

about BENJI DAVIES

Benji Davies divides his time between directing animation and illustrating children's books, including the Bizzy Bear series. His first self-penned picture book, *The Storm Whale*, won the inaugural Oscar's First Book Prize in 2014 and was short-listed for Book Trust Best Book Award. Benji Davies studied animation in college and has since worked on a diverse array of projects, from picture books and animated short films to music videos, commercials, and title sequences. His books have been translated into many languages. He lives in East London with his wife, Nina.



a note from BENJI DAVIES

When I started writing Grandad's Island, I was drawn to the relationship I had with my own grandad. He lived on the other side of the U.K., and we would write to each other often. We made up stories about fenland sprites and Cornish piskies, and using nom de plumes, we corresponded by carrier-goose (Royal Mail) across the length of the country. He started to write a book about a hare who found a golden egg—a book that I hoped to illustrate. Time and other factors meant that he would never finish the book, and the project never came to fruition.

He had been a primary-school head teacher, he was a keen reader, and sometimes he would paint and draw. He loved books about history and fossils and nature. We would read nonfiction books together when he stayed at our house. In particular, I remember one about British birds, which we read from cover to cover, both of us fascinated by all the different species, their migratory habits, and their winter plumage. He died when I was fifteen, and I never got to speak to him as an adult—something I wish I could do now. But when I look back, I realize how amazing it was to send these letters to each other; how wonderful that we got to do that, with our shared interest in wildlife and making things up.

Our memories, like perfectly folded letters, can wing their way back to us across the years, waiting to be opened and make us smile. In recalling this personal experience, I found a neat metaphor, and an ending to the story.