

I never met Jago Stone in the flesh. Thanks to the miracle of digital storage and a legacy from my late father-in-law, I have however seen him on the small screen in my front room, courtesy of MACE (Media Archive for Central England – www.macearchive.org). For around £70, I have now bought for my private use, a twelve minute clip from an 'ATV Today' programme broadcast on 10th January 1972 that features the artist in his village-setting talking about himself and his art work. You then hear various local worthies, ranging from the vicar to the publican and his wife, expressing their views on this odd presence in their midst. What is most immediately striking in this clip is how posh he and they sound. Their intonation is so Received Pronunciation of the times. Did this man really spend a couple of decades as Her Majesty's guest and keep that style of spoken English? But as he explains in his autobiography, he was known to his fellow inmates as the Reverend.

Jago's autobiography is a remarkable work. It was published in 1975 and I could at last afford to purchase my copy last year in 2015. It is called '*The Burglar's Bedside Companion*' and is long since out of print. It cost me nearly £50 on Amazon and is such a jewel. It has provided the basis for Chapter Three of this literary detective story. I knew when I finished reading it that this man and his story were worthy of a literary venture, the biography of a whole life.

I had first become acquainted with the legend of Jago Stone: burglar, artist, and ladies' man through the family I became linked with through my own second marriage in 1976. My wife as a teenager, and her late mother and father, knew him in person from 1968 to 1970. Her parents had indeed been patrons of this artist whom my wife had first encountered on the porch of their home in Gerrard's Cross, Buckinghamshire in the summer of '68 as he sought a commission to paint a water-colour of their family home. They said yes to that request from Jago who then produced the image that now hangs in our home in St Ives, Cornwall. My father-in-law then commissioned an oil painting entitled: 'The Makers of Sweet Smells' for his office at the firm of Oil of Ulay. My mother-in-law, in her turn, commissioned a work that was called 'The Fancy Dress Party'. Together they bought two more of his oils during this period at the end of the sixties. All these works now hang in our home, together with the depiction in oils of a country scene that Jago gifted Louise, my wife, when he left the area in 1970 to explore fresh pastures in search of more commissions. He claimed in his book in 1975 that he had sold more work than any other living British artist and you can understand the basis of the claim.

I knew from the moment that I conceived the idea of a biography that this would take the form of a detective story. I knew already as much as my wife and her parents had told me and what over the years I discovered on line. Google Jago Stone as my wife and I did and you find out some of the details of Jago's life as I have described below in Chapter Two. But you also raise a host of questions and that is the point where the real detective work begins. This biography could not have been written without the internet.