

Philippe Goddin

World authority on Tintin (or Hergéologist, as he called it) whose rivals claimed that his tight grip on the author's legacy included blocking other biographies

Philippe Goddin liked to call himself a Hergéologist. It was a term he made up. "It has an aspect," said the Belgian biographer, "that is at once playful, picturesque, and scientific."

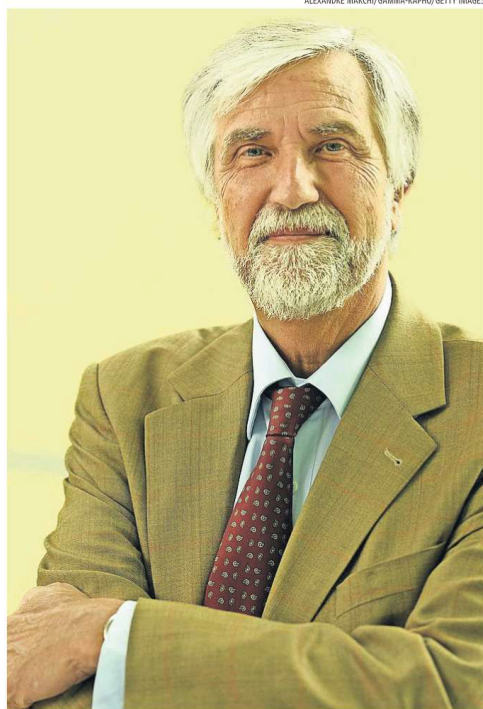
Goddin had some claim to the moniker, and not just because he invented it, or because he looked like a crisper version of Hergé's seafaring scallywag, Captain Haddock. Goddin was widely seen as the leading authority on Tintin and its Belgian creator, Georges Remi. He was secretary of the Hergé foundation, set up by Hergé's wife Fanny to control the licensing rights after his death in 1983, organised Tintin conventions and conferences around the world, supervised screen adaptations such as *The Adventures of Tintin* (1991-92), ensuring that the plot stuck closely to the original, and helped to keep Tintin popular with new generations. "When we ask children today when they think Tintin lived," Goddin boasted in 1994, "they always say 'now'."

Goddin's position as secretary gave him unbridled access to Hergé's archives and he wrote dozens of books including a seven-volume work, *Hergé: Chronologie d'une oeuvre* (Chronology of a Work), an exhaustive collection of sketches, photographs and unpublished documents. It was an attempt to decipher the character of a man Goddin had known in the 1970s, whom he had remembered as open, attentive and welcoming, and it had the support of Fanny who viewed the book as Hergé's "paper museum".

Using Hergé's diaries and personal letters, even transcripts of his dreams, Goddin "tried to flush him out, looking for him in his periods of disarray, in his flaws". He wanted his portrait of Hergé to be complex, and what he discovered "surprised" him. Letters spoke of a man who was sensitive, stubborn, prone to bouts of depression and occasionally "petty" (he once complained to his publisher that his works were poorly placed in a bookstore). Goddin unearthed one notebook from the early Twenties in which he confided that his future wife, Germaine, whom he was "madly in love with", had rejected him because he was not mature enough. Another revealed that the serialisation of *Prisoners of the Sun* had stopped for a long period in 1947 because Hergé had made a pass at a much younger family friend, fallen out with his wife and into a spell of depression. "Never in a biography about him have we been so close to the man," said Goddin, "not in his royal path, but in his difficulties, in his disarray. That's where he truly opens up."

Some claims Goddin made caused controversy, such as that Hergé died of Aids after a contaminated blood transfusion, or that he took a position of neutrality during the Second World War while Belgium was occupied by the Nazis. "I am neither pro-German," he wrote to a friend, "nor pro-British."

Coming in at 3,000 pages, the



ALEXANDRE MARCH/GAMMA-RAPHO/GETTY IMAGES

biography took Goddin nine years to complete. Some critics thought it less an exercise in serious scholarship than a testament to his obsessive nature. Three rooms in Goddin's Brussels home were said to be dedicated to his collection of Tintinabilia, and thousands of files cluttered his cellar.

Goddin's tight grip over the Tintin world angered many of his rival Tintinologists (or Hergéologists), who complained that he blocked the publication of other biographies as secretary of the foundation. In 1995 Marcus Berkmann revealed that a Tintin companion he co-wrote with Harry

Goddin argued against the claim that the first Tintin comic was racist

Thompson had gone unpublished because Goddin withdrew the foundation's authorisation, claiming that the book was not accessible enough; years before, Berkmann had described one of Goddin's books on Tintin "an incomprehensible poststructuralist treatise".

Thompson went on to publish a biography in 1992 but Goddin reportedly forbade him from including any illustration from the Tintin comics. "When he interviewed Hergé's assistants and collaborators," Berkmann said, "most of them asked not to be quoted by name, as they feared the retribution of the foundation."

Born in 1944 in Schaerbeek, near Brussels, Philippe Goddin studied at the Saint-Luc Institute art school in Brussels, then

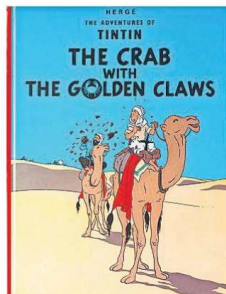
became an art teacher and lecturer. His early interest in comic books was rare at the time, and in 1971 he began writing to Hergé and meeting him. His first book, a biography of Hergé's protégé Paul Cuvelier, was published a decade later, in 1981.

After Hergé's death in 1983, Goddin arranged meetings with many of those who knew or worked with him, and in 1989 he was appointed secretary of the foundation, a role he kept for a decade. During that time he directed research and archiving work at the foundation, oversaw the publication of posthumous works and published a number of books including *Hergé et Tintin, Reporters* (1986) in which he pointed out that Hergé's childhood was characterised by "an absence of fantasy". He was a sympathetic, well-liked, well brought up boy, "a young scout in uniform with a mischievous look and a thoughtful face".

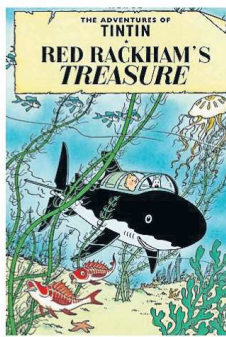
How a Comic Strip Is Born Over Hergé's Shoulder (1991) used material discarded by Hergé after the completion of his 1967 graphic novel *Flight 714 to Sydney* to explain the arduous process of creating an adventure, from the original idea to production, including preparatory notes and research, lettering, inking and colouring.

For a while Goddin rebuffed suggestions that he write Hergé's biography. "I thought that with the many books that have already been published about Hergé, we had covered the subject," he said. "Well, I realised that there was still a lot to say about the man/Hergé, and the man/Hergé interests me." A 1,000-page biography, *Hergé, lignes de vie*, arrived in 2007.

The final volume of his seven-



As secretary of the Hergé foundation, Goddin held the Tintin licensing rights



part magnum opus, *Hergé: Chronologie d'une oeuvre*, was published in 2009. It documented projects Hergé never completed, such as *Tintin and the Thermozero* and a reworking of *The Black Island*, and those that occupied him in his later years: an abandoned idea, *A Day at an Airport*, in which Tintin, Snowy, Captain Haddock, and Professor Calculus meet old faces as they wait for a layover flight, and the unfinished *Tintin and Alph-Art*. Goddin also unearthed reproductions of about 15 sketches and oil paintings Hergé made at the dawn of the 1960s, when he became an enlightened lover of contemporary art.

In 2018 he published *Les tribulations de Tintin au Congo*, a defence against accusations that Hergé's original comic, *Tintin au Congo*, was racist. Goddin said that Hergé's political line was, above all, a lack of interest in politics. "There is a thin line between caricature and racism," he said. "He did not cross that line."

And anyway, it was not the biographer's place to decide. "As Georges Simenon said, we must understand, not judge," said Goddin. "Faced with certain options, certain attitudes, certain initiatives of Hergé, I do not set myself up as a judge but I do not pass them over in silence. The life of a man — that of Hergé, therefore, like that of everyone — is made up of victories and defeats, of choices that are not always happy. But we must not see a work in the light of what we are today; we must see in what context this work was built."

Philippe Goddin, Tintinologist, was born on May 27, 1944. He died of undisclosed causes on September 8, 2025, aged 81

Births, Marriages and Deaths

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HE SAID to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing." Luke 12:22-23 (NRSV)

Bible verses are provided by the Bible Society

Births

PERRETT on 24th September 2025 to Henrietta (née Plint) and Charles, a son, Oliver Michael George.

POTTHOFF on 13th June 2025 to Dr Eva Potthoff and Dr Daniel Potthoff, a daughter, Ava Luise, sister to Ida Ottilie.

Deaths

BELCHER Sandra Margaret died peacefully, aged 78, on 3rd October 2025 surrounded by her family. Beloved wife to the late Colonel Paul Belcher and loving mother to William, George, Sam and Cara. Sandra leaves behind her 12 adored grandchildren, Dominic, Flora, Polly, Bertie, Beatrice, Barney, Theo, Bella, Jemima, Sadie, Monty and Cosi, and a legacy devoted to her family, friends and the arts. She will be sorely missed. Funeral will be held at St Peter's Church, Linchmere, on 4th November at 11am. Donations to her preferred charities to be made through W Brydler & Sons or on the day.

CARPENTER Brenda passed away peacefully on 23rd September 2025, aged 95. She will be sadly missed by all her family and friends. Thanksgiving service to take place on Tuesday 28th October 2025 at 2.30pm at Pinner Baptist Church, Paines Lane, Pinner HA5 3BL. All inquiries via Hearnden-Smith & Daughters Funeral Directors. T: 020 8421 2202.

MEADE

Paul passed away on 20th September 2025, aged 72. A wonderful husband, father, brother and grandfather. Long career in banking in the City. Funeral service to be held at St John the Baptist Church, Harrietsham, on Monday 20th October at 10am.

HAMILTON STUBBER Fiona (née Bredmeyer) died peacefully at home on 8th October 2025, aged 92. Wife of the late John Hamilton Stubber, much-loved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Funeral on Monday 20th October at 2pm at St John's, Fivemiletown, Co Tyrone BT75 0OP. No flowers please. Donations to the Perennial charity via Marcus Madill, undertakers, Enniskillen.

WALLS

Duncan, solicitor, on 29th September 2025. Died peacefully after a long and fascinating life begun in Victoria, Australia. Funeral 10.30am at Charing Crematorium, Ashford, on 16th October 2025.

In Memoriam - Private

FRANCES ANNE FIELDING (HERKES) 05.01.52-13.10.05 That's 7305 days without you, Witch. There's so much I wish you had lived to see. x

School Notices

QUEEN'S SCHOLARS

The Queen's School, Chester, is pleased to announce that, following the entrance examination, scholarships and the title of Queen's Scholar have been awarded for 2025-26 to (in alphabetical order): Sophie Boyle (The Queen's Lower School), Nirvithi Gandhi (The Queen's Lower School), Winyou Gilding (Stapeley Broad Lane Primary School), Arabella Go-Gardner (The Queen's Lower School), Sienna Harvey (The Queen's Lower School), Matilda Kanzara (Mill View Primary School), Amélie Ougbode (Sandycroft County Primary School), Darcey Shears (Waverton Primary School), Phoebe Williams (The Queen's Lower School).

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Court Circular



Balmoral Castle

11th October, 2025
The Queen today attended Cliveden Literary Festival at Cliveden House and was received by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire (Countess Howe).

St James's Palace

11th October, 2025
The Duke of Edinburgh, Colonel-in-Chief, The Queen's Royal Hussars (The Queen's Own and Royal Irish), this morning attended a Regimental Family Day at Assaye Barracks, Tidworth Camp, Tidworth, and was received by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Wiltshire (Dame Sarah Troughton).

Balmoral Castle

12th October, 2025
Divine Service was held in Crathie Parish Church this morning.

The Reverend Canon Dr James Hawkey preached the Sermon.

St James's Palace

12th October, 2025
The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh this morning departed from Heathrow Airport, London, for Monaco and were received this afternoon upon arrival at Nice Côte d'Azur Airport, France, by the Ambassador from the Principality of Monaco to the Court of St James's (Mrs Evelynne James).

His Royal Highness, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation, and Her Royal Highness, Global Ambassador, with Prince Albert of Monaco, this evening attended a Gala Dinner at Yacht Club de Monaco, Quai Louis II, Monaco.

Mrs Angus Galletley is in attendance.

Kensington Palace

12th October, 2025
The Duke of Kent, Patron, Wigmores Hall, this evening attended a Concert at 36 Wigmores Street, London W1.

Legal Notices

NOTICE

In the High Court of Justice Business and Property Courts of England and Wales, Property Trusts and Probate List (ChD) Case number: PT-2025-001041. In the matter of an application for a declaration of the presumed death of Muriel Frieda McKay. A claim has been issued in the High Court of Justice, for a declaration that Muriel Frieda McKay whose last known address was 6 Arthur Road, Wimbledon, London, SW19 is presumed to be dead. Any person having an interest may apply to the court to intervene in the matter. If you wish to apply to the court, you should do so at The High Court of Justice Business and Property Courts, Chancery Division, 7 Rolls Building, Fetter Lane, London, EC4A 3DF, as soon as possible, and if possible within 21 days of the date of this notice. Delay may harm your prospects of being able to intervene. Claimant's Legal Representatives, Berkeley Rowe Solicitors, Claimant's address for service, 5 Merchant Square, London, W21AY, United Kingdom.