



I Wish I'd Written: Jonathan Stroud

Article Author:

[Jonathan Stroud](#) [1]

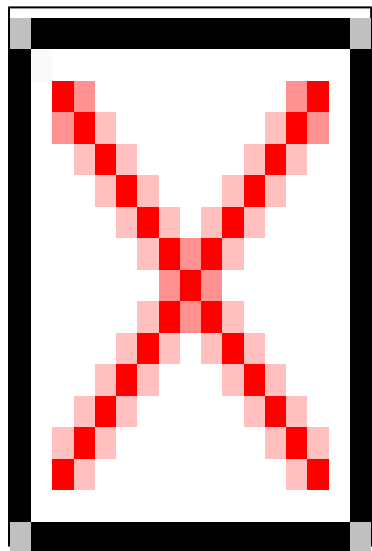
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Jonathan Stroud chooses one of the finest post-war British fantasies.

Katharine Briggs was an expert on British folklore, whose **Dictionary of Fairies** is an inexhaustible seam that every fantasy writer should trace. But my favourite of her books is this novel, published in 1955, concerning a kindly hobgoblin who lives at Widford Manor in the Cotswolds, protecting the folk that live there. When a family of Puritans takes possession of the house in the mid-Seventeenth Century, they threaten the old ways that bind the human and supernatural worlds; Hoberdy Dick must overcome witches, ghosts and religious bigotry before he can save the children of the house and, in a piercingly beautiful ending, achieve his own salvation. The author's depiction of time and place is exquisite, and her knowledge of fairy lore allows her to fuse the real and magical in a charming, matter-of-fact way. It's one of the finest post-war British fantasies, and I still remember the joy I felt when I first read it, all in one sitting. Never was there a better or warmer conjuring of English rural traditions, both mythic and historic. **Hoberdy Dick** stands beside Kipling's **Puck of Pook's Hill** as a lyrical evocation of the past - how it was, and how it ought to have been.

Hoberdy Dick (978-0-5712-5206-0) by K. M. Briggs is published by Faber & Faber £10.00

Jonathan Stroud's latest book [The Hollow Boy](#) [3] (978-0-5525-7314-6), book 3 in the **Lockwood and Co** series is published by Corgi Children's Books, £7.99.

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