

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien: 1892 - 1973. Roos:

J. R.R. Tolkien was a major scholar of English, being twice Professor of Anglo-Saxon at the university of Oxford. John (Ronald to the family) was born in Bloemfontein, South Africa in 1892. He married his wife, Edith in 1916 before seeing active service in France. There he succumbed to 'Trench Foot' and after recovering, moved to the RAF station at Renish Farm near Withernsea. Whilst billeted at The Old Rectory in Roos, Ronald went for a walk in the woods with Edith. There, in a grove thick with hemlock Edith danced for him. This was the inspiration for the tale of Beren (Ronald) and Luthien (Edith) in the Silmarillion

It is told in the Lay of Leithian that Beren came stumbling into Doriath grey and bowed as with many years of woe, so great had been the torment of the road. But wandering in the summer in the woods of Neldoreth he came upon Luthien, daughter of Thingol and Melian, at a time of evening under moonrise, as she danced upon the unfading grass in the glades beside Esgalduin. Then all memory of his pain departed from him and he fell into an enchantment; for Luthien was the most beautiful of all the children of Iluvatar.

Could Roos Bog have been the inspiration for The Dead Marshes? After all Ronald did mention The Wold and Wetwang (Nindalf)

The Passage Of The Marshes (Lord of The Rings Part Two, The Two Towers.)

"On either side and in front wide fens and mires now lay, stretching away southward and eastward into the dim half-light. Mists curled and smoked from dark and noiseome pools. The reek of them hung stifling in the still air. Far away, now almost due south, the mountain-walls of Mordor loomed, like a black bar of rugged clouds floating above a dangerous fog bound sea."

Hobbit 1937, Lord of the Rings 1954 1955, Beren and Luthien in the Legendarium.

Roos Church



Winifred Holtby: 1898 - 1935.

Winifred Holtby, born in Long Street, Rudston, had an intimate knowledge of the people and landscape of South East Holderness. Winifred used the experiences of her mother, the very first woman to be elected to the East Riding County Council, to weave the intricate emotional novel, South Riding (1936) which showed how the decisions of councillors tackling problems of health, education, housing and poverty in the 1930s, deeply affected the lives of ordinary people. Winifred used local settings to bring her writing alive. Withernsea was Kiplington, Maythorpe was Winestead and Flintonbridge was Beverley.

Here Lydia Holly from "The Shacks" surveys the landscape...

"One July afternoon Lydia Holly sat on the roof of the untenanted railway coach and tasted rapture. From her sun-warmed seat she could see, if she lifted her eyes, beyond the squalor of the huts, hen-runs and garbage, the long green undulating land, netted with dykes like glittering silver wires and cut short by the serrated cliff. The fields changed colour week by week, springing or ripening, but the sea altered from hour to hour and Lydia loved it. The wide serenity of the South Riding Plain, the huge march of the clouds, the tides that ran nearly a mile out over the ruddy sand, had become part of her nature."

Miss Sarah Burton (the new Headmistress of Kiplington High School For Girls) surveys a Battlefield....

"Kiplington was taking its evening pleasures. Along the esplanade strolled couples chewing spearmint, smoking gaspers, sucking oranges. All forms of absorption, mastication and inhalation augmented the beneficent effects of sea air, slanting sun and holiday leisure. Mothers with laden paper carriers and aching varicose veins pushed prams back to hot crowded lodgings; elderly gentlemen in nautical blue naval jackets leaned on iron railings and turned telescopes intended for less personal objects upon the charms of Kingsport nymphs emerging from their final bathe."



The Landscape of Holderness



The Pier Towers, Withernsea

Philip Larkin: 1922 - 1985. Coventry: Hull.

Philip Larkin was born in Coventry in 1922. Educated at King Henry 8th Grammar School and St. John's College Oxford, Philip became Chief Librarian at Hull University in 1955. Admired by scholars and ordinary readers alike, Philip was deeply influenced by the Holderness landscape....



*Larksong "A laverack in its house of air is singing
May morning, May morning, and its trills drift
High on the flatland's abstract hill
In the down-below of England.
I am the aerial photograph it takes of me
On a sonar landscape
And it notates my sorrow*

Robin Skelton Born 1925 at Easington, died 1997 in Vancouver.

Robin Skelton was the son of 'Eggie' Skelton, Headmaster of Easington School. Robin had an interesting primary education, often being locked in the coal-house by his fellow schoolboys. A scholar of Pocklington School and Leeds University, Robin became Professor of English at the University of Vancouver and the Chairman of the Writers' Union of Canada. He was the author of over 100 novels and poetry books, often drawing on the Holderness landscape and the distant horizons across the Humber Estuary.

There is a commemorative plaque to Robin Skelton on the side of the old Easington schoolhouse.



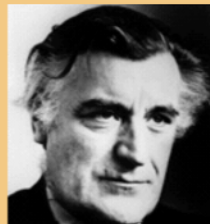
Easington Village Square

Westfield Lane:

*...and beyond an eight mile waste
of grey water stirs and waits.
Looking back at Westfield Lane
The eye has altered, the light passed.
The house echoes, I mount and ride
The other road, by graveyard and stack,
Home through the silent village square,
Chilled and listening. That track
Led me too far into my need,
And yet a new need drags me back."*

Ted Hughes: 1930 - 1998.

Ted Hughes was a scholar of Mexborough Grammar School and Cambridge. Ted served his National Service between 1949 and 1952 as a ground wireless mechanic at Patrington RAF Camp. He professed to have nothing to do except watch the grass grow and re-read Shakespeare. He became Poet Laureate in 1984. Ted Hughes published several novels including "The Iron Man". There were several references to Holderness including "Fishing The Estuary". here we have an excerpt from "Mayday on Holderness" contained in Poems selected by Simon Armitage published by Faber in 2004....



*"This evening, motherly summer moves in the pond.
I look down into the decomposition of leaves -
The furnace door whirling with larvae.*

*From Hull's sunset smudge
Humber is melting eastward, my south skyline:
A loaded single vein, it drains
The effort of the inert North Sheffield's ores.
Bog pools, dregs of toadstools, tributary
Graves, dunghills, kitchens, hospitals.
The unkillable North Sea swallows it all.
Insects, drunken, drop out of the air."*



Sunk Island

Valerie Wood.

Valerie Wood is a home grown author from greater Yorkshire who now lives and works in Holderness. Her first book "The Hungry Tide", influenced by our wild countryside, won the 'Catherine Cookson Prize for Fiction' and several of her other works are set locally. In the prologue for "Annie" (Bantam Press 1994) Valerie shows how the River Humber coloured her thinking....

"Did other rivers, stream and creeks fall into these mighty waters, cascading down hills and surging through valleys to swell the rushing waters of the mighty Humber? Annie wrapped her shawls around her. A wind was rising, coming in from the sea. It disturbed the water's dull surface, agitating it into frothy white crests and she saw by the increasing undercurrent that the tide was on the turn. The river was on a journey and she was compelled to follow it.

And again in the prologue for Rosa's Island. (Bantam Press 2001).

*"The rivers waters eddied and broke over the bank of sunken sand, covering it with a watery blanket and then retreating. Again it came and drew away. And again. Over the years the sand-bank grew wider and higher and the constant rhythmic waves of the estuary surged and flowed and caressed its edges, flooding the greening centre only at high spring tides.
Sonke Sande, a bare and empty lonely isle risen from the deep Humber bed."*

And this of course became Sunk Island.



Stone Creek. Sunk Island

OTHER AUTHORS WORTHY OF NOTE WITH LITERARY CONNECTIONS WITH HOLDERNES:

John Betjeman: poet and author of "A Guide to the Parish Churches of Britain." Philip.I. Adams: author of "Is Orion Home." Chris Buckle: author of "My Favourite Walk." Oliver Onion. Hubert Nicolson: authors who have used Sunk Island as their literary influence. Penny Grubb: crime writer. Linda Acaster: author of novels based in this locality.