

Robert Aickman Centenary

The River Runs Uphill – A Story of Success and Failure

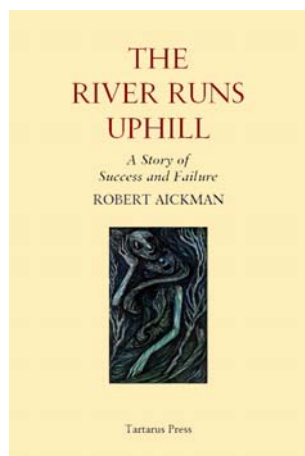
A new edition of the second volume of autobiography by Robert Aickman (1914-1981), with a reinstated chapter and other passages not present in the first edition



Published by Tartarus Press 17th July, to celebrate the centenary of his birth, 27th June 2014

Robert Aickman knew himself to be ‘several different people’—writer of ‘strange stories’ and novelist, critic, literary agent, and saviour of the waterways. He wrote some of the most extraordinary ghost stories of the twentieth century, and his eight, now celebrated, but in his own lifetime mostly ignored, collections of strange stories and other works have been reissued by Faber as paperbacks, and, over the last 15 years, by Tartarus Press (www.tartaruspress.com) as hardbacks. Aickman is also notable for co-founding the campaigning organisation the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) in 1946, and spent almost twenty years at its helm, helping to ensure the survival of the British canal network for future generations.

The River Runs Uphill, mostly written in 1967 and first published in 1986, is Aickman’s second volume of autobiography, the first being *The Attempted Rescue* (1966 – reissued by Tartarus Press 2001 & 2013). With the kind permission of Aickman’s Literary Estate, this new edition from Tartarus reinstates material pruned from the first edition, including the original ‘Chapter Ten: Kyogen’, which deals with his theatre criticism and other matters relating to ‘life, death and the human heart’. Other reinstated passages add colour and detail to the story of the part played by Aickman in the struggle to save the waterways, which lies at the heart of this book.



The River Runs Uphill deals with the first few years of the IWA, up to the Market Harborough Festival of Boats and Arts in 1950, and the publication of *We Are For the Dark* with Elizabeth Jane Howard in 1951. It is a tale of some adventure and romance, with Aickman casting himself in the role of knight errant, often battling divergent interests and dissenting personalities in his own organisation. We are presented with a more informed view of the author as a formidable campaigner and leader.

Both *The Attempted Rescue* and *The River Runs Uphill* are full of Aickman's extraordinary opinions on life, love and art, but there is little about what he did during the Second World War (he told friends he was a conscientious objector and exempt from war work); his wife Ray, who eventually retreated to a convent; the Richard Marsh literary agency he ran with Ray, and how he spent his time before the War and after he had severed ties with the IWA. Aickman had planned a third volume of autobiography, but time slipped away from him and it was never written. It seems that some of the most baffling mysteries are the missing pieces in the puzzle of Aickman's own life.

The River Runs Uphill is a sewn hardback of 290 + xiv pages, with a 16 page plate section, printed lithographically, with silk ribbon marker, head and tailbands, and d/w. ISBN 978-1-905784-68-4 £32.50. Publication 17th July 2014.

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