THE POWER OF THE DEAD

AN

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THE POWER OF THE DEAD (1963)

covering the period August 1926 to late 1928

Twelve hundred acres of downland and valley with a trout stream await an heir and Sir Hilary Maddison wants his only nephew Phillip to learn farming the hard way, beginning as a labourer and rising to a tenancy-for-life. But Phillip has other ideas. Unable to forget the early death of his wife Barley as well as his friends who died in the Great War, he needs to recreate the past in his writing. Trying to combine both worlds Phillip is bound to fail in one of them; and literary success only intensifies the dilemma.

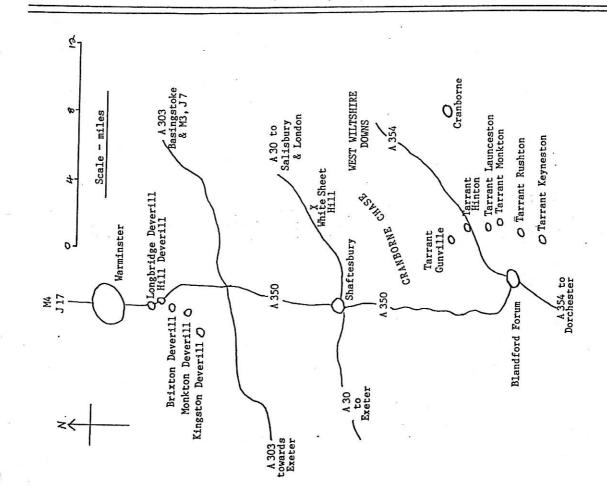
(Dust-jacket)

Between two worlds - Phillip at the crossroads in the late 'twenties.'

What emerges is a deep sense of truthfulness and accuracy and a complexity of experience.'

Malcolm Bradbury (Punch)





MAP I

MAP 2

ROOKHURST village- where is it?

Well, nowhere, really, for it is entirely imaginary, but we have several clues as to where it might be.

We can be sure that it is in the <u>West Country</u>, at least - this is first mentioned in <u>The Dark Lantern</u> (1951)(pp 17,25,64), when Richard Maddison cycles there in the summer of 1893. We read that Richard, born at Rookhurst, of course, was born in the West Country.(p64) But our first clue that Rookhurst might be in the West Country is when we find Phillip Maddison arriving there by rail from Paddington in a Great Western Railway train in 1912. (<u>Dandelion Days</u> (1922) ch 19)

Then we read later in <u>The Dark Lantern</u> (p 79) that Rookhurst is in chalk and flint country, so this, for example, eliminates Devon, where there is no chalk or flint, from our enquiries.

We see that Rookhurst is 60 (<u>road</u>) miles from Chepstow. (<u>The Power of The Dead</u>, p 22) (Shaftesbury is some 50 miles from Chepstow <u>as the crow flies</u> - see Map p 26)

<u>Wiltshire</u>? (i) In <u>The Dream of Fair Women</u> (1924) ch 27, Willie Maddison, born at Rookhurst, tells Lionel Fairfax that he believed his forefathers had lived in <u>Wiltshire</u>. (ii) In <u>It Was the Nightingale</u> (1962) p 285, Richard dreams of retiring to his native <u>Wiltshire</u>. (iii) In <u>The Pathway</u> (1928) ch 7, Rookhurst is said to be below 'the downs' - the West Wiltshire Downs, perhaps?

<u>Dorset</u>. In <u>A Solitary War</u> (1966) p 164, we read that Richard, retired, is now living in <u>Dorset</u>, the county of his birth.

<u>Stonehenge</u>. Driving from London to Down Close at 'Shakesbury' Phillip, presumably on the main road (the A 303), passes Stonehenge (<u>It Was the Night-ingale p 306</u>) just before journey's end.

White Sheet Hill. This prominent ridge/hill, like Stonehenge, is real enough - it looms alongside the A 30 road between Shaftesbury and Salisbury, (see Map p 26) not very far from Skirr Farm, Rookhurst - see The Power of The Dead (1963) pp 248,264,174.

Cranborne Chase. Another very real geological feature (see Map p 26) south of Rookhurst and visible from Skirr Farm. (The Power of The Dead p 13) Lucy Copleston, of course, whose home is Down Close, 'Shakesbury', lives in Dorset, on the edge of Cranborne Chase, not far from Rookhurst/Colham, where Willie Maddison once lived. (see It Was the Nightingale pp 130 & 181) Cranborne Chase is within walking distance of Rookhurst. (see The Power of The Dead p 200) Shaftesbury. 'Shakesbury' is drawn from this real town in north Dorset, just west of the Dorset/Wiltshire border (says Wheatley Blench in Journal 37 p and we do not lightly disagree with that gentleman!), or at least its name

ROOKHURST (cont'd)

and location is, for 'Shakesbury' has a railway station (<u>It Was the Nightingale</u> p 234 and <u>The Power of The Dead</u> p 205), for instance, which Shaftesbury, perched high on its bill-top, never has, as far as I can discover. 'Shakesbury', very near Rookhurst, is in <u>Dorset</u>, of course, (e.g. <u>It Was the Nightingale</u> p 120, on which page, incidentally, 'Shakesbury' is first mentioned in the Chronicle, as late as 1925 in the fiction, the novel being published in 1962). And if Phillip's guess that Exeter is about 50 miles from 'Shakesbury' is correct (see <u>The Power of The Dead</u> p 67) then 'Shakesbury' would appear to be at least ten miles west of Shaftesbury.

<u>Westbury</u>. When Phillip, cousin Willie and Julian Warbeck travel by train from Paddington to Exeter and beyond, in 1923, Willie gets off at Westbury (see Map p26) to get the slow train to Colham to collect his dog from Rookhurst.(<u>The Innocent Moon</u> (1961)p 341) Colham, well known to us, is of course wholly fictional, its exact location, unfortunately, never given. But Westbury, at least, is real enough, and would appear to be the nearest main-line station to Rookhurst.

The Tarrants is a group of hamlets just east of Blandford Forum (see Map \(\rho_26 \)) and south of Rookhurst, says Richard Maddison in The Phoenix Generation (1965) p 128.

The Deverills is another group of hamlets south of Warminster (see Map p26) - the Deverills are north of Rookhurst, says Richard (same page).

Blandford Forum — sounds vaguely Latin; whether it has a 'Roman' history, I do not know. It is some ten miles south of Shaftesbury. Perhaps its name may have inspired the name of the fictional 'Flumen Monachorum' which is 18 miles south of Rookhurst on the 'Shakesbury/Colham' road, (The Phoenix Generation p 49) which doesn't help us at all, really, because we don't know where 'Colham' is. But it certainly now seems that Colham, the market town where Willie Maddison attended the grammar school, might be a lot further away from Rookhurst than the (guessed) ten miles or so covered in 15 minutes (The Beautiful Years (1921) ch 24) by the ancient and decrepit train described in Dandelion Days ch 12. 'Flumen Monachorum' (Latin, surely, Flumen = river, Monachorum, don't know) (there is, incidentally, a village called Buckland Monachorum in south Devon), about which we know nothing, is where Phillip and his family live for a while (a long while, in fact, as much as eight years), this period coinciding with Henry Williamson's sojourn in Shallowford from 1929 to 1937.

From all these clues, some of which are somewhat confusing and contradictory (there may well be others not noticed by this Sherlock), we can safely, I think, assume that 'Rookhurst' is in Dorset, in chalk country probably near Shaftesbury, within 60 road miles of Chepstow, fairly near White Sheet Hill, north of and within sight of and within walking distance of Cranborne Chase; its main-line railway station is Westbury, and it is north of the Tarrant villages, and south of the Deverill villages. (see Map p26)

ch 1

ibid

ch 5, p110

The 'twenties - an abbreviated chronology				
(Phillip Maddison born April 1895 - see e.g. <u>Donkey Boy</u> p 292)				
1919				
August, late	Phillip discharged/demobilised from Army	•		
<u>1920</u>				
February	Phillip lives 'next door' (12, Hillside Road),	working fo	r the	
	estate agents/advertising dept of The Times ('Test' pp 444-445);			
	in spare time writing a novel ('Test' p 389)			
July and	Roberts Park Company			
August	proposals to Tabitha Trevilian ('Spica') turne	d down		
Ret la l		ocent Moon	pp 51 & 73	
October and	first novel twice rejected	ibid	рр 91 & 95	
November				
<u>1921</u>				
January	job with The Weekly Courier ends	ibid	р 105	
March	ejected from home (again)	ibid	р 135	
	living in Valerian Cottage, Malandine	ibid	p 153	
April .	meets Irene Lushington and daughter Barley	ibid	ch 10	
1-71	meets Annabelle Selby-Lloyd	ibid	pp 202-203	
winter	first novel published			
1922	nothing of much importance			
1923	walks with cousin Willie from Malandine to			
early	Appledore and beyond	ibid	ch 18	
Easter	'the Pyrenees Adventure' - Barley loves him		ch 20	
September 24t	h Willie drowns	ibid	р 399	
1924		t. 2100		
January	marries Barley. They live at Malandine	ibid	pp 407-408	
April	they find and adopt otter cub Lutra in France	It Was the	Nightingale	
1925			p 22	
January	Barley dies giving birth to Billy	ibid	р 69	
Summer	meets Lucy Copleston in North Devon	ibid	p 129	
	agrees, when staying at Down Close, to Uncle			
	Hilary's proposal that he starts farming at			
1006	Skirr Farm, Rookhurst		ch 17	
1926 Marrie		.11	-1.00	
May	marries Lucy Copleston	ibid	ch 20	
June	Phillip, Lucy and Billy move into Skirr Farm	THE POWER	of The Dead	

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Peter Maddison born

<u>1927</u> March

abbrev. chronology, (cont'd)

<u>1927</u> (cont'd)	The Powe	r of The Dead
May or June	Fiennes and Tim Copleston emigrate to Australia	рр 126-127
July	Billy and Peter Maddison christened	p 155
November	The Water Wanderer published	p 184
n yel galdaen.	(bgolf able [15] and force the property of the block book and	
1928		
June	Phillip receives the Grasmere Prize	p 228
August	Rosamund Maddison born	p 286
	John Maddison dies (Phillip inherits Fawley House	e) p 289
September	Bob Willoughby leaves Doris	p 329
gg bidi	The Phoenix published	р 339
October	Hilary decides to sellthe Fawley Estate	р 364

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