

# The Woman in Black makes horrifying return

**Follow-up to Susan Hill's bestseller commissioned from crime writer Martyn Waites, adapted from forthcoming film sequel**



Not buried yet ... Ciaran Hinds (Daily) and Daniel Radcliffe (Arthur Kipps) in 2012's film version of *The Woman In Black* by Alison Flood

The Woman in Black – she of the pale, wasted face and proclivity for terrifying hauntings – is set to wander the grounds of Eel Marsh House once again in a new novel out later this year, and author Martyn Waites is promising it will be even scarier than Susan Hill's original.

First published in 1983, Hill's short novel *The Woman in Black* has been an enduring bestseller ever since, giving rise both to a popular stage play and to last year's film starring Daniel Radcliffe. It tells of a young lawyer summoned to attend the funeral of the old woman who lives in Eel Marsh House, a building on the east coast of England which is entirely cut off from the mainland at high tide and which appears to be haunted by the ghost of a black-clad young woman. "She was suffering from some terrible wasting disease, for not only was she extremely pale, even more than a contrast with the blackness of her garments could account for, but the skin and, it seemed, only the thinnest layer of flesh was tautly stretched and strained across her bones, so that it gleamed with a curious, blue-white sheen, and her eyes seemed sunken back into her head," writes Hill.

Thirty years later, Hammer Books, an imprint of Random House, has signed up crime writer Martyn Waites to write a new Woman in Black novel. Set during the Blitz – around 40 years after the original – The Woman in Black: Angel of Death will see a group of schoolchildren and their teacher evacuated to Eel Marsh House from London, "where of course the Woman in Black is waiting for them", said the publisher.

The story is based on an original idea by Hill herself, said Hammer publisher Selina Walker. The idea was then developed by screenwriter Jon Croker – it is also due to be made into a film by Hammer films – with Waites approached by the publisher to turn it into a novel.

Hill said that she was "always open to someone else taking my books and recreating them in another medium ... or taking the stories forward into 'another life' . I think this is one way literature can be flexible. I have finished with them but why not allow someone else to enjoy working with them?"

Of her own involvement in the new project she said that: "The most I have done is come up with the core of the idea for the new film. Jon Croker took that idea and made it into a very good screenplay. Now someone else is taking it and turning it into what I am sure will be a good book. Meanwhile, I have so many other fish to fry I'm buying another chip shop"

Waites, author of the Joe Donovan series, said that being asked to write the new novel was "a dream come true". "You thought the first one was scary? Just you wait," he added.

The novel is part of a new literary publishing programme from Hammer, which has seen authors including Helen Dunmore, Jeanette Winterson, Melvin Burgess and, next month, Julie Myerson, writing novellas with paranormal twists. As well as Waites' sequel to Hill's classic novel, Walker has also signed up horror stories from Booker winner DBC Pierre and from Eats, Shoots and Leaves author Lynne Truss, which will be published next year.