

Return
to the
Hundred
Acre Wood



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Publisher's Note:

The map of the Forest presented on the endpapers of this edition of *Return to the Hundred Acre Wood* shows where the characters are living by the end of *The House at Pooh Corner*. In this new visualisation, Mark Burgess has combined key elements of Shepard's original illustration with some of the real places in Ashdown Forest.

Edited by Anna Bowles and Sharika Sharma
Designed by Suzanne Cooper

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Return
to the
Hundred
Acre Wood

*in which Winnie-the-Pooh enjoys further adventures
with Christopher Robin and his friends*



By David Benedictus
based upon the Pooh stories by A.A. Milne
with decorations by Mark Burgess
in the style of E.H. Shepard

DEDICATION

*You gave us Christopher Robin and Pooh
And a forest of shadows and streams,
And the whole world smiled with you, as you
Offered us your dreams.
I took up the offer and page upon page
And line upon fanciful line,
I tried to show in a different age
Your dreams are mine.*





EXPOSITION

Pooh and Piglet, Christopher Robin and Eeyore were last seen in the Forest – oh, can it really be eighty years ago? But dreams have a logic of their own and it is as if the eighty years have passed in a day.

Looking over my shoulder, Pooh says: “Eighty is a good number really but it could just as well be eighty weeks or days or minutes as years,” and I say: “Let’s call it eighty seconds, and then it’ll be as though no time has passed at all.”

Piglet says: “I tried to count to eighty once, but when I got to thirty-seven the numbers started jumping out at me and turning cartwheels, especially the sixes and nines.”

“They do that when you’re least expecting it,” says Pooh.

“But are you really going to write us new adventures?” Christopher Robin asks. “Because we rather liked the old ones.”

“I didn’t like the ones with the Heffalumps in,” adds Piglet, shuddering.

“And can they end with a little smackerel of something?” asks Pooh, who may have put on a few ounces in eighty years.

“He’ll get it wrong,” says Eeyore, “see if he doesn’t. What does he know about donkeys?”

Of course Eeyore is right, because I don’t know; I can only guess. But guessing can be fun too. And if occasionally I think I have guessed right, I shall reward myself with a chocolate biscuit, one of those with chocolate on one side only so you don’t get sticky fingers and leave marks on the paper, and if sometimes I am afraid that I have guessed wrong, I shall just have to go without.

“We’ll know,” says Christopher Robin. “We’ll help you get it right, if we can.” And Pooh and Piglet smile and nod their heads, but Eeyore says: “Not that you are likely to. Nobody ever does.”

D.B.



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original illustrator of the Winnie-the-Pooh stories.*

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and been of the greatest benefit to all concerned.*





◆ CHAPTER ONE ◆

in which Christopher Robin returns

WHO STARTED IT? Nobody knew. One moment there was the usual Forest babble; the wind in the trees, the crow of a cock, the cheerful water in the streams. Then came the Rumour: Christopher Robin is back!

Owl said he heard it from Rabbit, and Rabbit said he heard it from Piglet, and Piglet said he just sort of heard it, and Kanga said why not ask Winnie-the-Pooh? And since that seemed like a Very Encouraging Idea on such a sunny morning, off Piglet trotted, arriving in time to find Pooh anxiously counting his pots of honey.

“Isn’t it odd?” said Pooh.

“Isn’t what odd?”

Pooh rubbed his nose with his paw. “I wish they would sit still. They shuffle around when they think I’m not looking. A moment ago there were eleven and now



there are only ten. It is odd, isn't it, Piglet?"

"It's even," said Piglet, "if it's ten, that is. And if it isn't, it isn't." Hearing himself saying this, Piglet thought that it didn't sound quite right, but Pooh was still counting, moving the pots from one corner of the table to the other and back again.

"Bother," said Pooh. "Christopher Robin would know if he was here. He was good at counting. He always made things come out the same way twice and that's what good counting is."

"But Pooh . . ." Piglet began, the tip of his nose growing pink with excitement.

“On the other hand it’s not easy to count things when they won’t stay still. Like snowflakes and stars.”

“But Pooh . . .” And if Piglet’s nose was pink before, it was scarlet now.

“I’ve made up a hum about it. Would you like to hear it, Piglet?”

Piglet was about to say that hums were splendid things, and Pooh’s hums were the best there were, but Rumours come first; then he thought what a nice feeling it was to have a Big Piece of News and to be about to Pass It On; then he remembered the hum which Pooh had made up about him, Piglet, and how it had had seven verses, which was more verses than a hum had ever had since time began, and that they were all about him, and so he said: “Ooh, yes, Pooh, please,” and Pooh glowed a little because a hum is all very well as far as it goes, and very well indeed when it goes for seven verses, but it isn’t a Real Hum until it’s been tried out on somebody, and while honey is always welcome, it’s welcomest of all directly after a hum.

This is the hum which Pooh hummed to Piglet on the day which started like any other day and became a very special day indeed.





If you want to count your honey,
You must put it in a row,
In the sun if it is sunny,
If it's snowy in the snow.

And you'll know when you have counted
How much honey you have got.
Yes, you'll know what the amount is
And so therefore what it's not.

“And I think it's eleven,” added Pooh, “which is an excellent number of pots for a Thursday, though twelve would be even better.”

“Pooh,” said Piglet quickly, in case there was a third verse on the way which would be nice, but time-consuming, “I have a Very Important Question to ask you.”

“The answer is Yes,” said Pooh. “It is time for a little something.”

“But, Pooh,” said Piglet, the tip of his nose by now quite crimson with anxiety and frustration, “the question is not about little somethings but big somethings. It's about Christopher Robin.”

Pooh, who had just put his paw into the tenth pot of honey, left it there, just to be on the safe side, and asked: “What about Christopher Robin?”

“The Rumour, Pooh. Do you suppose he has come back?”



Eeyore, the grey donkey, was standing at the edge of the Hundred Acre Wood, staring at a patch of thistles. He had been saving them for a Rainy Day and was beginning to wonder whether it would ever rain again and whether, by the time it did, there would be any juice left in them, when Pooh and Piglet came by.

“Hallo, little Piglet,” said Eeyore. “Hallo, Pooh. And what are you doing around here?”

“We came to see you, Eeyore,” said Pooh.

“A quiet day, was it, Pooh? An if-we-haven’t-anything-better-to-do sort of day? How very thoughtful.”

Piglet wondered how it was that every conversation with Eeyore seemed to go wrong.

“Time hanging heavy, was it, Piglet? And, Pooh, I would thank you not to stand on those thistles.”

“Which ones would you like me to stand on?” asked Pooh.

“But, Eeyore,” squeaked Piglet, “it’s C-C-C-”

“Have you swallowed something, little Piglet? Not a thistle, I trust?”

“It’s Christopher Robin,” said Pooh. “He’s coming back.”

While Pooh was talking, Eeyore went rather still. Only his tail moved, brushing away an imaginary fly.

“Well,” he said, rather huskily, then paused. “Well. Christopher Robin . . . That is to say . . . heretofore . . .” he blinked quickly several times. “Christopher Robin coming back. Well.”





Finally, the Rumour was confirmed. Owl had flown to Rabbit's house, and Rabbit had spoken to his Friends and Relations, who had spoken to Smallest-of-All, who thought he had seen Christopher Robin but couldn't be absolutely certain because sometimes he remembered things which turned out not to have happened yet, or ever, or at all. And they asked Tigger what he thought, only he was hopping across Kanga's carpet avoiding the yellow bits, which could be dangerous, and paid no attention. But Kanga had told Rabbit that it was true, and when Kanga said something was true, then that thing *was* true. And so, if Pooh and Piglet thought that it was true, and Owl believed that it was true, and Kanga *said* that it was true, then it really must be true. Mustn't it?

So a meeting was convened to pass a Rissolution. The Rissolution was for a Welcum Back Party for Christopher Robin, and Roo got so excited that he fell



into the brook once by accident, and twice on purpose, until Kanga told him that if he did it again he would not be allowed to come to the party, but would have to go home to bed.

* * *

It was July. The morning of the party dawned warm and sunny and the spinney in the Hundred Acre Wood was looking its finest. There were speckles of light on the ground where the sun had found a way through the branches, and other places where the branches had said No. Kanga found a mossy place and laid a table with her best linen tablecloth, the one with bunches of grapes embroidered around the edges, and Rabbit brought his best willow-pattern teacups, and said that they were Heirlooms, and when Pooh asked Owl in a whisper what an Heirloom was, Owl said that it was a kind of kite. Then Kanga moved one of the teacups so that it was covering the stain where Tigger



had spilled a dollop of Roo's Strengthening Medicine.

All the animals brought treats for the feast: hazelnuts from the rabbits and a pot of honey (almost full) from Pooh, and a twist of lemon sherbet from Piglet, the kind that when you put it in the palm of your hand and licked it, the palm of your hand went bright yellow, and jellies of all colours made by Roo and Tigger. There were glasses with coloured straws and home-made lemonade, and squares of decorated paper with everybody's names on them, and things which you blew and which made a hooting noise when you did, and things which you threw, and balloons, long ones as well as round ones, and splendid crackers.



But in the very centre of the table stood the finest cake you ever saw, baked by Kanga and iced by Roo and Tigger, and there was spindly writing on the icing, except that nobody could make out what it said, not even Owl; and when Pooh asked Roo and Tigger what the writing said, they giggled and ran off to play in the bracken.



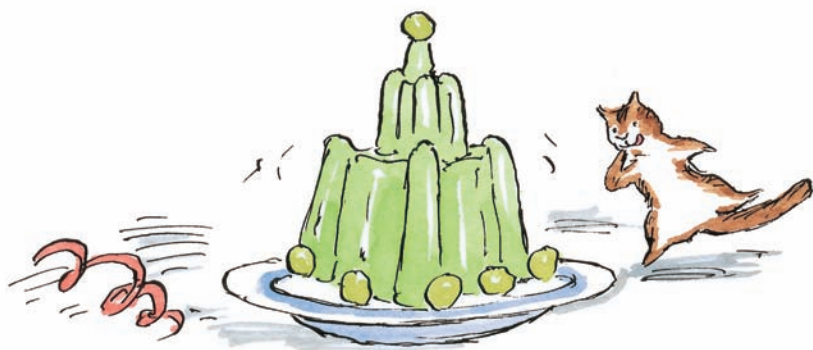
Everyone had been invited to the party, even Eeyore, and Pooh had pushed a special invitation under the door of Christopher Robin's house. Owl had written it. It said:

SPESHUL INVITATION
WELCUM HOME
CRHISTOPHER ROBIN
AND WELCUM TO A
WELCUM HOME PRATY
DAY: TODAY

"It says Welcum three times," Owl explained, "because that's how pleased we are to see him back."

All the animals sat on the ground and waited, but there was a tree stump reserved for Christopher Robin. The jellies were getting rather wobbly in the

sun and Roo kept looking at the green jelly which he had made himself with grapes and greengages and which was – or at least had been – shaped like a castle. It was a little along the tablecloth from him and he kept fidgeting to get closer to it, because although he *thought* the others might like green best he *knew* that he did. He kept saying to anyone who would listen: “The red ones are the best. They’ve got strawberries in them. The yellow ones are even better, because they’re really lemony.” But he said nothing about the green ones.



Eeyore was the last of the animals to arrive in the spinney. He turned around a few times and sat down on the tree stump.

“Jollifications and hey-diddle-diddle,” he said. “Decent of you to wait for me.”

“But, Eeyore –” said Piglet, and would have said more if Kanga hadn’t frowned and shaken her head at him.

“I’m sure it’s going to be a lovely party,” said Kanga, “but you’re sitting in Christopher Robin’s place, Eeyore dear.”



Eeyore unfolded his legs and got slowly back to his feet. “It was quite comfortable,” he said, “as tree stumps go. I’m sure Christopher Robin will enjoy sitting on it now that I’ve warmed it up for him.”

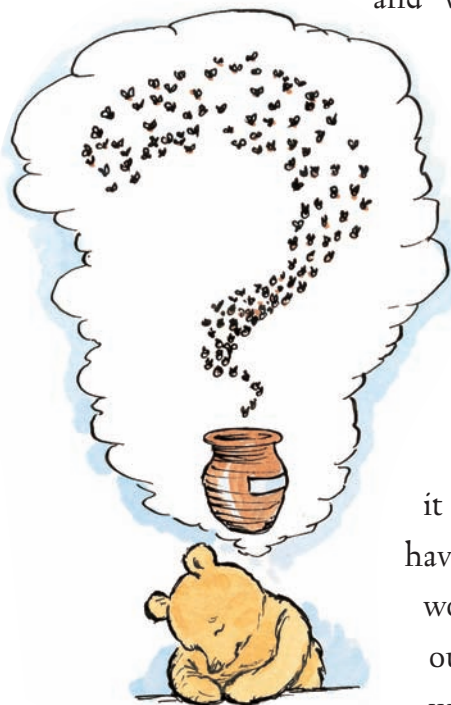
Still there was no Christopher Robin.

Piglet held his cracker up to the light and shook it to see if it rattled. Then, a little sadly, he put it down again.

“When can we start? Oh, when can we start?” cried Baby Roo. “The red jellies are best everyone. Or the yellow ones. Oh, when can we start?”

And Kanga said: “Soon, dear, soon, but don’t keep pointing like that. It’s rude.”

Pooh was staring at his pot of honey and getting drowsy, and wondering if it was still *his* pot of honey,



and whose pot of honey it would be if Christopher Robin didn't come, and whether one could train bees to make honey straight into pots, because then they could use the combs to brush their hair without it getting sticky. If bees have hair. And maybe he would leave an empty pot out there just in case. And would it get any hotter, and what would happen if

it did . . . and Pooh's head sank forward and he uttered a soft sort of Snunt, which is halfway between a grunt and a snore.

Then, by way of conversation, Owl said: "Did I ever tell you about my Uncle Robert?" And although he had told them more than once, more than several times in fact, Kanga said quickly before he could begin: "Best not to tire ourselves. Christopher Robin is sure to be here soon." And Piglet said: "I expect he had to come a very long way."

“How do you know?” Rabbit asked. “How long?”

“He may have been delayed by a gorse bush,” said Pooh.
“They do that sometimes, you know.”

“Or a Heffalump,” said Piglet, and he shuddered at the thought.

Then the sun went behind the only cloud in the sky, and the speckles in the Forest went away and came back again, which is what Christopher Robin had done if you believed the Rumour.

Then Piglet, a little flustered and a little hungry, explained: “Christopher Robin has had to come from wherever he’s coming from, Rabbit, and it must be a very



long way, because if it wasn't he would be here by now."

Just at that moment there was a whirring sound, and a clicketty sound, and a pinging sound, and there he was, Christopher Robin, just as he had always been, except that he was riding a bright blue bicycle. Everybody gasped and began chattering at the same time, which is usually quite impolite but wasn't just then. When Christopher Robin had leant his bicycle against a tree, he looked at them all and said: "Hallo, everyone, I'm back."

"Hallo," said Pooh, and Christopher Robin gave him a smile.



Owl said: “A velocípede. I will explain to you the principle upon which . . .”

Eeyore said: “A pleasure to see you, Christopher Robin, and I hope you enjoy the tree stump, which is quite warmed up.”

Piglet just said: “Ooh!” He wanted to say much more, but the words wouldn’t form themselves the way he wanted them to, and when they had, it was too late to use them.

Roo said: “There are lots of jellies, Christopher Robin, and me and Tigger made them, and the red ones have got real strawberries in them, but if you want a green one . . .”

“I’ll try them all,” said Christopher Robin cheerfully, “but I’ll try the red ones first.”

Early and Late, two smallish Friends and Relations, pulled a cracker, or tried to, and Early let go by mistake and Late toppled over backwards. But Winnie-the-Pooh



gave Christopher Robin a bear hug and said: “Welcome home, Christopher Robin.”

Kanga said: “You must cut the cake, Christopher Robin.”

“And make a wish,” added Tigger, hopping from foot to foot, which is complicated when you have four.

So Christopher Robin made a wish, and everyone cheered and clapped and said:

“Welcome home,” except Eeyore

who said: “Many happy returns

of the day,” and Christopher

Robin felt glad to be back,

but a little sad at the same time. Then everybody blew their hooters and threw



their streamers and pulled their crackers,

and Eeyore pulled two, one with his front

hoofs and one with his back, and the

first one had a motto and a key ring with

A PRESENT FROM MARGATE on it and a

paper hat, but the second

only had a paper hat.



I wondered, Pooh, whether you would be kind enough to eat it for me?" And Pooh was kind enough and did.

Then Eeyore said: "I don't suppose he remembers who I am. Not that it's important. After all why should he?"

* * *

When they had eaten everything they could eat, which was almost but not quite everything on the table, because at a proper tea party there should always be leftovers for the birds, Christopher Robin made this announcement.

"Now, dear friends of the Forest, in my bicycle basket I have Coming-Home Presents for you all, because I have missed you so much. And I have wrapped them up in Christmas paper because I had some left over from last year and I thought it might be useful for next year."

The animals were very excited, even Smallest-of-All, who had fallen asleep in a butter dish and had to be de-buttered. He thought that maybe it was Christmas already, so he opened his present, a shiny farthing with a wren on it, and said, "Happy Christmas, everybody!" Then he went straight back to sleep, because the moon was already shining out and it was that mysterious time between day and night when it is not easy to tell which is which or why or whether.

These were the presents Christopher Robin had brought for the other animals.



For Early and Late: sugar mice



For Owl: a spectacle case, in case he lost his spectacles



For Piglet: pink earmuffs

For Roo: a bottle of coloured sand in a satisfying pattern from the Isle of Wight



For Kanga: a set of seven thimbles (one for each day of the week)

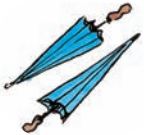


For Tigger: a pogo stick

For Rabbit: a book called *1001 Useful Household Hints*



For Eeyore: two umbrellas, for front and back



For Pooh: a wooden ladle for removing the sticky bits from pots of honey



What did Christopher Robin wish for when he cut the cake? That is a secret and if I told you what it was it would never come true, but Pooh came into it, and Piglet, and the sunshine, so it was quite a long wish and Christopher Robin kept his eyes tight shut when he made it, but his lips moved a bit.

If what Christopher Robin wished for was more adventures in the Hundred Acre Wood, then his wish certainly did come true and I will tell you about the adventures, from the time that Piglet Became a Hero to the time that Tigger Dreamt of Africa. There could well be Heffalumps in there somewhere, and honey. In fact, I am sure of the honey. There may even be a story about the bright blue bicycle, because it was a very fine one, a Raleigh, and it made you feel good just to look at it, and made you want to rub the mud off it just as soon

as it got onto it. There might be other bicycles in the Hundred Acre Wood but none as fine nor as shiny as Christopher Robin's, and no boy prouder than he.

