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The Wind in the Willows

Kenneth Grahame



Yarlung audio book

The Wind in the Willows

by Kenneth Grahame

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| 1. | The River Bank | 23:47 |
| 2. | The Open Road | 23:06 |
| 3. | The Wild Wood | 23:42 |
| 4. | Mr. Badger | 25:05 |
| 5. | Dulce Domum | 29:31 |
| 6. | Mr. Toad | 24:35 |
| 7. | The Piper at the Gates of Dawn | 22:29 |
| 8. | Toad's Adventures | 27:55 |
| 9. | Wayfarers All | 36:35 |
| 10. | The Further Adventures of Toad | 31:25 |
| 11. | Like Summer Tempests Came His Tears | 32:05 |
| 12. | The Return of Ulysses | 25:44 |

The Wind in the Willows

Thoughts from the narrator:

Reading, hearing and rereading Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows* has been a principal joy for me since my mother first read this book to me when I was four years old. We still have that hardcover edition. I was the same age as Kenneth Grahame's son when his father first created Mole, Rat, Badger and Toad, and told him these bedtime stories. I dedicate this audio book to my sweet mother, Linda, who introduced her children to great literature, including *Wind in the Willows*.

Kenneth Grahame first published *Wind in the Willows* in 1908. Our world looked very different in 1908. Argentina opened Teatro Colon in that year, the "finest opera house in the world," to which Caruso, and later Callas would travel during the "summer season." World War I was not yet on the horizon, or barely. We nostalgically portray the Edwardian period romantically. And indeed, Grahame captures this golden age of long summer afternoons and garden parties among the scenes and seasons of his precious novel.



In the century leading up to the publication of *Wind in the Willows*, the British Empire had defeated Napoleon and the *Pax Britannica* endured and increased. During those years, Britain added 400 million people to her empire and incorporated an additional ten million square miles of land. England itself boasts only just over fifty thousand square miles. Think what that means.

Is *Wind in the Willows* a great children's book? Or a serious allegory for adults? Or a novel containing some of the most sensuous prose in the English language? Since *Wind in the Willows* continues to captivate our imaginations so successfully, perhaps the book's power comes from its unique blend of all three of these qualities and more.

Reading *Wind in the Willows* for the seventh or eighth time in 2021 came as a bit of a shock to me in ways I hadn't anticipated. For one, I hadn't remembered the now uncomfortable sense of Grahame's underlying misogyny. Great works of art look different to us, if we are willing to pay attention, in the middle of the Me Too movement. The Jailer's Daughter comes through with intelligence and strength of character, but the author portrays a majority of the other women in the book negatively. Comments about Toad's "female nurses," and the

character of our magnificent “fat barge woman” come to mind. All of the animal characters are male. Now that *Wind in the Willows* ranks among the finest creations in English literature, it is tempting to hold it to every high standard one can think of. But it may help to remember that when Grahame wrote the original manuscript, he had just retired early from his career as a banker, and settled in the town of Pangbourne, in what is now Oxfordshire. This home was not far from the rambling house in Cookham Dean by the Thames, in which Kenneth Grahame grew up. Grahame retired with his wife and son and spent a lot of time, as do our friends Rat and Mole, in his boat on the river. As part of this retirement, he committed to paper some of the bedtime stories he had made up for his son Alistair starting at the age of four, some of which he later sent to Alistair in letters. Had the Grahames had a daughter as well, one can hope that these bedtime stories might have developed more balance.

A reader, or listener, might comfortably divide Grahame’s chapters into two categories. One set of chapters chronicles Mole, Rat and Badger and their friendship with Toad, including their unsuccessful intervention with Toad’s serial obsessions and driving addiction. (Sadly, it helps to recall that Kenneth Grahame’s father was seriously alcoholic.) The second grouping, *Dulce Domum*,

The Piper at the Gates of Dawn and *Wayfarers All*, delve more deeply into serious topics: the meaning of home, the creation of family, spirituality, and the inner world. Grahame places these chapters carefully to give us a break from Toad's wonderful but exhausting antics.

Yarlung recorded this book in the Arian Jansen studio, using the Hapi by Merging Technologies, and Pyramix software recording 256fs DSD. This is overkill for sure, for an audio book. Toad would have been proud of me.

I wish to thank my friend Mike Rosell for the album cover and artwork. Rosell pays homage to the great characters depicted by Ernest H. Shepard in the 1931 edition of the book published by Methuen & Co. Ltd. London. Mike too grew up with Mole and Ratty and Toad. He joins me in saluting them.

—Bob Attiyeh, narrator

The Wind in the Willows

Executive Producer: Mike Rosell

Recording Engineer: Cliff Harris

Narrator: Bob Attiyeh

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Graphics & Layout: MikeDesign

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