



The Witch of Clatteringshaws

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This is the final book in the more than 40-year-long sequence begun with **The Wolves of Willoughby Chase** and there is the continuing pleasure of being with Dido Twite and her companion in this wonderfully imagined and sparkily written world which took a branch off the historical path before the Hanoverians could settle in. Simon (the poor gooseboy of **The Wolves**) is King of a kind of Victorian Britain but 'not above half keen on the job. Now that I've tried it' so Dido sets off to the Highlands to find the lost prince and heir - and just before the wicked, scheming McClans can falsely substitute their Desmond. Meanwhile, Simon also heads north to lead his army against the invading Wends. Of many delights there is Simon's version of an Agincourt speech to his troops: '...there are not very many of us, so we'll have to be extra brave and tough. I'm not particularly brave myself, but I like to think that all of you are with me, backing me up, and that.' The Wends lose the tactical advantage when faced by the road sign, 'Stop Toads Cross Here' and the battle is settled by Simon playing a series of games of Hnefatefl with King Albert the Bear, leaving the Wends who wish to stay settling in that spare part of a Yorkshire dale soon to be famous for its cheese. Aiken explains in an Afterword that the book had to be kept short (it was completed just before her death), and, among so many gifts, she has that authorial graciousness of caring for and knowing her readers: 'The end came too quickly, said the editors. Yes, it did, and I apologize. But a speedy end is better than a half-finished story.' It's a delight to read aloud (just try that Aiken/Scottish dialect) and just one way of hooking more readers into the Aiken treats that await them.

Running Order:

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