

# Q&A with Natasha Solomons

**1) Tell us how the story of Jack and Sadie Rosenblum mirrors your grandparents' real experience. Is this a story you've always wanted to tell?**

My grandpa, Paul Shields, arrived in England from Berlin in 1936 with almost nothing. Within a few years he had built up a successful textile factory in London, and after the war had enough money to buy a small thatched cottage in Dorset. It was many years before the fashion of 'holiday cottages' and he was something of an oddity in the small farming community. At his first village fete, he was told the story of the 'Dorset woolly-pig', both a folktale and a kind of shibboleth. The following year, when he was asked whether he knew the story, and he replied that yes, indeed he did, he was granted a grudging acceptance into the village.

While Paul inspired me to create Jack Rosenblum, the two men are very different. In fact, I'm not sure that Paul would have approved of Jack's impetuosity. Paul was much taller than five foot three and half inches and was an elegant man who played the piano and liked to go to the Riviera to paint. Yet he gave me the confidence to create Jack. His odyssey into the English countryside and his determination to find a place to call home suggested the story of *Mr Rosenblum's List*. Of course the novel is dedicated to him.

**2) Does Jack and Sadie's house really exist?**

'Chantry Orchard' is inspired by my parent's house, which is next door to the original cottage my grandparents bought after the war. I've included a picture – I think that's Curtis taking a nap beside the tractor.

**3) Mr Rosenblum's List is a book that the book industry in Australia has been talking about with a great deal of excitement for a few months already. Are you having the same experience in the UK?**

It's all been quite overwhelming. For a time, the only people who'd read the book were my husband and my mum. Then, when the book went to auction, it was just surreal. I am thrilled by the reception Jack has been getting in Australia, and I wish I could be there in March. But I have sent my auntie. So if you come across an English lady trying to foist copies of 'Mr Rosenblum' upon you – please say hi to my auntie Marion.