

# Bridge at War

## A Novel by Trevor Hopkins

A prequel to *New Bridge to Lyndesfarne*, this story is set partially in England in 1946, and partially in the mysterious world of Lyndesfarne. In Lyndesfarne, all but the simplest technology does not work, but a sophisticated society functions using pervasive magic. The crossing between the worlds is formed by two stone causeways across the marshes, joined by the Old Bridge; its immense masonry arches are partially reinforced by both steel alloys and by magical sprites, visible as orange sparks inside the stonework itself. A short section in the middle of the central arch, in the region where neither engineering nor magic is entirely reliable, requires both metal and magical enhancement.

The story follows three young men – Alistair, Bram and Tom – who have become friends and comrades in the Army. After their return from Germany and demobilisation, the friends have no very clear idea of their future life. Neither Tom nor Alistair has close living relatives, and Bram seems unwilling to return to his family. They travel to northern England and find summer work on a farm not far from the Island of Lyndesfarne.

From a series of barrack-room stories and pub tales, the companions learn more about Lyndesfarne, and the properties of magic, as well as some of the dangerous creatures that even now inhabit its less densely populated areas. At the end of the summer, Bram resolves to visit his family who, it now transpires, live on Lyndesfarne. Tom and Alistair elect to accompany Bram, and the companions journey together across the causeway and bridge.

Much to their surprise, Tom and Alistair are welcomed warmly at Bram's family home. It appears that Bram has been acting as a spy, an agent for the Lyndesfarne organisations, reporting on the progress of the War. It also becomes clear that Bram has been subtly attempting to recruit the others to join the Guardians, the organisation that is partially responsible for policing the crossing between the worlds.

Intrigued, Tom and Alistair agree to sign up, and are shortly transported to Cliviger Grange, the Guardian training school. Here, they learn much more about the properties of magic, and are introduced to the day-to-day responsibilities of the Guardians. They also learn about the Watchers, a more secretive organisation responsible for monitoring movements in the area surrounding the crossing, whose members have been mistaken for monks from the Holy Island of Lyndesfarne in the past.

Despite what he has been told, Tom begins to suspect that magic can sometimes work outside Lyndesfarne. Meanwhile, Alistair becomes attached to the Guides, and forms a romantic attachment with Yise, Bram's sister. It emerges that Bram is older than the others had thought, and is closely associated with senior parts of the organisations responsible for protecting the crossing.

It becomes clear to Tom that, although the War in Europe may be over, there is still a war going on around the Lyndesfarne crossing. By a combination of sharp wits and good luck, Tom is instrumental in foiling several attacks on the crossing: an attempt from the England side to blow up the bridge with explosives, and an attack from Lyndesfarne that would have set loose a horde of dangerous dragons in the English countryside. Tom also becomes suspicious of the Warden of Cliviger grange, Major Markham, having accidentally observed a private meeting between the Major and Hamet, Bram's uncle.

Alistair tells a tale of escorting Tarm, his VIP visitor from Lyndesfarne, who had also had a secret meeting with Markham. Alistair and Tom begin to believe that Tarm is somehow involved in another conspiracy to close the crossing between the worlds.

Tarm and Hamet disappear mysteriously, and are later revealed as agents of Agrea, a country in the Other World that had maintained loose affiliations with Nazi Germany. Tom and Alistair, now rejoined by Bram, investigate the disappearance. Tom intercepts information suggesting another attack on the crossing is imminent, and catches Hamet trying to sabotage the communications between the worlds. Tom heroically succeeds in foiling Hamet, but falls from the tower. Shaken and injured, he awakes in the infirmary, instrumental in the exposure of numerous secrets.