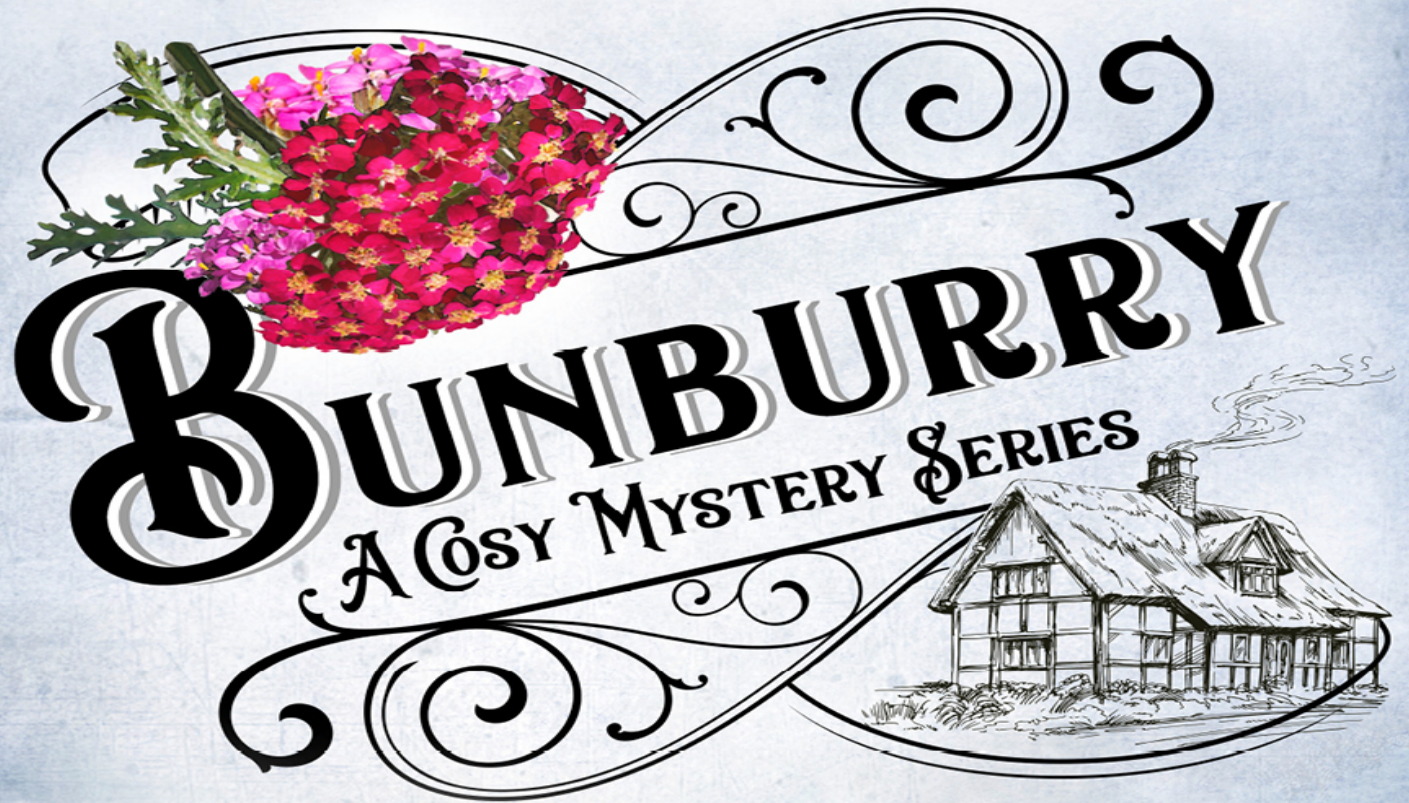


# HELENA MARCHMONT



# BUNBURRY

A COSY MYSTERY SERIES

## SHEEP SECRETS





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## **BUNBURY – A COSY MYSTERY SERIES**

Miss Marple meets Oscar Wilde in this new series of cosy mysteries set in the picturesque Cotswolds village of Bunbury. In “Murderous Ride,” the second Bunbury book, Alfie discovers that he has not only inherited a cottage from his late Aunt Augusta but also a 1950s Jaguar. He is dismayed: for reasons of his own, he no longer drives. Aunt Augusta’s best friends, Liz and Marge, persuade him to get behind the wheel again - but that’s just the start of his troubles.

## ABOUT THE BOOK

The picturesque village of Bunburry is basking in midsummer sunshine when a shepherd finds a body in a nearby quarry. The deceased was taking part in an outdoor survival training course run by Neil Walker, friend of Constable Emma Hollis. The death seems a tragic accident, but Emma insists on amateur sleuth Alfie McAlister joining the course to save Neil's good name. But are the other participants as innocent as they seem? Add an undercover reporter and a mysterious druid to the mix, and Alfie's investigation becomes more complex than he imagined ...

# CAST

**Alfie McAlister** flees the hustle and bustle of London for the peace and quiet of the Cotswolds. Unfortunately, the “heart of England” turns out to be deadlier than expected ...

Margaret “**Marge**” **Redwood** and Clarissa “**Liz**” **Hopkins** have lived in Bunburry their entire lives, where they are famous for their exceptional fudge-making skills. Between Afternoon Tea and Gin o’clock they relish a bit of sleuthing...

**Emma Hollis** loves her job as policewoman, the only thing she is tired of are her aunt Liz’s constant attempts at matchmaking.

**Betty Thorndike** is a fighter. Mostly for animal rights. She’s the sole member of Bunburry’s Green Party.

**Oscar de Linnet** lives in London and is Alfie’s best friend. He tries luring Alfie back to the City because: “anybody can be good in the country. There are no temptations there.”

**Augusta Lytton** is Alfie’s aunt. She’s dead. But still full of surprises ...

**Harold Wilson** loves a pint (or two) more than his job as local police sergeant.

**BUNBURRY** is a picturesque Cotswolds village, where sinister secrets lurk beneath the perfect façade ...

## THE AUTHOR

Helena Marchmont is a pseudonym of Olga Wojtas, who was born and brought up in Edinburgh. She was encouraged to write by an inspirational English teacher, Iona M. Cameron. Olga won a Scottish Book Trust New Writers Award in 2015, has had more than 30 short stories published in magazines and anthologies and recently published her first mystery *Miss Blaine's Prefect and the Golden Samovar*.

HELENA MARCHMONT



Sheep Secrets

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*If Nature had been comfortable, mankind would never have  
invented architecture.*

Oscar Wilde

## PROLOGUE

He was running, running for his life. He had no idea how many were coming after him, but he knew if they caught him, it would be the end.

It was a moonless night, everything around him darkly threatening. The only illumination came from his head torch. He didn't dare glance round at his pursuers for fear of what he would see. He could hear them, their thudding feet, the rasp of their breath. He had to outrun them. Somewhere, surely, there must be sanctuary.

Gasping for breath, sweating, he raced across the field, frantically looking for shelter. He was completely exposed here, an easy target.

*Was that a deeper blackness over there to the right? Could it be a wood?* He veered off course to head towards it, stumbling in his haste.

Yes, a wood, he'd be safe there, hidden - but suddenly in front of him there was a fence, a barbed-wire fence, just under waist-height. Normally, he could have leaped over it like a hurdle, but right now, his legs were shaking, and he was trembling too much to be able to jump. Desperately, he peered from side to side. The thin light of the head torch revealed a rickety stile a few metres away. He pitched towards it and hauled himself over the uneven steps.

Half-wheezing, half-sobbing, he plunged into the dense woodland. Branches lashed into his face as he ran, and he flailed at them ineffectually, tripping over roots and crashing into tree trunks. He was winded, bruised, his face and hands scratched, but he didn't dare let himself focus on the pain - he gritted his teeth and kept on running.

All he could hear now was the pounding of his own blood. *How close were they? Had he escaped?*

A branch caught the side of his eye socket, and he was temporarily blinded by his eye watering. As he reached up to wipe it clear, he saw to his horror that it wasn't a branch, it was an arm. Arms were reaching out of the darkness to seize him.

"Get away from me!" he screamed, struggling to free himself. "Leave me alone!"

He twisted away from them and fell, the head torch catching against a sapling and tearing off. He was in complete darkness now, losing all sense of direction. He scrambled to his feet and without pausing to catch his breath, he started running, and suddenly he was falling again, and then ... nothingness.

\*

The shepherd stopped for a moment and closed his eyes, feeling the warmth of the sun on his back. There was no better life than to be among the Cotswold hills, whatever the weather. But on this perfect June day, he felt sorry for anyone who had to work indoors, especially those trapped in cities.

It was time to move the flock to a new pasture. The thick-fleeced Cotswolds sheep were tough enough to survive anywhere - a group of them were grazing contentedly at the foot of the old quarry - but the shepherd wanted them in the neighbouring meadow.

He opened his eyes and looked down at the sheepdog crouched beside him, waiting for her instructions.

"Walk up," he commanded, and the dog headed towards the sheep at a slow, steady pace that wouldn't send them scampering off.

"Come by," he called, and the dog began circling the sheep, herding them in the right direction for the meadow.

The shepherd squinted at the scene. There was something in the quarry, something dark.

“Come by,” he ordered the dog again, and as the sheep were expertly rounded up, he strode towards the quarry to see what it was. It almost looked like a person, someone lying sleeping. It was. A man. Could it be the druid who had got permission to camp on the land? But would even a druid be able to doze undisturbed among grazing sheep?

Something was wrong. He ran towards the figure. And even before he got close enough to see the injuries, he knew it was too late for him to help.