: Laurie Lee's *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* and Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. My English tutor, Mr Keatings, had decided that my reading was beyond the normal reading of my fellow pupils, and he felt the time was right to introduce me, particularly, to Evelyn Waugh. I was already acquainted with Laurie Lee as *Cider With Rosie* had been on the curriculum reading list during the academic year before.

Under those trees in the warmth of the summer sun, *Brideshead Revisited* arrived in my life with all its senses and evocative emotion. I was entranced with descriptions of youth in abundance among those dreamy spires of Oxford.

It was possibly, as a result of *Brideshead Revisited* and indeed the story of Edward VIII and the abdication, that I became obsessed with the history of the early to mid-twentieth century (1900 to 1939). My grandparents, who were teenagers in the late 20s, told me of their recollections of the period which I have since used and explored in more detail for my own writing.

So, just how extensive is collection of *Brideshead Revisited* memorabilia etc?

- 12 copies of the book (of which one is a 1st edition, May 1945)
- 3 audio books (1 on CD; 1 on cassette; 1 on Kindle)
- 1 radio play (1 on CD and a copy on Kindle)

- DVD of the ITV tv series (1981) starring Jeremy Irons and Anthony Andrews in lead roles
- 2 vinyl records: 1x LP of the music from the tv series; 1x 7" Single of the theme.
- 1 CD of the music from the tv series
- 1 large framed poster of the 1960 penguin edition
- 5 biographies on the life and work of Evelyn Waugh; including *The Brideshead Generation* by Humphrey Carpenter.



*Brideshead Revisited* is considered part autobiographical and part fiction.

*Brideshead Revisited* is the memoir of Captain Charles Ryder and deals with the period 1920 to 1941. It tells the story of Captain Ryder's years at Oxford, his acquaintance with Lord Sebastian Flyte Marchmain, the Marchmain family, and their country estate dominated by Brideshead Castle.

Main characters:

Charles Ryder = a composite of Evelyn Waugh (1903 – 1966); Brian Howard (1905 – 1958); and Harold Acton (1904 – 1994). Charles is the narrator of the book.

Sebastian Flyte = a composite of Alastair Graham (1904 – 1985); Hugh Lygon (1904 – 1936); and Stephen Tennant (1906 – 1987).

Anthony Blanche = a composite of Harold Acton (1904 – 1994); Philip Sassoon (1888 – 1939); and Stephen Tennant (1906 – 1987).

Other characters such as Julia Mottram (nee Flyte Marchmain), Celia Ryder (nee Mulcaster), are composites of society personnel of the 1920s such as Lady Diana Cooper. Lord Marchmain is believed to be based on a Victorian Lord of the Manor possibly Earl Beauchamp. Rex Mottram may be a composite of Henry "Chips" Channon and Duff Cooper.

In 1982, having read *Brideshead Revisited* cover to cover on more than one occasion, and after watching the tv series starring Jeremy Irons and Anthony Andrews in lead roles, I realised that Waugh had ended the book rather abruptly. The questions piled up:

- Did Waugh intend a sequel?

Allegedly there are sketchy notes in the Waugh archives that may have been an outline for a possible sequel. Research suggests he was not keen to continue the story as many of the characters were based on friends and acquaintances, most of whom were still alive, and he felt that the book had not received universal approval by some. In addition, as the original book was semi-autobiographical, Waugh was troubled by mental health issues (some of which are alluded to in *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*) and he clearly wanted to remain as private as possible to mask his personal demons.

- Why did Waugh end the book so abruptly?

Waugh wrote the book in a period of six months in 1944 whilst on convalescence from the army. Waugh had been wounded in action and although the army tried to curtail his period of absence to three months, Waugh managed to gain an assignment that effectively extended his leave to six months. It is conceivable that Waugh wanted to complete *Brideshead Revisited* just in case he should not return from the war.

- What happened to the main characters?

In the absence of any published notes or sequel, the main characters are not sufficiently dealt with or closed-off. This is not unusual for Waugh, but normally there is an ending to his novels that require no further enquiry. In the case of *Brideshead Revisited*, because of the plethora of characters, enquiries are justified.



## The Sequel:

I decided in the winter of 1985/86 to outline a possible sequel to *Brideshead Revisited*. That initial work has been revised and parts have been included in the final Prologue of my sequel. In 1998, I returned to the original draft but again left this unfinished until 2006. Encouraged by my good friend, the late Alan Harrup, I recommenced work on the 1998 draft, but his subsequent death the following year meant the sequel was left again on the shelf.

Finally, in 2013, my wife Louise, persuaded me to return to the manuscript. The 2006 draft was patchy but workable. In between the day-job and building the house, I set to work. In September 2018, I had a completed manuscript – job done. With minor revisions, in 2020, I approached the Waugh Estate for permission to publish my manuscript.

The Waugh Estate responded to my enquiry with delight, commenting “...the work is clearly a labour of love” but felt the time was not right to grant permission for the publication of my sequel. The original book is of course, protected by UK copyright laws, until 11 April 2036. Subsequent enquiries with the Waugh Estate have confirmed their decision not to grant publication; but, I remain on good terms with them via their appointed agent and hope that my sequel will appear in print in due course (and before 11 April 2036).

The sequel, entitled *After Brideshead: The continuing Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder*, is a completed manuscript of 121.5k words.

