



Madam Popoff opens another emporium in Broadstairs. Stories include the Carlton Hotel, Olympic games of 1924, convalescent homes, Punch and Judy, donkeys, smugglers, wreckers, lighthouses, the treacherous Goodwin Sands and the Teddy Bear Hospital!

Broadstairs On My Mind

By Sally Forrester

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*Broadstairs
On
My Mind*



SALLY FORRESTER

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About The Author

Sally's parents, Pat and Evelyn Forrester, came to the Isle of Thanet in the late 1940s on their honeymoon; they loved it so much that they stayed. Sally was born and grew up in the little holiday town of Margate. She first left the area when she finished St. George's School to attend teacher-training college. Although she moved to the USA with her husband and two sons in 1994 Sally always returns to the area, usually for several months during the summertime, and to celebrate Christmas with relatives. Over the years she has witnessed the area decline and rise once again in fortune. Margate, Ramsgate, Broadstairs and the surrounding Thanet area are in her blood and hold a special place in her heart. This is Sally's third novel; she has worked as a teacher, artist and in the holistic health field. Her passion is to help people get well and enjoy life. Sally weaves her extensive knowledge and experience of healing with herbs, homoeopathy and flower remedies into this third book and draws her inspiration from the many suffering people who, over the years, have come to tell their story.

The upturn in fortunes of old town Margate inspired Sally to set her books in the Madam Popoff Vintage Emporium. Yes, it is a real shop and a delightful place but the Madam Popoff of Sally's first book *Last Train to Margate* is purely a work of fiction, as are the things that cross Madam's threshold, the characters, and their stories. Sally's second novel *Ramsgate Calling* continued the story theme in the nearby town of Ramsgate where the fictitious Madam Popoff opened up another vintage emporium. Now for this third novel Sally draws upon the colourful history of Broadstairs and the surrounding area as Madam Popoff opens up her third shop. Although this too is a work of fiction some of the people, places and events are factual, this becomes clear as the reader enjoys the book.

Sally Forrester

Sally met Mary and her little dog, Winston, at Ship Shape Café in Ramsgate and they too are real. Winston loves his daily sausage dished out by the dotting café staff. When Sally is at home in the USA she enjoys sailing her yacht around the coastal waters of Florida with her husband Cliff and consulting with the many families who seek out her help.

Goodwin Sands

The Lady

August 5th, 2020 was a day that Poppy would always remember because it was the day that *The Lady* appeared. The town was quieter than usual because of the Covid-19 calamity. Crowds were anticipated at the weekend but today was a Wednesday and Poppy was looking forward to a slack day when she could catch up with her sorting and pricing. *The Lady* was patiently waiting for Poppy on the inner covered tiled entrance to her new Broadstairs shop. She was large, colourful and brash, seemingly carved out of some seasoned hardwood. Upon careful examination Poppy concluded that she must have been one of those figureheads that once upon a time adorned the bow of old sailing ships in years gone by. This particular *Lady* had weathered well. She was carefully painted in fresh gaudy colours. Someone had taken care of her but now she was clearly unwanted. She sat abandoned and lonely in the entrance of the recently opened Madam Popoff and Poppy Vintage Emporium on Broadstairs High Street.

The Lady was cumbersome and heavy and it took Poppy sometime to haul and manoeuvre her over the threshold into her new home. It was still early in the morning and with a few hours to spare before opening time Poppy decided to brew a pot of coffee and settle down to become better acquainted with her new find. Carved locks of long golden hair rested upon her shoulders, cherry red lipstick framed her mouth and a string of white baubles hung loosely around her neck. The lady's magenta dress was shockingly low cut and she was lifting up the skirt at the knee to display a flurry of white petticoats and black leather ankle boots. She looked decidedly racy like *a lady of the night* and immediately reminded Poppy of Circe the beautiful enchantress from Greek mythology. Circe, daughter of Helios the sun god and Perse the

ocean nymph, was able by means of her alluring beauty, drugs and incantations to change humans into wolves, lions and pigs.

Jack the Lad was settled comfortably upon his little velvet cushion at the back of the shop carefully eyeing up Poppy's latest acquisition. She turned to him with her steaming mug of coffee in hand, patted his head and asked, "Well Jack, whatever will Madam Popoff say when she sees our mysterious visitor?" Surprisingly Jack turned and responded with a low growl and a curled lip showing his sharp incisors. Jack's response heralded an ill wind that Poppy decided to ignore as she carefully rested her hand upon *The Lady's* head and drifted back to another time.

The sailing vessel *The Beauty* was completed in 1790. She was a fine example of the craftsmanship and skilled boatbuilding that made the Bridport ship yards in Dorset famous. Bridport ships plied the cold waters of the Atlantic in the summertime to far off Newfoundland. In these icy waters the cod swam in their thousands. The fishing was rugged work for the Dorset sailors who risked these dangerous voyages to catch the cod. The Atlantic Ocean could be notoriously stormy and risky. The ships left in the springtime carrying cargoes of ropes, nets and salt. Their catches were salted and dried and the Spanish and Portuguese paid handsome sums for quality salt cod. Bridport ships eventually headed to Lisbon, Alicante or to far off Italian ports to sell their catch. The sailing vessels would finally return to Bridport with hulls crammed with olive oil, cork, sweet wine, exotic fruit, fragrant spices and yet more salt for the stores. The salt, a particularly precious commodity, was stored in the salt house ready for the next season's fishing.

The Beauty's logbook recorded many successful Atlantic crossings. Just like the noble oak tree used in her construction she was reliable and sturdy. Under Captain Winterborne's capable command she was a trustworthy vessel. Local folk would smile and fondly refer to her captain as *the salt of the earth*. Both ship and master were one and the same. They were strong and dependable. *The Beauty* boasted the carved figurehead of a fine buxom *lady* under her bowsprit. Newly enlisted

crewmembers could easily identify their ship as she lay tied up along side the quayside.

Sadly *The Beauty's* fortunes took a turn for the worse in 1820. Captain Winterborne was approaching retirement and her owners had been offered a handsome sum of money from a company based in East Kent. When the sale was complete her new owners had Captain Winterborne and his crew sail her up to Broadstairs where the Culver and White Shipyard would refit her. Shipbuilding had become an important industry in this seaside community. It had all begun back in 1538 when George Culver had built the first pier and the York Gate to protect his shipyard. The voyage to Broadstairs was Captain Winterborne's last voyage. It was his swan song and the end of an era for ship, captain and her crew. The good captain was weary and ready for a rest. He was not a man to sit down and relax; a lifetime of navigation and sailing with little time for shore leave had left him exhausted. It was time to hang up his hat and pass on the responsibility to another. However, he was anxious that *The Beauty's* future should be secure and that she would be loved in the same way that he had loved her. The farewell was difficult, both captain and her Dorset crew left the shipyard with heavy hearts.

The end of season refit in the Culver and White Ship yard left *The Beauty* looking as alluring as ever. However, in the hands of her new owners who were much less reputable, she quickly transformed. She became the enchantress leading her crew into dangerous waters fraught with life changing consequences. Cargoes of salt and cod, now a thing of the past, were replaced with tea, spirits and tobacco. *The Beauty* had begun a new chapter plying the English Channel between the Kent coast and France and in the very dangerous waters around the treacherous Goodwin Sands.

Smuggling and fishing were important industries on the East Kent coast. Smuggling had gradually become a way of life. It was particularly profitable because of the high duty payable on tea, spirits and tobacco. The village of St Peter's and the seaside community at Broadstairs became very good at outwitting the customs agents. A chalk, wave cut

platform along the coast, part of the longest continuous stretch of coastal chalk in the country, had given rise to a number of secluded cave ridden bays conveniently used by the smugglers to hide away their contraband. The Isle of Thanet's smugglers openly carried weapons and defied the authorities. They bullied local farmers into supplying them with fodder and fresh horses. Joss Snelling was leader of a notorious gang operating in the St Peter's and Broadstairs area. Joss and his men were partnered with some of the shady ship owners, including those who now owned *The Beauty*. Her new crew was a band of hard hearted rough men out to make a quick profit with little time and regard for moral values. Sadly *The Beauty* had become a *fallen lady*.

The Goodwin Sands, 10 miles long and three miles at their widest point, lie in the middle of the English Channel approximately six miles off the coastal town of Deal in East Kent. The sands constantly shift because of the tides and the currents. Usually the sands remain submerged between eight and fifteen meters below the surface. However, as the tides fall the sand banks begin to rear their head and expose approximately a tenth of the whole area. For centuries during rough, stormy weather these treacherous sands notoriously challenged navigators. The first documented shipwreck on the Goodwin's was in 1298 and it's estimated that more than 2,000 ships have met their watery grave. In more modern times local historians have estimated that dozens of shipwrecks still lie underneath the waves. Once a ship has fallen prey to the sands it will begin to break up. Any survivors lucky enough to clamber overboard onto the exposed sandbanks could try to light a fire. If providence happened to cast her beneficent countenance upon these poor souls, the lighted fire might attract the attention of passing ships or the boatmen of Deal and Kingsdown who might launch a rescue operation. However, if help didn't arrive within hours the tide would return and the sand turned into quicksand. Tragically any survivors would be engulfed. The biggest loss of life occurred during the Great Storm of November 26th, 1703. Historians believe that thirteen men-of-war ships and forty merchant vessels were wrecked, resulting in the loss of 2,168 lives.

The Beauty's unscrupulous owners together with her complicit captain and crew took advantage of these perilous waters off the East Kent coast. Floundering ships with valuable cargoes were easy pickings. When stormy weather approached *The Beauty* set sail and the keen huntress waited for disaster to befall those without local knowledge and experience. When the anticipated prey became ensnared upon the dangerous Goodwin Sands her brave crew members, mindful of a lion's share of the bounty, volunteered to man a couple of the large rowing boats. Rescuing desperate men from a floundering ship was far from their mind. *The Beauty's* men were armed with pistols and knives. Once they scuttled their target and snatched what they could of value they turned their backs and fled. It was despicable, dirty work, fraught with danger robbing men in their hour of need and abandoning them to the quicksand and to a certain death.

The good people of Broadstairs called it *the devil's work*. *The Beauty* gradually developed a notorious reputation. Good men shuddered when their eye caught a glimpse of the brazen lady figurehead, as *The Beauty* lay tied up alongside the stone pier. Under Circe's spell her men had become wolves and pigs. *The Beauty* had lost her moral compass. "What goes around comes around," muttered a few old sailors one night as they drank tankards of ale inside the *Tartar Frigate* public house on the Broadstairs quayside. They were discussing *The Beauty's* latest escapades.

It was common knowledge that many of the ships that passed this area of the East Kent coast would dip their sails in veneration to the cliff top shrine of *Our Ladye of Bradstowe*. Bradstowe was an Anglo-Saxon word meaning broad place. The ship's crew would pray for protection in these dangerous waters. *The Beauty's* crew did no such thing. Her unscrupulous captain and crew held little respect for anything other than the spoils of greed and deception.

The Beauty's wrecking history continued unabated for seven years but disaster, something always on the cards, eventually struck one wild night in January 1827. The sailing barque *Angel*, heading for the safety of

Ramsgate harbour, was blown off course in the winter gale. Her captain and crew, unfamiliar with this part of the East Kent coastline, found themselves blown onto the treacherous Goodwin Sands. *The Beauty* set sail planning to take advantage of the stricken ship. Her captain and crew had been drinking in the *Tartar Frigate* tavern when they heard talk of the stricken *Angel*. Greed and a decision made under the influence of too much Kentish ale, together with a gale much stronger than anticipated, was a recipe for *The Beauty's* impending doom. She was carrying too much sail for the dangerous conditions. While several crewmembers struggled to haul in and reef some of her sail she was blown off course and suddenly struck the rocks off the North Foreland. The unforgiving rocks ripped a vast gaping hole in her port side. She lurched onto one side and the cold salt water came crashing in. The water swiftly swept away many of her crew. The captain and several of his men clung desperately to what was left. As she began to break up the icy cold conditions, the relentless rain and strong winds quickly took their toll. After several hours the remaining crew were numb and exhausted. Eventually they were all swept away and engulfed by the angry sea.

In contrast *Angel's* crew, desperate for help, prayed to *Our Ladye of Bradstowe*. The brave boatmen of Deal and Kingsdown had seen a lantern signalling from the direction of the Goodwin Sands. Despite the very bad conditions these brave boatmen decided to launch their rowboats. All of her crew was snatched from the treacherous Goodwin Sands that awful night. *Angel's* crew, once on dry land, talked excitedly about a mysterious lady who had suddenly appeared in their hour of great need. Apparently she came out of nowhere walking barefoot on the gale swept sand towards them. She was holding a large lantern and she kept holding it up high above her head and deliberately signalling towards the coast. They described her as old, small, wizened and particularly portly. She had a kindly face that glowed in the darkness and there was a sort of ethereal light surrounding her. "Was this *Our Ladye of Bradstowe*?" They asked of their new friends who had come to the rescue. "Maybe," answered Alfred a rugged fisherman from Deal, "or maybe you had your own special angel to guide and save you tonight."

Local boatmen told *Angel's* story for many years. They always wondered who the old wizened woman with the lantern was. She never appeared again and eventually the story became local folklore. As for *The Beauty* little was left. Driftwood swept onto the local beaches for several weeks. None of her crew survived. Broadstairs men were pleased to see her gone from their harbour. *The Beauty* had brought nothing but bad things to the little town.

One cold February morning two Margate fishermen caught something large and heavy in their nets. When they hauled them in they were surprised to see the figurehead of *The Lady*. She was somewhat worse for wear but they liked the look of her and decided to take her home. They gave her a fresh coat of paint and propped her up in one of their fishing sheds. *The Lady* was passed on from one owner to another in the local Isle of Thanet area over the next 193 years. She was well looked after but when Fred, her most recent owner, passed away Jean, his elderly sister, didn't know what to do with such a cumbersome, quirky piece of maritime memorabilia. The ladies at Jean's WI group suggested dropping her off at the newly opened Madam Popoff shop on Broadstairs High Street. They didn't think she was suitable at all for either the cancer or cat's charity shops in the High Street. Jean's husband and a few of his friends helped out with the operation. The figurehead was loaded onto an open top van and deposited on the doorstep late in the evening of August 4th.

Poppy opened her eyes and gazed at *The Lady* and muttered to herself, "what a fascinating history. I'm not sure if she belongs here. I'll have to run her by Madam Popoff." Well, *she who knows everything* just happened to make a convenient appearance a few hours later. "Poppy this is a wonderful find. What a treasure! We can ask Cedric and Ollie to hoist her up and fix her high above the front door. She will become a landmark and as customers look up the Broadstairs High Street she will guide them straight to our doorstep." Poppy wasn't so sure; she knew that *The Lady* had a very chequered history. She had of course begun her life on what was always perceived to be an honourable ship with Captain Winterborne at the helm. However, later she had become associated with

smuggling. Then she had descended into her absolute downfall, the awful wrecking and this was surely the devil's work. Madam had always instructed Poppy that there were some things that carried very negative energy. Poppy had learnt that it just wasn't right to sell these things and pass them onto some unsuspecting customer so they could cause more havoc in someone else's life. Madam immediately sensed Poppy's hesitation. She smiled and stroked the lady's flowing golden locks. "Poppy, sometimes in life we need to give someone a second chance. We both know that this is *a fallen lady*. She has been through good and bad times; let's give her a settling in period of three months. Let's see if she brings beautiful things our way. We won't be passing her along but we will be giving her a second chance."

Ollie and Cedric arrived the next day with their toolboxes and bits of scrap metal and wood from Scott's Emporium in Margate. It took them the best part of the day to work out how to hoist her up and attach her to the wall high above the shop entrance recess. Eventually Cedric called his friend Joe who was a local builder. After much discussion Joe brought in a couple of his lads. By the time the clock struck six *The Lady* was situated, reigning supreme over the shop front. She was an alluring landmark for all to see as they made their way up Broadstairs High Street.



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