

THE ROAD TO MYSELF

A Memoir

ANTHONY STOVOLD

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Author's Note

This book is a personal account of my life, my travels and the experiences that shaped me. Some conversations have been reconstructed from memory, but the events are told as faithfully as I remember them. Identifying details, and minor elements have been altered for reasons of privacy, clarity, and narrative shape. What remains unchanged is the emotional truth of the journey.

About the Author

Peter Anthony writes from the meeting point of memory, place, and lived experience. His work explores longing, family, identity, and the hidden currents that shape a life over time. In *The Road to Myself*, he turns to memoir, tracing a journey through childhood, desire, loss, and the search for belonging.

Preface

There are lives that appear, from the outside, to move in a straight line. Mine never did.

What I remember most clearly is not certainty, but longing: the wish to be seen, to be wanted, to belong somewhere without condition. That search began early, long before I had the words for it, and it carried me through places, relationships, misjudgments, awakenings, and losses that I did not always understand at the time.

The Road to Myself is not the story of a single revelation. It is the story of a life lived in fragments that only later began to suggest a pattern. Memory has its gaps, and time changes the shape of what we think we know, but some truths remain. This

book is my attempt to follow those truths back through the years and make sense of the person who emerged from them.

Chapter One Beginnings - Windsor Road

I was born in Maidenhead, England, in 1947, right next to the River Thames opposite Boulters Lock.

Water has been a quiet current in my life ever since. From our windows I could watch the river shift with the seasons: swans gliding in summer, mist rising in winter, the lock gates creaking open and closed like the rhythm of some old heart. For a boy growing up in post-war Britain, it was a world at once small and endless.

Maidenhead itself was still shaking off the war years. In 1949, I had a ration book, its pages a reminder that even as a child, life was measured and controlled. Sweets were precious, food limited. The country was rebuilding, and we were expected to simply accept it.

Before long we moved to Lammas Road in Burnham. The house was a solid two-storey place with a tiled roof, with blackout curtains and a corrugated-iron Anderson Shelter left over from the Blitz. For us boys it wasn't a reminder of air raids but a playground, things to drag out into the garden and turn into a den.

We made our own fun then. I'd climb the tiled roof simply because I could, scrambling up until I stood right on the very top. My mother once came home to find me balanced there,

arms spread like a conqueror. She was horrified; I was fearless.

We had a dog, a Sealyham terrier, that went a bit funny in the head, and it was my job to track him down in the garden when he wandered, I would find him going around in circles.

While at school I also had a fondness for catching grey squirrels, I would bring them home at holidays, keeping them as pets.

One in particular, called Peta, was my favourite, until the day it escaped. We found it up in a huge weeping willow tree in next door's garden and father went to catch it, only for the squirrel to leap onto his back and when he tried to grab it, the little devil sunk its teeth into his hand.

These squirrels have particularly nasty teeth and powerful jaws for opening nuts. There was a lot of blood and father's wound needed stitches at the hospital, he was not happy with me. I thought he had asked for it. After all, you don't just grab a squirrel bare-handed.

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Thank you for reading.

Anthony Stovold