

Life's A Picnic

Win luxury hampers plus Waitrose vouchers & guidebooks

News Site of the Year | The 2008 Newspaper Awards

TIMES ONLINE



“Russia and China aren't natural allies, but Western geopolitical ambition will drive them together

” Robert Skidelsky

News Comment Business Money Sport Life & Style Travel Driving Arts & Ents Archive Our Papers Site Map

Film Music Stage Visual Arts TV & Radio What's On Books The TLS Games & Puzzles Related Features

MY PROFILE SHOP JOBS CLASSIFIEDS

Where am I? Home Arts & Entertainment Books

From The Times August 30, 2008

Erica Wagner on BookSleuth, a website that helps readers track down forgotten favourites

There are few greater pleasures than the rediscovery of a book that you think you have lost. By which I don't mean that copy of *Great Expectations* you were certain was on the bedside table and now has mysteriously vanished: no, I mean a book you know you read, know you loved, and knew at the time that everything about it - title, author, tiniest detail, grandest theme - would stay with you for ever and ever and ever. But ... wait. Suddenly all you can remember is one telling detail, and the rest has flown the coop. There's that scene with the fork, the radio and the bolt of lightning, but nothing else. There's a tall woman with bright red hair and a limp, but farther than that you can't get. It's maddening. What on earth is a reader to do?

Turn to [BookSleuth](#), that's what. Last week, readers may recall, author Alan Garner revealed he had, for years, suffered from just such a loss. He could recall a boy able to magically descend through the staircase in a pillar box to a garden where a girl could be found; he could recall "a wise but erratic old gentleman". He had been through decades of anguish, he told us, as a result of his inability to recollect anything more.

I'm pleased to say he is anguished no more. One of our readers put a query in on his behalf on the aforementioned BookSleuth, a feature you'll find if you head to [abebooks.com](#), one of the good websites for sourcing out-of-print books. There you'll find souls who ask such things as: "I'm looking for the name of a humorous fictional book about a college professor that winds up with his own personal cannon, one that fires oil cans filled with concrete. Any help would be appreciated." There's a woman who recalls a book in which a girl marries an Alaskan ship captain; someone wants to find a ghost story about a house that can't be slept in. Have a browse - perhaps you can help. Alan Garner got his answer because a kind soul wondered whether it wasn't Marion St John Webb's "Mr

Explore Books

- ▶ Book Extracts
- ▶ Book Reviews
- ▶ Books Group
- ▶ Audio Books

Times Recommends

- ▶ Extract: My Little Armalite
- ▶ Madonna: A life in 10 songs
- ▶ The Sunday Times 100 best holiday reads

Bestsellers

- ▶ Top 10 hardbacks - fiction
- ▶ Top 10 hardbacks - non-fiction
- ▶ Top 10 paperbacks - fiction
- ▶ Top 10 paperbacks - non-fiction

Today

- ▶ McCain chooses female Alaska governor Sarah...
- ▶ Dita von Teese is the new face (and body) of...
- ▶ Italy horrified by 'Clockwork Orange'...
- ▶ David Duchovny enters rehab for sex addiction

Today

- ▶ America refuses to accept defeat in Olympic...
- ▶ Dimitri Medvedev raises spectre of new Cold...
- ▶ Don't pick a fight you can't...
- ▶ Cold War tension rises as Putin talks of...

Today

- ▶ Dita von Teese is the new face (and body) of...
- ▶ Venice cancels opening ceremony for hated...
- ▶ Police cautions and on-the-spot fines leave...
- ▶ Stowaway computer virus sent into orbit

Focus Zone

London Triathlon:

Read the training tips and advice that helped our London Triathletes

Papingay" books he was after . . . yes, came the delighted answer - exactly those. "My yearning for a pillar box and a girl and an old gentleman is resolved and a 64-year itch has gone," Garner says. "Now I may rest. Thank you!"

Happy endings are rare enough in life, I find - even rarer than they are in novels. It's immensely satisfying when one gets a glimpse that, as the stories sometimes tell us, they might just be possible.

Have your say

* Name *Email

* Town Country

* Required

Remember me

Terms and conditions

- Print
- Email
- Post to del.icio.us
- Post to Fark
- Post to Yahoo!
- Post to Digg

Also in Books

- The Private Patient by P. D. James
- This is Not About Me by Janice Galloway

Book Review



Madonna: 10 Songs

The Material Girl's story told through her best loved hits

Podcast



The online books festival

Attend our unique online literary event

Book Review



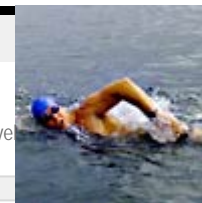
AUDIO: The Greatest Publicity Stunts Ever

PR wizard Mark Borkowski talks to Hardeep Singh Kohli about the geniuses of hype

Times Archive



- London Triathlon
- James Bond
- Perfect Pets
- Business Travel



Popular Searches on Times Online

[a level results 2008](#) | [bollywood news](#) | [chess](#) | [dark knight review](#) | [fantasy football 2008](#) | [fashion](#) | [london film festival 2008](#) | [mortgages](#) | [olympics news](#) | [podcasts](#) | [property](#) | [recipes](#) | [redundancy](#) | [sudoku](#) | [wine](#)

Shortcuts to help you find sections and articles

Services

- Fantasy
- Business
- Football
- Directory
- Business
- IFA Search
- City Guides
- Restaurant
- Dating
- Offers

Special

Fleming & Bond

Exclusive 100 year timeline



Get stuck into our Philip Pullman special



New titles for £2.99

Pick up new releases when you buy The Times or The Sunday Times



Classifieds

Cars

[Jaguar XK XK 4.2 V8 Supercharged R](#)
2007