

Rosemary Sutcliff Letters

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Rosemary Sutcliff Letters. – 1958 - 1992. – 0.45 m of textual materials, photographs, and objects.

Biographical sketch: Rosemary Sutcliff (1920-1992) was a British author whose books for young people recreated the Britain of the Middle Ages and Roman occupation. The daughter of a naval officer whose postings caused the family to move often, she developed Still's disease, a debilitating form of juvenile arthritis, from the age of two and was bedridden for much of her early childhood, attending school intermittently. Her mother read to her at length, especially books of history and myth. She was a talented artist and attended the Bideford School of Art at 14 obtaining considerably success as a miniaturist and maintaining a lifelong membership in the Royal Society of Miniature Painters. She also began to write and was invited to create a manuscript of *The Chronicles of Robin Hood* for the Oxford University Press, published in 1950 along with her first work of fiction, *The Queen Elizabeth Story*. *The Eagle of the Ninth*, set in Roman Britain, followed *Simon*, published in 1953 and set in the Civil War. These two breakthrough books established her reputation, partly through dramatization on the BBC Radio's Children's Hour. They led to a series of novels in which she displayed great skill at presenting an individual viewpoint within a well-researched historical setting. Most of her literary output was aimed at older children, but she also wrote three novels for adults, and a memoir, *Blue Remembered Hills*. In all, she published more than fifty books. She was appointed OBE in 1975, and received the Carnegie Medal for *The Lantern Bearer* in 1960.

Custodial history: The fonds is the gift of Christina Duff Stewart to the Osborne Collection in 1999.

Scope and content: The Rosemary Sutcliff letters at the Osborne Collection consist of 83 letters, 14 Christmas cards, and 7 'Round Robins' written by the author to her friend Christina Duff Stewart of Toronto, over a 33-year period. The first letter appeared on December 12, 1958, in response to Ms. Duff Stewart's letter asking permission to write about her in *The Junior Bookshelf*. In this first letter she relates how she came to writing and the relationships she developed with her characters. Subsequent letters trace their friendship, with details of her daily life (dogs, problems with household help, health issues, travel, etc) an unsuccessful love affair and her relationship with her cousin Margaret, whose children, Heather and Anthony, she was close to. They also contain information about Rosemary Sutcliff's taste in books, her relationship with her publishers, the progress of her writing projects and her awards. By 1960 the correspondents were on a first-name basis, and Ms. Duff Stewart visited Rosemary Sutcliff during that summer. They continued to write, with occasional visits from Christina Duff Stewart, until near the end of Rosemary Sutcliff's life. Some letters are accompanied by photographs and in one case a drawing of her dog. The handwritten letters end in 1985, but Ms. Duff Stewart was on Sutcliff's 'Round Robin' list, and received photocopies of her annual Christmas letter to friends from 1983 to 1991. Christmas cards for 1988 and 1989 contain short personal notes. The fonds also contains clippings about the author, the order of service for her funeral and memorial, and clipped obituaries.

Four pieces of jewelry and two ornaments made by the author and given to Christina Duff Stewart as Christmas gifts, and Christmas cards designed by Rosemary Sutcliff for the Horder Centre for Arthritis are also included.

The letters have been arranged by the archivist in chronological order.

Letters

1.1 Letters from 1958 – 1960

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 1	Dec 12 1958	Aerogramme: response to CDS's first letter requesting information she intends to use for an article in <i>The Junior Bookshelf</i> . RS writes of her early illness and her mother reading, early influences and the pleasures of writing stories	1.1
Letter 2	Dec 30 1958	Aerogramme: general response to CDS's second letter	1.1
Letter 3	Feb 10 1959	Aerogramme: RS discusses the terror of talking to groups of children, and the appeal of the Canadian north.	1.1
Letter 4	Dec 7 1959	Aerogramme: RS thanks CDS for her articles, "Scarlet on the Loom" and the review of <i>The Lantern Bearer</i> in <i>The Junior Bookshelf</i> (reproduced as an addendum at the end of this finding aid). First mention of her cousin Margaret's children, Heather and Anthony.	1.1
Letter 5	Jan 14 1960	Aerogramme: greeting becomes 'Dear Christine'; discussion of the similarities between the modern world and the Dark Ages, and an invitation to visit when CDS is in England	1.1
Letter 6	Feb 20 1960	Aerogramme: RS discusses what she has been reading, and copies out a poem written for her by a 9-year-old girl.	1.1
Letter 7	Apr 21 1960	Aerogramme: RS's response to winning the Carnegie Medal; discussion of books read including TH White.	1.1
Letter 8	June 7 [1960]	Aerogramme: letter contains phone number and arrangements to meet; discussion of books read	1.1
Letter 9	July 27 [1960]	Post card addressed to a London hotel, written in anticipation of CDS's visit	1.1
Letter 10	Aug 12 [1960]	Post card addressed to a hotel in Tewkesbury written shortly after their visit.	1.1

1.2 Letters from 1961

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 11	Jan 16 1961	Aerogramme: update on hip surgery after 9 weeks bed-ridden and report on a family wedding	1.2

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 12	Mar 7 1961	Aerogramme: the writing of <i>Beowulf</i> and a 'grown-up book'; her excitement at the prospect of watching the recording of the last installment of <i>The Lantern Bearers</i> at the BBC's Broadcasting House.	1.2
Letter 13	July 8 1961	Aerogramme: report on her writing of Arthur, and a trip to the opera	1.2
Letter 14	July 13 1961	Brief letter asking for help with an anthology on witchcraft	1.2
Letter 15	Dec 7 1961	Aerogramme: thanks for witch references; Christmas greetings	1.2

1.3 Letters from 1962

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 16	Apr 1 1962	Aerogramme: discussion of <i>Beowulf</i> reviews, the near completion of <i>Sword at Sunset</i> and dieting.	1.3
Letter 17	May 1 1962	Aerogramme: letter explains how she came to find a reference they had both been trying to find for use at the beginning of <i>Sword at Sunset</i> .	1.3
Letter 18	May 16 1962	Aerogramme: thanks for CDS's review of <i>Beowulf</i> , news of the dealings with publishers, and the intensity of her feelings when writing of tragic events; news of her father and his recent surgery.	1.3
Letter 19	Oct 1 1962	Aerogramme: letter discussing publishers, "The Bull from the Sea", the theatre, vacations, etc.	1.3
Letter 20	Nov 26 [1962]	Brief letter with Christmas greetings and present of 3 angels; news that <i>Sword at Sunset</i> was chosen as a Library Guild of America selection	1.3
Letter 21	Dec 20 1962	Aerogramme: thanks for Christmas gift; discussion of poetry and Christmas decorations.	1.3

1.4 Letters from 1963/ 1.14 Letter #27

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 22	Feb 4 1963	Aerogramme: letter bemoaning the winter weather, discussion of Richard I, and the task of providing her illustrator with information about armour.	1.4
Letter 23	Mar 26 1963	Aerogramme: discussion of Jane Austen (RS calls herself a Semi-Janite), and her excitement over the upcoming Hellenic Cruise.	1.4
Letter 24	Easter 1963	Postcard from Greece.	1.4

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 25	May 18 1963	Aerogramme: discussion of Greek trip	1.4
Letter 26	June 8 1963	Aerogramme: short letter advising CDS that photographs of the Greek trip will materialize from the author Andre Norton and that she is to send them back to RS after viewing them.	1.4
Letter 27	June 22 1963	Letter from Andre Norton to CDS, enclosing 4 photographs, which she evidently returned to RS who then sent copies at a later date.	1.14
Letter 28	July 15 1963	Aerogramme: thanks for the return of the photographs; discussion of Andre Norton's books and a visit to the theatre	1.4
Letter 29	Sept 18 1963	Aerogramme: problems with replacing the housekeeper, writing a play on Joan of Arc and studying other writers' interpretation of the story, and interest in CDS's talk [about RS?]	1.4
Letter 30	Oct 19 1963	Aerogramme: brief biography in response to CDS's request and a list of sources and inspiration for <i>Sword at Sunset</i> .	1.4
Letter 31	Dec 7 1963	Aerogramme: housekeeper situation, Kennedy assassination, and the St. Joan play	1.4
Letter 32	Dec 27 1963	Aerogramme: Christmas, her horror of storytelling, and New Year's wishes	1.4

1.5 Letters from 1964

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 33	Mar 9 1964	Aerogramme: discussion of writing projects, home renovations, fund-raising for the Horde Centre for Arthritis, a Shakespeare production and the Canadian Stratford	1.5
Letter 34	May 25 1964	Aerogramme: discussion of <i>The Mark of the Horse Lord</i> , and a dog-a-cat story	1.5
Letter 35	Sept 10 1964	Aerogramme: story of a dreadful housekeeper; visit to the Chichester Theatre	1.5
Letter 36	Dec 1 1964	Aerogramme: letter refers to a card, possibly one designed by RS for the Horde Centre for Arthritis [File 1.16]; proofreading <i>The Mark of the Horse Lord</i> , writing a nativity play for Heather and her Brownie pack, and Christmas greetings	1.5

1.6 Letters from 1965

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 37	Jan 10 1965	Aerogramme: report on the nativity production (a “roaring success”), and New Year’s greetings	1.6
Letter 38	Apr 9 1965	Aerogramme: report on buying a small property in Greece and a new housekeeper	1.6
Letter 39	May 30 1965	Aerogramme: condolences on the death of CDS’s brother; news on the Greek cottage, and a quick overview of her views on abortion, homosexuality and public washrooms	1.6
Letter 40	Dec 11 1965	Aerogramme: report on her father’s stroke and hospitalization, her decision to hire a male housekeeper/driver, and description of the first employee.	1.6
Letter 41	Dec 23 1965	Aerogramme: report on Christmas plans, and greetings for the New Year	1.6

1.7 Letters from 1966 – 1967

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 42	Jan 22 1966	Aerogramme: short letter with a report of her father’s continuing illness and hospitalization.	1.7
Letter 43	Feb 27 1966	Aerogramme: short letter reporting the death of her father.	1.7
Letter 44	Apr 12 1966	Letter with description and enclosed photograph of Benbow, the woolly Chihuahua puppy who joined the household. On three sheets of paper with a drawing of Benbow within the text of the letter.	1.7
Letter 45	July 16 [1966]	Aerogramme: report on construction of the Greek cottage, new writing projects and her invitation to the ‘Women of the Year Luncheon’ in October	1.7
Letter 46	Oct 23 1966	Aerogramme: letter with a reference to “another Canadian friend of mine, Jean Little, of Guelph....” and Canadian cottages; report on her Greek play, TV scripts, and the ‘Woman of the Year Luncheon’. First use of the calligraphic dolphin integrated into her signature.	1.7
Letter 47	Dec 1966	Aerogramme: short letter with some amusing anecdotes and Christmas and New Year’s greetings	1.7
Letter 48	Jan 26 1967	Aerogramme: discussion of <i>Mask of Apollo</i> , Harold Wilson, Rhodesia, etc.	1.7
Letter 49	Oct 2 1967	Brief note on a postcard from Greece	1.7

1.8 Letters from 1968

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 50	Jan 8 1968	Aerogramme: work on Alkibiades going slowly due to retirement of housekeeper, but completed a play, "The Garrison".	1.8
Letter 51	Apr 24 1968	Aerogramme: discussion of Alkibiades and scripts for Scottish Regional Schools Broadcast and a story for serialization in the Church of England Children's Society Magazine.	1.8
Letter 52	Nov 24 1968	2-page letter relating the progress of Alkibiades, and congratulations to CDS on the completion of her M.A. and her new job.	1.8

1.9 Letters from 1969 -1970

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 53	Jan 6 1969	Aerogramme: reappearance of an old boyfriend from Australia; attempts to finish <i>The Flowers of Adonis</i> and the Scottish Regional Schools scripts and hopes for a holiday in Greece.	1.9
Letter 54	April 17 1969	Postcard from Greece.	1.9
Letter 55	Dec 4 1969	Aerogramme: report of hip operation, the 'flare-up' of her old romance and its end.	1.9
Letter 56	Jan 17 1970	Aerogramme: trip to France, the Forsyte Saga, the hunt for a housekeeper, and dog stories	1.9
Letter 57	June 30 1970	Aerogramme: retelling of Tristan and Iseult for The Bodley Head and a trip to Dorset with cousin Margaret.	1.9
Letter 58	Nov 1970	3-page letter, with a discussion of <i>The Flowers of Adonis</i> , recently published, and her bout of writer's block due to many personal reasons	1.9
Letter 59	Dec 15 1970	Aerogramme: Christmas letter with reminiscence of her father.	1.9

1.10 Letters from 1971 – 1972

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 60	Mar 24 1971	Aerogramme: short note saying she won't be able to make it to London during CDS's visit,	1.10
Letter	Apr 4	Aerogramme: chain letter	1.10

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
61	1971		
Letter 62	[Late 1971?]	Aerogramme: Christmas greetings; news of cousin Margaret's illness and dog Simba's death. Probable loss of her house man, David, of whom she is very fond, and the problem of replacing him. Difficulty with writing due to nervous tension, but awards for <i>Witches Brat</i> and <i>Robin Hood</i> .	1.10
Letter 63	Jan 9 1972	Aerogramme: short letter with news of her cousin Margaret's death.	1.10
Letter 64	Oct 28 1972	Aerogramme: coping with Margaret's children, Heather and Anthony; discussion of problems with a new book set in late Roman Scotland; success of <i>Tristan and Iseult</i>	1.10

1.11 Letters from 1973 – 1975

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 65	Jan 19 1973	Aerogramme: report on her recent bout of 'flu and the hope that it won't interfere with a trip to Vienna.	1.11
Letter 66	Jan 24 1973	Aerogramme: report on the trip to Vienna.	1.11
Letter 67	[Dec 1973]	Undated Christmas letter: report on the progress of an unnamed new book; proclaims herself in a state of 'wretched nervous tension' and relates that she has been nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen Award.	1.11
Letter 68	Christmas 1974	Aerogramme: illness of Benbow the dog and the problems of concentrating on writing. Discussion of <i>The Changeling</i> .	1.11
Letter 69	May 14 1975	Aerogramme: problems with David the houseman; lifting of writer's block and getting on well with the new book.	1.11
Letter 70	Aug 26 1975	Aerogramme: response to congratulations from CDS and Marjorie on the occasion of her OBE award. Report on <i>Blood Feud</i> .	1.11
Letter 71	Dec 30 1975	Aerogramme: report on the presentation of the OBE	1.11

1.12 Letters from 1976 – 1978

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 72	Christmas 1976	Aerogramme: problems with replacing David; postponement of the publication of <i>Blood Feud</i> , news	1.12

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
		that <i>Eagle of the Ninth</i> is to be made into a TV series, reissue of <i>Warrior's Scarlet</i> in paperback, and a report on the new dogs.	
Letter 73	Jan 29 1977	Aerogramme: discussion of CDS's upcoming trip to Greece with advice on places to visit; report on reviews of recently published <i>Blood Feud</i> .	1.12
Letter 74	Nov 25 1977	Letter discussing the writing of <i>Song for a Dark Queen</i> and the publication of <i>Sun Horse Moon Horse</i> and the television series made from <i>Eagle of the Ninth</i> .	1.12
Letter 75	Jan 21 1978	Aerogramme: short, chatty letter about <i>I, Claudius</i> and other topics	1.12
Letter 76	Christmas 1978	2-page letter with reports on theatre-going, and meeting the actor who played Marcus in the television production of <i>Eagle of the Ninth</i> .	1.12

1.13 Letters from 1979 – 1985

Title	Date	Contents	Box/file #
Letter 77	Feb 21 1979	Aerogramme: congratulations on CDS's publication on the Taylor family, and news of <i>Songs for a Dark Queen</i> .	1.13
Letter 78	Dec 18 1979	Aerogramme: thanks for Christmas present and report on receiving 2 teddy bears.	1.13
Letter 79	[Dec 1979?]	2-page letter, with news that Oxford University Press is 'ditching its children's department'. Trip to Dorset with Anthony and his girlfriend; book signing at a fair at Oxford and a reunion with old friends from the Press.	1.13
Letter 80	[Dec 1980?]	Letter reporting that the house man, James, was taken to jail for 'interfering with little boys'; work on the retelling of the Arthurian legend for Bodley Head; health problems, and a positive reaction to Margaret Thatcher.	1.13
Letter 81	Dec 31 1980	Aerogramme: repeat of some news; report on reviews of <i>Frontier Wolf</i> and work on the King Arthur trilogy; holidays and a family wedding (Anthony and Jane), and a trip to London to see "Toad of Toad Hall".	1.13
Letter 82	Nov 16 1981	2-page letter with news of a minor car accident, work on the Bonnie Dundee book, and the birth of Rowan Rosemary Lawton, her godson Anthony's daughter.	1.13
Letter 83	Mar 5 1985	Brief note in anticipation of CDS's visit in May.	1.13

Other Material

1.15 Christmas Cards.

Christmas Cards. – [1958-1991?]. – 13 Christmas cards and 1 gift enclosure, undated. The first is signed ‘Rosemary Sutcliff’, thereafter a more personal greeting. A few contain short letters, and 2 are cards designed by RS for the Horder Centres for Arthritis.

1.16 Round Robbins.

Round Robbins. – 1983 - 1991. Christmas letters handwritten and photocopied for a group of friends, including CDS. A chatty synopsis of the preceding year, one to two pages in length, and meant to be included with her Christmas card. Included are letters for 1983, [1984], [1985?], 1986, 1987, [1988 or 1989], and 1991.

1.17 Photographs and Clippings.

3 colour photographs. – [1985?]. – 2 snapshots of Christina Duff Stewart and Rosemary Sutcliff, and a snapshot of part of her house, showing the rose garden.

Clipping. – [197-?]. – Illustration from a magazine, in colour, showing Rosemary Sutcliff seated with a fur blanket.

Clipping. – May 1960. – Page from The Library Associated Record with an article titled “The Carnegie Medal goes to Rosemary Sutcliff” with a portrait of the author.

Clipping. – May 4 1970. – Clipping from The Times, titled “One of the wheelchair brigade”, by Rosemary Sutcliff.

1.18 Funeral

Funeral. – Aug 1992. – File contains the order of service and a letter from Sylvia [West, sister-in-law of CDS] dated Aug 12, describing the funeral and enclosing 3 photographs of the grounds, the tea, and the grave site.

1.19 Memorial Service

Memorial service. – Nov 3 1992. – File contains the announcement and order of service from the memorial at St. James’s Church, London.

1.20 Obituaries

Obituaries. – 1992. – File contains lengthy obituaries from The Times and The Daily Telegraph as well as 4 short obituaries.

Gifts to Christina Duff Stewart:

Object	Description	Box #
Christmas ornament	Green felt hexagonal ornament with applied beads and sequins and a chord for hanging.	2

Object	Description	Box #
Christmas ornament	Pink heart-shaped ornament with applied beads and sequins, and a chord for hanging	2
Brooch	Bronze metal brooch in the shape of an Etruscan-style horse	2
Rings	2 metal dinner rings, with 'opal' and 'amethyst' settings, probably referred to in Letter ---	2
Earrings	Gilt earrings with horse heads and inset 'garnets'.	2

Books:

Note: all titles are by Rosemary Sutcliff

1. *Rudyard Kipling*. London: The Bodley Head, 1960. Inscribed on the fly-leaf: "Chris with love from Rosemary".
2. *Sword at Sunset*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963 (2nd impression). Inscribed on title page: "Chris from Rosemary with love Aug 1963".
3. *The witch's brat*. Illustrated by Richard Levenson. New York: Henry Z. Walck, 1970. Inscribed on fly-leaf: "Chris from Rosemary with much love". Signature includes her calligraphic dolphin.
4. *The changeling*. Illustrated by Victor Ambrus. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974. Inscribed on fly-leaf: "Chris. Only a small Christmas present, I'm afraid, but with much love, from Rosemary" and calligraphic dolphin.
5. *Blood feud*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977.
6. *Sun horse, moon horse*. Illustrated by Shirley Felts. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978. Inscribed on half-title: "Chris from Rosemary with much love April 1978" and calligraphic dolphin.
7. *Song for a dark queen*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1979. Inscribed on fly-leaf: "Chris from Rosemary with much love Christmas '79" and calligraphic dolphin.
8. *Blue remembered hills: a recollection*. London: The Bodley Head, 1983. Inscribed on fly leaf: "Chris from Rosemary after 30 years or so with love" and calligraphic dolphin.
9. *Flame-coloured taffeta*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1987. Signed, including dolphin, on the title page, and inscribed, ditto, on fly leaf: "Chris Duff Stewart from Rosemary Sutcliff with love".
10. *My Downs*. Wooton-by-Woodstock: John Bell at his press, Christmas 1988. No. 2 of an edition of 15. Inscribed on the title page "Rosemary Sutcliff with love" and calligraphic dolphin.
11. *Blood and sand*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989 (paperback edition). Inscribed on the title page: "Chris from Rosemary with love" and calligraphic dolphin.