



# One Day In Oradour

Helen Watts (ACB Originals, ISBN 978-1-4081-8201-7)

I visit lots of schools and libraries to talk about my writing and one of the first questions people ask me is why I chose to write a novel based on the massacre Oradour-sur-Glane. My answer is this.

I have family in France and about twelve years ago, while staying with them on their farm near Confolens, I visited the Memorial Village at Oradour-sur-Glane. I love history but even so I knew absolutely nothing of the shocking events that took place there on 10th June 1944. So the impact that my visit had on me was profound and I returned home to England armed with books from the Visitor Centre shop, determined to find out more.

I guess what drove me was a desire to understand how human beings were capable of such extreme actions and behaviour. Encapsulated in those few hours on that fateful summer's day, were examples not only of extreme cruelty and evil, but also of great courage and incredible bravery. The more I talked to people about the story, the more I realised that although the Oradour-sur-Glane massacre was a well known event in France, it was relatively unknown elsewhere in the world. I felt compelled to try to change that and to do what I could to help make sure that the people who lost their lives at Oradour-sur-Glane will never be forgotten.

I was particularly keen to share the story with young readers. So my approach was to write a story that had the real historical events at its heart but which portrayed them through the eyes of a young boy from a fictional family. I would not shy away from recounting some of the horrors of that day since that would do a disservice not only to those who lost their lives or lost loved ones that day, but also to the reader. Rather, I wanted to hold up a mirror to a world in which, side by side, there can exist a man like Adolf Diekmann, who is willing to oversee the mass slaughter of hundreds of innocent people, and a seven-year-old boy like Roger Godfrin, who has the courage and sheer determination to survive against all odds while his world is turned upside down.

## WHY ORADOUR?

**HELEN WATTS** is an award-winning author with more than 25 years of publishing experience. She has worked as an editor and publisher for some of the biggest educational publishing houses, including Scholastic and Heinemann, and was Co-director of the Literacy Club which produced magazines and online resources for children, parents and teachers. She began writing fiction in 2011 and has had four books published, including two historical fiction novels and two short story collections. Helen is also Children's Events Coordinator for the Stratford-upon-Avon Literary Festival. Her passion for history goes back to her school days and she is an Honours graduate in Classical Studies from Bristol University.

