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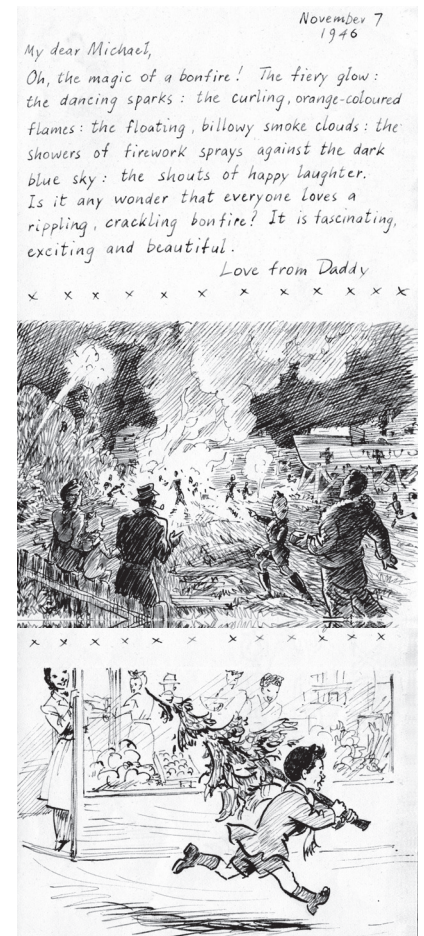
Letters to Michael: a father writes to his son 1945-1947

Written and illustrated by CHARLES PHILLIPSON, the grandfather
of acclaimed artist and poet HEATHER PHILLIPSON

'My dear Michael, Mummy and I are very pleased that you are now able to read books for yourself. . . As you grow older you will find that good books can be some of your best friends. . . Much love from Daddy'

It is 16 January 1947 and, as he does most days, Charles Phillipson has taken up his fountain pen to write to his young son Michael. Before Michael started school in 1944 Charles had already made him a book of playful drawings of the alphabet to encourage his reading. From early 1945 to the autumn of 1947 a sequence of 150 illustrated letters followed in which Charles captures the delight to be found in the mundane detail of everyday life: passengers on the morning train hidden behind their newspapers; the fun to be had on a revolving office chair; a walk on a very windy day; the sun rising over chimney-pots. Jotted on a sheet torn from a pad of office paper, and often sketched in haste in tea breaks, each letter was embellished with a hand-drawn stamp which made the young Michael feel as if he was receiving 'real' letters. And real letters they are – love-letters, even – for through their affectionate words, mischievous drawings and gentle encouragement of Michael's own literary and artistic explorations, a father's love for his son shines out.

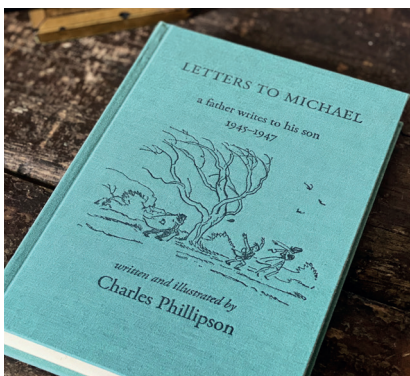
Charles Phillipson grew up in a green suburb of Manchester where much of his time was spent with pen, pencil or brush in hand, exploring the surrounding countryside. After leaving school at 14, he attended evening classes at the city's School of Art – L. S. Lowry was a fellow student – and developed his drawing and lettering skills as a printer's apprentice. Some years later he became head of the publicity department of a large chain-making company, where he used his humour and love of language to create instruction manuals and advertising for their products. In 1937 Charles married Marjorie and they moved to a village just south of Manchester. For a short time, life seemed idyllic but then tragedy struck when Charles was diagnosed with progressive and untreatable multiple sclerosis. Charles was made redundant in 1955 and from then on received only a small disability pension but, despite the inexorable progress of his disease, he never stopped painting and drawing. Now these letters, saved by Marjorie who recognized their unique quality, and treasured by Michael after his father's death in 1974, have been gathered together in a handsome cloth-bound hardback edition. *Letters to Michael* presents a touching portrait of the relationship between a father and his son and captures a bygone age when people still wrote letters using pen and paper.



“To my child's mind, my grandfather's drawings were totemic. I saw that he was present to the microcosmic and the macrocosmic connections that are freely available everywhere, if you just tune in and note them. And it struck me that this could be so much *fun*. Charles' drawings are the energetic imprints of a mind observant to the point of absurdity. I understood that art was something breathing. They landed with dynamism and tenderness, and with permission to make the world come alive as it comes alive for me, which is perhaps the most important thing art can do.” – Heather Phillipson

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Steph Allen / Jennie Harrison bunningpress@foxedquarterly.com • 020 7033 0258**

HEATHER AND MICHAEL PHILLIPSON ARE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW



SLIGHTLY FOXED is the publisher of the well-loved quarterly literary magazine and an acclaimed list of limited-edition memoirs. Authors include Edward Ardizzone, Gerald Durrell, Anne Fadiman, Graham Greene, Helene Hanff, Michael Holroyd, James Lees-Milne, Hilary Mantel, Gavin Maxwell, V. S. Pritchett, Dodie Smith and Rosemary Sutcliff.

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