



The Journey to
DREAMTIME
by Chris Coope



Sophie and Dylan are introduced by Professor Watson and his hot air balloon to a Magical Globe. The Globe takes them on some fantastic journeys of discovery in the hot air balloon. The Journey is part of a series of trips, where the children learn about how we were able to build cities, by growing food in ever more efficient ways. The story is told through the eyes of two adventurous children and their pets. The main characters are two children Sophie & Dylan, along with their pets Monty a maltese dog & Naomi a barn owl.

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Thinking of Dreamtime

Professor Watson was a little skeptical but very excited to try this. Would this be all that was needed to travel almost anywhere?

His assistants were due in about 30 minutes. He needed somewhere to go, but where?

The learned Professor decided he really wanted to visit the ancient Aborigines, the original inhabitants of Australia who had travelled from Africa to take up residence some 46,000 years before Europeans landed in Botany Bay in 1778.

He knew that to this day, they are nomadic hunter-gatherers, with a rich mythology known as Dreamtime that is passed down from generation to generation.

The Professor wanted to visit the Aborigines when they first inhabited Australia to try to understand Dreamtime. This was a mystical time during which the Aborigines' ancestors established their world. It was a fascinating time when, for example, one of their many myths tells how the sun was made.

He wondered if Dylan and Sophie would like to go on such an adventure with him.

Before the Professor could embark on such a journey, he knew he needed to test his theories in much shorter visits back in time.

He sat in his car drinking another cup of coffee, while waiting for his ground assistants to arrive. As he sat, he started reading the novel he had just started for the fourth time, *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. He knew he wasn't very far from Gad's Hill, the early home of Charles Dickens. It was just a few miles along the Ridgeway towards Rochester. Picking up the Globe with both hands, he thought of Rochester Cathedral, Gad's Hill and Charles Dickens.

A Test Flight to see The Beatles

As the thought of traveling so far back in time was too much for the two of them to comprehend, they asked if they could try a shorter trip back say of 50 years or so.

Simon, a Beatles fan, remembered the last live performance the group had played. It was on top of the Apple Records building in Saville Row, London, on January 30th, 1969. One of the all-time greatest moments in pop culture, it ended with John Lennon saying, “I’d like to thank you on behalf of the group and ourselves, and I hope we passed the audition.”

They all quickly agreed that would be a fantastic test of the mysterious Globe.

Simon quickly found an article that detailed the whole event.

The Professor then took out the Globe, remembering that he had already shown it the Aborigines picture from 46,200 years earlier. He reset the Globe like the last time. He found his Jeppesen flight

chart of Meopham and placed the Globe over it and, sure enough, the Globe shone its beam of green light. As before, it turned to blue as it scanned the area of Meopham on the map, before finally turning deep red.

Feeling confident that this had ‘reset’ the Globe, the Professor motioned to Simon to bring the article about the Beatles’ last live performance. Simon placed it on the kitchen table. The Professor placed the Globe on the document. Again, the Globe sent out a green light first, then as it read the details “Beatles, 1969, 3 Saville Row, London,” it changed to a blue beam. As it warmed up noticeably, the beam changed to deep red.

They all decided to take the flight the next day to test if the Globe recalled this information.

With their upcoming adventure in mind, Tony and Simon went out to the barn to prepare. They needed to recharge the propane tanks at the local shop, check the gondola, and perhaps even recharge the small battery they used for communications, height, and direction. The Professor checked the weather and decided that an early morning flight would be perfect.

When Tony and Simon returned a few hours later, the Professor suggested a 7:00 am flight, to which they

agreed. The schedule decided, they all went home for an early night's sleep so they could commence the flight fully refreshed in the morning.

Simon arrived home early to a surprised wife. Tina asked him why he was so early. He mumbled something about a 7 am flight with the Professor. "We'll need Jim Smith from Culverstone to act as my stand in." "Why is that?" asked Tina. "Oh, just some new equipment we want to test," he answered.

Tony was also home early for a change. His wife Samantha was delighted and all for visiting the pub. When Tony told her he had to be in bed early for his morning flight, she was most put out, eventually persuading him to at least have one round of drinks before turning in for the night.

The Professor wasn't married, his lady friend Caroline, another professor, well more of a scientist actually, usually only appeared on weekends, preferring to avoid all his "grown-up toys" as she put it. This allowed the Professor to carry out more research, which suited him very well. He too turned in early as he wanted to make as many observations of events the next morning as possible.



5:00 am arrives way too quickly, no matter the project in hand. Alarm clocks jangle away while wives, girlfriends and pets complain loudly about being awakened so early. The intrepid travelers, along with Jim the new stand-in ground man, all quickly showered and dressed. Upon arrival, they drank an early cup of coffee before heading out to the manor house. They took the hot air balloon to its usual takeoff spot in the field behind the barn.

Sophie, Dylan, Monty and Naomi were all fast asleep at home, having no idea what the Professor was about to attempt or why.

The Professor was the first to reach the barn. It was, after all, just a few strides across his courtyard. The others had to drive a couple of miles to reach the Professor's house.

By the time they had all arrived, the Professor had warmed up the diesel-powered Land Rover and loaded the provisions for the flight. He added some extra flasks

of coffee, a pack of six warmed croissants, first aid kit, along with Jeppesen air charts of London, Southern England and The English Channel for good measure. He had also managed to check the communication batteries and completed a preflight check of the altimeter and the wind speed indicator.

They all clambered into the short, wheel-based Land Rover Defender 90, for the short journey across the field to the takeoff zone -- a clearing on the Professor's property.

With Jim's extra pair of hands, unpacking and preparing for the flight was much easier. The gondola was quickly in place, with the propane tanks attached, the burners fitted, balloon hooked up and the envelope filling with air in less than 20 minutes. Soon, they would be able to start the burners to expand the balloon with hot air.

There was very little wind at almost all heights today. The crisp October air left short vapor trails with each breath. Everyone was glad to be wearing a series of layers of clothing ending in a trusty parka jacket with a fur-lined hood, to keep them warm on the flight.

They had attached the gondola to the Land Rover to prevent the balloon taking a flight all by itself, something that it could easily do if you weren't prepared for that odd puff of wind.

As the balloon rose majestically to its full height, the Professor contacted air traffic control to inform them of his expected course, which was nowhere near Saville Row in Central London.

Gulf, Bravo, Zulu, Tango, Alpha was soon cleared for its short flight.

Simon, Tony, and then the Professor all climbed into the gondola. Jim let go of the headline, walking to the tethering line attached to the Land Rover. A final look to see if everything was set, a quick nod from the Professor, and the balloon was free to soar into the air, which it did with the help of the two huge propane burners consuming around 20 gallons of propane per hour. The fully inflated balloon was huge, 55-ft wide and 70-ft high, with a volume of some 77,550 cubic feet.

The brightly coloured balloon was quite a majestic sight, rising into the sky on this clear morning.

The altimeter quickly showed a height of 1000 ft. The planned height was 2400 ft or just below the ceiling for visual flights. The Professor took the Globe out of his pocket. It was, as before, warm with a red beam of light. Slowing the rate of ascent, the Professor again looked at the Globe, which had now turned green. He suggested that they look below. All they could see was a haze, which had mysteriously suddenly appeared.

Opening some vanes on the sides of the balloon, the Professor allowed the balloon to descend. Slowly it began to break through what they thought was early morning mist, into a clearer sky. As they did, they saw not fields, but a large, bustling, modern city. It didn't take long for them to see that it was London, and they wondered if London had seen them as well.

Immediately below them, a band was playing on a roof with a number of people watching. Even larger crowds were gathered in the street below looking up.

The songs could be clearly heard by them, "Let it be" and then "Get back." It was definitely the Beatles singing their last live concert! Simon was stunned. Tony just looked on, enjoying the music, while the Professor keenly looked for clues about this flight.

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The band's last live song, "Get Back," was on its third take as some policemen arrived on the roof.

And in the end....John Lennon was saying,

"I'd like to thank you on behalf of the group and ourselves and I hope we passed the audition."

The music came to an abrupt end at this point. The Professor, fearing they may be spotted, quickly opened his Jeppesen chart of Meopham. He pulled out the Globe, which was sending out a green light, and placed it over the map. The beam changed to blue, finally turning red as he ran the beam over Meopham. He then returned the Globe to his pocket.

Naomi's Home

Dylan had no idea that Naomi could hear the entire conversation even from that distance.

Looking around, she decided it was time to come back, so she swooped down, landing on Sophie's hand. Dylan gave her a small piece of fresh chicken, and then Sophie attached her leash and they headed out of the field homeward bound.

Dylan suddenly asked Naomi a question: "Naomi can you understand us when we are talking?" Naomi, who most definitely had an impish sense of humour, hesitated before replying. Just as Dylan was about to ask again, she answered him, "Dylan, of course, I can."

Sophie was laughing at Dylan by now, saying, "I wonder if Monty can talk too?" in a mocking sort of way.

Dylan was not at all sure that he could, so he asked Naomi, "How long have you been able to understand us?" Naomi chuckled in a way only owls can, "Since you took me home as your pet."

“So why wait until now to reveal you can talk to us?” he asked.

Naomi wasn't sure she wanted to answer that question just yet, “Can you both keep a secret?” she asked.

Sophie was the first to say, “Well, I know I can!”

Dylan added, “Of course, I can too!” in a most indignant way.

“Okay then, whilst I could understand you when you were talking, I wasn't able to talk back until you put me in contact with the Professor's Globe,” she said.

“The Professor's Globe?” asked Sophie.

“Yes, the Globe. It must be a magical Old World instrument handed down from generation to generation by very wise people to very wise people. It was no accident that the Professor found it. It was sent to him for a reason,” Naomi explained.

Dylan, who had been very quietly thinking until then said, “Naomi how do you know all this?”

“Dylan, that is a good question, I think I can best answer by explaining that all living matter on earth is connected to each other in some way.”

Sophie quickly added, “You mean just like the *Avatar* movie, we watched?”

“Yes, Sophie. As you will soon learn, magnetism, light, energy, radio waves, and your feelings or vibrations are all interconnected,” Naomi added.

Dylan was still thinking about how everything was connected, so he asked, “Why can’t I see the connections?”

Naomi was impressed by Dylan’s question. “Dylan that is another great question. Let me answer it for now by saying it is the same sort of connection there is between mobile phones, or our television, or radar, or Wi-Fi.”

“Oh, so it’s invisible?” he asked.

“To your eyes, yes, but that doesn’t mean it cannot be seen or heard by others, just as I can hear a field mouse running under the snow,” Naomi explained.

“Naomi, I was told owls were wise,” Sophie added.

Naomi just winked a big wink at them.

“Okay, let’s all head for home.”

They all set off for the short walk home.

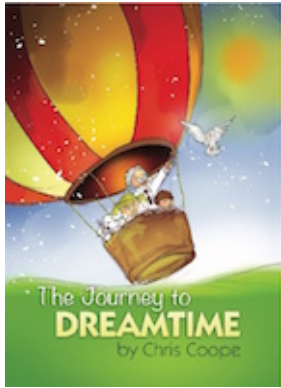
The light was just beginning to fade as they walked into the garden, stepping across the well-kept lawn, past the dividing hedge to the miniature barn with its attached aviary that was Naomi’s home.

Naomi was much quieter now. “Let’s keep my ability to talk a little secret between us for now.” “Yes, let’s,” said Sophie. “Okay,” said Dylan really reluctantly, as he so wanted to tell his schoolmates, that their pet owl could talk.

Sophie opened the gate to the aviary, unhooked Naomi’s leash, and she immediately flew into the aviary, taking a quick look around to see if they were alone. Sophie closed and secured the gate, and then said, “Naomi we will be back later to change your water. We need to prepare for the trip tomorrow.”

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Naomi whispered, “See you later,” before flying into her barn.



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