

## Katharine Briggs

### Story-Teller

by Hilda R. Ellis Davidson

#### DESCRIPTION:

Katharine Briggs made an indelible mark on the world of folklore with her compilation of the Dictionary of British Folktales in the English Languages, while her subsequent Dictionary of Fairies confirmed her already distinguished place among British Folklorists. Briggs's initial academic interest while at Oxford University was in seventeenth-century literature and the Civil War. Upon leaving Oxford she pursued amateur dramatics and worked for the Guide Movement, and during the Second World War she served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. It was here, perhaps, that her personality fully matured; among other activities she delighted her fellows with her remarkable gift for story-telling.

After the war, her career as a folklorist began to blossom. As if to make up for lost time, she spent the last twenty years of her life writing and lecturing almost continually. As well as her books on folklore, she gained renown for her children's books *Kate Crackernuts* and *Hobberdy Dick*. She was responsible for revitalising the Folklore Society and as its President, she laid the foundations of the Society as it is today. Hilda Davidson's biography brings to life a remarkable woman whose combination of academic excellence and natural gift for narrative found her friends all over the world.

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Hilda R. Ellis Davidson (1914-2006) was President of the Folklore Society. She published a number of books, including many on Norse and Anglo-Saxon mythology. Dr Davidson was a Lecturer and formerly Vice-President of Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge, and was the general editor of Mistletoe Books, published by the Folklore Society.