ELFRIDA VIPONT: QUAKER CHILDREN'S WRITER

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JOHN RYLANDS UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OF MANCHESTER

Elfrida Vipont Brown was born in Manchester in 1902, the third child of Dr Edward Vipont Brown and Dorothy Brown nee Crowley. Both her parents were members of prominent Quaker families and were active in the Quaker life of Manchester. Her childhood home was Surrey Lodge in Birch Lane, Longsight, from where her father ran his medical practice. The family had close connections with Dalton Hall, a student's residence of Manchester University then administered by the Society of Friends. She attended Manchester High School for Girls, situated in Dover Street close to the University, and continued her schooling at The Mount School, a Quaker boarding school for girls in York where her mother had also been a pupil. On leaving school she enrolled at Manchester University to read History but resigned before completing the course in order to concentrate on a musical career. She was a singer of considerable promise giving many recitals throughout the country. After her marriage in 1926 to the research chemist R. Percy Foulds her attention increasingly turned towards writing, and the birth of four daughters between 1927 and 1935 concentrated her energies on more domestic matters. For many years the family had visited the small north Lancashire village of Yealand Conyers, which lies in the heart of the area known as the '1652 Country', the birthplace of Quakerism. On the outbreak of the Second World War the family moved to Yealand Conyers where Elfrida became the headmistress of Yealand Manor School, an evacuation school, originally for Quaker children evacuated from Manchester and Liverpool, but subsequently for children from all over the country including some refugees. It took children up to the age of twelve years.\(^1\) Staff at the school worked voluntarily and parents paid what they could afford. After the closure of the school at the end of the war Elfrida's husband bought a house in Yealand Conyers where she continued to live until her death in March 1992 in her ninetieth year.

* I am very grateful to Carolyn Shaw for all the help she has given me and for reading the text and correcting errors of fact. Any mistakes that remain are mine alone.

\(^1\) An unpublished manuscript chronicling the history of the school is to be found in the archive. 'A writer's debt to children', published in *Junior Bookshelf*, 15, no. 3, (1951), also deals with the evacuation school.
Through the generosity of Elfrida’s daughter and literary executor, Carolyn Shaw, the John Rylands Library has received letters, manuscripts of both published and unpublished works and documents which cover the whole of her writing career. It is the intention here to deal only with those parts of the archive which concern her writing for children. It is, however, worth mentioning two other substantial parts of the archive dealing with other aspects of her life.

As already mentioned Elfrida Vipont had originally intended to pursue a musical career and there are many recital programmes, reviews and leaflets which it is hoped will provide material for a future article on this aspect of her life. Throughout Elfrida’s life she played an active part in Quaker work both in this country and abroad. Her writing in this field, both books and periodical articles, was vast and the archive documents this extensively. She served on many official Quaker committees both local and national, but few papers relating to these activities are to be found in the John Rylands Archive.

The earliest examples we have of Elfrida’s writing date from the period of her junior school days. A seven-page fragment headed ‘The Trio by E.V. Brown, author of Young Macdonell, The wishing ring, etc.’ shows an excellent command of style and imagination: ‘Donald Carlton Pickard was Mr. Pickard’s eldest son. He was tall, strong and manly. He had black hair and dark blue eyes. He loved the sea and all the great sea-captains, he loved to read of Nelson, Cook, and Hudson, he was every inch a seaman. At the time of the beginning of our story he was fourteen years old’. The wishing ring started impressively being ‘Dedicated to my dear Mother hoping she will enjoy this simple fairy story, E.V.B.’ but continued for only a few pages. There is a more substantial fragment of a play which has clearly been re-copied at a later date. Called The ransome: a play written on the picture of the same title, by Millais, it was written by ‘Elfrida Vipont Brown, with the aid of suggestions by Rachel Graham, 1911’. Rachel Graham was the daughter of John William Graham, the warden of Dalton Hall, and the children of both families played together and wrote plays which they performed for their parents. The earliest printed work so far discovered appears in the magazine of the Manchester High School for 1914 which included a short poem and an account of a family visit to Gouganebarra in Ireland.

In later life many friends and members of her family urged
Elfrida to write reminiscences of her childhood. She was unhappy at writing in the first person and in the event the reminiscences took the form of a story with all the characters being given fictional names. While I understand a complete version of the final ‘reminiscences’ exists, we do not possess it. Her handwriting can, on occasions, be extremely difficult to read and her secretary also had trouble with it. It would seem that the entire manuscript was dictated using a dictaphone. We are extremely fortunate to have both the dictaphone and a number of the tapes. The tape version is unfortunately not complete as some of the tapes have been re-used once transcribed. A number of the fictional names used have been identified.

In 1930 the Friends Meeting House in Mount Street, Manchester, celebrated its centenary and a small booklet containing six essays was issued to commemorate the event. Two of the contributions were by Elfrida and, under the pseudonym of Elizabeth Oldbridge, she also drew the small decorations at the end of each essay. Elfrida also wrote the words and composed the music of an anthem, *Lift up your lamps* to be sung during the commemorations. She wrote a pageant in twelve sections for the children to act; it covered the history of Quakerism in Manchester. Our typescript copy is the one used by Hilary Sutherland, the daughter of George Sutherland who later took over the wardenship of Dalton Hall on the retirement of John William Graham. In 1938 the Society of Friends published the text of the pageant with the title *Lift up your lamps: the pageant of a Friends’ meeting.*

There had long been a tradition in the Vipont Brown family of involvement in educational enterprises. In 1926 Elfrida gave the first of many broadcasts to schools. A ten-part series on *The origins of song* was broadcast from station 2ZY, the first radio call-sign of the Manchester station. We have an almost complete text of the series. These talks are particularly significant as they were broadcast at the same time as the experimental schools’ broadcasts undertaken in the Kent region, also in 1926. The first authenticated broadcast transmitted specifically to schools took place in Glasgow in 1924. In view of the fact that Elfrida was an accomplished singer it is reasonable to assume that at least some of the examples were sung by her.

During the 1950s and early 1960s Elfrida Vipont contributed to a number of schools’ broadcasts on aspects of history, usually with a Quaker content. In the series *Stories from world history* which was aimed at children aged eight to ten years she contributed *Doctor Dimsdale in Russia.* This was first broadcast in 1956 and as the story

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1 I am extremely grateful to my husband for not only putting the dictaphone in working order but also for patiently transferring the tapes to modern cassette tape.

dealt with early vaccination against smallpox it had interesting parallels with the campaign which was taking place in 1956 for innoculation against polio. It was the practice of the BBC to ask teachers to assess the impact and interest shown by the children to the schools’ broadcasts as soon as possible after the programme and to send their comments to the BBC. These were gathered together and a confidential report was made by the BBC Education Officer. A copy of his report is included in the archive.

*Stories from British history* was aimed at slightly older children, those of between nine and eleven years of age. The scripts for this series, which was broadcast for the first time in 1954 and repeated in 1962 and 1964, were adapted from the book, *Sparks among the stubble*, which was first published by Oxford University Press in 1950. The stories chosen were *John Crook Quaker*, also called *Things that go bump in the night*, and *Kitty Wilkinson*, also broadcast under the title *She shall be Queen*.

A rather different story was included in the 1952 series *Adventures in English*. The script called *Cream of paradise* related the true story of a negro slave taken from Elfrida’s own family history. It also formed one of the chapters in *Sparks among the stubble*. All the stories in *Sparks among the stubble* had originally been told to the children in the evacuation school at Yealand during the war. In 1955 Longmans Green published a book by Margaret Cropper with the title *Sparks among the stubble*, and, although there is no copyright in titles, a publisher would normally be very careful to check any prospective title before going ahead. In this case Longmans were obliged to note in the *Bookseller* that there was another different book with the same title.

There are a number of letters in the archive from Duncan Taylor of the Schools Broadcasting Department and copies of the terms of contract for the various transmissions. Booklets to accompany each series were published by the BBC to help teachers to provide background information. An example of each is included.

In 1931 the first book to be published by Elfrida Vipont, *Good adventure: the quest of music in England*, appeared. Correspondence shows that there had been some difficulty in finding a publisher. In 1929 J.M. Dent had been approached unsuccessfully and while Dent had recommended Oxford University Press there is no evidence they were contacted. An attempt to place the book in the United States was made in 1930 which again came to nothing. The book was eventually published by the Manchester firm of John Heywood, which had a long tradition of publishing works by local authors. It was illustrated by Estella Canziani, an artist known to the

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family who had previously provided decorations for some of the programmes of Elfrida's song recitals.


For her next book, *Blow the man down,* Elfrida adopted the pseudonym Charles Vipont. The publishers, Oxford University Press, felt that 'there was considerable prejudice among the public against a boys' book appearing which had been written by a woman' (Letter, O.U.P. 14/11/38), and that the story would have more impact with a man's name. The first edition published in 1939 contains a facsimile of the pamphlet *The fighting sailor turn'd peacable Christian manifested in the convincement and conversion of Thomas Lurting,* London, 1710. This formed the source of the story. The facsimile was not reprinted in the subsequent American and British editions, but it has been reprinted separately on several occasions by Quaker publishers. There are also Danish and German translations of the book. By arrangement with Oxford University Press Heinemann published the book in their School Edition series.

The first of the books for which Elfrida Vipont is best known, *The lark in the morn,* was published by Oxford University Press in 1948. The book was reviewed favourably. It was followed two years later by *The lark on the wing,* which won the Library Association Carnegie Medal for 1950: the oldest and most prestigious medal in England for children's books, it is awarded annually for the most outstanding book of the year. Announcing the award in the *Library Association Record* Lorna Paulin, incidentally also an active Quaker, wrote, 'The story is absorbing and often amusing, but the writer is not afraid to be serious, and it is refreshing to find a book where religion enters into everyday life as a matter of course. Much of the book must reflect Mrs. Foulds's personal experience'. In the book *Chosen for children: an account of the books which have been awarded the Library Association Carnegie medal, 1936–75,* after describing *The Lark in the morn* as 'One of the most individual books of 1948' the writer went on to say, 'The book cried out for a sequel. When this came, in 1950, it proved to be that rarest of all books, a sequel which grew naturally out of the parent book and was completely true to it in spirit and in detail'. 1951 saw the publication of an American edition by the Bobbs-Merrill Press. Further editions appeared both in this country and in the United States. A German translation of *The lark in the morn* appeared in 1961 and *The lark on the wing* in 1962. Both were published by the Union Verlag of 5 *Library Association Record,* 53, no. 5 (May 1951), 161.
Stuttgart. An unusual but useful feature was a loose insert listing the various members of the Haverard and Kitson families, a very helpful aide-mémoire when reading the books. It is interesting to note that the German publisher's attention had been drawn to the 'Lark' books by one of their employees who had visited England in 1933 under the auspices of Noel G. Ede, the founder of the International Friendship League and a Quaker himself. Three further sequels appeared, *The spring of the year*, 1957, *Flowering spring*, 1960, and *The pavilion*, 1969. An interesting sidelight on the way an author keeps track of people and events when writing a family saga through several books is to be found in the elaborate family tree which has been drawn up by the author and a small note book used as an aide-mémoire for the whole series. Elfrida Vipont realized the reader's difficulty in sorting out all the relationships and a smaller version of the family tree is printed in both *The Lark on the wing* and *The pavilion*. In 1959 contact was first established with the Kerlan Collection. Dr Irvin Kerlan, who had presented his important collection of children's book to the University of Minnesota, wrote asking for signed copies of *The lark in the morn* and *The lark on the wing*. Thus began an association with the Kerlan Collection which resulted in the deposit of manuscripts and books for their Library.

The award of the Carnegie Medal led to a number of requests to talk to children in libraries, especially in the area of north Lancashire where Elfrida lived. Details of most of these events no longer exist except for the occasional picture in the local newspaper of Elfrida surrounded by children in the local library. Teachers who encouraged their classes to go to these story-times also suggested that the children write to the author expressing their pleasure at the books. Considerable numbers of such letters have been preserved. The Harris Public Library in Preston published a *Children's Library Magazine*. The Spring 1962 issue (vol. 12, no. 1) contained a letter from Elfrida Vipont and it is clear she had also written for the journal on other occasions.

Following on the success of the 'Lark' books and the death of her husband in 1954, almost every year saw the publication of a new book. Another family series, *The family at Dowbiggins*, 1955, *More about Dowbiggins*, 1958, and *Changes at Dowbiggins*, 1960, achieved considerable critical acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic. These books were each first issued by the Lutterworth Press and *The family at Dowbiggins* was published in the United States by Bobbs-Merrill Press. After the Lutterworth Press editions went out of print all three 'Dowbiggins' books were re-published by Hamish Hamilton with different titles.

At the same time as writing novels for children Elfrida Vipont was producing a variety of serious books about religion. Under the auspices of the Friends Home Service Committee she prepared a small pamphlet about Margaret Fell, the 'mother of Quakerism': *A lily among the thorns: some passages in the life of Margaret Fell of Swarthmoor Hall*, 1950. This would only have been distributed through Friends outlets and would not have been generally available in bookshops. In 1954 *The story of Quakerism, 1652–1952*, was published. Part of the impetus to gather together material on the history of Quakerism was undoubtedly the tercentenary celebrations in 1952 of George Fox's visit to northwest Lancashire and the beginning of his contacts with the Fell family and Swarthmoor Hall. Elfrida Vipont had played an important rôle in the celebrations, and nobody was more fitted to undertake such a task. A first approach for publication was made to Oxford University Press and while a number of their letters express enthusiasm with the book they felt unable to undertake the publication. The principal market for such a book was outside the scope of their normal publicity outlets, even in the United States where the potential sales were likely to be greater. The book was published by the Bannisdale Press, a publisher with connections with the Rowntree Trust, a charitable concern and an imprint frequently used by the Society of Friends. The book was very well received and an illustrated second edition appeared in 1960. There is much correspondence covering all aspects of the various editions and the archive has the typescript copy of the text used for revision. The book, aimed at young adults, both Quaker and non-Quaker, was used as an essential source for the history of Quakerism in schools in the United States.

At the beginning of 1956 Collins Publishers wrote to Elfrida Vipont suggesting that she might be willing to compile an anthology of prayers for children. Following her very successful previous anthology *The highway*, compiled for Oxford University Press, Collins felt she would be able to draw on her experiences of family prayers with her own children. The result was one of her most delightful books for young children, *Bless this day: a book of prayer for children*, which appeared in 1958. It was a wide-ranging compilation of short prayers and meditations from a very broad spectrum of religious writers, with no special Quaker emphasis. It was envisaged that text and illustrations should have equal importance and Collins approached Harold Jones to prepare the drawings. A number of meetings took place between artist and compiler and the resulting lovely black and white and colour illustrations very successfully complement the text. The book jacket
has a specially drawn portrait by Harold Jones of Elfrida Vipont. An American edition was published by Harcourt Brace in the same year.

*The story of Christianity in Britain* appeared in 1960. It had been commissioned by Michael Joseph and was a straightforward historical approach for junior school children. *What about religion?* (Museum Press, 1961) sought to answer the questions so often asked by children. As Elfrida Vipont says in her introduction, 'Sometimes it is easier to read a book because at least you feel there are no strings attached, or if there are, you can ignore them'. In 1961 Michael Joseph again approached Elfrida Vipont with a suggestion for a book describing the significance and origin of Christian festivals. After a considerable amount of correspondence *Some Christian feasts and festivals* was published in 1963. The file of correspondence contains some detailed information on the publicity used to promote the book in Britain and abroad.

A frequent feature of the various publishers is that they seek advice from the author about publicity outlets specifically for Quaker material. Many of her books received very extensive publicity and review because of the world-wide network of Quaker organizations, very often including places where Elfrida Vipont had made personal visits and given lectures.

Music is a recurring theme in Elfrida Vipont's fictional writings for which she was able to draw extensively on her own experiences. In 1959 to commemorate 300 years since the birth of Henry Purcell, one of England's great composers, a biography for children was written which was published by Lutterworth Press, who were at this period publishing a number of educational biographies of notable historical characters.

In the mid 1960s Oxford University Press published a series of books for young children aged five to seven years on a wide range of topics relating history through a story under the general title 'People of the Past'. Elfrida Vipont was approached to contribute to the series covering the seventeenth century. She was invited to submit her own suggestion and initially envisaged a Puritan or Quaker topic. Oxford University Press felt this aspect was already sufficiently well represented and they in turn suggested something on the arts and court life at the time of Charles II. Drawing on her extensive knowledge of music and the success of her previous book on Henry Purcell he was again the subject of the story in *A child of the Chapel Royal*, published in 1967.

During the 1960s Hamish Hamilton published a series of 'Gazelle Books' which they described as 'very first reading for the very young'. All were illustrated, frequently by well known artists. Five stories by Elfrida Vipont featured in the series. *Stevie* published in 1965, brought together the very successful partnership of Elfrida Vipont and Raymond Briggs.
In 1957 *The secret of Orra* was published by Basil Blackwell. Aimed at junior school children the story while not having an actual known setting clearly drew on the intimate knowledge Elfrida Vipont had of the Lake District and the area where she had lived most of her life. At this time Blackwell's were trying to build up a library of short stories from famous modern authors (Letter, Basil Blackwell 3/2/56). They had already published *Six of the best*, and in 1957 proposed a sequel 5 *more*, which included contributions from 'B.B.', Peter Dawlish, William Mayne, Elfrida Vipont and Ronald Welch. The illustrations were by D. Watkins-Pitchford, 'B.B.'.

Elfrida had for many years been fascinated by ghosts and the stories connected with them. The book *Terror by night*, 1966, published in the United States as *Ghosts high noon*, 1967, is a collection of stories assembled from a variety of different places and people. Family and friends wrote with suggestions. These letters together with a small book of jottings are preserved in the archive. Not all were eventually used in the book. As might be expected the historic area of north Lancashire where she lived is a fruitful source and many of the incidents have their origin in the period of Quaker persecution. The archive also has a large portion of the original hand-written manuscript of the book. The original hand-written versions of her books were always written on the same type of paper and a small leather binder was used which is preserved in the archive. A note tucked into one of the small pockets explains this. One of the stories from this collection was included in Eric Duthie's compilation *Thrilling stories from the past* published by Odhams Press in 1970.

In 1963 the American publishers, John Day of New York, wrote to Elfrida Vipont asking her if she would be interested in writing a book for their 'Daughters of Valor' series. They described the series as 'Historical fiction, or fictionalized biographies of actual historical characters, girls who in their teens either achieved some measure of greatness, or a promise of such. But we only deal with their teen age life. They can be chosen from any period and any locale' (Letter, John Day Company 27/10/62). Elfrida Vipont suggested the young Charlotte Brontë and this was agreed by the publishers. This would be the first book about an English woman to be published in the 'Daughters of Valor' series. The initial agreement with the publishers called for an outline of the whole work and a sample chapter. These were prepared and sent to the editor of the series. From this time began a conflict of opinion between author and publisher, but, in spite of considerable differences, by September 1963 a contract was prepared and an advance payment made. From the correspondence of the series editor it is clear that Elfrida had only the sketchiest knowledge of the early life of Charlotte Brontë and was in no position to question the
details of Brontë’s life. When the completed manuscript was submitted the series editor amended many of the chapters and asked Elfrida Vipont to re-write them incorporating the emendations. In her reply (Letter 10/4/64) Elfrida Vipont wrote ‘I have read the amended chapters carefully, but they are so full of inaccuracies that I cannot possibly accept them. I quite understand that these are fictionalized biographies, but in my opinion the facts as known - and well known in the case of the Brontës – cannot be tampered with . . . I can send you a complete list of the inaccuracies if you like, but I am wondering if you would prefer to call the whole thing off and return the MSS’. It is difficult to make judgements about the publisher, but throughout their lengthy correspondence and in the contract they consistently spelled Elfrida Vipont’s name incorrectly.

In view of the dispute which had now arisen between author and publisher Elfrida Vipont appealed for advice to the Society of Authors. It was agreed that John Day should return the manuscript to the author who would then seek another publisher. If and when another publisher was found the advance payment which John Day had paid some months earlier should be returned and the contracts which had been exchanged should be cancelled. The search for another publisher proved difficult as there were already a number of similar books available and several publishers felt there would not be a market for another book on Charlotte Brontë however good it was. By 1965 after a number of unsuccessful approaches to publishers, Weaver of dreams: the girlhood of Charlotte Brontë was published by Hamish Hamilton. The following year an American edition was published by Henry Z. Walck. As well as the considerable body of correspondence outlined above, the archive contains the typescript of the book and all the research notes used to prepare it.

In spite of its somewhat chequered early history Weaver of dreams was very well received on both sides of the Atlantic and Hamish Hamilton were anxious to follow up its success with another similar literary biography for teenagers. Elfrida Vipont was asked for her suggestions. The result was Towards a high attic: the early life of George Eliot, which was published in 1970. Although the idea was first considered in 1966 pressure of other commitments and the time required for the necessary research delayed its publication for several years. It came at an appropriate time as there was an increasing interest in the novels of George Eliot and her early life had not previously been treated for younger readers. The previous year Hamish Hamilton had increased their emphasis on children’s publication by the formation of Hamish Hamilton Children’s Books Ltd and it was fitting that one of their established successful authors should be one of the first to appear under the auspices of the new company. An American edition was published in 1971 by Holt Reinhart and Winston. Once again it was widely
acclaimed by the critics not only for its own merit but as a stimulant for the children to read George Eliot's novels themselves.

Since her early teens when Elfrida Vipont had first encountered the novels of the Brontës, George Eliot and Jane Austen, they had been constant companions and so it is hardly surprising that Jane Austen was the subject of her next teenage literary biography. 1975 was the bicentenary of Jane Austen's birth and a predictable number of biographical and critical works about all aspects of her work were published to coincide with the anniversary. Thus, in preparing her life of Jane Austen, Elfrida Vipont was able to make use of the very latest research by some of the most eminent scholars of the day, as well as the more popular accounts which appeared in the newspapers.

Elfrida Vipont could trace her family history back to the earliest times of Quakerism and among her many ancestors who achieved prominent positions in the fields of industry and medicine were members of the Curtis family. An early member of the family, William Curtis the botanist, is well known for his monumental work *Flora Londiniensis*, published 1777–98; and a subsequent member of the family also called William was an apothecary in the village of Alton in Hampshire close to Chawton where Jane Austen lived. This William Curtis treated Jane Austen in her last illness and Elfrida Vipont did much research to try to establish whether her ancestor had been aware of the subsequent fame of his patient. While there was no conclusive proof it is interesting to note that 'there is a tradition in the Curtis family that Jane Austen had William Curtis in mind when she created Mr Perry in Emma - Mr Perry on whose judgement Mr Woodhouse relied so implicitly'. Contracts for *A little bit of ivory: a life of Jane Austen* were exchanged in 1974, but once again work on other books and foreign lecture tours for the Society of Friends intervened and it was not until 1977 that the book was published. This was to be the last of her literary biographies and like the previous ones gained well-deserved success.

Every author hopes that he or she will write a book which becomes a 'classic'. With *The elephant and the bad baby* (Hamish Hamilton, 1969), Elfrida Vipont undoubtedly achieved that goal. The combination of an already successful writer for very young children and an established artist, Raymond Briggs, was an excellent recipe for success. Elfrida Vipont had already written a number of books on commission for Hamish Hamilton and Raymond Briggs had both illustrated stories and co-operated in joint publications with Hamish Hamilton. In 1966 he had been awarded the Library Association's Kate Greenaway medal, given annually for the best illustrated children's book with his *Mother

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* A little bit of ivory: epilogue, 145.
Goose treasury. The year before publication of The elephant and the bad baby an agreement had been reached for an American edition with the publishing house Coward McCann. The American publishers wished to 'Americanize' the text. In particular they wished to replace 'mummy' with 'mommy'. While it is clear that neither Elfrida Vipont nor Hamish Hamilton was happy with the idea an American text was agreed. Both English and American editions were first published in 1969. The book was an instant success. The first review written by Naomi Lewis prior to publication said: 'This book is so good, so right of its kind, that one feels that it must have existed always in nursery annals, pictures and story in one'. The book was in the shops in time for the Christmas market in 1969. It received extensive reviews in virtually every British national newspaper and a considerable number of local papers. The influential children's literature journal The Horn Book had a long review and an illustration, and a review appeared in the New York Times Book Review. The first edition was published in hard covers but since then the book has been constantly in print in paperback under the Penguin imprint, the latest reprint appearing in 1993.

In 1970 Hamish Hamilton published Author's choice, an anthology of stories by seventeen distinguished writers. The stories were to appeal to children aged twelve to fourteen years and each author introduced their particular piece. The book included contributions from a diverse selection of writers – Kipling, Katherine Mansfield, Eleanor Farjeon, Walter de la Mare and Arthur Ransome. The book was edited by M.R. Hodgkin. Elfrida Vipont's choice was 'Our field' by Mrs Ewing.

For a number of years Noel Streatfeild edited The Ballet Annual, a selection of contributions by various authors not necessarily about ballet. Two stories by Elfrida were included, 'The show must go on', 1959, and 'The light that never was', 1960.

In 1973 Heinemann asked the writer and critic Richard Church to edit a volume to be called My England in which contributors were asked to write about some place or event which typified England for them. Elfrida's contribution was 'Lancashire hotpot'.

Elfrida Vipont travelled extensively to Australia, the United States and Canada both as guest lecturer at Quaker colleges and to represent British Quakers at international conferences. Because of her reputation as a children's writer it was inevitable that on many of her foreign travels she should be asked to speak to young children in schools, Quaker gatherings or public libraries or to contribute to their magazines. The United Church of Canada published several

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different magazines; Wonder: a weekly paper for primary and kindergarten children; Discovery: a weekly paper for juniors; Onward: a weekly for young people and adults. Many issues contain short poems or prayers by Elfrida Vipont. An American very young children’s magazine called Jack and Jill also published two stories, Bruin and the shipmaster in 1953 and About a famous writer: a true story of Charles Dickens in 1956. One has not only to admire the versatility of Elfrida Vipont’s writing covering books for the very young right through to adulthood, but also the acknowledged critical success achieved over the whole range.

Listing and arranging the Elfrida Vipont archive is still at a preliminary stage. It is, however, possible to outline the broad categories of material it contains which are relevant to her writings for children. Apart from the specific items already mentioned, there are notebooks from schooldays, some covering projects undertaken at school and university. There are extensive files of letters from all the publishers both in this country and in the United States. Only occasionally does the correspondence include Elfrida Vipont’s replies to their letters. Memoranda of agreements exist for most of the published books and a considerable number of royalty statements are included. As already mentioned the initial work on any book was handwritten in a leather notebook and it was then typed. While we do have some of the original handwritten texts they tend to be fragments only. Many of the typescripts are to be found, often with manuscript alterations. For many years Elfrida Vipont subscribed to a ‘cuttings agency’ and there are quantities of reviews from newspapers and journals all over the world. They have already been arranged by the author in book order. Frequently members of the public, including children, wrote expressing their pleasure on reading the books and many of these letters are preserved. For all three of the literary biographies there are details of the research undertaken, notebooks and lists of other works consulted. In the case of the contributions to the magazines published by the United Church of Canada the only evidence existing is the copies of the issues in which the contributions appeared.

As far as I am aware the only critical appreciation of Elfrida Vipont’s career which has appeared formed one of the articles in the special edition of the Friends’ Quarterly devoted to Quaker children.10 This was ‘Elfrida Vipont as a children’s writer’ by Edward H. Milligan. Edward Milligan, a former Librarian of the Friends House Library in London was a long-standing friend of the family.

Books for Children by Elfrida Vipont

All published under the above pen-name except for *Blow the man down* and *The heir of Craigs*, where the name Charles Vipont is used.

*Good adventure.* John Heywood, 1931.


*Hvem er Kvaekerne.* Danish translation of above. Vennernes Samfund, 1937.


*Blow the man down.* Oxford University Press, 1939.


*Aus grosser Fahrt mit Thomas Lurting.* German translation of above. Sauerlander, 1950.

*The lark in the morn.* Oxford University Press, 1948.


*Sparks among the stubble.* Oxford University Press, 1950.

*Sparks among the stubble.* Friends Home Service Committee, 1971.


Henry Purcell and his times. Lutterworth, 1959.
Books Containing Contributions by Elfrida Vipont


Journals Containing Contributions by Elfrida Vipont


*Discovery: a weekly paper for juniors.* United Church of Canada.

*Onward: a weekly for young people and adults.* United Church of Canada.

*The Explorer: a Canadian paper for juniors.*


*Children's Library Magazine.* Harris Public Library, Preston.

Appendix

Original material held in other libraries.11


*Bed in hell.*12 Holograph and corrected typescript.

*Blow the man down.* Holograph.

*Changes at Dowbiggins.* Holograph, typescript, corrected partial photocopy, page proof corrected.

*A child of the Chapel Royal.* Typescript corrected, page proof and notes.

*Children of the Mayflower.* Holograph

*Family at Dowbiggins.* Holograph, page proof corrected.

*Flowering spring.* Holograph, typescript corrected, galley proof corrected, page proof corrected.

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11 Compiled from information supplied by the libraries themselves.

12 This book was included in both Hamish Hamilton's adult and their children's lists.
Henry Purcell and his times. Holograph, page proof corrected, notes, research material.
High way: an anthology. Correspondence, notes.
Lancashire hotpot. Holograph, typescript corrected correspondence, notes.
A little bit of ivory. Holograph, typescript corrected, notes.
The pavilion. Holograph, typescript, corrected photocopy, page proof corrected.
Towards a high attic. Holograph, typescript corrected, page proof corrected, correspondence.
What about religion? Holograph, typescript, corrected partial photocopy.
Spring of the year. Holograph with notes, typescript corrected, galley proof corrected, page proof corrected.
The story of Christianity in Britain. Holograph, typescript corrected, galley proof corrected, page proof corrected, correspondence.
Search for a song. Holograph, typescript corrected, galley proof corrected, page proof.
The secret of Orra. Holograph, typescript, galley proof corrected.
Sparks among the stubble. Holograph, typescript, correspondence, research material.


A file of newspaper cuttings.

3. Lancaster Public Library.

The lark in the morn. Holograph.

11 This was not a children's book but has been included here for the sake of completeness.