

Scottish Readers Remember Bookshops



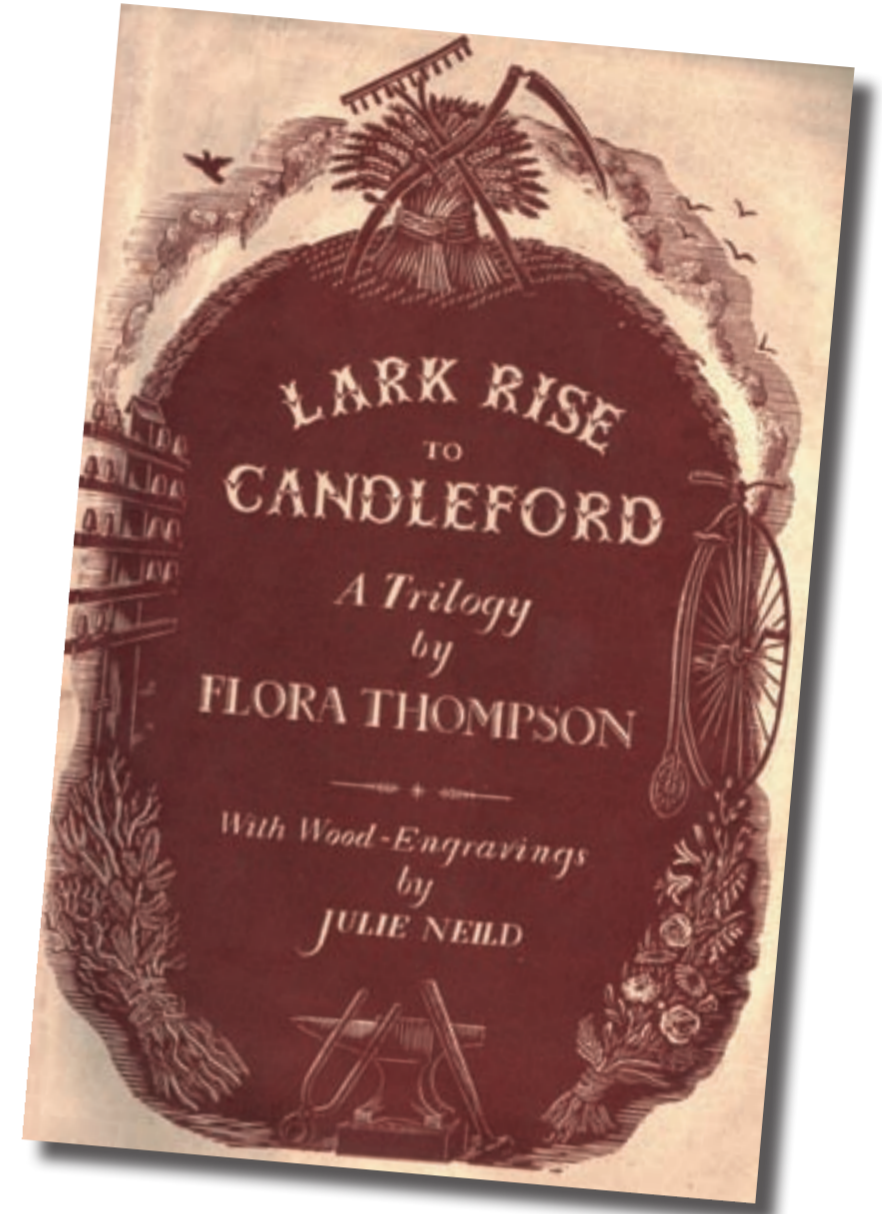
But, you know, books have always been part of my life and it's difficult to resist going into a bookshop and buying books ... and then I come home with about half a dozen and I think 'Oh!'

Beatrice

Few bookshops today remain independent; most are part of a major chain such as Waterstone's. However, during much of the twentieth century in Scotland, book-buying took place in local shops often with a strong local identity such as John Smith & Son in Glasgow. Popular fiction, comics and magazines were bought in local newsagents.

Until 1995, bookselling was governed by the voluntary Net Book Agreement (NBA) between publishers and booksellers; publishers decided the price and all booksellers agreed not to discount. Until this was ended by the publishers in 1995, the NBA created stability for family firms like Thins or Bauermeisters. Most books were sold throughout Scotland at the same price from Dumfries to Ullapool. This advantaged readers remote from Edinburgh or Glasgow.

That stability was first challenged by chains like Waterstone's or Borders in the larger towns and cities. Chains had greater 'buying power'



than independents and were able to take over high-street sites, offering large attractive window displays, author visits, and other in-store activities. They provided a restricted range of titles held in greater numbers, squeezing independents either out of business or out of town, providing a suburban service in contrast to the high-street dominating chains. This contemporary experience of bookshops contrasts greatly with that of readers for most of the twentieth century.

