

# Foreword

I have always believed that H. E. Bates was the absolute master of short story writing. He managed to create a little world for you to enter into, and that soft focus world would stay with you long after you'd finished the story.

When I first started writing I tried my hand at short stories, assuming quite wrongly it would be easier than attempting a book. Bates was my guiding light; there appeared to be a simplicity about his work that I sought to emulate. I did get a few short stories accepted by magazines, but they could never be in his league. I certainly never created anything as lovely as 'The Watercress Girl'. Did any writer before or since? I think I found it in a magazine and read it curled up in my aunt's spare room one wet school holiday and then went on to rush to the library to find more of his work. *Fair Stood the Wind for France* was the first book I borrowed and I was totally hooked on his work, but it was always the short stories I really admired the most.