

# Ripping Reads

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*The Secret Holiday* by Maud Frère  
by Muriel Robinson

When I was 7, my father was ordained and we moved to Limpsfield in Surrey for him to serve his curacy. I was already a fluent and avid reader and, much to my delight, his Rector had a daughter a few years older than me who would periodically pass on books she had grown out of (I don't know if this was optional on her part or encouraged by her parents!). The books were an eclectic mix but included three which I still own. Two of these were Puffin editions of *Storm Ahead* and *The White Riders* by Monica Edwards, and these started my love of her Westling books in particular, but the other which has stayed with me is a dark blue hardback without a dust cover, published by Heinemann in 1958, called *The Secret Holiday*. I could see from my first reading that it had originally been written in French and as I went on to learn French I often wondered about trying to read the original. Of course, back then, to track down a book was complex, but a couple of years ago I found the French version online and bought it. Originally published in 1956 by Gallimard, my version is a paperback dated to 1997 in Gallimard's Folio Junior series. The author, Maud Frère, was Belgian, born in 1923 and living till 1979. Apparently several of her books have been adapted for TV or cinema, though I have been unable to find out much about that. *Vacances Secrètes*, as the French language version is entitled, seems to have been her first book and was well received, even to the point of an English translation appearing so quickly. I don't know if it was filmed, but it has a cinematic feel which I think would work well.

