



## BfK Briefing ? July 1992

Article Author:

[Douglas Hill](#) [1]

[75](#) [2]

Article Category:

BfK Briefing

Byline:

Awards \* Publications

### The Eleanor Farjeon Award 1992

<!--break-->

Presented by the Children's Book Circle and sponsored by Books For Children.

**Douglas Hill** writes about this year's recipient, who is well-known to readers of **Books for Keeps**:

#### Stephanie Nettell

Stephanie Nettell has of course been Children's Books Editor of the **Guardian** since 1978. Her achievement in that capacity might be sufficient citation in itself.

Her work on the **Guardian** publicly focused on the preparation of a regular page of book reviews. But those pages - high as their standard always was - have merely formed the visible tip of her iceberg-sized effort. For the **Guardian** also over the years, she wrote numerous feature articles on behalf of children's books: for instance, castigating other newspapers for their insufficient or non-existent coverage of the field, upbraiding the authorities for the inadequate funding of books in schools. In her time, the **Guardian** has probably been more committed to children's books than any other national paper, largely because of Stephanie's selfless and relentless urgings.

She also played a role in the creation of the regular 'Young Guardian' page, to which she contributed a weekly column on children's paperbacks. And she has worked tirelessly to maintain and enhance the prestigious annual **Guardian** Children's Fiction Award. For that event, every time, she had to sift knowledgeably through a year's output of books to produce a shortlist; to preside over the judging (for which she persuaded a range of well-known authors to serve, unpaid) with tact and firmness; and to act as principal organiser and eloquent hostess for the award-giving celebration itself.

And more: for the 21st award, she edited a festive anthology of original stories, **Guardian Angels**, written by past winners.

But for Stephanie there was life in children's books before the **Guardian**, as there will be after. For example, she has produced two other books for children - one on the theme of disasters, natural or man-made, the other a collection of her own stories. And as a journalist she developed her concerns with children's books years ago, as deputy editor and then editor of **Books and Bookmen**. There she maintained regular, extensive coverage of the field - and indeed produced some issues exclusively devoted to it, quite a departure at the time.

Besides these editorial tasks, she has written abundantly for other editors. Interviews for **Books for Keeps**, reviews for

the **TLS**, **TES**, BBC and many more, previews for the **Bookseller**, articles and summaries for works of reference.

More recently, as reported in the **Bookseller**, she inspired and initiated a spectacular development in the press advertising of children's books - by bringing publishers together to collaborate in buying full-page advertisements, hoping both to stimulate interest among readers and to prompt a better coverage of the field in the editorial columns.

She has also extended herself, beyond **Guardian** Award lunches, as a sought-after, effective and influential speaker on children's books in academic symposia, conference discussion panels and other venues.

Now in 1992 she has left the **Guardian**. But she has not left the books. She will go on reviewing and producing features and interviews. Currently she is contracting to write a book for adults about children's books. She is even remaining in the realm of awards, for she will be chairing the judges of the next Smarties Award.

As she crosses this watershed in her career, with her invaluable work for the **Guardian** behind her but much comparable work ahead, it seems a uniquely apposite moment to honour her splendid record with the Eleanor Farjeon Award.

### **Other awards for 1992:**

#### **The Science Book Prizes**

Set up in 1987 by the Science Museum and COPUS (the Committee on the Public Understanding of Science), these prizes (split between adult and children's books) are part of an effort to 'raise public awareness of science and technology and their implications'.

The £10,000 Junior Prize was divided between Peter Rowan's **The Amazing Voyage of the Cucumber Sandwich** (Cape, 0 224 03113 9, £6.99) and David Burnie's **How Nature Works** (Dorling Kindersley, 0 86318 641 6, £12.99).

#### **Lancashire Libraries Children's Book of the Year Award**

Chosen and awarded by children from across Lancashire, the winner this year is **The Whitby Witches** by Robin Jarvis (Simon & Schuster, 0 7500 0581 5, £3.99 pbk).

#### **The Children's Book Award**

Organised by the Federation of Children's Book Groups, this is also awarded by children. Nearly 35,000 children sent in returns, with the winner, **Kiss the Dust**, emerging from 649 books submitted by publishers.

**Kiss the Dust** by Elizabeth Laird is published by Heinemann (0 434 94703 2, £9.95 hbk) and Mammoth (0 7497 0857 3, £2.99 pbk).

#### **The Carnegie medal** - for 'the most outstanding work published for children'

As the longest running of the children's book awards, the Carnegie and Greenaway medals, awarded by The Youth Libraries Group of The Library Association, have acquired a certain grandeur. This year's winners may well raise a few eyebrows in the wider world beyond that of the librarian judges. We will have to wait and see. Meantime, **Grace Kempster**, chair of this year's judges, reports from the inside...

Armed with criteria which focuses on plot, characterisation and style, judges were seeking a consistency of quality to be demonstrated throughout a book. The final choice, after long debate, was **Dear Nobody** by Berlie Doherty. This book is a sensitive and compelling story of two young people facing the challenge of an unwanted pregnancy, charting their separate emotions and feelings with extraordinary insight. The narrative, in the form of letters to the unborn child (the Dear Nobody of the title), is immediate and enlightening, providing an equal understanding of the young father.

Only afterwards did it dawn on the panel members that they had made a problematic choice for themselves and their

colleagues. Where would it go in the library? Too old for the younger teenager, might it become lost in the adult shelves? Too few libraries make special provision for this age group. In the school library, were the difficulties of **Forever** to be repeated? However, if one believes in the ability of books to change lives, to broaden experience and to truly enlighten, then ways will be found to make this outstanding novel available to all. For popular it will undoubtedly be, as storyteller Berlie Doherty captures the magic of human emotion... who said winners of literary prizes were worthy but not read? This one will rarely be on the shelves and will offer a lasting and universal understanding to every reader.

Winner: **Dear Nobody**, Berlie Doherty, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 13056 5, £8.99 (age 13+)

Highly Commended: **The Story of Tracy Beaker**, Jacqueline Wilson, Doubleday, 0 385 40075 6, £7.99 (age 9-12)

Commended: **The Real Tilly Beany**, Annie Dalton, Methuen, 0 416 17252 0. £7.99 (age 6-10)

**The Drowners**, Garry Kilworth, Methuen, 0 416 17682 9, £8.99 (age 11+)

Shortlisted: **Del-Del**, Victor Kelleher, Julia MacRae, 185681 072 0, £8.99 (age 11+)

**Rosa's Singing Grandfather**, Leon Rosselson, Viking, 0 670 83598 6, £4.99 (age 7-9)

**Yaxley's Cat**, Robert Westall, Macmillan, 0 333 55075 7, £8.50 (age 10+)

**The Kate Greenaway medal** - for 'the most distinguished illustration in children's work'

Judging the vastly different illustrative styles of Greenaway contenders proved to be an even more difficult process: to set aside personal taste and view the illustrations in terms of their relation to text and consistency of quality in overall production and individual illustrations. Once again, we had contrasts: the eerie, subtle pictures in **East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon** accompanying a traditional Norwegian fairy story for older children; the intricate wordless collage of **Window**, to be shared and pored over in detail, both backwards and forwards; and the unique and zany style of Fiona French in **Anancy and Mr Dry-Bone** contrasting with the illustrative humour of **Farmer Duck** in which Helen Oxenbury adds another dimension to this simple, read-aloud story for under-fives.

After anguished discussion, our final choice, with its extraordinary attention to detail (see the baa code on the miniature book in one of the pockets) was **The Jolly Christmas Postman**, outstanding both in terms of its excellent total production and its consistently high standard of illustration. However, we had done it again - libraries simply do not loan copies of this Ahlberg book and its bestselling predecessor, **The Jolly Postman**, for the eminently practical reason of losing the pieces (including puzzles, letters and miniature books), without which the full impact is lost on the young borrower. I would suggest that libraries need to address these problems creatively (how about spare sets of the 'bits', Heinemann?) so that they do not miss the opportunity to allow children to enjoy this most illustratively distinguished work.

Winner: **Janet Ahlberg** for her illustrations to **The Jolly Christmas Postman**, Allan Ahlberg, Heinemann, 0 434 92532 2, £9.99 (age 4+)

Highly Commended: **Helen Oxenbury** for **Farmer Duck**, Walker, 0 7445 1928 4, £8.99 (age 2+)

Commended: **Caroline Binch** for **Amazing Grace**, Mary Hoffman, Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 0670 8, £7.95 (age 4+)

Shortlisted: **Jeannie Baker** for **Window**, Julia MacRae, 1 85681 010 0, £8.99 (age 9+)

**Fiona French** for **Anancy and Mr Dry-Bone**, Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 0672 4, £7.95 (age 6+)

**P J Lynch** for **East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon**, Naomi Lewis, Walker, 0 7445 1927 6, £9.99 (age 10+)

**Jane Ray** for **The Story of Christmas**, Orchard, 185213 280 9, £8.99 (age 4+)

The Carnegie and Kate Greenaway awards were announced by Libby Purves in a ceremony at The South Bank on 17 June; the medals will be officially presented to the winners at a celebration dinner, which forms part of the Youth Libraries Group Conference at Birmingham in September. The winners select £750 worth of children's books which are donated to a group of children they nominate.

The Carnegie and Greenaway Awards are sponsored by Peters Library Service.

**Grace Kempster** is National Chair of The Youth Libraries Group of The Library Association, and Assistant Head of Libraries and Arts Services for the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

### **Author Posters**

From Random Century Children's Books a set of four author posters (available from August) featuring Jane Hissey, Brian Jacques, Hazel Townson and Colin Dann. Write to: Author Poster Offer, Random Century Children's Books, P O Box 1375, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA. Please enclose a self-addressed label to avoid stitching up their postroom entirely!

Also from the same source, the most interesting promotional device seen for many a year - a 'fiction sampler'. A 136-page paperback of extracts from ten books published by The Bodley Head, Hutchinson, Jonathan Cape and Julia MacRae Books. If you're interested, use the same address for the poster offer but head it 'New Fiction Sampler Offer'.

Page Number:

30

---

**Source URL (retrieved on Nov '19):** <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/75/childrens-books/articles/bfk-briefing/bfk-briefing-%E2%80%93-july-1992>

### **Links:**

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/douglas-hill>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/75>