

James Herriot from <https://www.visitthirsk.org.uk/pages/jamesherriot.php>



James Herriot wrote ‘**All Creatures Great and Small**’ and other books about his life as a country vet. The [World of James Herriot](#) museum encompasses the very essence of the world renowned vet. It offers visitors an unforgettable experience of the life and times of a man who became an international celebrity after the publication of his books.

[James Herriot in Wikipedia](#)

James Herriot (real name James Alfred Wight) was born on 3rd October 1916 in Sunderland in the North East of England. When he was just three weeks old his parents moved to Glasgow where he grew up. He was an only child. His father James Henry Wight was a Ship Plater by trade but also an accomplished pianist and his mother, Hannah Bell, sang Contralto.

Alf (James) went to Yoker Primary School and then onto Hillhead High School. When he was 12, Alf had his first dog, a red setter named Don and they were devoted to each other. It was also at this time that he read an article in the Meccano Magazine about being a vet and this set him on a path into the veterinary profession.

In 1933 Alf Wight went to Glasgow Veterinary College where he spent 6 years. He qualified on the 14th December 1939.

In January 1940 he travelled south to Sunderland where he was employed for 6 months by J.J. McDowall as a Veterinary Surgeon.

On the 18th July 1940 he arrived in Thirsk in North Yorkshire at number 23 Kirkgate, where he started working for Donald Sinclair (Siegfried Farnon). In November that year he met Brian Sinclair (Tristan Farnon) who became a life long friend.

In 1941 Alf met Joan Danbury (Helen Alderson) and they were married on 5th November in St Mary’s Church Thirsk. Donald Sinclair was best man. The honeymoon was spent in the Yorkshire Dales, staying at the Wheatsheaf Inn, Carperby. Alf (James) carried on TB testing cows in Wensleydale and the top floor of 23 Kirkgate became Joan and Alf’s first home.

In 1942 Alf (James) joined the RAF and was away for 12 months before being discharged with poor health.

On 13th February 1943 Alf (James) and Joan (Helen) had their first child Jim. Their second child, Rosie, was born on 9th May 1947.

1949. Alf (James) received a full partnership from Donald Sinclair.

1951. With the veterinary practice very busy, the first of many assistants, John Crooks, joined them.

1953. Alf (James) and Joan (Helen) moved to their first house, 'Rowardennan', on the outskirts of Thirsk, which was their home for the next 25 years.

1965. Alf (James) wrote his first book called 'The Art and Science' under the pseudonym J A Walsh but it was not published.

1966. Michael Joseph Ltd published a revised version of his first book under the name James Herriot (after a Birmingham goalkeeper).

1970. 'If Only They Could Talk' was published.

1971. 'It Shouldn't Happen to a Vet' was published.

1972. The first two books were published in the USA under the title 'All Creatures Great and Small'.

1973. Alf (James) travelled to America to promote 'All Creatures Great and Small'.

1974. 'Vet in Harness' was published.

1975. The film 'All Creatures Great and Small,' with Simon Ward playing James and starring Anthony Hopkins as Siegfried, was released. Also this year, Alf (James) was made Honorable Member of the British Veterinary Association and he was honoured by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

1976. 'Vets Might Fly' was published. Also this year, the sequel film was released called 'It Shouldn't Happen To a Vet'. John Alderton played the part of James Herriot.

1977. 'Vet in a Spin' was published. Also in this year, Alf Wight (James Herriot) moved to a house in Thirlby called Mirebeck and the BBC bought the rights to televise the James Herriot stories.

1978. In January the first episode of 'All Creatures Great and Small' was shown with Christopher Timothy as James Herriot. The show was instantly popular and reached viewing figures in excess of 13 million. In total the TV series covered 90 episodes over a 12 year period.

1979. Alf Wight (James Herriot) received an OBE from the Queen and Honorary Doctorate from Herriot Watt University Edinburgh.

1980. Alf (James) stopped working full time as a vet at 23 Kirkgate.

1981. 'The Lord God Made Them All' was published and Alf (James) declared his intention not to write again.

1982. 'The Best of James Herriot' was published. Alf (James) received a Fellowship of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and was the first person to receive honorary membership of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners.

1984. Alf (James) received the British Tourist Authority Award for his placement of Yorkshire on the world map and an Honorary Degree of Veterinary Science from the University of Liverpool.

1987. The Humane Society of the United States of America created an annual award 'James Herriot's name for kindness to animals'.

1995. on 23rd February James Herriot died. The very next day Jim Wight, James Herriot's son, attended the opening of the James Herriot Library at Glasgow Veterinary School. James Herriot was cremated and his ashes scattered at the top of Sutton Bank – in no particular place. This was his favourite view in all England.