# Seven Stories saves Enid Blyton archive at auction

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These include three Famous Five titles, Last Term at Malory Towers, Look Out Secret Seven, two novels from her Adventure series, and two of her Mystery books. Seven Stories also purchased typescripts for several Noddy stories and plays, and a number of other short stories. These would have otherwise been sold to private collectors and now makes Seven Stories the largest public collector of Enid Blyton material. The purchase was made possible by special funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, and two private donations.

Enid Blyton (1897-1968) was the best-selling English-language author of the twentieth century, and remains one of the most popular writers of all time. In polls of favourite childhood reading, she continues to be ranked in the top five authors, often above Roald Dahl and JK Rowling. In a career spanning five decades, she produced an astonishing 700+ books and some 4,500 short stories. Despite this huge output, very few of Blyton's original typescripts appear to have survived.

The material at auction was from the estate of the late Gillian Baverstock, Enid Blyton's elder daughter, who died in June 2007. The 66 lots included seventeen typescripts, and a large number of books, periodicals, and other Blyton-related items, some of them owned by Gillian Baverstock during her childhood, others collected by her later on. The auction represented a unique opportunity for a national archive to acquire a body of work representing Blyton's extraordinary achievements and contribution to British children's literature.

Sophie Smallwood, Enid Blyton's granddaughter, who kindly contributed to the fund that enabled Seven Stories to make this purchase, said: "'I know Seven Stories will take really good care of the manuscripts and it means children will be able to enjoy them."

Kate Edwards, Chief Executive explained the importance of the purchase: "This is wonderful. This archive was in danger of being lost to the nation and we are thrilled to be able to bring it to Seven Stories where it will play an important part in telling the story of modern children's literature. It's hard to think of another author whose books have touched the lives of so many children throughout the world, generation after generation, as Enid Blyton's. We are the only gallery and archive in the country specialising in children's literature and we'll bring to life for children through exhibitions and learning projects. Of course her work and life still provokes discussion and debate, so this will be fascinating archive for researchers as well."

Sarah Lawrance, Seven Stories Collection Director, added: "Enid Blyton material of this kind is very rarely sold at auction and there is no other Blyton archive in public hands anywhere else in the UK. We are very excited about featuring the material in an Enid Blyton exhibition in the future and being able to use it in our learning programmes, as well as making it available for research."

Brian Alderson, children's literature expert, said: "Enid Blyton was an immensely prolific and commercially successful author, whose presence generated controversies directly related to contemporary social and cultural issues - factors which surely require her representation on as substantial a scale as possible in Seven Stories national centre for children's books."

Kimberley Reynolds, Professor of Children's Literature at Newcastle University, said: "It is absolutely appropriate, that Blyton's work should be held at Seven Stories, which is preserving the heritage around children's books precisely because it is so important to the nation's understanding of itself. The work of Enid Blyton, master storyteller, expert on nature and religious apologist, should be one of the centrepieces of the Seven Stories collections."

Jamie Andrews, Head of Modern Literary Manuscripts at The British Library, said: "I have no doubt that Seven Stories is the most appropriate repository to acquire, preserve, and exploit this exciting new archival material to a wide range of audiences, both locally and nationally."

Seven Stories also holds 2 'Noddy' illustrations by Harmsen van der Beek, donated by Enid Blyton's granddaughter, Sophie Smallwood, and files relating to two Noddy adaptations by the playwright David Wood, whose extensive archive is also held.

Seven Stories fundraised to enable it to bid for these items at auction. Grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the MLA/V&A Purchase Fund as well as donations from generous supporters of the charity's work made the purchases possible. Seven Stories is also grateful to Anthony Smithson of the Keelrow Bookshop in North Shields who advised them on the purchase and bid at auction on their behalf.

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the North East, Ivor Crowther, said: "Many people across the UK will have read an Enid Blyton story at some point in their lives, making these works a welcome addition to the already fascinating archive at Seven Stories. With the support of HLF, the Enid Blyton collection will be available to everyone and will ensure that this prolific author's rich legacy is preserved."

Cllr Pauline Allen, Newcastle City Council's Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Customer Service, said: "We are delighted Seven Stories will now become the home of the Enid Blyton archive. I am sure having this important collection in Newcastle will bring many visitors to our city and it will also become an important destination for those studying one of our country's most celebrated writers.  The work of Enid Blyton is known throughout the world and we are proud that this collection will inspire our region's schoolchildren and families."

Alison Clark-Jenkins, Regional Director, Arts Council England, said, "Providing children and young people with access to this stimulating work will give the opportunity for a new generation of audiences to experience this great art."

This rare Blyton collection enhances the national significance of the Seven Stories' archive of British children's literature, which spans from the 1930s to the present day.

Seven Stories is the only gallery and archive in Britain to celebrate the wonderful world of children's books. Based in Newcastle upon Tyne, Seven Stories gives a unique insight into the making of a children's book with engaging exhibitions that allow children, young people, families and researchers to explore their own creativity.

**Notes to Editors**

**Successful Lots**

1. Enid Blyton's original corrected typescript for Five have Plenty of Fun (1954).
This was the fourteenth book in the series. First published in 1955. Complete final text of the novel. The typescript comprises 176 typed pages, plus a final page in carbon copy containing an invitation to join the Famous Five club. There are numerous annotations in Blyton's own hand, including changes to words and phrases, showing that despite

the speed of her composition she nevertheless read through the text of each novel with some care, presumably before sending it off to the publisher. This typescript has the added interest of a handwritten front sheet, with a note from the author stating ‘This is the original typescript of “Five have plenty of Fun”. I do not write my books by hand but type them straight out of my head”.

2. Enid Blyton’s original corrected typescript for Five have a wonderful time (1957).
This was the eleventh book in the series. First published in 1952. Complete. 185 unbound typed pages of text plus 4 unnumbered preliminary pages including handwritten mock up of title page, possibly in Enid Blyton’s hand, but no cover sheet.

3. Enid Blyton’s original corrected typescript for Five on a Hike Together (1951).
This was the tenth book in the series. First published 1951. The earliest Famous Five typescript included in the sale. 177 unbound typed pages with numerous handwritten annotations. However, this script is incomplete, lacking the last few pages of the final chapter.

4. Enid Blyton’s original corrected typed playscript for Famous Five Adventure – A Play for Older Children in Three Acts (undated, apparently unpublished).
In a folder marked: ‘My own Top Copy Old copy’.
Heavily corrected throughout; cover sheet with Enid Blyton’s address and telephone number. Together with this copy, there are 4 unbound carbon copies in the same lot; these appear to be revised versions of the same text.

5. Enid Blyton’s original, corrected typescript for Last Term at Malory Towers (1951).
This is the only typescript from one of Blyton’s best known series, and the only school story in the sale. It has a signed foreword, 192 typed pages of text (unbound sheets) with frequent minor corrections. Of particular interest to Seven Stories as a key text in a very important genre in writing for children.

6. Enid Blyton’s original, corrected typescript for Cheer Up, Little Noddy (Noddy Book no.20).
29 sheets plus prelims. Together with typescripts for 2 other short Noddy stories and 2 Noddy playscripts and four corrected carbon copies for Noddy Stories and Songs.
This lot would be of particular value to Seven Stories because we already hold two Noddy illustrations and files for David Wood’s Noddy adaptations. Noddy has been one of Enid Blyton’s most controversial creations but remains popular.

7. Enid Blyton’s original, corrected typescript for Look Out, Secret Seven (1962).
Lacks the last few pages of the final chapter but otherwise a good example of Enid Blyton’s method of composition, with frequent minor handwritten corrections. The Secret Seven was another very popular series, aimed at slightly younger children than the Famous Five. This is the only typescript for a Secret Seven title included in the sale.

8. Enid Blyton’s original, corrected typescript for The River of Adventure (1955).
Eighth and final novel in the Adventure series. Notable for its foreign (north African) setting. Of interest as a late example of one of her popular series; the fact that Blyton has often been accused of racism makes this an interesting title.

9. Enid Blyton’s original corrected typescript for The Circus of Adventure.

10. Enid Blyton’s original corrected typescript for The Mystery of Holly Lane (1953).

11. Enid Blyton’s original corrected typescript for The Ragamuffin Mystery (1959).

12. Enid Blyton’s original, corrected typescripts for a number of Nature Stories; also, in the same lot, a typescript for Mr Tumpy’s Caravan (undated, possibly unpublished).
Of interest to Seven Stories as examples of Enid Blyton’s natural history writing, in which she combined her interest in education with her passion for the natural world. ‘Mr Tumpy’ was a character in two ‘strip’ books published in the 1950s; the typescript in this lot appears to be a novelisation of one of the stories and may have been unpublished.

13. Illustration for Last Term at Malory Towers by Stanley Lloyd. Undated [1951].
Pencil, pen and wash.
See above re typescript for this novel (lot no.59 ). Stanley Lloyd was illustrator of the first edition of this novel. Of particular interest to Seven Stories if we are successful in bidding for the typescript.

14. A box lot containing a large selection of Enid Blyton's readers and retellings for use in schools.

15. A box lot of four books with family inscriptions. These include a copy of Enid Blyton’s autobiography, "The Story of My Life" inscribed ‘for my darling Gillian with much love from Mummy’.

16. A box lot of games and ephemera, including a Noddy playsuit.

17. Gillian Baverstock’s Childhood Diary 1946-50.

Manuscript entries begin 1 January 1946, when Gillian Baverstock was thirteen and run intermittently to July 1950. Early entries are in a childish but legible hand; later entries are harder to read. This unpublished item is particularly important because it provides a direct insight into the life of the Blyton/Darrell Waters household during a period when Blyton was at her most productive.

**Enid Blyton (1897-1968)**
More than forty years after her death, her series fiction, in particular her 21 titles in the Famous Five series, has acquired iconic status. The name ‘Enid Blyton’, coupled with her trademark signature, has become a byword for a lost era of innocent childhood adventure.

As well as being hugely popular, Enid Blyton’s work has often provoked widespread controversy. During her lifetime, her simplistic literary style attracted adverse comment from many librarians, who regarded her books as insufficiently challenging for young readers; many public libraries deliberately avoided stocking her titles, despite their immense popularity with children. Subsequently, her work has drawn criticism for being sexist, racist and overly middle class. Nevertheless, interest in her life and work remains strong, and Blyton titles continue to sell in large numbers.

**Blyton’s Writing**
Before becoming a full-time writer, Blyton trained as a teacher. Much of her early writing appeared in magazines, in particular Teacher’s World and, from 1926 onwards, Sunny Stories for Little Folks , which she also edited. Her early output ranged from poems and short stories to retellings of myths, legends and Bible stories; a passionate naturalist, she also often wrote about animals, plants and the countryside.

Blyton’s first full-length work of fiction, The Adventures of the Wishing Chair, was published in episodes in Sunny Stories in 1937. The first Famous Five title, Five on a Treasure Island, appeared in 1942. Her experience as a teacher enabled her to adapt her style to suit children of different ages, from 5/6 (the Noddy books) through to early teens (the school

stories and Famous Five adventures). She addressed both boys and girls, though the later schools series, Malory Towers and St Clare's, were aimed more exclusively at girls. Through the Enid Blyton's Magazine (launched in 1953) she established strong relationships with her readers and encouraged them to provide her with constant feedback.

Blyton wrote extremely fast, with few, if any, notes or preliminaries, using a portable typewriter balanced on her knee. At her peak writing period she was capable of producing 10,000 words per day – an extraordinary rate of composition. Blyton's method of writing was described in her autobiography, The Story of My Life (1952), in which she claimed that she was able to 'see' her characters appearing, on a "private cinema screen inside her head"; her role, she explained, was to transcribe their actions into paper. The typescripts broadly confirm her description, but also reveal occasional interruptions and changes during the process; they also show that she carried out detailed checking of each script before sending it off for publication, frequently altering words and phrases in the manuscript. She also made more extensive changes, by pasting or pinning replacement text over the top. Two/three of the typescripts are accompanied by short statements, in her hand, describing her method.

**Special thanks to the following funding bodies for their support in purchasing the Enid Blyton archive.**

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK with £209 million in the North East alone.

The MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund is a government fund that helps regional museums, record offices and specialist libraries in England and Wales to acquire objects relating to the arts, literature and history. It was established at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in 1881 and continues to be part of its nationwide work. The annual grants budget, currently £900,000, is provided by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). Each year, the Purchase Grant Fund considers some 250 applications and awards grants to around 100 organisations, enabling acquisitions of around £3.5 million to go ahead.

**Further information**

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