

NO MATTER HOW MANY SKIES HAVE FALLEN

Back to the land in wartime Britain

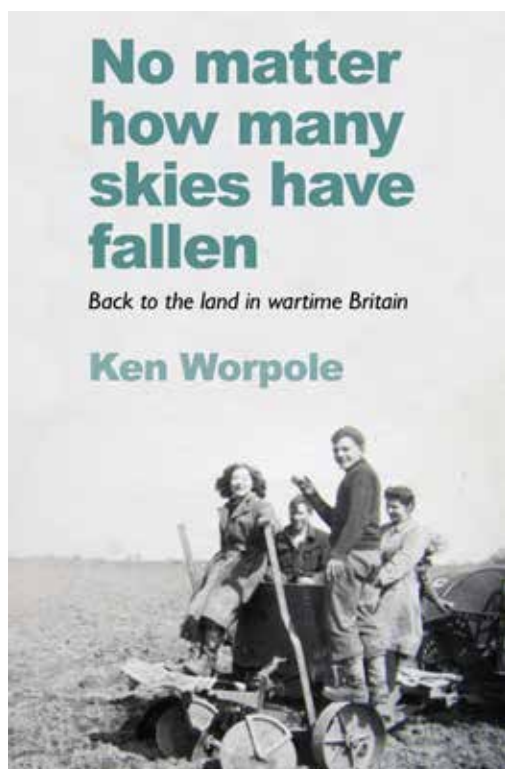
Ken Worpole

Published May 2021

ISBN: 978-1-908213-86-0



“Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: there is now no smooth road into the future: but we go round, or rather scramble over the obstacles. We’ve got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen.” **D. H. LAWRENCE**



On ‘Lady Day’, March 1943 a group of Christian pacifists took possession of a vacant farm in Frating, a hamlet on the Essex Tendring Peninsula. There they established a working community, inspired by their association with *The Adelphi journal*, where D.H.Lawrence, John Middleton Murry, Vera Brittain, Iris Murdoch, George Orwell and others shared ideas for the future with European religious radicals such as Nikolai Berdyaev, Martin Buber and Simone Weil.

Frating Hall Farm provided a settlement and livelihood for individuals and families (as well as a temporary sanctuary for refugees and prisoners-of-war), and over time became a successful arable and livestock land-holding of more than 300 acres. Scorned initially by their neighbours for their anti-war views, the Frating community won respect not only through their

farming achievements, but having established a touring theatre company and choir, for bringing new life to the villages and churches around them.

The lost story of Frating Hall Farm is based on the reminiscences of those who grew up on the farm, together with photographs, letters and organisational records, never before seen or published. The book is a kaleidoscopic history of a farm during its eleven-year occupation, and an enquiry into the passionate religious and political ideals of the back-to-the-land movement in wartime and post-war rural England.

KEN WORPOLE is a writer and social historian, and the author of many books on architecture, aesthetics, landscape and public policy. He was once described by *The Independent* as ‘one of the shrewdest and sharpest observers of the English social landscape.’ A founder member of think-tanks Demos and OpenDemocracy, in recent years he has focused on post-industrial landscapes, settlements and communities, together with questions of ‘Englishness’ and regional identity.

PUBLISHED BY LITTLE TOLLER BOOKS 18TH MAY 2021 UK, 3RD MAY 2022 US

225 X 150mm, illustrated paperback with flaps, 176 pages

Price: UK £14, US \$25 ISBN 978-1-908213-86-0

Distributed by Central Books T: 020 8525 8800 F: 020 8525 8879 E: orders@centralbooks.com W: centralbooks.com

Available from Gardners Books & Little Toller Contact Jon on 01308 480611 or jon@littletoller.co.uk

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