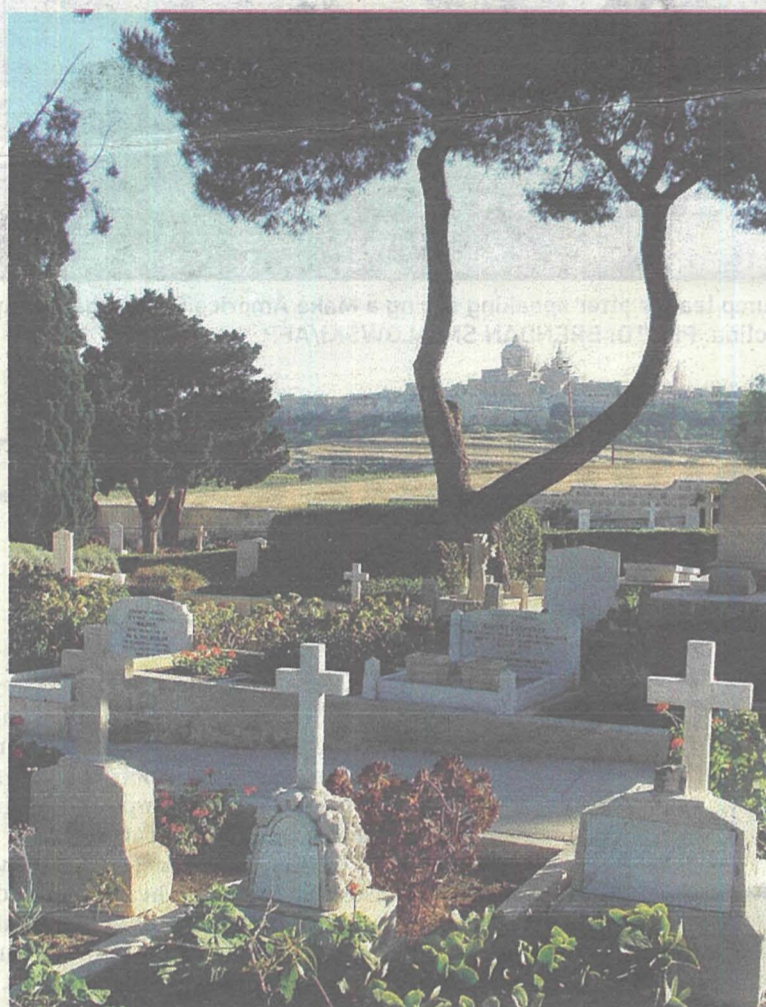


LIFE AND WELLBEING HISTORY

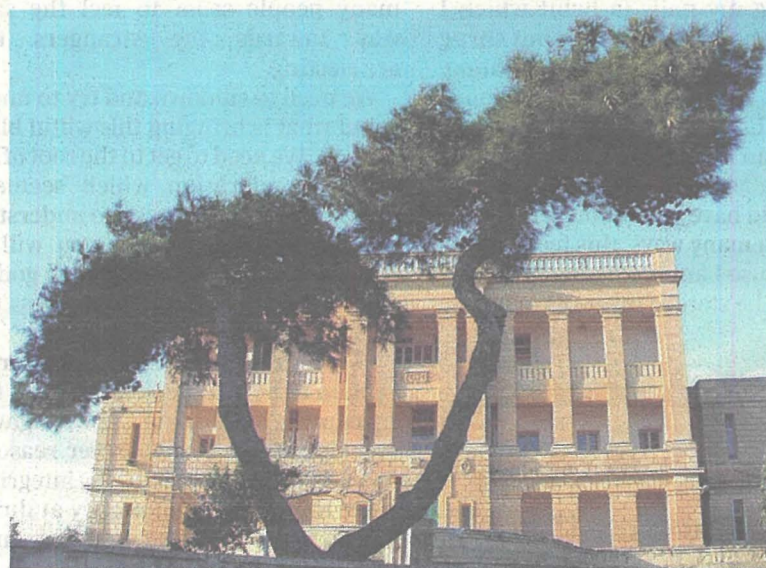
Enid Blyton's first husband



Mtara Military Cemetery



Enid Blyton and her daughters



David Bruce Hospital, Mtarfa, later a boys' secondary school.

MARY ATTARD

Freelance writer and photographer

"My father was an honourable man - not the flawed, inconsequential one which was the deliberate misconception perpetuated by Enid (Blyton)" - Rosemary Pollock, daughter of Ida and Hugh Pollock

Hugh Pollock died on November 8, 1971. He was the ex-husband of Enid Blyton, the famous children's writer. And his tombstone lies peacefully flat on the ground against a wall in the serene Mtarfa Military Cemetery. It reads: "Hugh Alexander Pollock, D.S.O., Lieut. Col. Royal Scots Fusiliers (29-7-88 - 6-11-71), Beloved husband of Ida."

After learning of the interesting connection with Blyton, I got intrigued to dig some more on how it is that her husband ended up in Malta - and with another woman! This opened up a can of worms... a whole saga was unravelled and while peeling more and more of it, I found myself with quite a story that will be of interest to most baby boomers who were weaned on Blyton's books.

Who was not captivated in his teens on her adventures of *The Famous Five*, *The Secret Seven* and the *Noddy* books!

In her 40-year career, Blyton (1897-1968) published over 600 children's and juvenile books. She was a phenomenon and was instrumental in encouraging children to read. Her books have sold 400 million copies worldwide and were translated into nearly 70 languages. And are still selling...

But what about Pollock?

Pollock was born on July 29, 1888, at Garfield Villa, Hawkhill, (now 27, Hawkhill Avenue) in the town of Ayr in Scotland. He was educated at Ayr Academy and joined his father's bookselling and publishing business. For almost a century the business of Stephen & Pollock, Booksellers at 37, Sandgate, at the corner with Newmarket Street, was one of the most popular shops in Ayr.

In 1913, at the Hotel Dalblair, he married Marion, the youngest daughter of William Atkinson, a farmer. They had two sons. The eldest, William Cecil Alexander, died after two years in 1916. The younger,



Enid Blyton. Right: Hugh Pollock

Edward Alistair, was born in 1915 and died in 1969. Pollock's marriage to Marion ended when she left for another man during the Great War.

Pollock had joined the Royal Scots Fusiliers during World War I and served with them at Gallipoli, Palestine and France. He was awarded the DSO. When the war ended, he served with the Burma Rifles in India, Burma and Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) after transferring to the Indian Army.

Having lost his wife to another man during this period, Pollock wished to make a new career away from Ayr. So he joined Newnes publishing house in London in the book department as an editor. At that time Newnes were Blyton's publishers.

In Barbara Stoney's biography of Blyton we read a description of the debonair Scot as a "handsome, fair-haired man with striking blue eyes... was in his middle-30s," and as possessing a "glamorous background... air of quiet authority and sophisticated manner" which "charmed the 26-year-old, emotionally very immature Enid from the start, while her childlike naivety and zest for life drew the war-weary ex-soldier to her from the first meeting".

The first mention of Pollock in Blyton's diary was on January 10, 1924. The relationship developed and they married in August 1924 in Bromley, Kent. He was to be her first husband. At first the union was successful and they had two daughters, Imogen and Gillian.

Meanwhile, Blyton's writing continued to gain popularity while Pollock continued with his career at Newnes. By 1933 he was responsible for a number of Newnes' notable authors, one of

whom was Winston Churchill. At the time, Newnes were doing Churchill's *The World Crisis*. This required Pollock to visit Churchill in Chartwell to discuss World War I. However, this proved too much for Pollock and the recollections of the war triggered a nervous breakdown on him. Though he continued to work, he started to withdraw from public and family life and became a heavy and secret drinker.

We know from his younger daughter that when in 1938 the family bought a new house at Beaconsfield, 25 miles from London, Pollock seemed more depressed than enthused about the change.

"Blyton has emerged as an emotionally immature, unstable and often malicious figure"

But when in 1939 war broke out, Pollock joined the Home Guard. Here he was finding life purposeful again and the following year was appointed commander of the War Office School for Instructors of the Home Guard at Dorking.

This post kept him away from home for long stretches and war service was once again to blame for the break-up of his second marriage.

Blyton and Pollock were married for 19 years but as her career took off in the 1930s, Pollock grew depressed and took to nightly drinking sessions in the cellar while she managed to fit affairs in between writing.

Blyton and Pollock divorced in 1942, and the following year she married a middle-aged surgeon, Kenneth Darrell Waters. Waters was genuinely interested in her work and shared many interests together, including gardening. Waters

buried at Mtarfa cemetery

died in 1967. Blyton herself died a year later in a Hampstead nursing home on November 28, 1968.

Blyton had displayed a streak of bitterness over the break-up with Pollock and forbade her two daughters to get in touch with their father, and quickly officially changed their surnames from Pollock to Waters.

She persuaded Pollock to take the blame for the break-up through infidelity so as not to ruin her reputation. Reluctantly, he accepted, on condition that he would be able to keep in touch with his daughters who he kept supporting financially. But Blyton broke this promise and forbade her daughters to ever get in touch with him again, which is what happened.

Meanwhile, at Dorking, Pollock had recruited a novelist with the name of Ida Crowe to his staff, with whom he ended up having an affair, once he found himself free to do so. They had first met in 1939. At the time, Crowe was 21 while Pollock was 50. He married her in London in October 1943, just six days after the marriage of Blyton and Waters took place.

After this, Pollock's whereabouts could not be easily traced. But his daughter Gillian, in an interview she gave to the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* in May 1999, implied that Ida and Pollock had travelled widely, and in their later life lived in Malta where he died, probably in 1971. They had a daughter, Rosemary.

It transpired that he did indeed die on November 8, 1971, at the David Bruce Royal Naval Hospital in Mtarfa (which later was turned into a boy's secondary school and is currently unoccupied). He was buried in the nearby picturesque Mtarfa Military Cemetery. He was 83.

Ida lived to be 105 and was quite a prolific writer herself. When she was 100 she published her memoirs, *Starlight*, recounting how her husband Pollock was unfairly treated by Blyton. He was driven to bankruptcy when the publishing house he and Blyton were in preferred to keep her and get rid of him, as she was a better financial asset.

Pollock was instrumental in getting Blyton's writings off the ground, being in the publishing business, but after the divorce she tried to ruin him as best she could.

Since Blyton's death and the publication of her daughter Imogen's 1989 autobiography, *A Childhood at Green Hedges*, Blyton has emerged as an

emotionally immature, unstable and often malicious figure. Imogen considered her mother to be "arrogant, insecure, pretentious, very skilled at putting difficult or unpleasant things out of her mind, and without a trace of maternal instinct. As a child, I viewed her as a rather strict authority. As an adult, I pitied her." However, Blyton's eldest daughter Gillian remembered her rather differently, as "a fair and loving mother, and a fascinating companion".

Blyton herself went through a rough childhood, having her father abandoning the family when she was quite young. As she grew up, she escaped her pain of this loss through the fantasy world of writing.

It is said she was allergic to reality and she projected an image to her readers of being a loving mother with a healthy family life of two obedient daughters and a loving dog. In reality, she was nothing of the sort and concentrated on meeting her young readers and organising reading parties for them to increase her popularity while her own two children were kept out of the way and tended to by their nannies.

It also transpired through Crowe's memoirs that Blyton often organised tennis parties at her home where everyone ended up playing naked and sharing in erotic fun. This was a common practice in those days among the more daring members of the middle classes.

Various writings also revealed that Blyton had lesbian tendencies and had an affair with one of her children's nannies. In her mid-60s, she started to develop Alzheimer's and died on November 28, 1968, aged 71 - three months after being moved to a nursing home - and a year after her husband's death.

As for Pollock, after going through the traumas of two wars and three marriages, and helping to launch the career of one of Britain's most popular writers, he found peace in his final resting place in Malta.

Acknowledgements

The following were used as sources of information for this article: *A Childhood at Green Hedges* by Imogen Smallwood (one of Blyton's daughters); Barbara Stoney's *Enid Blyton: The Biography*, London; *Starlight* - a memoir by Ida Pollock; 'Hugh Pollock: The First Mr Enid Blyton', by Rob Close, in *Ayrshire Notes* 21, Autumn 2001; and www.enidblytonsociety.co.uk.

FACTBOX

On Enid Blyton

- In a 1982 survey of 10,000 11-year-old children, Enid Blyton was voted their most favourite writer. In her 40-year career she published more than 600 books for children.

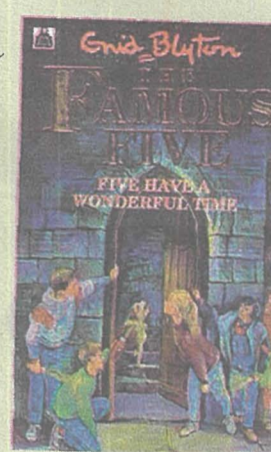
- Enid Blyton is the world's fourth most-translated author, behind Agatha Christie, Jules Verne and William Shakespeare, having her books being translated into 90 languages. From 2000 to 2010, Blyton was listed as a Top Ten author, selling almost eight million copies (worth £31.2 million) in the UK alone.

- To date, she has sold more than 600 million books and still sells about eight million copies a year.

- Along the years there were accusations of racism, xenophobia and sexism in Blyton's books and a few libraries even banned them.

- Many of Blyton's books were adapted for stage, television and film, and even games and puzzles.

- A society was set up on everything connected with Enid Blyton for all her followers. Its website is www.enidblytonsociety.co.uk.

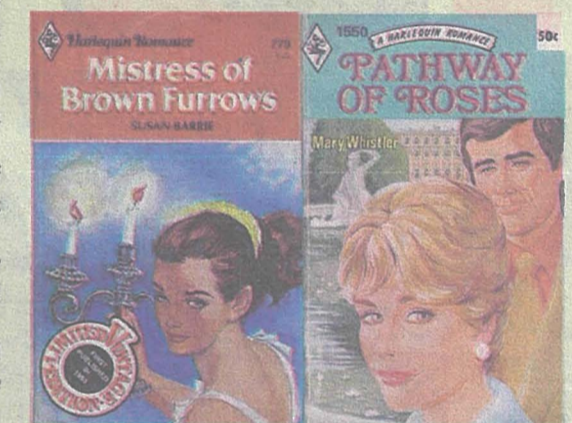


One of The Famous Five books

was 100, tells the story of the start of her career, her marriage and the relationship of her husband with his ex-wife Enid Blyton.

- In addition to writing, Ida constructed model houses, usually scale miniatures of Georgian or Tudor buildings. She was also an oil painter, who was selected for inclusion in a national exhibition in 2004, at the age of 96.

- Ida published 125 romance novels under her name and several different pseudonyms: Joan M. Allen; Susan Barrie, Pamela Kent, Averill Ives, Anita Charles, Barbara Rowan, Jane Beaufort, Rose Burghley, Mary Whistler and Marguerite Bell. She has sold millions of copies over her 90-year career and has been referred to as the "world's oldest novelist", who was still active at 105 and continued writing until her death. On her 105th birthday, she was appointed honorary vice-president of the Romantic Novelists' Association, having been one of its founding members.



Two of Ida Pollock's books

On Hugh Pollock

- Hugh Pollock was married three times and had five children in all. The first wife was Marion Atkinson (m. 1913; div. 1924); his second was Enid Blyton (m. 1924; div. 1943) and his third, Ida Crowe (m. 1943 till Hugh's death in 1971).

- The location of Hugh Alexander Pollock's tombstone at Mtarfa Military Cemetery is Plot 3, row 3, no. 14-26.



Enid Blyton at work

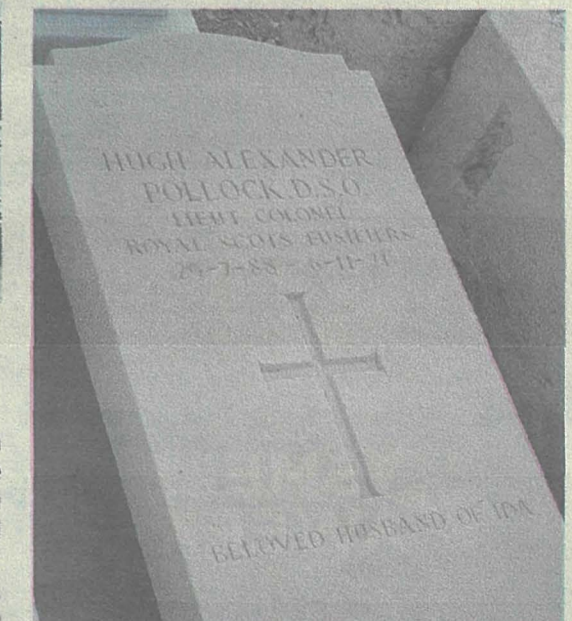


Ida in her 90s

On Ida Pollock

- Ida Pollock, herself a prolific writer, lived to be 105. She was born on April 12, 1908 and died on December 3, 2013.

- Her memoirs, *Starlight*, published in 2009 when she



Hugh Pollock's tomb