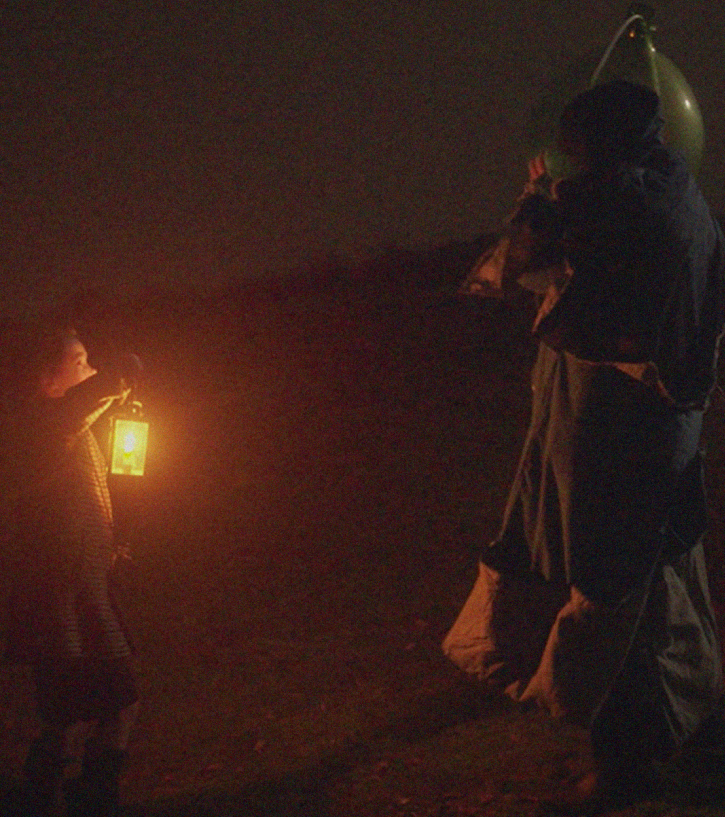


The Puddle Man

Information & Press Kit



Synopsis

Toby is a twelve-year-old boy who is evacuated to Dartmoor in the midst of the Second World War. With new fears looming over him, Toby discovers his grandmother Julie's dark past and a mysterious figure who wanders the moorland.



Why give this short film a second look?

The Puddle Man packs an inventive and immersive story into just 15 minutes. Set in the 1940s on Dartmoor, it features a captivating performance by child actor Dainton Anderson, a lovable donkey and illustrations by British artist Charles Peattie. You won't want to miss it!





Director's statement

The Puddle Man is a story about fear, the kind of fear that lingers, distorts reality, and even makes us believe strange things. Blending history, magical realism and mystery, the film explores the way fear shapes us and the stories we tell ourselves to make sense of the unknown.

When I was 18 I had cancer, and the subsequent years that followed were full of fear that the cancer would return and kill me. But fear manifested itself in strange beliefs and I found reconciliation in the idea that there could be magic in the world that would somehow make it so my cancer would never return. I wanted to tell this story to show that sometimes the irrational things we believe when we are scared are real - at least on some level - and should be taken seriously. Perhaps by facing and sharing the things that frighten us we can lessen some of the fear that we feel.

The idea came over time. At the start, I knew that I wanted to make a film about people who were scared. Soon Toby emerged, a boy who had a new fear that his father would die. Then Julie, a woman who had a lingering fear that she would never be able to escape the grief she felt for her late husband. I like history and thought setting the film in Britain in 1940 would give reason for Toby to be scared that his father would die at war and allow Julie's husband to have died in the First World war. By fusing these characters' stories in a mysterious world that does not quite make sense I wanted to capture the irrationality of fear.

The filmmaker J. Joseph Held

J. Joseph Held (Jacob) is a filmmaker from London. He is the creator of multiple short films which have been screened in festivals across the UK. Jacobs films focus around themes of boyhood and magical realism. He is currently studying Philosophy at University of Bristol but is pursuing writing and directing films with the ambition of a full time filmmaking career.



The Filmmaking Process

Writing *The Puddle Man* started in September 2024, during this process Jacob went on a number of trips to Dartmoor. On one of these trips he stumbled across a converted farmhouse in West Dartmoor that a retired couple had converted into a holiday cottage, this became the main location for the film.

In January, casting took place in Bristol where 10 boys between the ages of 8-12 auditioned. Dainton Anderson, who plays the character of Toby, was the second boy to audition and Jacob knew he was right as he was able to convey fear so well, essential for the character of Toby.

Filming commenced in February and lasted five days. It was important for the cinematography to show a small boy in a big strange world. Jacob and DOP Alfie Dickens focused on capturing the eerie vastness of Dartmoor, utilising deep focus, wide shots and the natural fog.



The actors

Toby Hutton is played by Dainton Anderson who is a 12 year actor from Bristol. Dainton has been performing on screen since the age of 4 playing Benedict Cumberbatch's son in Patrick Melrose. He went on to get a role in BBCs This Country Xmas special and then a role in Stonehouse playing Matthew McFadden's son. In the last couple of years he has starred in Archie playing the title role, Young Archie alongside Jason Isaacs and in BBCs Casualty.

Julie Hutton is played by award winning British actor Sara Wilson-Soppitt. Sara recently won Best Actress at The Berlin Film Festival. The Puddle Man is played by Leon Drago, an actor from Malta whose background is in Television and stunt work.



The Funding Process

To raise the required funds we had to get creative. We launched an instagram promoting the story, characters and inspiration through instagram reels, after an initial buzz the crowdfund opened. Offering fortnightly newsletters, posters, books of concept art, hoodies and even bottles of The Puddle Man's tears to our contributors.







NEWSLETTER

Dear Reader,
Welcome back to The Puddle Man newsletter!

The team are making progress with The Puddle Man costumes. Last weekend, Jacob and Blythe went to a huge fabric warehouse to find the perfect fabric to actualise the most important costume of all, The Puddle Man's coat. After much consideration and lots of choices, they decided on 3 fabrics for the main body, the hood and the lining in varying shades of blue. The fabrics are lovely thick cottons to give the coat structure and to mirror the heaviness of The Puddle Man.



The professional cartoonist and artist, Charles Peattie is creating the artwork for a key prop in the film, a blue leather bound book. This book is important as it acts as a MacGuffin that drives the film towards its climax. Here is a sneak peek at one of the beautiful drawings Charles has done for it.



We are in need of some props! If you have any of the following and don't mind us borrowing them then please send us a message. We need: binoculars, telescopes, strange instruments (microscopes, lenses), old books, and little antique glass bottles - Please note everything must look like it would belong in an English cottage in the 1930s (preferably Victorian) - The full prop list is on our Instagram!

Thank you for reading our newsletter, look out for the next edition with more exciting updates on The Puddle Man!
Love,
The Puddle Man crew

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



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TIKTOK: @THEPUDDLEMANFILM
EMAIL: THEPUDDLEMANFILM@GMAIL.COM



FAQ's

Who is The Puddle Man?

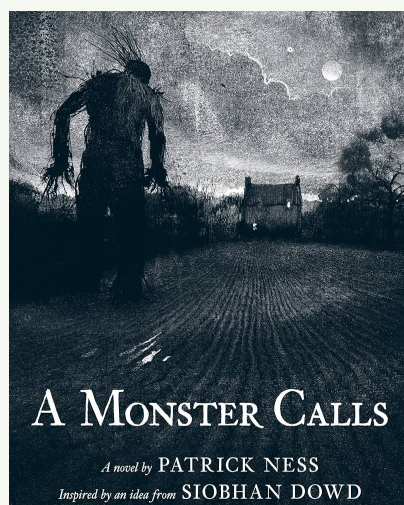
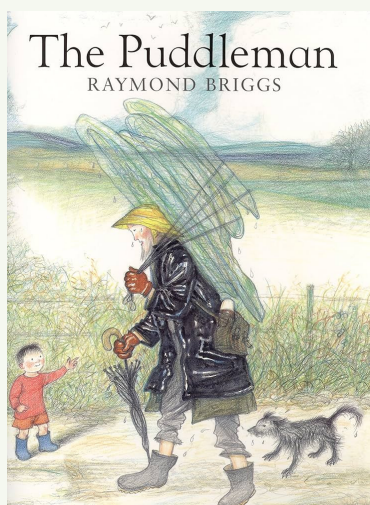
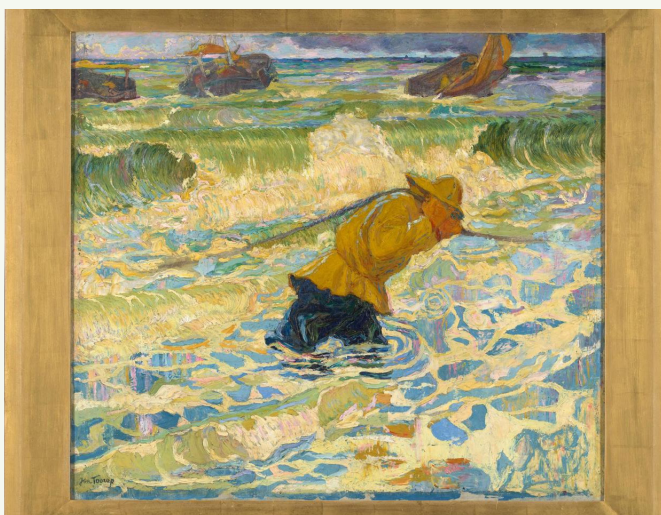
The Puddle Man is a manifestation of human fear. He wanders Dartmoor 'neath sombre skies and preys on the scared, collecting their tears.

What works inspired The Puddle Man?

The themes of fear and magical realism were inspired by the novel 'A Monster Calls' by Patrick Ness and the film 'Pan's Labyrinth' by Guillermo del Toro.

The visual inspiration for The Puddle Man came from paintings, 'Sisyphus' by Titian and 'High Tide' by Jan Toorop.

The children's book The Puddleman by Raymond Briggs was the inspiration for the title. There is no connection to the story however it was still a significant step in the creation of this film.



What were the challenges of the shoot?

Wind! The shoot was in West Dartmoor during February and the open landscape allowed for huge gusts that made communication very difficult.

How did J. Joseph Held get into filmmaking?

What started as a love of photography soon transitioned into a desire to turn his first short story Reverie to life in his final year of school. Reverie became J. Joseph Held's first film, it featured in the Moving Image Awards at the BFI Southbank which began his journey as a filmmaker.

Why does Jacob not study film at University?

Jacob taught himself how to make films through trial, error and youtube! Upon choosing what to study at university Jacob thought studying film would restrict his ability to make films rather than enhance it. Instead he chose to study Philosophy due to his personal interest in the subject and his hope that it would help improve his writing and critical skills.

Who is the Donkey?

Dermot was the fabulous donkey actor who joined the Puddle Man Team. He lives in a donkey sanctuary in South-West Wales and enjoys carrots.



Key specifications

Country of production: United Kingdom

Length: 15 minutes

Aspect ratio: 2.31:1

Format: 4K Digital

Date of completion: 2025

Genre: Drama

Key production credits

Writer / Director: J. Joseph Held

Producer: India Pluves

Executive Producer: James May

Director of Photography: Alfie Dickens

Gaffer: Sheldon Booth

Camera Operators: James May, Alfie Dickens, Sheldon Booth

Production Designer: Bella Blue Bloss

Costume Designer: Bella Blue Bloss, Blythe Brunt

Film Editor: J. Joseph Held

Sound Recordist: Henry lee

Foley Artist: Noah Grose

Composer: Veronica Manuel





Contact



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<https://www.instagram.com/thepuddlemanfilm/>

<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-puddle-man/>

<https://filmfreeway.com/ThePuddleMan>

