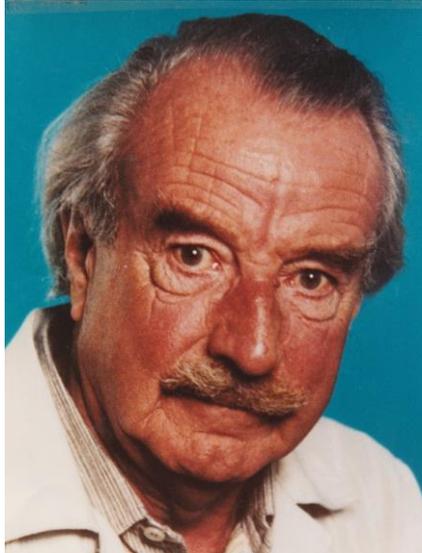


James Hadley Chase 1906-1985



Rene Lodge Brabazon Raymond who wrote under the pen name James Hadley Chase was born at **4 Woodfield Avenue** in 1906.

Rene was born on Christmas Eve to Mrs Jennie Raymond (nee Isgrove) and Major Francis Raymond. Woodfield Avenue, one of the first roads in Brentham, was completed in 1905 and it is likely that the Raymond family were the first tenants at No 4. They lived there until 1908. Francis Harvey Raymond was a veterinary surgeon with the Colonial Indian Army. He was 52 when Rene was born and had served with the 17th Lancers in the last major battle of the Zulu War. He took part in the Chitral expedition in 1895 with the field veterinary hospital. Rising in 1908 to the rank of colonel he transferred to the Indian Civil Veterinary Department. *photograph above right*

Rene was educated at King's School Rochester and Hastings University School. He defied his father's wish that he study engineering, left the family home and, after selling encyclopaedias door to door, followed his interest in the book trade and publishing. At the age of 26 he married Sylvia Ray and they had a son.

In 1938, feeling he now understood what people wanted to read "speed, violence, women and America", he wrote **No Orchids for Miss Blandish**. Written in the style of an American crime thriller under the name Hadley Chase it was an instant success and began a career as the most popular European thriller writer. Not having visited America he relied on U.S. city maps, police reports and slang dictionaries for authentic details. During WW2 he served as a Squadron Leader and co-edited the R.A.F. Journal. He continued writing best-sellers whose lurid nature resulted in a fine for obscenity in 1942. Over fifty of his books were made into films, thirty in France where he was very popular.

A quiet man, he was a skilled photographer and his interests included opera, classical music and making complicated Meccano models. He lived a secluded life with his wife in France and then above Lake Geneva in Switzerland. He died there in 1985 aged 78.