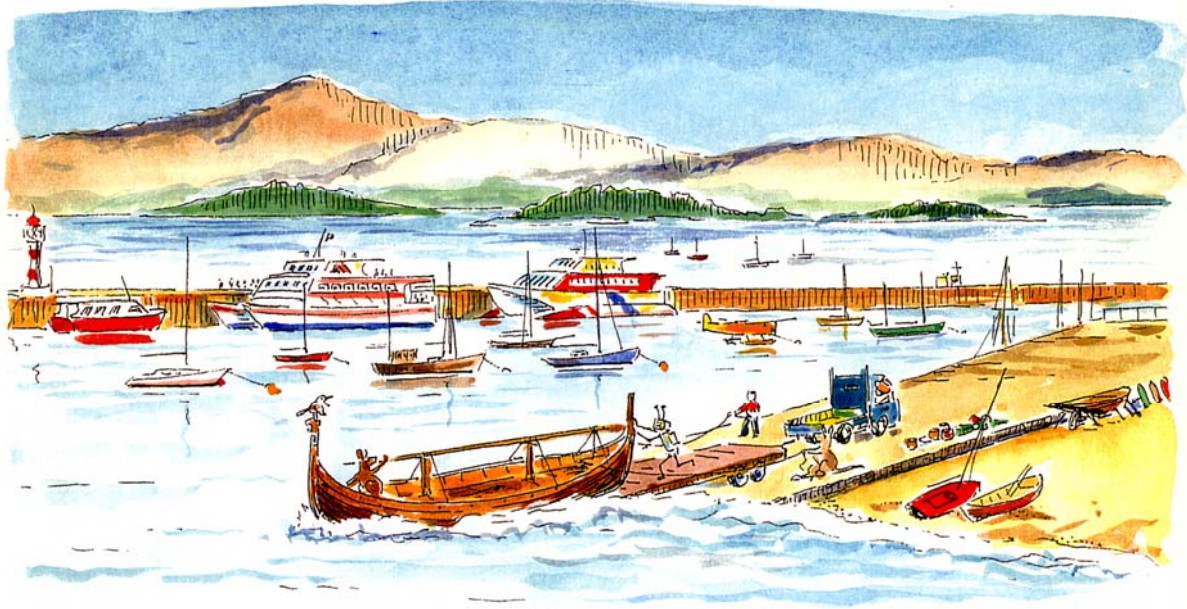


**The Private Papers of Crocodile Uppsala
Book Eleven**



Words by William Shepherd and Pictures by Connie Lindqvist

A Telling in Words and Pictures

based on the letters of William Shepherd and Nicholas John in Oz
and the sketches of Connie Lindqvist
as told to

Connie, Constanza, Elisabet, Linda, Sabine, Susan, Alan, Bob, Clifford, Edgar, John & John

featuring
the Letters of William Shepherd
written in November 1993
from Boulogne 'twixt 'Umber and Skagerrak
and
from Uppsala and the final letter from Oz.

161. School End
162. Ayers Rock
163. Mucho Crocodiliano
164. Duck & Plummet
165. Feral Waters
166. Land of Cats
167. David's Birthday
168. Weather Report

169. Computer Games
170. Clever Sheep
171. Gulls & Fulmars
172. Video Violence
173. Alice's Restaurant
174. Aslak Sagas
175. Aslak Sightings
176. Crocademia

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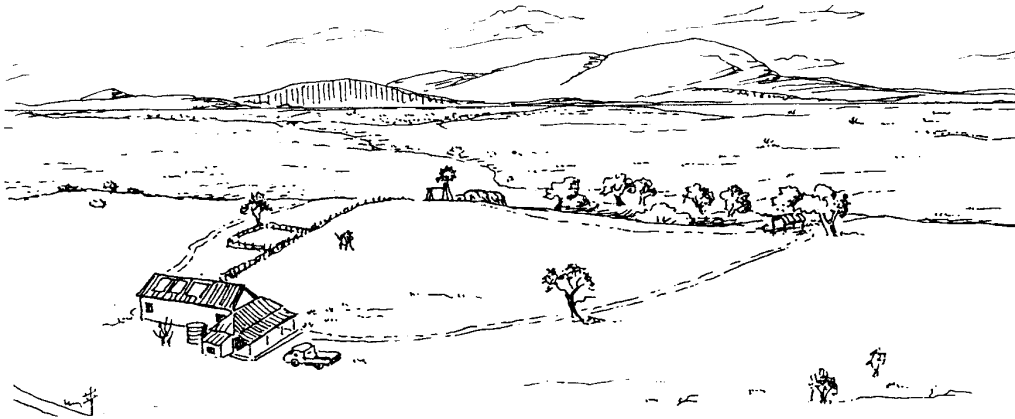
Chapter 161 - School End

© William Shepherd 1993

Palmwoods, Queensland, Australia. 1st November 1993.

Dear Nanna

Thanks for your letter that I received a couple of days ago. Now I am back from my wonderful trip and school is going into its last two weeks, all the teachers are using their last few moments with us to give us exams on all the stuff we haven't had time to do yet!



Sketch 202 Empty Quarters

Still it's a lot easier than what I am used to from home so I really don't have reason to complain. I'd also like to thank you for the note you sent. It will most likely come in handy now after having spent most of my pocket money on the Australian tour. But that was what I had saved it for so it doesn't really matter.

Chapter 162 - Ayers Rock

© William Shepherd 1993

It's amazing how large this country is. Our trip was 10 000 kilometres long but still only brought us around half the country! And in the centre there isn't exactly very much to see - there they need two hundred acres of land just to feed one sheep and when it also is incredibly flat you sure do have lots of time to talk with the other students on the trip.



Sketch 203 Ayers Rock Mountaineers

Luckily they were all great people so there weren't many (if any) boring times during the three weeks.

Chapter 163 - Mucho Crocodiliano

© *William Shepherd 1993*

Rye, Sussex, England.

Sunday 17th October 1993.

Dear Crocodile Uppsala

You seem to suffer from the delusion that I write to you every week. Not so. Send, Yes. Write, no. Since mid-year my writing has come in bursts of three or four letters at a time...with small updatings orchestrated for Despatch Day to fool you and posterity. (*What a give-away! Mervin.*)

I wrote my last Crocodile Uppsala Letter more than a month ago and have been struggling a little to get back into the swing of things. And this, after battling to organise the three boaty serials and the two day-in-my-life features into a form suitable for repackaging as 'Five Everyday Stories of Boating Folk'.

The individual letters seem to have worked alright. I made sure of that by reading them aloud to a select Finnish audience of one before release. But we'll have to see whether the Crocodile Uppsala Books work. My principal concern was for the articles to work as a book which local people would enjoy.

But I also took the opportunity to craft the pieces for soap-opera use 25 years hence...cutting out unnecessary characters, sharpening dialogues etc.

Last week it was finished and the five copies of the 80-page illustrator's word sketch book ordered from the printers. The book reads quite well and when Connie's 70 sketches are added to the 25 000 word text next year I think the prolific book-team of William Shepherd & Connie Lindqvist may have another minor local triumph on their hands...which augurs better for our pensions and your inheritance than for tomorrow's breakfast.

But then that's the way of the artist...and I have just finished reading Irving Stone's biographical novel about the French Impressionist Camille Pissarro to confirm it (*He was Danish. People are so ignorant. Mervin. Actually, smarty diodes, he was Jewish if you really want to get technical...a world tribe, just like the Oirish*). So be warned...or do it my way and get a job, raise the family, give them the money, and then gauguinate.

Anyway my plans for the last six letters are simpler. CULs #31-33 from Rye this month. CULs #34 -36 from Uppsala next month. Linda is busy arranging boat tickets even while I write. Three weeks in Sweden before Christmas is the plan. So far, my part has been limited to reducing my commitment to any serious Christmas selling campaigns here in Rye and providing background briefings on William Shepherd and his Crocodile Uppsala Papers for Linda to slip into the frozen north.



Sketch 204 Crocodile Publishers

I also wrote a note to Caroline Th  lin at the editorial offices of 'kaos', congratulating her on her 'well-thought and well-written' essay on the politics of Oscar Wilde and suggesting she had a look at William Morris next.

Now it just so happens that there is an occasional paper entitled 'The Political Legacy of William Morris' coming off the presses...but of course this has no bearing on the matter.

Otherwise, Ingrid has offered Linda the use of her Uppsala house while she's a-visiting you down under, so I can now write to your grandmother and warn her not to assume that I will be in England for Christmas.



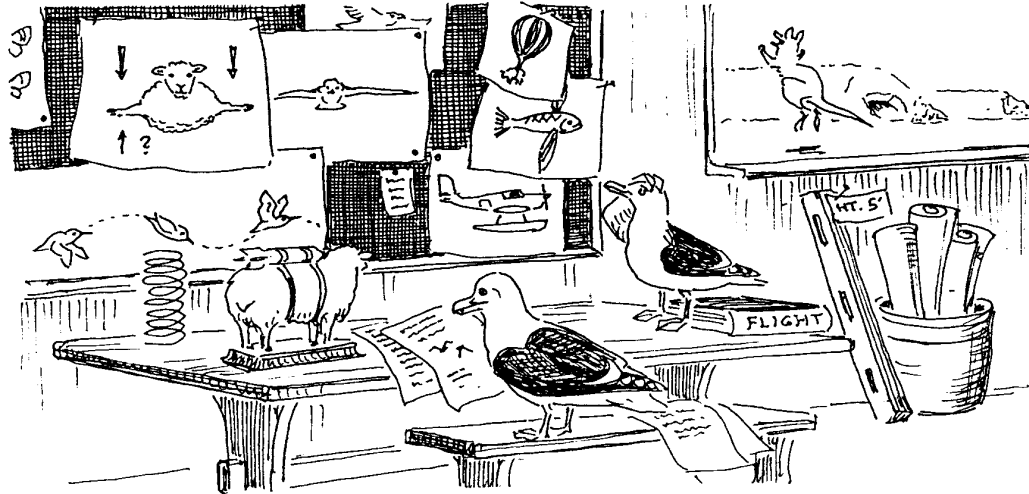
Sketch 205 Tropical Paradise

Nor should you assume I'll be in Sweden. If Alan happens to throw some work my way...and if I manage to offload our thirty thousand kronors-worth of hologram watches, pendants and key-rings at a profit...(and if sheep learn to fly. Mervin)...well then I might just head off into the sunset for a while. I've been promising myself a trip to Colombia for some time.

Chapter 164 - Duck & Plummet

© William Shepherd 1993

Incidentally, I hope you're enjoying your recycled Crocodile Uppsala Letters. Linda...and I quote the scribblings on her last envelope...‘loved the sheep-pen pic’ acclaiming that ‘those facial expressions and body postures are outstanding!’ High praise from somebody who takes her sheep expertise seriously...angling for a ‘Research Assistant: Sheepish Matters’ commendation on her next Curriculum Vitae, wouldn't doubt?



Sketch 206 Moutons Aerodynamiques

In recent months, the Crocodile Uppsala's editorial offices have been bombarded with all manner of suggestions from those lindavish quarters. Here for instance, from a letter dated September 5th, 1993...which begins at Frank

Lloyd Wright before skipping nattily across to Buckminster Fuller and his Einstein explanations in ‘Nine Chains to the Moon’...she quotes from Bucky Fuller’s Autobiography (*Your big sister’s been raiding your library, little brother. Mervin of GCHQ.*)

‘I tuned my attention to transport, to developing a vehicle that would take you back and forth from these remote places and I wanted it to fly the way a duck flies: a duck doesn’t soar like a seagull can, it has to flap its wings very rapidly and has jets under each of its wings. The jets give it a little elevation then, due to its shape and elevation, it falls in its preferred direction, so it plummets. It lifts and plummets, lifts and plummets.’

There’s more but it’ll keep until next week because Crocodile Uppsala Tales...rather than Letters...have been engaging my literary attention in recent weeks, in between devoting myself to more mundane matters, like Academic Inn Books publishing programmes and bookmaking accounts.

Chapter 165 - Feral Waters

© *William Shepherd 1993*

Let me brief you on the story so far. It was Mike Roud’s fault. He had set up his shipbuilding yard on the shores of Castle Waters...by the shining big sea waters (*Hi! Is that a Watha I see before me? Mervin.*) My watery wanderings commenced when I went there to case the joint.

You can see Castle Waters from the Gun Gardens...a little Finland without the trees...Land of a Thousand Lakes glittering and sparkling in the sunlight. Your Uncle John used to windsurf there some years ago before he took up golfing in Hastings every spare moment he had in Rye. Castle Waters lies over by Winchelsea Beach, west of the Rye Harbour road and south of the footpath along the Brede and past Camber Castle.

The wind-surfing centre is just off the Rye Harbour Road behind Castle Joinery. It is not a happy sight...nor a happy story. Those in the know murmur darkly of much skulduggery, disputed wills, dawn evictions and even a body or two with the air let out of it...a Finnish expression. Hercule Poirot would be Proprieteur of a nice little earner were he to set up shop in one of England’s smaller towns in these troubled times.

The whole area has the kind of desperate look peculiar to industrial dereliction...twisted metal, broken concrete and blackened mud softened, in the way that only Nature can, by reckless clumps of wild flowers clinging tenaciously to the polluted soil.



Sketch 207 Human Nature

This is the human edge of Castle Waters. Behind the dilapidated 'Win****ing' and '**trance' signs...last remains of a once thriving local enterprise...lies Mike's plot of land. The concrete footings are in place. The gantry crane rises above the rusty fencing. Against the red-brick of the Litho-Printing Works lean neatly stacked

big red metal bits...the raw ingredients for the big red metal boatbuilding shed wherein the big red ocean-going Roud-a-Vessels will wondrously materialise.

Last Saturday I walked there with my mother who had motored down to Rye with her friend Joyce. Mum and I seem to have come to some sort of rapprochement. She provides me with Steak & Kidney Pie at the Standard Inn or a Baked Potato at The Holloway House Hotel. In exchange, she gets an annotated & informed tour of Rye and its environs from me.

To get to Castle Waters, you walk along the old Rye Harbour Tramway track, stepping over the stile just across the road from the Brede Moorings. In 15 minutes, Roud Engineering looms into view. You turn off right before you get there, step out around the lake scattering rabbits, moorhens and herons in all directions the moment you appear, and soon find yourself walking in lush sheep meadows with lakes on every side of you...and rarely more than one way in and out of any field.

The sea is there, way over on your left, while up ahead is Camber Castle...currently being restored to its former Tudor glory. The area is teeming with wildlife...and with mushrooms...swans, seabirds, herons and moorhens, rabbits and sheep there in abundance. I half expected to stumble over a red-necked wallaby or two. I must remember to look out for their droppings next time I'm there...fibrous, ovoid with rounded ends, about 2 cms long, in case you didn't know. Feral I'm told. Feral.

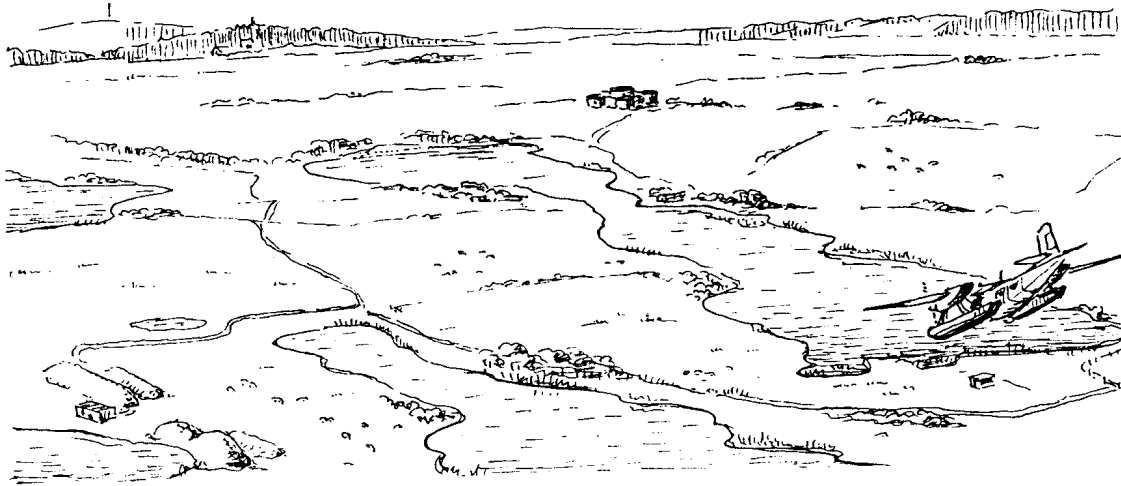
Chapter 166 - The Land of Cats

© *William Shepherd 1993*

At Castle Waters I found myself thinking back to the time...you must have been seven...when we worked at story and book making. This could be your Land of Cats. It felt right. Not yet...but perhaps some day, after it has been loved and cared for, trees planted, seeds sown, soil nurtured and life sanctified.

I liked having a derelict industrial area there. It was a warning. The balmy breezes from the sea would heal the scars. To the north across the River Brede rose the steep-sided grassy cliffs of Udimore.

Could Harold move his friends here, declare Castle Waters a people-free zone and make it a kingdom fit even for cats? In May this year much of Castle Waters was declared a conservation area and ringed off with wire fences. Everywhere you turn now there are Keep Out signs 'supplied by Nuclear Electric'. Behind this setting-aside of our commons lies a murky morass of intrigue.



Sketch 208 Castle Seaplanes

But having no wish to join Sheila Bowler's aunt at the bottom of the River Brede I will instead sing the praises of the good old days of yore...when Norman Jones would bring his seaplane in to land on the smooth surface of Castle Waters. Eventually Old Boy Jones was obliged to abandon this practice after falling foul of the local dignitaries. It seems that, at the age of 80, he decide to buzz Rye Church in a stunt reminiscent of David Gower's

act of rebellion while cricketing down-under in your adopted land. Arrangements were made to withdraw Mr. Jones' licence to fly...forthwith!

To my mind, national trusts, sheep, shooting ranges, golf courses and set-aside land are all greedy aristocratic devices to deprive the yeoman citizen of rightful access to his commons in general and to his personal two acres for his pig in particular. So Harold will not find it easy.

I have been wanting Connie to come out to Castle Waters with me for a couple of weeks. The Rye Water Trails book needs the artistic feel that Castle Waters inspire, I want to see whether she shares my enthusiasm for Castle Waters as a setting for the Crocodile Uppsala Tales and of course, there are mushrooms galore for the picking.

Chapter 167 - David's Birthday

© *William Shepherd 1993*

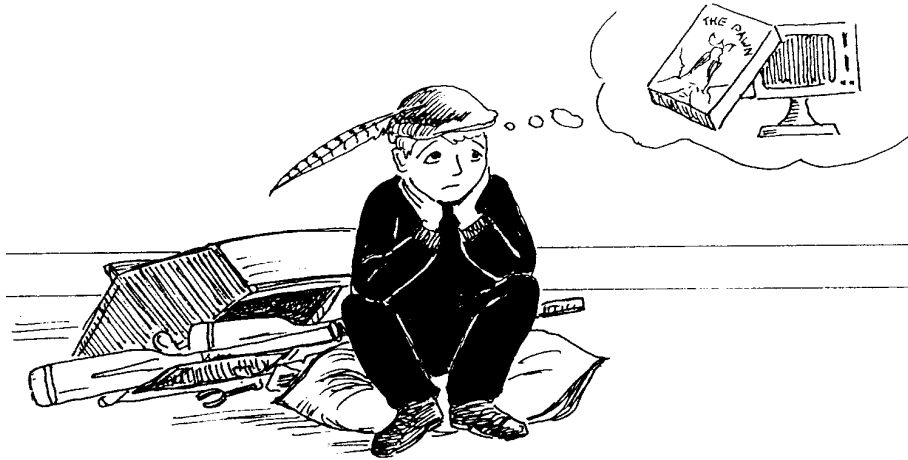
But life has been hectic for Connie these past few weeks. A sudden rush of work at Rye Tiles. Harrods Calling; a £500 commission to work with Richard Horner on four Michelangelo panels for Rye Heritage Centre; Martin's father dying, the last of the four grandparents; Teresa, who once ran a restaurant a few doors along from me, in town a-visiting...and so it goes on.

In the midst of all this, David finally made it to his seventh birthday, celebrated by a trip to the Hastings Sea-Life Centre yesterday and by the arrival of Nefertiti's dinghy at 12 Rope Walk late on Friday night. Bonfire Boys 0 - Birthday Boy 1. But the best present from a seven-year old's point of view...£1000-worth of dinghy being 'boring'...was to be the Computer Game.

He thought he had covered his bases, dragging everyone round to Rope Walk Arcade to show them what to buy. Tomahawk, the only game I have for my Amstrad, had also become...that's correct...boring so we grown-ups had to move upward and onward...David expected it!

The consensus was to make him sweat...not least because I haven't got the £6 I need until tomorrow, two days after his birthday. So arriving late yesterday afternoon, I sneaked upstairs, propped Brown Bear up beside the

bed and placed the green envelope in his hand: 'To David from Ilbereth'. Then my formal entry. 'Where's my present?' Devastated! 'But...but...where's my computer game?'



Sketch 209 Birthday Morning

Eventually bedtime brought with it the first little ray of hope. He found the message from Ilbereth. He knew! He knew! But wait. Not big enough. What's this? A purse. Oh no! Unreal! Grown-ups! Just give me the computer game! I don't need this! Inside the purse was a silver coin. Weird!

And what's this? A little hand-written book, 6½ x 4½ cms in size and 12 pages long. Not like normal books. Strange. Opens out like a concertina. 'David and the Magic Silver Sixpence...a True Fairy Story for a Seventh Birthday'.

Are you still sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin...at the end of the beginning. Tinkerbell, the Tooth Fairy, has been talking to Mervin. The upshot of it all? David must place his magic silver sixpence under his pillow for three nights in a row. Good Night, David. Remember to put your magic sixpence under your pillow.

You too, Nicholas! G'Day Mate!

Chapter 168 - Weather Report

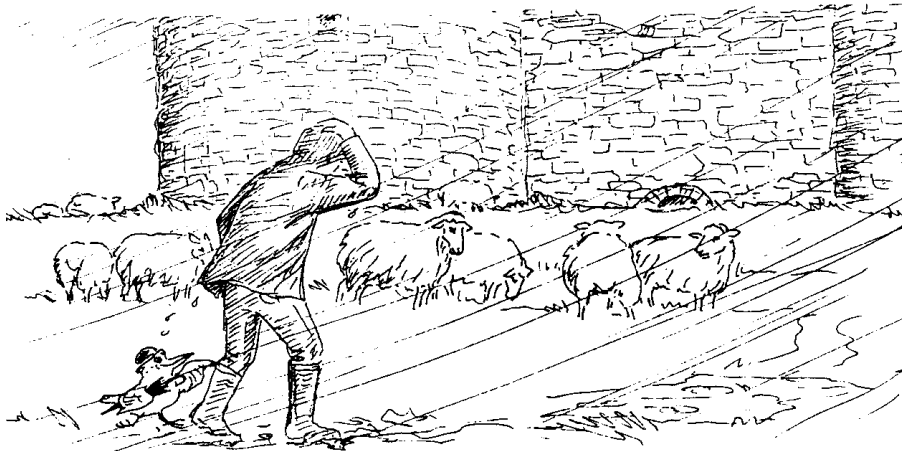
Rye, Sussex, England.

Dear Crocodile Uppsala

Here's the good news. It finally stopped raining some time around the middle of the month just as we were heading for the wettest October on record.

© William Shepherd 1993

Sunday 24th October 1993



Sketch 210 Drenched Explorer

According to 'The Sun' we normally have '12' dumped on us but in early October we got '25'...in other words, double and numbered to prove it. This was the fortnight that I took it upon myself to explore Castle Waters for athletic and literary purposes. I got myself thoroughly drenched 25 times. Normally I suppose it would have been only 12.

The bad news is that an Arctic wind saw its chance and breezed into the hole in the weather to send temperatures plummeting to their lowest October levels on record...ten below on Shap Fell in Cumbria, seven below in the Midlands, and bloody freezing here in the middle of the English Channel. It was The Russians.

All this torrential weather was heading for Russia from the Atlantic before it was blocked by a high pressure over Eastern Europe. Climate Warfare. The ultimate Cold War.

Eventually even Vemara's reckless mariners were persuaded to abort their scheduled weekend run to Boulogne for booze 'n baccy...which was just as well because there were serious rumblings about John Pierce and I taking Skua 4 across to keep them company, Gilbert being much too sensible to dream of such follies in October.

Mike Roud was telling me that the Friday night shipping bulletins had been advising the big metal boats plying the shipping lanes out in mid-Channel to cut across to Dungeness to avoid the French gales off Brittany, so perhaps there was sense in this Rye Discretion Decree.

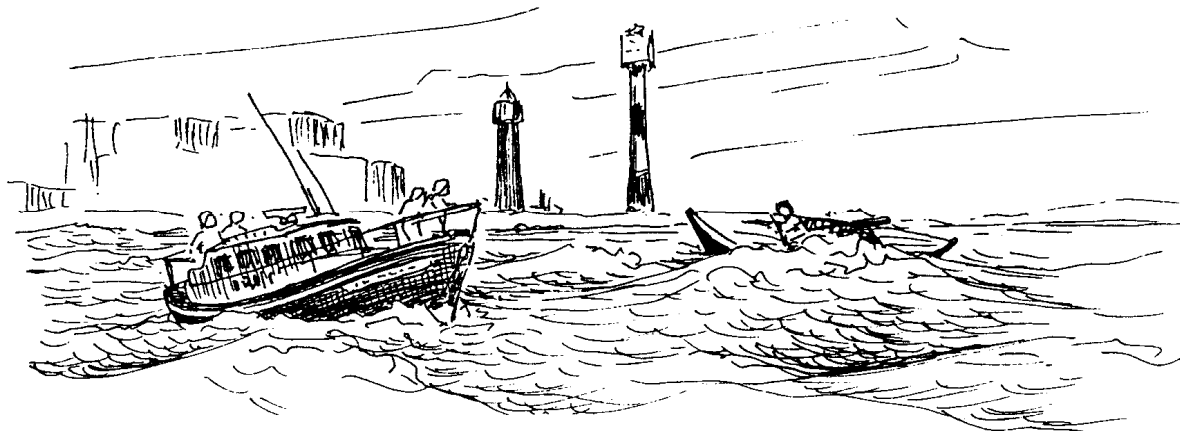
And perhaps it should be reported, lest you attribute our Boulogne unescapades to cowardice, incompetence or idleness, that the Cruiser Secretary of the Rye Harbour Sailing Club reported to his 180-strong membership that our summers are now back to their usual 'interesting almost unpredictable mix of weathers'.

Most RHSC cross channel races were cancelled completely in 1993. And Fécamp it seems was the most popular spot for cruising holidays...a channel chart will tell you why.

Mind you a 32-foot Westerly Fulmar by the name of Marsh Mist sighted off the Icelandic coast in 1992 made its way to Norway in late June. But in May and June even Unlucky Weather Martin was astounding us all with an unprecedented series of lucky weather runs across to Boulogne.

For the record, it took Marsh Mist eleven days to reach Sognefjord, north of Bergen, from Rye. With good weather you might hope to make it in a week. But this was 1993, so Marsh Mist had to scurry into the little harbour town of Skudenshavn to escape some particularly fiendish weather.

One person who wished he had chosen some other way to spend 1993 was doubtless Alexander Smurgis. He left Murmansk with his father Yevgeny in May aboard an 8-metre rowing boat. Earlier this month Dad and one slightly damaged boat were washed onto the beach at Denge Marsh just along from Camber Sands. The yacht club gave him the use of their clubhouse.



Sketch 211 Russian Rowers

He left just a day before David got Nefertiti's rowing boat. And that was perhaps just as well, because otherwise David might have decided to go with him. Yesterday was Grand Launching Day for David's Nefertiti on the

Strand Quay. Within minutes he was touting for trade. Roll on roll off! Only fifty pence a crossing! Boredom was banished for a whole day!

Chapter 169 - Computer Games

© *William Shepherd 1993*

All this weather has played havoc with my running. After 33 miles last month, here's the sorry story with just one week of October remaining. It must have been the hubris of introducing seconds into the record.

46. Fri	1 Oct	1800	Admiralty Jetty by Old Trail	4 mile	36 min 15 sec
47. Sun	3 Oct	0830	Camber Road Signpost	2 mile	17 min 45 sec
48. Sun	24 Oct	0745	Windsurfing Lake (far side)	3 mile	24 min 15 sec

This morning's 3-mile run was the result of dropping a mile by turning back before the Admiralty Jetty because of grumblings from my right knee. My policy after any break in training is to displace misplaced valour with crucial discretion...and live to run the next day. (*Please confirm that you really are writing this on Sunday 24th October, 1993. Mervin of ERP...the Euro Truth Police.*)

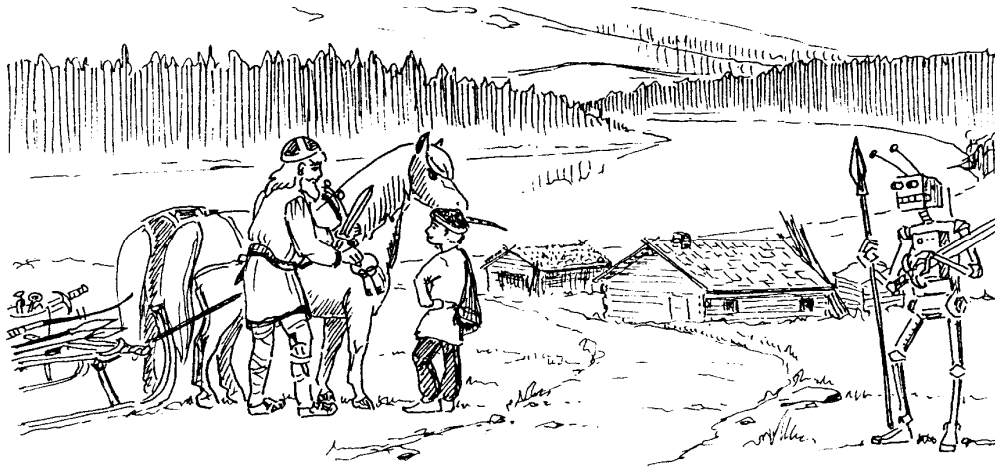
Aha! You may have noticed that normally Mervin is treated with the disdain he deserves. But Aha Again! And Affirmative! Thought you had a fair cop! Wrong nano-freak! It is 1230 Greenwich Mean Time on Sunday 24/10 as I hit the keyboard (It's 1400 hours and you're back again. When will you make an end? Mervin.) You should have asked me yesterday when I was completing CUL#31 instead. Try again when CUL#33 is being worked on.

Goodness knows when that will be though. Access is the problem. The silver sixpence delivered its magic. David now owns 'The Pawn' and is doing his Arlo Guthrie routine...I want to kill! I want to kill! But next week is half term. After Honest John swiftly extracted a knife from inside his boot, deftly placed the point on David's Adam apple and said menacingly 'I wouldn't try that again'...well he's gonna be back with another >kill honest John< scheme tomorrow. Nothing wrong with a little Lapp education? (*Or some Mervin's Revenge!*)

But the weather is not really the excuse for my recent athletic demise. The light...or rather the lack of it...is. I have become accustomed to early morning runs at weekends and evening excursions during the week. Mainly

habit, but a habit based on prudence. I like to run from my Custom House office and was reluctant to do so in office hours.

Planet Earth chunders along its elliptical orbit at a cool 60000 miles an hour...with another 1000 miles an hour spinning speed thrown in for good measure. But gyroscopically speaking the earth's axis being where it is, at equinox times dawn and dusk shift by a quarter of an hour a week...at the solstices it is just a minute or two.



Sketch 212 Honest John

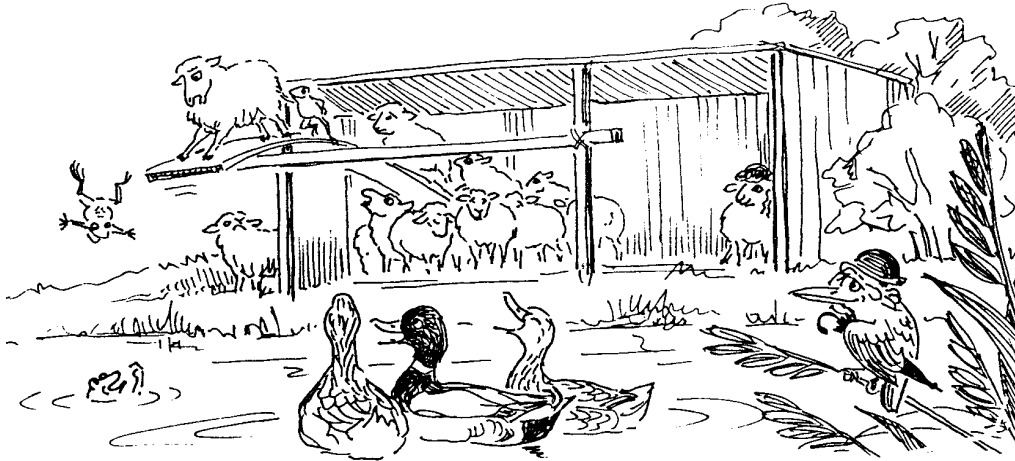
The end result is that, all of a sudden, my running opportunities have turned dark on me...and this is at the time I re-enlisted at Connie's Restaurant down at Rope Walk for five o'clock dinner every day. Full stomachs and running take a few hours to come to terms with each other. Anyway, this was a vivid reminder to me of the way that marathon running takes over your life. Back in 1981, there was nothing that did not have to be reorganised

around my running schedules...down to the minute. The motto for the corporate manager has to be 'Never employ a marathon runner'. They have divided loyalty. Perhaps it has already come to that.

Chapter 170 - Clever Sheep

© *William Shepherd 1993*

This is almost the first year I've looked forward to last night's changing of the clocks. 'Spring forward. Fall back' is the rule...to the chagrin of this little town of Tilling where the invitations to Miss Mapp's afternoon bridge parties still bear the memory of the time before summer time was invented and men played God.

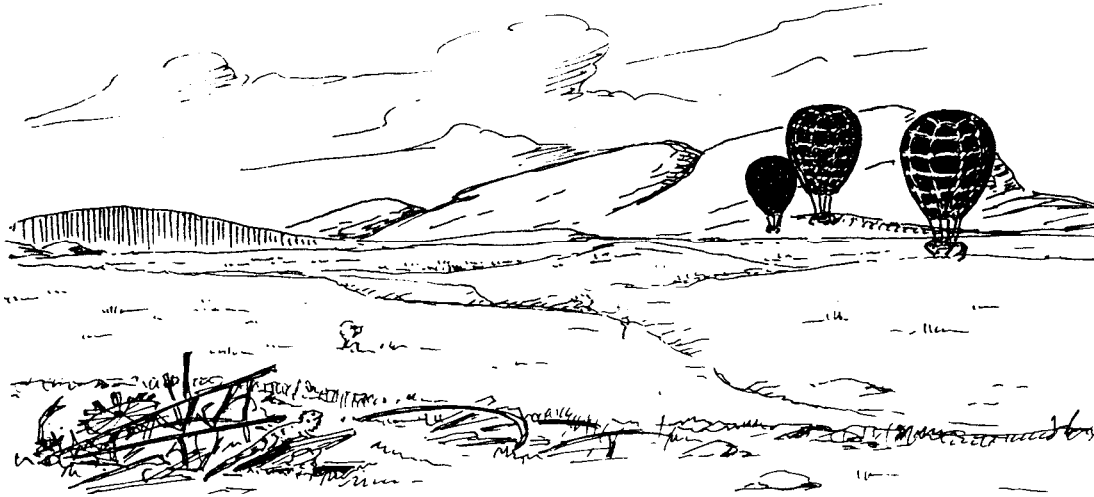


Sketch 213 Plummeting Lessons

It means morning runs are back on the agenda. So I might surprise Harold...recovering my pride and figure in the process...by trotting out to the Admiralty Jetty each day this week and turning a debacle into a 37-mile

month triumph. I needed to see Harold this month too. It seems Harold, our clever sheep, is the rule not the exception. Here are more sheeplly facts from Linda's letter to the Crocodile Uppsala Book Club.

'Perhaps you could have Harold take plummeting lessons from a duck or he could try to copy seagulls soaring and is unsuccessful until a duck comes along...perhaps a friend of the kingfisher. The duck liberates the sheep by teaching them to plummet over fences.'



Sketch 214 Spiders World

(Sounds good to me. I'll arrange for Marley's synthesizer brothers to invent a rhythm. Then Harold can take over the world, dancing the Duck & Plummet. David's magic silver sixpence can turn up in a plummet pudding...and...). Thank you Mervin. That's quite enough, particularly since there is more from Linda.

Hear this about the alleged stupidity of sheep. ‘I was watching a programme on telly by *Utbildningsradion* about Argentina, and a Falklands vet (*As in Vietnam Veteran? Mervin.*) was telling how they had to catch sheep all the first month in order not to starve. At first they could catch them with their hands, because the sheep weren’t afraid. But soon they learned that their friends never returned - so the soldiers had to shoot them at 50-yards with a pistol. And finally they had to use a rifle because if they came within sight, even at 3-miles, the sheep would run! It seems that sheep aren’t as stupid as I thought. Rather they are oppressed...captive...‘1984-style’.

This reminded me of Colin Wilson’s Spider World trilogy in which Niall, the hero, releases the encaptured humans from their sheep-like enslavement. But the story opens, not on another planet, but on an Earth where spiders are the dominant controlling species. After a successful human rebellion in the second book...and I have not yet read the third...an uneasy alliance is agree between the free spiders and the free humans.

Chapter 171 - Gulls & Fulmars

© *William Shepherd 1993*

At times like this, a chat with Aslak is helpful. I saw him along by the fish market a few weeks ago. The day before, he was gliding around Strand Quay with a colleague...driven inland by the weather was the story. Aslak is a fulmar...*fulmarus glacialis*. (*Eissturmvogel to freunders. Mervin.*)

But the herring gulls didn’t believe a word of it. Rumours spread fast and wide in the bird world and fulmars have earned a reputation around these shores that make Germans look like peace-loving pastoralists.

Fulmars are stockier than gulls, with thicker necks and very slender wings. Their flight is gliding so they circle a great deal and take off from the water by running across its surface. Getting off level ground is bad news. They can’t. So they nest in colonies on rocky coasts and islands. The female lays her egg in any hollow she can find or dig in the ground and both parents do the incubating.

And a little paternal advice. Never annoy a fulmar. And if you inadvertently do so, then duck. Fulmars, like skunks, emit a spray of oil smelling strongly of musk when threatened. The odour impregnates its plumage and is even found in its eggs. Gathering fulmars’ eggs was a popular pastime in Victorian times...as was the general

harassment of birds, animals and peasants. *The Victorian Village* by Ralph Whitlock provides the best read on the subject. Out of print of course.



Sketch 215 Aslak's Alting

Aslak has a memory outside of time and across space and seems to be a shaman of some sort amongst Birds of the North...and not only fulmars. He has a family all around the Arctic Circle nowadays. Once he spoke of the dinosaurs as his ancestors.

But for Aslak modern fulmar history starts a quarter of a millennium ago with small fulmar settlements on Jan Mayen, on Grimsey off Iceland and on the islands of St. Kilda to the west of the Outer Hebrides. Aslak is descended from the Grimsey Fulmars.

If I understood Aslak aright, the Twelve Tribe Treaty ushered in a golden age. Old feuds were settled and new clan loyalties built up through repealing the ancient taboo on love marriages. In the years that followed, Aslak's family spread round Iceland, eventually sending a particularly rebellious flock of young fulmars to the Faeroe Islands to set up their own colony.

In 1978 the Grimsey Fulmars celebrated the centenary of the family's first successful nesting on Foula, outermost of the Shetland Islands. Your grandmother took the boat up to Lerwick a couple of years ago and spent a day on Foula learning fulmarian ways. Didn't know we had a family fulmar expert, did you?

Unfortunately I have to leave the rest of the Aslak saga until next week as Mervin refuses to allow anything more onto his M-Disc until I explain last week's awful 'Hi Is that a Watha ICB4 me' joke. So cut the noise and listen...from Brattle Street, just around the corner from *Parents Nursery School* in Cambridge Massachusetts: *The Childhood of Hiawatha*.

By the shores of Gitche-Gumee, By the shining Big-Sea-Water, Stood the wigwam of Nokomis, Daughter of the Moon Nokomis (*Hiawatha's grannie. Mervin*), At the door on summer evenings, Sat the little Hiawatha, Heard the whispering of the pine-trees, Heard the lapping of the water, Sounds of music words of wonder, 'Minne-wawa!' said the pine-trees, 'Mudway-aushka!' said the water.

Saw the fire-fly, Wah-wah-tay-see, Flitting through the dusk of evening, With the twinkle of its candle, Lighting up the brakes and bushes, And he sang the song of children, Sang the song Nokomis taught him, Wah-wah-tay-see, little fire-fly, Little flitting white-fire insect, Little dancing white-fire creature, Light me with your little candle, Ere upon my bed I lay me, Ere in sleep I close my eyelids!

G'Night Mate!

Chapter 172 - Video Violence

© William Shepherd 1993

Rye, Sussex, England.

Sunday 31st October 1993.

Dear Crocodile Uppsala

Alistair Cooke has been watching American Senate Committees again...the social effects of TV violence. Gun prohibition is in the air and lies, dam lies and statistics are in the breach. Exhibit One. Masters of the Big Lie. The National Rifle Association. Latest advertising campaign? 'Refuse to be a victim! Get a gun'. Target? Women. Keeping handguns triples the chances of someone getting killed.

The lawyers prefer the damn lie. 'Citizens have the right to bear arms! Our Constitution Says!' Humbug! Standing armies were the problem and a militia was the solution. And the statistics? One school kid in five carries a gun; homicide is the leading cause of death amongst 15-24 year olds; 85% of all homicides are family killings...just you and the wife...or the mother-in-law. So my contribution is a little piece of anecdotal evidence. Nothing else is reliable. Collect assiduously. Case Three. David Hutchings. A Story of Everyday Seven-Year Old Computer Players, brought up in the fantasy world of early morning television cartoons...the parent-free hours of the day...and the real world of the school fields of Playden.

You might think that Honest John had taught him a lesson. Well, let's find out. Instead of Honest John, it was Kronos who chanced by the next time David was wandering around the grassy wilderness. He had a letter for David to take to King Erik. Well, no sooner was the magician's back turned than David opened the letter. Instant frazzled brain...and a long lecture from Mervin on mortality, morality and private property. End of game.

Restart and take to the foothills...and the Guru's Hut. David nicks his rice and then gives the >kill guru< order. Big mistake. Restart. A Kung-Fu kick in the solar plexus did the necessary. So, back to the palace to deliver the newly acquired and now unopened magician's letter. Bribing his way past the guards didn't work and killing seemed a dangerous option so David tried controlled violence. >punch guard<. Bad news. Swish goes the pike. Off come his legs and he bleeds to death. Restart. Seven-year olds don't get mad, they get even. David had a

plan. Kill the guards with the letter. Fiasco. The guard didn't fall for it, King Erik got the letter and David had to beat a hasty retreat into the forest as fast as his reinstated legs could carry him. So much for Revenge.



Sketch 216 Brave Squire David

Next he tried being a nice guy. The guru was happy to give him the rice...and it even tasted better. So when he met an adventurer on the path clad in silver armour, he needed little prompting. Are you going to kill him? NO WAY! Aha...to be continued in adulthood. Have any of the Senate Committee ever played with the latest adventure games? Have they ever read a Piers Anthony book? Our self-styled rulers live in the stone age...or is it Cloud Cuckoo Land...ignorant of their own ignorance.

Chapter 173 - Alice's Restaurant

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Meanwhile in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, the town is suffering from a surfeit of very unwelcome tourists...all on account of the best pacifist tract since A. A. Milne's 'Peace With Honour'. This tract is a song. And self-styled rulers, if you want to know where the future is, it's in the far distant past. Homer would have been proud of Alice's Restaurant.



Sketch 217 Alice's Restaurant

Pacifists throughout the ages have longed for the day that somebody would call a war and nobody would show up. We may get there yet. The failure to get anybody to flatten Bosnia seems a good sign. 'You want to know

whether I'm moral enough to burn women, kids, houses, villages after being a litter-bug?...your EuroDraft instructions coming up. Walk into the shrink, wherever you are.

Just walk in and say shrink you can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant and walk out. If one person does it they might think he was really sick and they won't take him. But if two people do it...in harmony...they may think they're both faggots and won't take either of them.

If three people do it...imagine three people walking in singing a bar of Alice's Restaurant and walking out...they may think it's an organisation. And you can imagine fifty people a day walking in singing a bar of Alice's Restaurant and walking out. Then friends they may think it's a movement.

And that's what it is. Alice's Restaurant Anti-Massacred Movement...and all you've got to do to join is sing it next time it comes around on the guitar with feeling... 'You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant.' Matthew brought the Alice's Restaurant tape over to Connie's one evening around my birthday time when Linda was in town.

This week we finally got around to recording it for Linda. If everything goes according to plan, Linda should receive it from Connie at the same time as she receives the pamphlet of 'Topside or the Future of England' by J. B. Priestley from me. Education...the only known antidote to Masters & Masses war propaganda.

Chapter 174 - Aslak Sagas

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But I promised you a little more of Aslak's Saga. So here we go. By 1900 Aslak's family were breeding along the North Scottish coast. By the 1920s they were being sighted all along the east coast of England as far south as the Humber Estuary and along the north coast of Ireland in Derry and Donegal. By the end of the 1940s fulmars were breeding on the northern shores of East Anglia, around the whole of the coast of Ireland and on the north coast of Cornwall and Devon in the Bristol Channel.

By the beginning of the 1950s, the only stretch of these offshore islands unfamiliar with the sight of fulmars breeding was the coastline 150 miles either side of Rye...to Brixham in the west and to Boston in the north. I

await expectantly the independent confirmations of my Rye sightings. Has anyone taken a look at Fairlight Cliffs lately? But back to beginnings.



Sketch 218 Hrip Farm

In the Landnamabok there is a story about a Norwegian called Grimur who went to Iceland looking for land. He arrived in late summer and settled temporarily on Grimsey in Steingrimsfjörður, in the north. Aslek was there. In the autumn Grimur went fishing, his young son Thorir lying safely tucked into a sealskin bag fastened at the

neck, in the prow of the boat. Suddenly Grimur hooked a merman, and when he had hauled him to the surface, Grimur asked what can you tell us about our futures?

Where in Iceland should we settle? The merman replied that there was little point in making prophecies about Grimur...implying that he had not long to live...but the boy in the sealskin bag would settle and claim land at the spot where Grimur's mare, Skölm, lay down under her load. Not another word could Grimur get out of the merman but as in all good sagas, it all went as the fates decreed.

Eventually Sel-Thorir settled at Raudamelur Ytri...Outer Red Hill...where the modern highway to Snaefellsnes swings westwards into the peninsular. Not so long ago I overheard Aslak telling Marley some more of the story.

When Sel-Thorir was old and blind, he went out one evening and saw a huge evil-looking man come rowing into Kaldaros...Cold River Estuary...in an iron boat. The man walked up to a farm called Hrip and started digging at the door of the sheep-shed.

There was a volcanic eruption there that night and from here runs the lava-field of Borgarhraun. Where the farm had stood there is now a crater. I got the impression that Aslak hoped Marley could throw some light on the identity of the man by the sheep-shed. But he's a dark sheep, that one.

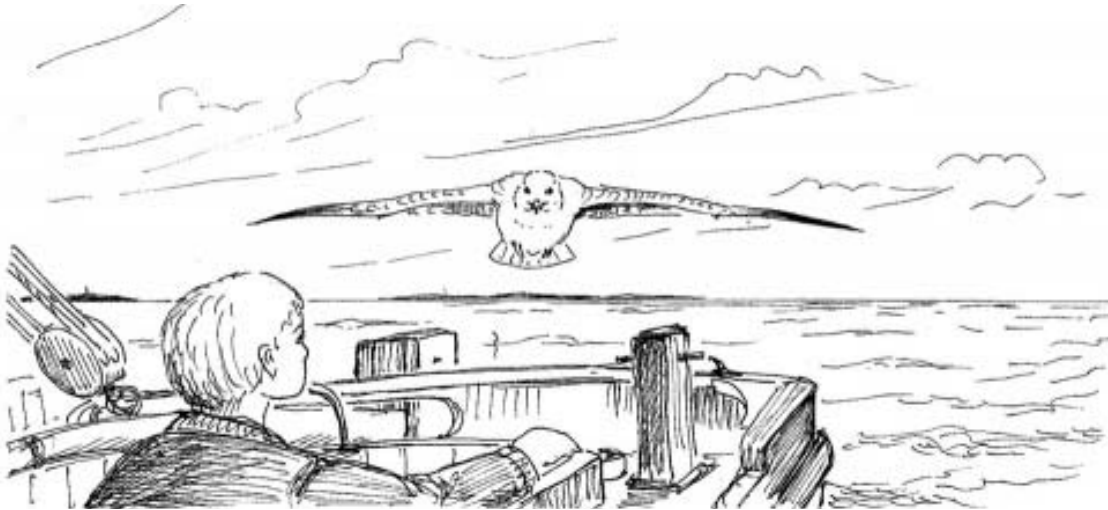
Chapter 175 - Aslak Sightings

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We had an interesting encounter with Aslak earlier this summer on one of our May trips to Boulogne. We were sailing back and had just passed the Colbart Buoy when Aslak came gliding in from Cap Gris Nez. David was the only one who saw him the first time. He insisted Aslak had been flying in the middle of a big red heart. That's pretty weird. Aslak circled a couple of times and then wheeled away back towards Boulogne.

Now I take people seriously...particularly uneducated child-people and ignorant savage-people. If they say they've seen something, I believe them. Our sensory systems are there to ensure that we don't get blinded by the light. Their job is to cut out incoming signals to avoid chronic overload and system collapse. The brain is a

reducing valve...as Aldous Huxley wrote in *The Doors of Perception*...cutting out from conscious awareness anything our minds can't make sense of.



Sketch 175 Aslak Sightings

David was in no doubt. Aslak had come up astern of Vemara on a straight flight path from over the Cap Gris Nez horizon, flying in the centre of a red heart-shaped aura or halo. Well there was nothing to do but alert Connie, our Bird Brain, and await Aslak's return. The three intrepid observers didn't have long to wait.

And this time there was no mistake about it. Aslak was making sure of that. There, engraved upon the fulmar's breast, was a red heart.

Connie saw it clearly. I saw it clearly. And David saw it clearly. Aslak swung around in a wide arc, glided across our bow and flew away towards the French coast. Five minutes later he was back for the third time. But this time there was no red heart. That was the last we saw of Aslak on that trip.

Now you either dismiss the record of the three observers or you accept it as evidence and try to explain it. Thomas Kuhn tells us in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* that big science prefers the former, while great scientists go for the latter.

Two hypotheses. The first attributes the effect to the fulmar's olfactory skills...small scent droplets and rainbow-style refractive theories. The other embraces Jungian concepts and regards the heart as an archetype and the whole episode as anecdotal evidence that birds...or at least the shaman class of fulmars...can communicate directly and intentionally with people by use of archetypes.

One of the more intriguing aspects of the whole encounter was confided to me by David the following day...and he confirmed the fact three days ago. The second time was nothing like the first. The red heart had faded almost to nothing on the second run. Could this mean that adults destroy the complex realities that birds, children and savages create? (*Answers on a duck's back to Mervin's MindParks (2100) Inc.*)

Chapter 176 - Crocademia

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David certainly had to work this week for his computer game...much more than planned. Mervin stands accused, coming up with a CF2 disc on the Monday that didn't play on the PCW 8256. Luckily the computer shop boss had a buying spree scheduled for the Wednesday and got hold of three second-hand PCW games...The Pawn for £8 and two others at £9. But we still had to stall...stretching the original three nights to eight.

The Quest For The Missing Birthday Present did not finally end until 4 am. on a chilly Sunday October 24th, 1993. Instead of yet another note from Ilbereth...clues and pieces of the puzzle had been appearing magically under his pillow every night...David found the end of a piece of string. How long is a piece of string, David? (*Twice the distance from the middle to the end. Mervin.*)

Down the stairs, the threads of fate untwirling ahead of him, into the kitchen, behind the oven, out into the conservatory, back through the kitchen into the front room, behind the sideboard, up into the bookcase, behind the television and...Aha! Computer Game Birthday Card and all. Oh Rapture! Joy Unbounded!

(For some...who was that saying Go Back to Bed? Mervin.)



Sketch 176 Crocademia

But let me give you some news. The card of Ilbereth and his goose was coloured with such subtlety and assurance that it could only have been the work of a master like...yes...yes...like me. William Morris beware!

William Norris Shepherd is abandoning his quill pen and taking up his paint brush. Nowhere man is hatching more nowhere plans for nobody.

My occasional paper on *The Political Legacy of William Morris* went across to Uppsala this week.

It kicks off with some Ruskin. No wealth but life. Riches is power over men and so on...from 'Unto This Last' which spent the 1860s challenging The Bible, The Works of Shakespeare and Mrs. Beeton's Household Management for pride of place on Victorian parlour tables.

Stuff and Nonsense!

*Mrs. 24-year-old's half a million words sold a quarter of a million
and were far more often consulted and far more exactly obeyed.*

Mervin's mother

Joy-in-Work was one of Morris' ideas...from Coleridge: 'the word rational has been strangely abused of late times'...and Carlyle: 'work is life'.

Morris and Marx were the only creative minds of the 19th century able to grasp the vital unity of the political, economic, aesthetic and moral in sustainable change. For both, commodity production and the division of labour were the dragons to be slain, while the spell of an idea of progress based on ever-increased production had to be thrown off.

The best ideas on what the little individual can do are in John Seymour's classic tales from his Welsh farming days improbably entitled 'I'm a Stranger Here Myself'. Try and get a copy from his wife Sally, an Aussie artist and porter down your way.

G'Day Mate!



**Miss Ye Not the intoxicating exhilaration engendered by reading
The Twelfth & Final Book in
The Private Papers of Crocodile Uppsala**