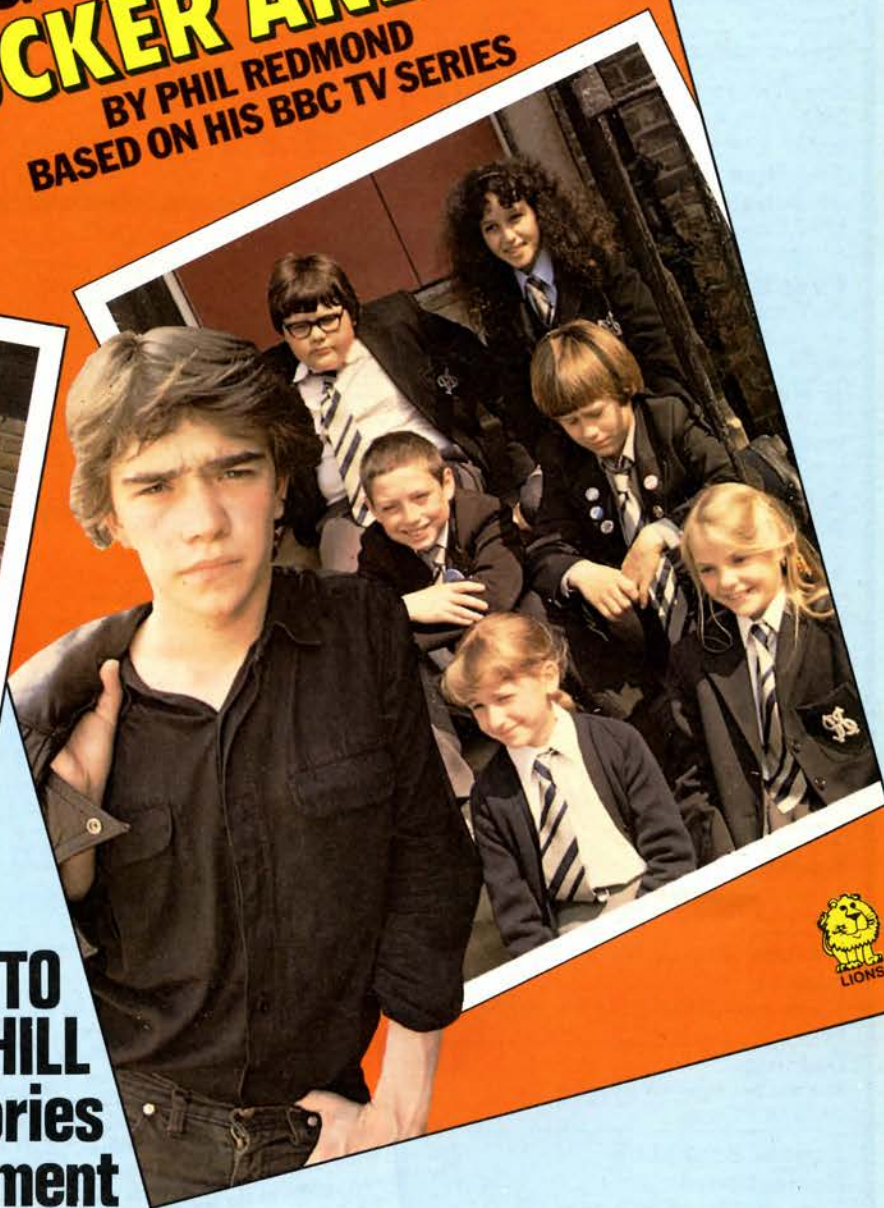


BOOKS FOR KEEPS

Jan. 1982 No.12
UK Price 85p

Stories of life in and out of
GRANGE HILL
TUCKER AND CO.
BY PHIL REDMOND
BASED ON HIS BBC TV SERIES



**GREYFRIARS TO
GRANGE HILL**
**7 page School Stories
Supplement**

PUBLICITY PEOPLE
World of Children's Books
Part 2

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Editorial correspondence:

Pat Triggs
36 Ravenswood Road
Bristol, Avon, BS6 6BW
Tel: 0272 49048

Subscriptions and advertising:

Richard Hill
1 Effingham Road
Lee, London, SE12 8NZ
Tel: 01-852 4953

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Cover Story

Our cover this issue features **Tucker and Co.**, Phil Redmond, Fontana Lions, 0 00 670127 X, 85p

It is also available in hardback from BBC Publications, 0 563 20053 7, £4.50 in March.

We are grateful for help from **Fontana** in putting the book on our cover in full colour.

Cover photos, by Douglas Playle, show Todd Carty, Erkan Mustafa, Nadia Chambers, Lee MacDonald, Lee Sparke, Paula Taras and Alison Vettles.

Stop Press

We apologise if this issue of **Books for Keeps** arrives with you a little late. The snow before and after Christmas made communication between us, our typesetters in Gloucester and our designer in the Forest of Dean impossible at a crucial time in the production process. We hope you will bear with us and understand the problems which as a very small team we face in producing the magazine.

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six times a year.



Reviewers

in this issue



Jill Bennett

Jill is an infant teacher, currently on a course at the Institute of Education in London. She is Literary Editor of **Child Education** and on the Board of the SBA.



David Bennett

David (no relation to Jill) is a former librarian, and currently Head of English in a Nottinghamshire secondary school.



Steve Bowles

Steve was a secondary English teacher and co-producer of **Reviewsheet** until it ceased publication. He is now writing full-time.



Cathy Lister

Cathy teaches in a middle school in Staffordshire, with responsibility for English and Language across the Curriculum.



Colin Mills (left)

Colin is in the Division of Teaching Studies at Worcester College, where he helps run a Diploma in Children's Literature. He's taught in a comprehensive school, a primary school and worked in radio.

Bill Boyle (right)

Bill teaches in Middle School in Wirral. He was founding Deputy Editor of **Junior Education**.

EDITOR'S PAGE



The good ship **Books for Keeps** is off on its second voyage around the world of children's books (page 4). Landing again on Publishers Island we set out to discover how The Publicity People live. New readers may begin to wonder at this stage whether they need a map. Well, we do have one available. In **Books for Keeps 10** we prefaced a feature on The Editors with a rather light-hearted map of the **World of Children's Books** which this series of articles intends to explore with some seriousness.

Several of you wrote to us about our map and had obviously enjoyed the fun. Some even accepted our invitation to add new locations. Eileen Saez from the School of Librarianship and Information Studies at Newcastle-upon-Tyne Polytechnic really got into the spirit of the thing.

'Congratulations on the thought-provoking map. Can I make a plea for the Library Schools to be charted please? I suppose we might belong on Library Island, the children's literature options are possibly the best supported of the courses we run and might counteract erosion. Education Island would be another possibility, but then we could well anchor in Booklovers Bay too, and I'm sure that the students would happily consign their lecturers to Bee in the Bonnet Bay. I have a fancy, however for the schools of librarianship to be in the Ocean of Opportunity on the grounds that the schools do have the time and opportunity to explore and investigate areas through research projects and the like.' Explorers please amend your maps. We've made a note for the next edition.

For those who want to catch up on the first article and the map, back numbers of **Books for Keeps 10** are available. (75p including postage). Those who asked if we could reproduce the map poster-size will be pleased to hear that we can now also supply an enlarged (A3) version. (Also 75p including postage). No wall should be without one!

Cover Story

Great value though our map is it will be a while before we top the sales figures of Bob Leeson's **Grange Hill** books which have just reached one million. To follow that comes a new Grange Hill venture from Fontana Lions — Phil Redmond's **Tucker and Co.**, our cover book for this issue, which neatly unites our two themes of Publicity and School Stories. With Tod Carty on the front, scowling irresistibly at all his fans it's bound to be a winner. It's five short stories, two about Tucker, three about the new first formers, racily told and very much in the style of the television series. The confrontations with bully Gripper Stebson (the new Booga Benson) are perhaps a bit repetitious in the 'first year' stories; but **Maybe Tomorrow** with Tucker coping

with the dawning realisation that he fancies Trisha Yates is a little gem. More about Phil Redmond in his own words on page 24.



Eithwyn Jones, the girl who bought the millionth Grange Hill, with a pupil, Mrs Darwin, teacher, and Robert Leeson in the School Bookshop.

A Writing Friendship

Also in our special feature you can meet Tim Kennemore. Her **The Middle of the Sandwich** is certainly one of the best in the new wave of school stories. She is, we discovered, a compulsive reader, the sort that feels insecure without a book to hand. One of her favourite writers when she was young was Antonia Forest, and six years ago Tim wrote to her asking for advice on how to get published. 'She was wonderful. I got pages of advice and the only thing she said she wanted in return was a copy of the first book I got published.' They have been corresponding regularly for two years now but never met. 'I wouldn't want to. We might not like each other and that would be the end of the letters.' When we met Tim she was looking forward to reading the latest Marlow family book. Unlike Tim, Antonia Forest writes very slowly and for her fans the gaps between books are unbearably long. **Run Away Home** (Faber, 0 571 11837 2, £5.25) is not a school story, in it the Marlows are at home for Christmas. But there is a lot happening (including an adventure at sea) and the subtle observation of character that is Antonia Forest's trade mark is evident in full. As Tim Kennemore put it, 'There's a lot of depth in her books.'

Showing the Way

Someone with something to tell us about education if not about schools is Richard Steel, seventeen year old winner of the 1981 Times Educational Supplement Information Book Award for his book, **Skulls**. We have devoted a lot of space to Richard and his book (page 26) partly because he is unusual and interesting, but mainly because his book is so revealing of how real learning happens. In his introduction to the book he writes: 'somehow when you find a skull, identify it and clean it, you seem to absorb information gradually and quite easily . . . if a subject is interesting then knowledge

just creeps in unnoticed . . . I have learned a lot by putting down what I know on paper . . . I had to check as many facts as I could to make sure I was not passing on inaccurate information.' Out of his enthusiasm came a highly individual book which communicates information clearly and compellingly. We could all learn a lot from it.

Bring Back Frances

Another award winner is Russell Hoban our choice for the Authorgraph in this issue (page 16). His adult novel **Ridley Walker** which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1980 has recently gone into paperback from Picador. Don't miss it.

We have tried by selecting examples from three of Russell Hoban's children's books (page 15) to give you a taste of the particular talent he has for revealing us to ourselves. In her new book list (see page 30) Elaine Moss includes no less than five Hoban stories. She calls him 'that arch-analyst of the human zoo.' Given all that, imagine how amazed and dismayed we were to find that almost all the indispensable Frances books are out of print in hardback and paperback. If you are to get acquainted with this delightful young person, lightly disguised as a badger, you will have to seek her in the library. Frances fans present and future should unite to urge publishers to get these marvellous books back into print as soon as possible.

Coming Soon — a Lifeline

We are constantly being asked for lists of sure-fire hits to recommend to those just starting out with children's books. Who better to give that sort of advice than Elaine Moss whose knowledge and encouragement have inspired so many of us? So we are particularly delighted that Elaine has agreed to do a series of five articles on this theme for **Books for Keeps**. She has called it **Lifeline Library**. The first one will appear in our March issue and the others will follow throughout the year. At the end of the series you will have an annotated list of fifty books every teacher (or parent) should own as a Lifeline for any situation. Meanwhile you can hear Elaine Moss talking about her **Picture Books for Young People 9-13** at a seminar on March 2nd, 5.00 pm at the National Book League in Wandsworth, London. For details contact Barbara Buckley (01 870 9055). Perhaps I'll see some of you there.

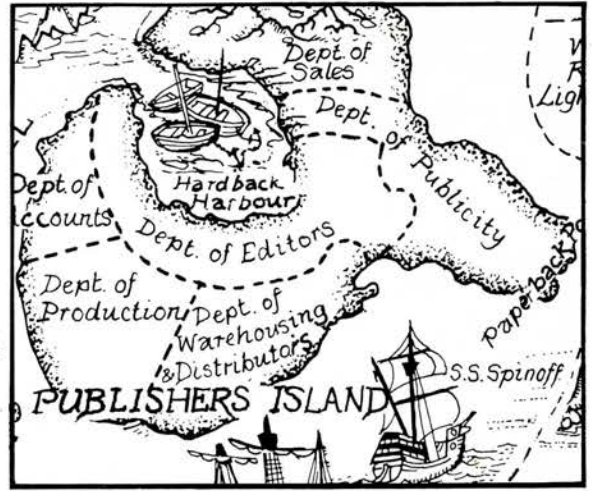
Good reading.

Tak

The World of Children's Books

Part 2

Continuing our exploration of the Books for Keeps map of the World of Children's Books, we venture into another part of Publishers Island.



In the Department of Publicity, Tony Bradman finds

THE PUBLICITY PEOPLE

It's a long and arduous journey for a book from Publishers Island to Readerland, and many places and people stand between it and an eventual safe landfall. Publishers can't just stand and wave goodbye to their books after they've launched them, either. They have to try and make all the other parts of the children's book world aware that they're on the way and, more importantly, want to buy them. And that's where the publicity people come in.

Almost all publicity for children's books is done by publishers so, in a sense, the publicity people do the most important job of all. In current marketing jargon, books are an 'artificial market'. What this means is that unlike other commodities (food or clothes, for example), people don't *have* to buy books, so unless a publisher constantly works at informing the market — that's you — that his books are available and also that they're desirable, useful, not to be missed, then you're not going to know about them. If you don't know about them you won't buy them, however good they are. As we'll see, other factors play a large part in who buys what, and many people would argue that books *are* as essential as food and clothes. But it's a hard fact of life that our society doesn't see that point.

Books for whom?

At a rough count there are nearly 12 million children under 14 in this country, and another four and a half million teenagers between the ages of 14 and 19. That's a potential market of 16½ million readers for the products of children's book publishers. The total number of children's books actually sold in a year is probably over 60 million. Nobody really knows how many of those are bought by institutions — schools and libraries — but it's a very high proportion. Of that 60 million in 1980, nearly 19 million were paperbacks. In 1981 that figure fell to under 17 million. That makes not much more than *one* paperback per child under 19.

But, of course, that isn't how it works. Most of those paperbacks are bought for a relatively small group of children who get a lot more than one book a year. They're the lucky ones, with parents and teachers working to provide them with what they need. Think of them as an inner circle, part of a 'converted' book world, which has rings spreading out from it formed of kids who get fewer and fewer books. And beyond the last circle there are millions of kids in the uncharted hinterland behind the most accessible shores of Readerland who don't get any books at all.

Nevertheless, as we all believe — and as Michael Turner, Chairman of Associated Book Publishers, wrote in *The Bookseller* about the Barnsley Book Bonanza — there's an 'enormous, latent enthusiasm for books' in the community. The problem is that there are those who know about books, know where to get them, which ones are the right ones for them and how to use them — and there are those who don't. The problem facing anyone who wants to change the situation is how to reach that vast, untapped majority.

In publishing the people at the sharp end of this problem are the marketing and publicity departments. It's their job to make

people aware of their product, and also to move vast quantities of books to ensure the survival of their employers. In the chain between author and child they are the second link and the sort of decisions they make — both on what to publicise and on how they do it — have a direct influence on the sorts of books which are available to children.

What do they do?

So what does a marketing and publicity department actually do? It varies from publisher to publisher, but certain broad lines can be drawn. The traditional way of bringing a book to the attention of the public is through paid advertisements, mostly in magazines or newspapers. Also available but more expensive and more rarely used are posters on billboards, and television. Much more important is a free mention on the editorial pages of a publication, something which publicity people work very hard to get. At its most basic this means a review of a new book and costs the publisher only the price of the book itself and postage to a reviewer or a publication. Far more valuable is a feature of any length about the book's content or author. Trying to package a book in such a way that it attracts the eye of a journalist is an essential part of a publicist's job.

Booksellers are absolutely crucial to publishers, as is the whole of the Distributors Group, where you'll find Booksellers Island. There, in the land of the small bookseller, the big bookshop chains and the wholesaler, publisher and consumer meet to exchange money for goods. The whole group therefore plays a huge — and some say disproportionate — part in the work of the publicity people. Booksellers are, for example, supplied with all sorts of 'point-of-sale' material which comes out of publicity departments' budgets — wire racks, shelving, posters, streamers, 'dump-bins', 'headers', and 1001 other goodies designed to make booksellers more interested in selling an individual publisher's products and their shops more enticing to potential customers. Direct contact with those customers is almost invariably limited to the mailing of catalogues, which are also prepared by publicity departments, to schools and libraries. (Booksellers get them too, of course.)

Special events

Last but not least — especially among paperback publishers — there are 'special events', promotions tied to a particular book which it's hoped will gain some more free publicity. These can range from arranging author visits to schools, bookshops or areas when a new book is published — the 'signing tour' — to all sorts of weird and wonderful behaviour. Small publicity people have been known to dress up as large, ungainly creatures and stand around on village greens, organise plate-smashing contests, hand out plastic dog-turds to passers-by in Oxford Street (something Barry Cunningham did to promote Richard Stanley's joke book, *The End*), and generally do things which no one sane would ever contemplate, all to attract as much (free) publicity as possible.



MONDAY
 10.30 Early start. Promotion planning meeting with Marjorie & Roger (New Sales Director!)
 Lunch: Myles Hundreath to discuss promoting "Another 1000 Things to Do on a Wet Friday."



BUT, DARLINGS, WE MUST DO SOMETHING. AS HIS EDITOR, I PROMISED... HE'S SUCH A SUPER WRITER.

I COULD OFFER HIM TO A SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN'S BOOK WEEK...

HE MAY BE GOOD, BUT HE DOESN'T SELL. MUST PLAY TO OUR STRENGTHS, MARJE.

IT'S GOT TO HAVE REAL IMPACT. MAKE HIM CUDDLY BUT SERIOUS - AND CAN WE HAVE MASSES OF PINK!

TUESDAY
 11.00 Brief designer for new Panda poster, mobile and stickers.
 Lunch: Global TV tie-in cover deal.



WEDNESDAY
 Sales Conference - all day!!
 Breakfast, lunch & dinner with REPS!
 NB: Stock up with Rennies & Aspirin.

NOT ANOTHER LITERARY MASTERPIECE. IT'LL NEVER SELL IN CHIPPING SODBURY... NICE LEGS, FELICITY.

IT'S GOING TO BE REALLY BIG... MASSIVE MEDIA COVERAGE... A MAJOR PROMOTION...

THURSDAY
 a.m. Finish catalogue, write 3 press releases, copy for new ad, letters to schools, phone Global to clinch deal. Lunch: W.H. Smuts (be nice!)
 6.00 Launch Party for 'FIVE UP THE CREEK TOGETHER!'



I'VE READ ALL 97 OF HER BOOKS AND THIS ONE IS REALLY THE BEST, DON'T YOU THINK...

I CAN'T THINK WHY I KEEP COMING TO THESE THINGS.

WHERE'S THE AUTHOR? NO IDEA, DARLING! THINK SHE WENT OVERBOARD AT WAPPING

THINK YOU'LL GIVE US A GOOD WRITE-UP?

BET HE HASN'T EVEN READ IT!

SOME PEOPLE HAVE NO STANDARDS.

WITH THE WINE YOU SERVE, YOU'LL BE LUCKY!

SOON HAVE HER BACK AGAIN - & ON NATIONWIDE - WITH LUCK!

NOT IF I SEE YOU FIRST!

PERHAPS I'LL SEE YOU AT THE PARROT PARTY?

WHAT IF NOONE TURNS UP?

FRIDAY
 Lunch: Paddy Pause. Take him to Harrods for signing session, for 'PANDAS AS PETS.'
 NB: Go on a diet.



SATURDAY
 Panda Party in Selam Hard (Dorset? Must check the map)
 Panda suit from dry cleaners.
 Books from Warehouse.



I'M REALLY A VERY NICE PANDA!

THE THINGS YOU DO TO SELL BOOKS!

ANOTHER AVERAGE WEEK. (YAWN) MUST REMEMBER TO READ A BOOK SOMETIME!

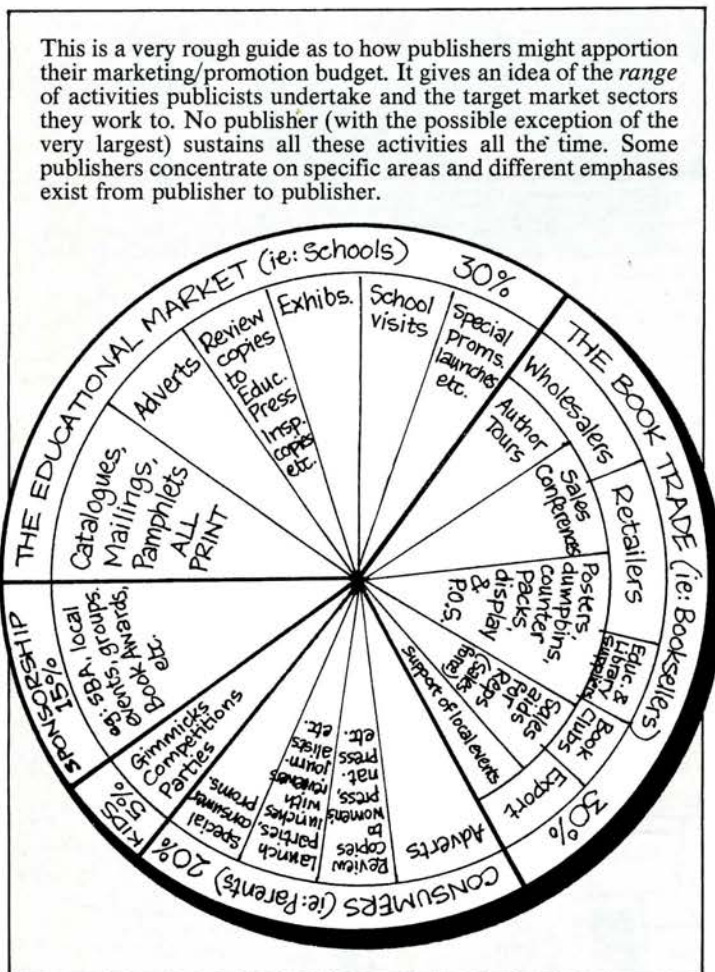


Where the money goes

Arising from all this is the vexed question of how the decision about which books to publicise is made. Many people feel that 'good' books — and that means good in a literary sense — don't get as much money spent on them as quiz books, joke books and books by 'personalities'. It is a fact that at Puffin, for instance, not much money is spent on promoting Rosemary Sutcliff titles, while a lot is spent on a book like *The End*. These sorts of decisions are made early on, sometimes even before a book is accepted. Editorial departments often have a lot to say about which books they'd like to be promoted and how. Many books fit into one 'market' or another, and will 'do best' if promoted to that market. No publisher can afford to spend money on promoting every title to the mass market, so the money is apportioned these days on maximising the profit potential of each title in its respective market. If a Rosemary Sutcliff is likely to sell 5,000 copies and *You Can Do the Cube* over a million, the solution — to a publisher — is obvious. There's no point in spending money trying to create new readers of Rosemary Sutcliff — even if they knew how. Many books inevitably are left to fend for themselves when with a bit of promotion money they might do very well.

One other broad distinction which can be drawn is between hardback and paperback publishers. All this furious activity has to be paid for, and publicity departments are given a 'budget' — that is, they're told how much they can spend on their work. At the top end of the scale, Puffin are reputed to spend well over £100,000 a year on marketing and promotion. At the other end, many hardback publishers spend much, much less — an average figure is around £6,000.

This is a very rough guide as to how publishers might apportion their marketing/promotion budget. It gives an idea of the range of activities publicists undertake and the target market sectors they work to. No publisher (with the possible exception of the very largest) sustains all these activities all the time. Some publishers concentrate on specific areas and different emphases exist from publisher to publisher.



It's clear that by far the largest proportion of the money is spent promoting books to the converted and to the trade — schools, libraries and booksellers. A much smaller proportion is spent directly on the consumer.

Hardback houses probably spend a smaller proportion of their budgets on direct promotion to the general public — 'Readerland' — than paperbacks. This reflects a very simple difference. Paperbacks is a numbers game, and the numbers have to be big to guarantee survival. Children's paperbacks are a relatively recent phenomenon. Puffin may be 40 years old, but most of the current paperback imprints were founded in the last fifteen years, and it's

those years which have seen a veritable boom in children's paperback sales. Paperbacks have always been involved in the move towards the wider, untapped market.

Middle-class public

Hardbacks have traditionally been tied in to an established reading public, a middle-class reading public, which is small yet aware. In addition hardback children's publishers have been reliant for many, many years on what's called the 'institutional market' — that's libraries and schools — and the largest proportion of their promotion budgets obviously goes on promoting to their biggest market.

Schools and libraries also play a big part in some paperback marketing and publicity departments. But the picture has changed recently. The government cuts of the last three years have meant that the institutional market has much less buying power and this has affected many publishers. Schools and libraries just cannot afford to buy as many books as they used to, partly because they've got less money in real terms, and partly because inflation has hit publishers' prices as much as anything else.

The picture for children's publishers as a whole is even more gloomy, however. The ordinary consumer's amount of disposable cash has shrunk too, with depressing results for children which says a lot about our priorities. For while the number of adult paperbacks sold last year showed a slight rise, the number of children's paperbacks showed a huge *fall* — from nearly 19 million to under 17 million.

Into the unknown?

There has therefore been a lot of pressure on children's marketing departments in recent years to do something about the situation. Their response has been to try to get into the vast, uncharted hinterland of Readerland, that vast, untapped reservoir of kids they're not reaching. It's meant a ferment of ideas being thrown up and tried out.

One statistic which publishers use almost as a talisman is that 67 per cent of all children's books are bought by women between the ages of 25 and 45 — the Mum's market, as they say, although it must include a fair number of teachers. (It's another example of how many people stand between the child and the book.) Publishers have watched the institutional market suffer and the 'consumer' market grow, so that's where they're putting their efforts.

'The amount we're spending on direct promotion to mums and dads is definitely rising,' says Barry Cunningham. 'The schools market is static at the moment and the mums and dads market isn't really being exploited at all. So we're spending much more money on getting into that.' Part of this increase is to be found in more of an effort to make inroads into women's magazines, both in terms of paid-for advertising and free feature space. But it's still a drop in the ocean and most of Barry's budget and that of the other publicists still goes on promoting to 'the trade'.

Keeping the trade happy

Part of the reason for this is that publishers are caught in a cleft stick. They're dependent on their outlets — the booksellers — and they feel they have to keep spending their money on reaching 'the converted'. These are, after all, the people who are known to buy books. It's interesting to note that publishers will admit (behind closed doors) that even much of their so-called 'consumer' advertising — advertising to mums and dads — is aimed indirectly at booksellers.

Most publishers advertisements end up in specialist magazines like *Books for Keeps*, *Books for Your Children* and *Junior Education*, and on or near the regular book pages in the 'heavy' papers like the *Sunday Times*, the *Guardian* or the *Observer*. Part of the reason for this is of course that this is where you'll reach the book-buying public, librarians and teachers — 'the converted'. But publishers also know that these pages are read by wholesalers, buyers for the large chains and booksellers, so even though they're in mass circulation publications these advertisements are still directed at the trade. Publishers often tell booksellers that a particular title will be backed up by 'massive nationwide advertising'. They know that the massive nationwide advertising doesn't necessarily have much effect on the sales of a particular book. But they also know that in the highly competitive world of bookselling, they're showing 'the trade' that they're not just launching a book and forgetting about it — they're trying to help the bookseller sell more copies. They

therefore hope that the bookseller will want to take more copies of the book.

Enter the Ford Cortina Fleet

At this point we're beginning to get into the relationship between publicity people and the sales department, whose Ford Cortina Fleet sets out through the Discount Straits to take the books to Booksellers Island. The marketing and publicity departments come under pressure from sales departments to back up their work. Sales reps want to be able to go into a bookshop and tell a bookseller that a certain title will be 'heavily promoted' — so they put pressure on the marketing department.

That's why most publicity departments spend an enormous amount of time and energy preparing for the sales conferences which every publisher has. Puffin has two a year, huge jamborees where editorial, publicity and sales departments get together, and the onus is on the publicity department to present the new season's books to the 'sales force' and get the reps 'motivated' and interested in the product they're selling so that they will go out and flog it as hard as they can. In the current state of things publishers have to make sure that the books are in the shops — that's the sales force's job — and that the public knows about the books enough to want to buy them — and that's down to the publicity department. Inevitably they have to work together to a large extent.

Increasing awareness of what sells books has had significant effect on what gets published. Exposure on radio, TV or in print for an author or a book is worth its weight in gold, and puts paid advertisements in the shade. In the past this was rare, and publishers tended to publish books and think of publicity angles later. Now under economic pressure from without and pressure for more sales from within, editors are actively seeking authors who come ready-made with a 'high media profile'.

Personality publishing

In a sense it started in adult publishing and it's spread into children's books. It's why there's a plethora of 'personalities' producing children's books. Would Edna O'Brien's *The Dazzle*, good as it is, have received as much coverage (or sold as many copies?) if it had been written by a complete unknown? The thinking behind it is very simple. Someone who's already on TV or well known in any sphere is guaranteed some sort of coverage somewhere. And coverage equals more sales — not always, but usually.

Puffin and Piccolo have gone into this in a big way in recent years, and it's a case of editors becoming more aware of commercial pressures (as we saw in *Books for Keeps 10*). For a book on magic for kids, Jill Mackay at Piccolo gets Paul Daniels, regularly on television and popular with kids, which gives the marketing and publicity people (as well as the sales reps) something definite to build on. The enormous boom in the pop-up book, runaway successes for joke books, and the spectre of *Masquerade* which lurks somewhere around any discussion of publicity in children's books, have had their effect.

Success breeds excess

This sort of promotion idea and the success which puts 40 Puffin books in the Top 100 Penguin bestsellers (and makes the overall bestseller for Penguin a children's book two years running) creates its own problems for children's publishers' publicity departments. If Puffin books supplied half of Penguin books' sales for the financial year ending last October, the marketing and editorial departments may well be expected to come up with a similar success rate next year. Of course a large part of this success has to do with 13-year-old Patrick Bossert's *You Can Do the Cube*, a book which had everything going for it from a publicity angle. The idea of a 13-year-old writing a book which solved the problem of the latest fad was ready-made for Fleet Street and television. Sales of over a million reflect the spread of media interest.

The Big One

Television is the big one (see *Books for Keeps 6* on the subject). Most publicists would give their right arms (and any other necessary parts of their anatomies) to get a mention on television. It's obvious why: not even the biggest mass circulation newspaper or magazine can reach the huge numbers of people television does. It goes even deeper than that, though. Newspapers are bought by adults, and although children might read them, they're not the newspaper's prime market. Children's

television is, and a mention on *Swap Shop* could reach millions of children at once.

But you need a good angle to get a mention on television, and airtime is restricted. TV tie-ins — that is, serialisations of books — can be a great boost for an author, and producers' offices are awash with books and manuscripts lobbed in by hopeful publishers. The six-part TV serial of Bernard Ashley's *Break in the Sun* directly affected the sales of the book, pushing it into a very quick reprint. Of course you can do it the other way round too, and make a book out of a TV series. It's been happening for years in adult TV and books, but *Grange Hill* has really given it a kick in the pants in children's publishing.

Reaching the hinterland

So that's what they do. But how effective is it? In straight commercial terms, what they're doing must be successful because they are still around. That is, they do sell a lot of books, and (until last year) the number was rising.

Nearly all money spent on publicity for children's books is spent by publishers on their own individual books. It's also spent predominantly on new books — what publishers call the *front list* — rather than on books which they have published in the past and which are still available — the *back list*. Is this just a short-term strategy for staying in the same place? What about creating new markets? Many people say — and work very hard at promoting this idea — that the only way to get deep into Readerland in a real way is for more money to be spent on promoting the general awareness of kids' books.

Although much money is spent by publishers on publicity, and much effort goes into it, their effectiveness is very limited. Yes, a lot of books are sold; but there are still millions of kids for whom books mean nothing. Publishers have a vested interest in selling *their* books, and there's still resistance among them to the idea of pulling together and investing in the future by trying to increase the total number of people who are aware of books, by reaching more of the unconverted. In the end the only real way of doing this is to spend money and time on changing the attitudes of people, and making them aware that books are a good thing. All the time that money is being poured into promoting new books, individual titles and so on, the hinterland will remain untouched. As it stands, publicity is increasingly dependent on 'the new'. All this money spent on new books — and high warehousing costs — means 'classics' are allowed to go out of print, and it's increasingly difficult for unknown new authors to get into print.

What publishers do do, however (to a greater or lesser degree) is to support organisations like the School Bookshop Association, the Federation of Children's Book Groups, the Book Marketing Council and the National Book League. They also visit schools, stage exhibitions and seminars, and several produce information in the form of booklists and reading information for parents and teachers. Maggy Doyle, at Piccolo, for example, stages at least six exhibitions a year in various parts of the country — this involves a lot of organisation, getting authors to visit, and a lot of hard work. Many publicists would also argue that any publicity is good publicity in terms of spreading the word.

A lot of work does of course go on outside publishers and much of it is done by amateurs. In fact the last fifteen years — the same period during which the sale of paperback children's books has boomed — have seen a positive ferment of activity at every level, and it's a bit like the traditional chicken and the egg — it's difficult to say what came first. Many of the ideas generated by the 'amateurs', parents, teachers and librarians — book bashes and bonanzas, book buses, book fairs, community level promotion of books in all senses and in any way possible, and above all, personal contact and enlightenment — have been picked up by the professionals as good ways of promoting their books. Some publishers have also backed grassroot activities. But all this is only a beginning.

The Book Marketing Council, a section of the Publishers' Association, the trade organisation which promotes publishing, is charged with the general task of promoting the marketing of books. Desmond Clarke, the Council's director, is committed to children's books and in a sense manages the common pot into which most children's publishers — there are over 90 in the country — contribute. Children's Book Week is the flagship of the BMC's work.

'You've got to take the books to the people instead of the other way round,' is what Desmond Clarke says. 'In many ways books have a certain similarity to confectionery. You've got to put them in front of people's eyes otherwise they don't buy them. You've

also got to make it easy and convenient for them to buy them.' How grateful organisers of school bookshops and FCBG book agencies must feel to hear that what they have been practising for years is at last being preached.

Maggy Doyle of Piccolo stressed the importance of community involvement, of personal contact. 'It's only by providing the right book for the child that you'll make that child want to read more. There's a book for every child if it can be found.' That's the problem, and that's where the money arguably needs to be spent. The problem for the publicity people is knowing how to spend it. Because no one really knows, it's risk money. And when your job is to keep sales up so your company survives, the pressure is to play safe, do what's always been done because it seems to work. And it's a hard fact of life in the book world that publicists have to make sows' ears into silk purses, and very often treat silk purses like sows' ears.

Desmond Clarke points to the fact that the music business is actually putting between two and three million pounds into a common fund to promote the idea of records. He says that this is what publishers should be doing. 'We've all got to invest in making our total market larger. If publishers could see that that was important, they'd also see that it's the only way to increase their share of the market.'

Anna Locke of Heinemann says 'Publicity in children's books takes so long. Books go out of print faster these days and you spend more time and effort on promoting new books than old ones. But we still depend on word of mouth. In the end it's the

children who decide which books sell, and it happens by word of mouth over a long time.'

But before the children can decide they have to be in touch with the book. And whether that happens depends to a large extent on how effective the publicity people are in persuading booksellers to stock it and librarians, teachers, parents and children themselves to be aware of it and want to seek it out.

Which is where we came in. Those who inhabit the Department of Publicity on Publishers Island certainly do play an important part in deciding what children read. Their job involves reaching out to all parts of the world of children's books. How well equipped are they to do that? Children's books publicity is full of very nice people, mostly very nice, well-educated ladies who like books and children and genuinely want to bring them together. Few of them are very highly paid or have the kind of status that encourages them to go out on a limb or take risks. Few of them, if any, have had any specialist training. They learn as they go and because of this tend to hew a traditional row rather than seek to innovate. Enthusiasm and talent are hampered on the one hand by lack of information (there's almost no market research available yet on books) and money (budgets for publicising children's books are small compared with those for adult books).

Publicising children's books is an art very much in its infancy. Our exploration reveals a land underdeveloped and under-resourced but rich in potential. The way in which the rest of the children's book world grows and develops depends very much on how that potential is used. ●

REVIEWS

Nursery/Infant

Hardbacks

The Mice Who Lived in a Shoe

Rodney Peppé, Kestrel,
0 7226 5737 4, £4.25

The practicalities of living in a shoe are explored in Rodney Peppé's new book: A family of mice — fed up with being too wet, cold or hot, or blown about, not to mention pestered by a large tabby — decides to convert their old shoe into a dream house. The family sets to work and the construction project is shown stage by stage through the book. Each illustration is almost overrun with busy mice working, playing and talking (in speech bubbles) together so that the reader will find as much, if not more, to read in the pictures as in the text. This story, and in particular the idea of building a dream home oneself, has really fired the imagination of the children with whom I have shared the book. JB

Bill and Stanley

Helen Oxenbury, Benn,
0 510 00111 4, £1.50

'She's always busy' thinks Bill as his mum sends him to play in the garden on his own. But thanks to Stanley, a friendly dog, Bill's day in the garden turns out to be anything but dull. The story is very simple and is told through a few

words of text facing a delectable picture on each spread. One of the new Little Library Series. JB

Alfie Gets in First

Shirley Hughes, Bodley Head, 0 370 30417 9, £3.50

I know of no other author/illustrator who can create such endearing characters in a totally realistic style, and work such magic with simple domestic stories as can Shirley Hughes. Her newest character is Alfie who, in his eagerness to be first home, manages to get locked inside his house with Mum and baby sister Annie Rose outside. Poor Alfie is very upset; his distress is so touchingly portrayed one feels the urge to pick him up and comfort him, but in the end it is Alfie himself who effects the rescue and not the anxious and willing helpers who come to mum's aid.

The book is ingeniously designed, clever use being made of the gutter which forms the front door and separates the inside and outside stories, and heightens the reader's enjoyment since only s/he knows what is going on on both sides of the door. Everyone will want to linger long over the pictures, savouring the details and delicious touches which abound on every page. JB

Reviews of paperback fiction are grouped for convenience under teaching range. Books and children being varied and adaptable, we suggest you look either side of your area. More detailed recommendation for use can be found within the reviews.

Frog and Toad Tales,

Arnold Lobel, World's Work, 0 437 55717 0, £3.95

This bumper volume contains the first three Frog and Toad books, fifteen stories featuring those two friends who are the favourite characters of countless children learning to read, and a good few teachers too.

Just in case you haven't yet made the acquaintance of these marvellous characters, rush out and buy this book immediately and even if you have, I'd recommend getting a copy; just think of the satisfaction for a child learning to read who can manage a really fat book like this. Not to be missed. The best bargain around. JB

King Rollo and the Search

0 905478 98 3

King Rollo and the Bath

0 905478 96 7

King Rollo and King Frank

0 905478 97 5

David McKee,
Andersen Press, 95p each

Hardbacks at paperback prices.



Three new titles in this deservedly popular series; here we have the magician suffering from a spell of amnesia; providing the ideal solution when King Rollo refuses to bath; and keeping a watchful eye as Rollo entertains King Frank to tea. Highly recommended for sharing with threes to fives, and for beginner readers. These tiny books are habit forming and their magic is showing no signs of wearing thin. JB

Paperbacks

Me and my Friend
0 590 70104 5

My House
0 590 70102 9

Going Out
0 590 70101 0

My Colours
0 590 70103 7Deborah Manley/Moira
Maclean, Hippo,
70p eachA similar size to David
McKee's King Rollo series
but in comparison these small
books are non-starters.They deal with everyday
things and events in the lives
of small children but have no
story at all, and the pictures do
nothing to attract. Books for
the under fives should
engender in their audience the
excitement of words and
visual images; these do neither.
JB'Tilly had never seen plastic and
foam rubber and drip-dry cotton.'**Tilly's House**
Faith Jaques, Picture
Lions, 0 00 661791 3,
90pAided and abetted by a
friendly bear, Tilly, a
resourceful peg doll escapes
from her life of drudgery in the
dolls' house and sets up home
in the garden shed inside a
seed box. Text and pictures
are perfectly matched; and
both are full of warmth and
detail. JB**Mr Magnolia**
Quentin Blake, Picture
Lions, 0 00 661879 0,
90pThis zany tale of an eccentric
individual and his odd
assortment of possessions
appeals right across the age
range. Just in case anyone
missed the hardcover and its
deserved acclaim: a loud
'Whoopie!' for Mr Magnolia
and his boots. JB**Portly McSwine**
James Marshall,
Carousel,
0 552 52150 7, 90pAnticipating every possible
disaster, Portly — the world's
worst worrier — prepares for
his National Swine Day party.
However, the party is a huge
success and the following day
Portly begins planning for next
year's celebration: 'What if
next year's party isn't as good
...'; being the eternal
pessimist, the pathetic Portly
has 364 days to worry about it.I find it difficult to imagine
who this book is aimed at:
certainly not the very young;
nor did it engender any
enthusiasm from the sevens to
tens I showed it to. JB**I Will not Go to
Market Today**
Harry Allard, pictures
by James Marshall,
Carousel,
0 552 52149 3, 90pJames Marshall's droll red,
brown and black illustrations
do add a glimmer of humour to
what I found a rather silly,
pointless story in which one
Fennimore B. Buttercrunch (a
white cockerel) after a series
of abortive attempts, finally
gets to market to buy himself
some jam. JB**A Merry-Mouse
Book of Months**
0 437 45904 7**A Merry-Mouse
Christmas ABC**
0 437 45903 9Priscilla Hillman,
World's Work £1.95 eachWith their sloppy verses and
twee pictures of mice in frilly
garb these remind me of
nothing so much as a third rate
series of children's birthday/
Christmas cards stuck between
two covers to make books.
They may well appeal to
sentimental grannies and aunts
but not to self-respecting
children.I certainly would not advise
anyone to spend £3.90 on
those two. JB**Riding on a
Roundabout**
Althea, Dinosaur,
0 85122 264 1, 70pRiding various roundabout
figures and machines, a boy
indulges in a series of
imaginary adventures; he
becomes a racing driver, a
helicopter pilot and an Indian
prince for example. With its
sequence of double pages
showing reality opposite
fantasy, somewhat reminiscent
of John Burningham's Shirley
books, but not in the same
class. JB**Jeremy Mouse was
Hungry**
Althea, Dinosaur,
0 85122 275 7, 70pA small mouse tries to pick
some large blackberries which
overhang a stream,
overreaches, tumbles in, and
eventually arrives home mud-
covered but safe, though not
feeling too well. A simple, run-
of-the-mill story with clearly
presented text (a characteristic
of this series), and bright
pictures. JB**Desmond at the Zoo**
Althea, Dinosaur,
0 85122 264 1, 70pIf your children have enjoyed
previous Desmond stories then
I imagine they will want to
read this one wherein he finds
himself the centre of attraction
when he visits the zoo.
However, this story is unlikely
to win him any new fans. JB**Chocolate Mouse
and Sugar Pig
How They Ran Away
to Escape Being
Eaten**Irina Hale, Picturemacs,
0 333 321774, £1.50Chocolate Mouse and his
friend, a pink sugar pig thought
they were going to a party, and
so they were in a way though
it was not what they had
anticipated. But the pair
escape thanks to parachutes
made from cake cases which
they put to a number of other
equally ingenious uses in theChocolate Mouse and Sugar Pig
in the paper trays they use with
such ingenuity.course of their adventures. A
delectable picture book with a
longer than average text and
illustrations using a number of
media including collage and
crayon. JB**Paddington Bear**
0 330 26572 5**Paddington's Garden**
0 330 26573 3Michael Bond/Fred
Banbery, Piccolo, 95p
eachThese Paddington stories have
been diluted for a younger
audience than that of the
original books, and have lost
the characteristic humour of
those longer stories. However,
since many children come to
know Paddington as a TV
character nowadays, they will
not know what is lacking in
these picture book versions:
nor will they miss the charm of
Peggy Fortnum's superior
illustrations. JB

Infant/Junior

Hansel and Gretel
Retold by Shirley
Greenaway, illus. by
Peter Richardson,
Piccolo Picture Classics,
0 330 26548 2, 90pThere's an undoubted need for
good retellings of Grimm's
fairy tales and this series has
an attractive format. The
version here is clear, unfussy
and retains the pathos and
suspense within the tale —
though I could have done with
more malice in the tenor of thestepmother and the 'witch in
the oven' episode is curiously
underplayed. That said, it may
be a useful introduction and an
addition to class libraries.
Peter Richardson's illustrations
are sylvan greys, browns and
reds — with a witch that's
wandered in from 'Wild
Things', but is none the less
effective! CM**That Dog**
Nanette Newman, illus.
by Penny Simon,
Carousel,

0 552 52147 7, 85p

An imaginative idea for a story
for five to eights: Barney has a
pet dog, Ben, who he's always
having to defend against
neighbours and chums. It's a
loving relationship which is
shattered when Ben dies. The
boy's grief and the way that he
gets over it is sensitively
caught in a way that reminded
me of Judith Viorst's 'Tenth
Good Thing About Barney'
(happily now back in print).
Penny Simon's teeming, lively
illustrations are really spoiledby cramped, smudgy
reproduction. I wish the
publishers had looked to
Young Puffin, or Fontanas, to
see how vital the "book as an
object" is for the younger
reader. CM**Victor the Vulture**
Jane Holiday, illus. Jo
Worth, Young Puffin,
0 14 03.1255 2, 80pEngaging tale for six to nines
about Garth, whose Dad wins
a vulture in a raffle. There are
problems involved in feeding



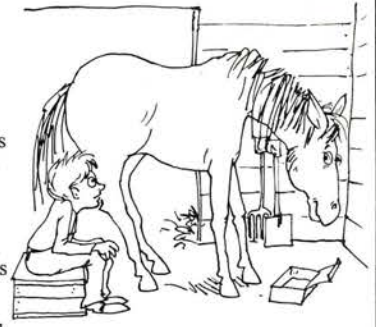
'His father was already up. He was looking worriedly in the fridge for something for Victor to eat. "He'll not like fish fingers nor butterscotch blancmange."

and keeping him — and I like the very realistic picture of the community and their struggles to keep pets. At one stage Garth speaks up at a Town Council meeting, and, of course, there's the pompous Councillor Dobbs to be dealt with. A witty, unpatronising style, splendid cover from Jo Worth — and someone at Young Puffin has found out about making page-breaks easier. CM

Casey, the Utterly Impossible Horse
Anita Feagles, illus.
Roger Smith, Young Puffin, 0 14 03.1274 9, 85p

I like this one a lot, as did the seven to nines I read it with.

Hilarious, fast-moving yarn about a boy who's 'adopted' by a talking horse. Casey's not the usual docile, literary pet but an obstreperous, demanding creature. With Casey's gatecrashing, rudeness to girls, demands for food and attention and designs on a stage career, Mike's life is made a misery! Snappy, witty repartee between children and grown ups, children and horses and the kind of quirky contemporary humour that American ladies seem so good at catching (see Wells, Cleary, Byars, et al.). Superb cover and characterful pictures. CM



'Finally, Casey said softly, "I know what I would like." "What?" Mike asked eagerly. "I'd really like some striped pyjamas."

Junior/Middle

Ramona and her Father

Beverly Cleary, illus. by Alan Tiegreen, Puffin, 0 14 03.1303 6, 90p

Henry and Beezus

Beverly Cleary, illus. by Thelma Lambert, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671875 2, 95p

Any eight to elevens who don't yet know Ramona should do! She really is one of the most splendid creations in children's books — and Beverly Cleary writes with warmth, wit and an uncannily perceptive eye and ear for the fun and exasperation involved in being an eight year old. Ramona's always up against the eccentricities of her big sister Beezus, as well as the arbitrary nature of adult justice. In this one, her Dad loses his job and there's a change in family fortunes. The sensitive topic is not sentimentalised and I've rarely read the ebb and flow of family relationship so well described. Seven self-contained episodes, ending with a hilariously irreverent Nativity Play, complete with Three Wise Persons. A Must.



Beezus and her friend, Henry Huggins, and his dog Ribsy play more prominent parts in the Fontana issue. It's a characteristically well-presented edition. Seven marvellous episodes, my favourite of which is the one

where Henry unearths 14,700 pieces of peppermint flavoured gum and decides to go into big business. The humour here depends so much on interplay between children. Splendid stuff, from a writer who can turn the uncommitted into real readers. CM

The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe
0 86020 553 3

The Adventures of King Arthur
0 86020 551 7

Both retold by Angela Wilkes, illus. by Peter Dennis, Usborne Picture Classics, £1.00.

The Amazing Adventures of Ulysses

Retold by Vivian Webb & Heather Amery, illus. by Stephen Cartwright, Usborne World Legends, 0 86020 567 3, £1.00

I was excited at the prospect of a series aiming to produce retellings of classic stories in bright pictorial formats, but I've mixed feelings about the first two. The page layout is curious: four or five, sometimes six small pictures to a page and the text divided in short lines beneath the pictures. This makes for some very confusing line breaks and clips the author's style, which isn't too bad in this difficult genre, especially in the King Arthur stories. The 'Crusoe' retelling spreads over 32 pages so that with the unusual format, even the intrepid nines and tens who read it for me found it hard going. The pictures are vivid, but very "text-bookish" — what a superbly imaginative picture book *could* have been produced from Defoe's story.

"King Arthur" fares better, with more breathing space —



He saw Circe wave her magic wand and stared in horror when the men's noses turned into snouts.

Circe had changed them into grunting pigs. As she drove them out of the hall, Eurylochus turned and ran.

and there are eight separate stories which make it less of an obstacle race. It's good for children and teachers to have these stories in an accessible form, but I'd still spend my money on imaginative artistry like Selina Hastings' new "Sir Gawain" (see Chris Powling's Christmas pick — B.F.K. Nov. 1981) or on Roger Lancelyn Greene's splendid retellings.

The Ulysses book clarified my doubts about the oversimplification of content and the folksy format: it underestimates the *form*. The young need retellings and illustrations which catch the awe and magic which is in the tones of the original (and in many superb retellings). This *might* be a bridge for the young to get to more sustained versions, but I can't help thinking that they would be sold short while making the crossing. Not one of Usborne's better ideas. CM

Ed At Large

Tom Tully, Beaver, 0 600 20473 1, 85p

Roman remains in the brussels sprouts, a mad uncle,

a vigil in a haunted house and Christmas pickpockets are all pursued by Ed Englefield in his search for copy for the school magazine. He is the editor and the sole reporter but the sight of his scruffy notebook and pen alarms the most stalwart inhabitants of Chiverton. The book raised laughs with all testers in the lower middle school range and with many older children also devilish illustrations by Lesley Smith add to the entertainment. CL

The Street of the Starving Cats

Margaret Fox, 0 86042 038 8, £1.00

Green Fingers & Grit

Anita Davies, 0 86042 037 X, £1.20

Terrapin Books (from Winchester's Hambleside Publishers) move into paperbacks — an adventurous move that it would be nice to trumpet. Unfortunately, both titles are distinctly lacklustre and, worse, uninviting in appearance too. With publishers taking so little fiction for 9s and up

nowadays, surely there are better manuscripts doing the rounds?

Starving Cats is an urban, multi-ethnic novel. One inevitably thinks of **There Ain't No Angels No More** because of the eventual transformation (celebrated by a street party) of run-down Lavender Terrace and because of the torments young Atlee suffers at the hands of a local gang. There's no fantasy here, fortunately, but all the junior novel's clichés abound — the chorus of old men, the solace of befriending abandoned animals, learning to box, facing the bullies. The dialogue does nothing to enliven it, either — Ashley, Needle et al. might never have existed. The book's one plus is its simplicity; it's short and easy to read. If you've takers for Methuen's *Pied Pipers* or Collins' *Young Fiction*, you might try one copy.

Green Fingers & Grit has a little more verve in places — I actually laughed a couple of times. Its comic episodes arise from Dad's latest craze — self-sufficiency — but the humour too rarely stems from situations with the ring of truth about them. Anita Davies tends to rely on stock characters — like the angry neighbour, the rich visiting Auntie, the snooty girl at school etc. Worse still, none of the Green family has much semblance of reality,

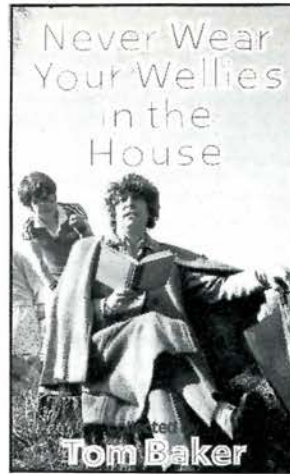
either, and the comedy isn't obvious from the (awful) cover, the title or the leaden opening so I don't see many kids trying it. SB

Never Wear Your Wellies in the House
Tom Baker (collected by),
Sparrow Books,
0 09 927340 3, 85p

'Poems to make you laugh' claims the sub-title, juxtaposed with a photo of Tom Baker in his Dr. Who outfit. For once the personality plug is unnecessary — the content of the book stands up on its own. The success rate of 'making you laugh' was impressively high among a mixed group of tens to twelves to merit a recommendation for the collection's inclusion in the Junior classroom library.

The 33 poems vary in style, from exaggerated, rhyming 'nonsense' effects to produce a belly laugh, through the subtleties of wordplays, to the conversation poems of Michael Rosen and Mick Gowar. However, the balance and blend of material provides a wealth of read-aloud humour to amuse throughout the seven to eleven range.

Brilliant, poignant illustrations, which superbly complement the poems, are provided by children from a variety of Special Schools.



(A royalty on each copy of the book goes to MENCAP, the National Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults). BB

The Puffin Book of Funny Verse
Julia Watson (compiled by) Puffin,
0 14 03.1333 8, 85p

Julia Watson's collection of 'some of the funniest poems ever written for children' is helpfully thematically arranged to help the harassed teacher. Having said that, there is not much else that can be said in the book's favour. There are

too many of the tired old chestnuts which well-meaning editors and publishers assume children will roll in the aisles for. Far too much of the content of 'Funny Verse' is not only irrelevant to its supposed audience, but is also not funny. Much of the language is incomprehensible — the book is aimed at the Junior school market, yet, to take an example from the first poem quoted, Belloc's 'Bison', the word 'opulent' is dropped without even a whiff of a context clue to assist those who manage to read it. Surely with so much talent to choose from in the 'kids verse' market these days, the use of eight Bellocs, an assortment of Goldsmith, Lear, de la Mare, Thackeray and somebody called Anonymous (fifteen times!), is hardly likely to induce English teachers in tune with their subject and their audience to part with dwindling capitation. If Puffin are as desperately short of ideas in the Junior poetry market as this publication would imply, they would be well advised to establish contact with some of the lively Junior school teachers who are doing remarkable work in this area of the curriculum. BB

Middle/Secondary

The Adventures of Holly Hobby
Richard Dubelman,
Granada,
0 583 30437 0, £1.25

That familiar figure in blue gingham, the focus of posters, stationery, calendars and the rest comes to life in this saga of a lost adventurer and his daughter's search to find him. Liz Dutton is haunted by dreams after her father disappears in Guatemala, dreams which convince her that he is still alive. Accompanied by Holly Hobby who has stepped out of an ancestral portrait she runs away and eventually finds her father. In so doing she also exposes a gang of international art thieves. The familiar title encouraged several girls to try this book but none, between nine and fifteen, were entirely happy about it. There is a matter of fact tone about the text that was voted 'boring' by most and for many it was far too long. It is a difficult book to place for the reading level is high but older readers felt the content was beneath them. Not an easy one to sell, I suspect. CL

Vet Riding High
Joyce Stranger,
Carousel,
0 552 53148 5, 85p

If like mine, your school has a high population of children from villages and farms, then the number of girls who read 'The Vet' and 'horsey' books will be disproportionately high. This was a welcome addition to their lists and the theme of young vet who cures an ailing foal and whose dream for a horse of his own is fulfilled was certainly approved. Guaranteed to be a fast mover in many a school bookshop. CL

The City in the Stars
0 552 52154 X

Terror on the Moons of Jupiter
0 552 52155 8

Victor Appleton,
Carousel, 85p each

A new series of space adventures for evelens and upwards starring Tom Swift.

Fast moving, always on the brink of desperation or destruction, with well structured tension, evenly distributed throughout each story. The twelve year olds who read these first two titles



gave unanimous thumbs up verdicts, with the interesting qualification that they didn't read much space stuff now. Obviously kids' reading habits are cyclical, and I wonder if space fiction is going to slip in the popularity stakes for a while in the eighties. BB

The Alien Probe
0 552 52156 6

The War In Outer Space
0 552 52157 4

Victor Appleton,
Carousel, 85p each

Numbers 3 and 4 in the Tom Swift series. I've had no time to try them in school but I know kids in my classes who'll read them. Essentially, they're variations on the Hardy Boys/Nancy Drew formula, though space adventure replaces sleuthing and a few crude gestures are made towards 1980s' concerns like the role of women and racial tolerance. As SF, inevitably, they are poor but they'll serve to introduce top junior/early secondary kids to the vocabulary and themes of the genre; in the absence of more Douglas Hill, one is forced to use such stuff to help develop the reading ability demanded by the more thoughtful novels. SB

Goodbye Day
Olive Dehn, Lions,
0 00 671810 8, 95p

Coral Sands — the latest adventurous, brash but vulnerable kids' book heroine — describes a Friday-long, Manchester-wide search for her Dad when she thinks he's run out on the family. There's humour, a fair degree of authenticity in Coral's voice and the ultimately rather contrived storyline doesn't

begin groaning until you're well into the book, the effective first part relying mainly on larger than life characters, anecdotes and conflict at school. It's short, fast-moving and has an eye-catching if peculiarly-drawn cover. (Coral looks deformed and Lions' house-style for female heads is beginning to pall.) For all its weaknesses, worth trying with early secondary kids. SB

Against the Sea
Douglas Reeman,
Sparrow Books,
0 09 927180 X, 95p

Phases come and go in children's fiction, but one constant seems to be the lure of true stories of courage and heroism. These eight tales of man's struggle against the sea fall into this category perfectly. From the oft-quoted versions of Kon-Tiki and Dunkirk dramas to the lesser-known tales of bravery, endurance and survival, Douglas Reeman demonstrates the story-teller's art in its many facets. With a long and creditable list of 'sea stories' to his name already, this collection simply confirms his reputation within this genre. Each story is conciseness personified and ideal material for reading to classes in either the upper Junior or early Secondary years. BB

The Robbers
Nina Bawden, Puffin,
0 14 03.1317 6, 95p

Money, the having of it or the not having of it is one of the

main themes of this competent story of Philip, a well-connected but over-protected lad and his strong friendship with Darcy, who reminds one slightly of a modern-day Artful Dodger. Their intention to provide money for Darcy's somewhat trouble-stricken family eventually leads both into conflict with the police but nevertheless strengthens the bonds even further between these two very different individuals.

The story is likely to engage 10 year olds and over but I hope that they will not be disappointed by it after reading the over-stated blurb on the cover and inside. Nina Bawden's books are generally quite popular and I am sure that ardent fans will not be disappointed by this one. DB

John Diamond
Leon Garfield, Puffin,
0 14 03.1366 4, 95p

This excellent novel won the Whitbread Award for 1980, deservedly so. The plot twists and turns as windingly as the verminous, teeming alleyways of Eighteenth Century London where it is mostly set. Hatred and revenge stalk the seedy ale houses, the shabby Solicitor's chambers and the mouldering lodgings where the characters meet, but, loyalty, friendship and scrupulous honesty are shaded in too and mercifully triumph in the end.

David Jones, in an attempt to allay his father's tortured ghost, comes from the country to

London in order to right Mr Jones' earlier wrongs, principally towards Mr Diamond, a former business associate. The capital is a far cry from Hertford and the young man must learn fast if he is to survive both the place and the machinations of John Diamond, son of the original injured party.

It's not pure history, it's historical adventure, fast and absorbing for competent junior and lower secondary readers. DB

Anne of the Island
Anne's House of Dreams

L.M. Montgomery,
Puffin, 0 14 03.1463 6,
0 14 03.1470 9, £1.25
each

Reading these two novels has taken a considerable degree of effort. Try as I might to be open-minded I still come back to two fundamental questions — which Puffineers read these? and is the sole reason for publication something to do with the sequel syndrome?

One assumes that Puffin anticipate an audience for them, otherwise they wouldn't be producing them. They claim that having read *Anne of Green Gables* and *Anne of Avonlea* these sequels will be enjoyed by everyone who wants to know more about this engaging character.

This effusive language is likely to lead Puffin readers into

these "heartwarming" stories and then to disappoint all but the most experienced and tenacious of them. After all, these stories were written over 50 years ago for an audience, I suspect, who were generally more appreciative of reading as a leisure activity, most likely more versed in manners and social grace, and generally more naive about the chemistry of boy/girl relationships. Present day Puffin readers, whom I take to be few above 13-14, (Puffin Plus is supposed to pick up 12+ readers), would find Anne and her companions at best quaint and at worst incomprehensible.

In the former book Anne and her Avonlea friends are beginning to pair off into marriage and Anne herself is at College, where she is making her way in life and coming to terms with her deeper feelings for her childhood friend Gilbert, to whom she is married in the second book. They go to live in bliss in Four Winds Harbour, where an unfortunate neighbour, Leslie Moore, becomes Anne's uneasy, but enduring friend especially in Anne's own time of trouble — hardly riveting reading for under 12 year olds. DB

Older Readers

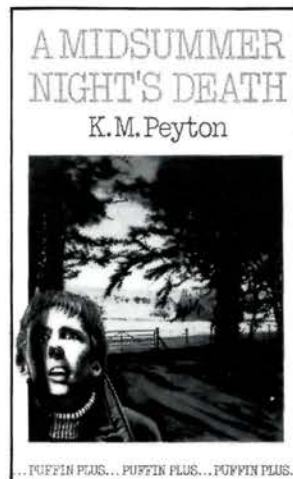
Empty World
John Christopher, Puffin
Plus, 0 14 03.1305 2,
95p

I can't see this attracting a huge audience. The plodding start sees Neil Miller, already solitary after the death of his family in a car crash, emerging as one of the handful who survive a world-wide Plague. Subsequently, John Christopher places the emphasis on character rather than drama; barring one brief encounter with a mildly deranged boy, Neil remains alone until the last few chapters when he intrudes upon two girls. In terms of tension, the story picks up then — too late for most — because one girl resents his presence bitterly. (Personally, I became very uneasy about Christopher's hints of lesbian tendencies in his treatment of this character.) Many kids would find the open ending irritating. It wouldn't hurt to keep a copy handy but don't expect too much. SB

Barriers
Judy Allen, Sphere,
0 7221 2558 5, £1.25

A novelisation of William Corlett's award-winning kids' TV series. The death of his "parents" in a boating accident leads to 17 year old Billy Stanyon learning that he was adopted as a baby. Thereafter, a quest to discover more about his real parents and, of course, to find the real Billy. This leads to a series of brushes with different life-styles, while basic stability is assured by his elderly solicitor-guardian and the faithful spinster secretary. Mixed in, too, are thriller elements arising from his real parents' past in Hungary and the mysterious circumstances of their death. The various episodes might be sufficiently interesting to fill 30 minutes (less adverts and credits) on a dull Sunday afternoon but the book seems over-long and, often, rather aimless. Nice touches in the characterisation help a little but I wouldn't buy too many copies. 14+. SB

A Midsummer Night's Death
K.M. Peyton, Puffin
Plus, 0 14 03.1355 9,
£1.00



Jonathan Meredith, having survived a kidnap in *Prove Yourself a Hero*, returns to his public school only to find himself mixed up in a murder. An unpopular, self-centred English teacher is fished out of the river and, step by step, Jonathan learns that it wasn't suicide and that the killer is Hugo, a master he idolises. Hugo teaches rock-climbing and, inevitably, on a trip to North Wales, Jonathan finds

his life in danger. A strange cover but a useful book to have around for the 14+ group. The characters are the main concern so it won't be a smash, more a steady mover. SB

The Pigman's Legacy
Paul Zindel, Puffin Plus,
0 14 03.1454 7, £1.00

With six Zindel novels in Lions, you must know the likely demand for *Legacy* in your school. Like many other readers, I found it disappointing — not because it's badly done; it's just no advance, we've heard it all before. To cash in on his earlier success, Zindel sends John and Lorraine back to Mr Pignati's house to find another old man. Sailing close to the wind, the kids brighten his last days, helped by Dolly, a bouncy cleaner from school. Fast-flow prose, more didactic (you might say 'positive') than *The Pigman*, a professional job. Regrettably, we don't have enough teenage paperbacks in print to be able to pick and choose. ● SB

MONSTERS, GHOSTS & WITCHES

A consumer report

Cathy Lister took this collection of 'horrors' into two schools to get some first-hand reactions from potential customers.

13th Armada Ghost Book

Ed. Mary Danby, Armada, 0 00 691913 8, 85p

6th Armada Monster Book

Ed. R. Chetwynd-Hayes, Armada, 0 00 691744 5, 85p

Creepy Creatures

Ed. Barbara Ireson, Beaver, 0 600 32064 2, 95p

Fantasy Tales

Ed. Barbara Ireson, Beaver, 0 600 20056 6, £1.10

The Beaver Book of Horror Stories

Ed. Mark Ronson, Beaver, 0 600 20383 2, 95p

A Book of Witches

Ruth Manning-Sanders, Magnet, 0 416 21910 1, 95p

The Vampire Terror and Other True Mysteries

Peter Haining, Armada, 0 00 691954 5, 85p

An A-Z of Monsters

Ian Woodward, Beaver, 0 600 20325 5, 95p

A Young Person's Guide to Witchcraft

Bernard Brett, Granada, 0 583 30465 6, 85p

A Young Person's Guide to Ghosts

Bernard Brett, Granada, 0 583 31466 4, 85p

The Tiswas Book of Ghastly Ghosts

Comp. Helen Pidcock, Carousel, 0 552 54186 9, 85p

'Got anything about ghosts?' 'I'd like a really scary book — vampires or something.' Familiar requests, both in the school bookshop and the library. Many children seem to think that these sorts of books cannot possibly be either boring or difficult — even though sadly they frequently prove to be both. Consequently many eyes opened wide in anticipation when this collection was offered. We tested the books with groups of pupils from nine to fifteen, both setted and mixed ability, in two schools.

Five of the books were non-fiction.

If vampires and other dreaded creatures are true, should telling about them add to or detract from the horror? The cover of Peter Haining's *The Vampire Terror and Other True Mysteries* promises terrifying truth to chill the blood and raise the hair. However most readers found that the promise was not kept. The authorial presence at the beginning of each story leads into an informative, at times even chatty, narrative rather than a spine-chiller. If this is the author's intention then the front cover picture and the back cover synopsis are misleading. The response of the older testers, in particular, include 'uninspiring', 'not very convincing', 'any feeling of mystery is dispelled'; a pity for the stories have considerable interest and potential for discussion and as voluntary reading. Presented like this they attract would-be readers and then disappoint.

The two Granada texts, *A Young Person's Guide to Witchcraft* and *A Young Person's Guide to Ghosts*, are illustrated by the author, with sketches which convey a sense of reality and which match the cover designs, more orthodox than the cinematic design on Peter Haining's volume but also

more convincing. Each chapter refers to several witches or ghosts of a particular era or influence and Bernard Brett's style, backed by historical fact, is fluent and interesting and was generally approved.

Beaver's *An A-Z of Monsters* by Ian Woodward is described in the blurb as 'essential reading for all monster lovers' and if a vote was taken it would win hands down among the non-fiction books. Some testers felt that the cover might have depicted a more grotesque monster but even those (few) who admitted no real interest in the subject enjoyed the potted information on monsters across the centuries and around the world. The text was very tightly written and I found myself having to read an item more than once to understand it fully. However the attraction of being able to dip into the pages and discover briefly set out facts rather than reading through a lengthy dissertation was undeniable. It is a book which should sell well and be used by a wide range of children; even the less able readers were prepared to struggle with each short section.

A less challenging read for the younger group, and for them perhaps the most popular choice, was *The Tiswas Book of Ghastly Ghosts*. Those over eleven scorned the large print and easy reading style but for those in lower middle school the dazzling cover, associations with Tiswas and the brief but true stories were a hit. Helen Pidcock's compilation blends the ingredients for tingling spines with the exuberance of the associated TV programme. The result, a book that won much spontaneous acclaim.

Six of the books were collections of stories.

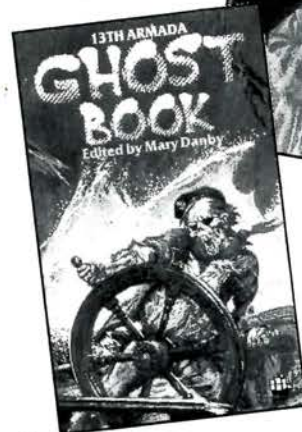
The three Beaver books — *Horror Stories*, *Creepy Creatures* and *Fantasy Tales* — were all received favourably by older testers. The cover of *Horror Stories*, a luminous green, fanged face, caused giggles rather than shivers but the stories were very much enjoyed. The linguistic level is generally high and the content frequently gory. 'It was a colossal and nameless blasphemy with glaring red eyes, and it held in bony claws a thing that had been a man, gnawing at the head as a child nibbles at a stick of candy,' for example. Print in all three is small and tightly packed, there are no illustrations and few children under twelve were tempted after an initial scanning. However response from our consumers indicated that for reasonably competent readers they could be an answer to 'Why haven't you anything more adult?' in the bookshop and the library. A variety of themes by well-known names appear in each list, among them John Christopher, Leon Garfield, Joan Aiken and T.H. White. The price of *Fantasy Tales*, £1.10, brought scathing comments from some.

The 13th Armada *Ghost Book* has a most enticing cover, suitably chilling and without the stereotyped ghouliness of the other Armada covers. Mary Danby's selections are often popular with middle school readers and this one was no exception. High school comment was a little disparaging about the reading level, around ten years, but the testers acknowledged that they would probably have enjoyed the stories at an earlier stage. It's a careful selection with sufficient variety and suspense to capture the imagination of children older than ten years who are less capable readers or less widely experienced in this genre.

The other Armada collection, the sixth in the Monster series, caused less excitement. The reading level is higher but the selection less stimulating and the general response by the children to this one was 'I might borrow this book, but not buy it.'

'It is the absolute and very comforting rule of the fairy tale that the good and brave shall be rewarded and that the bad people shall come to a bad end,' says Ruth Manning-Sanders in her introduction to *A Book of Witches*. And her traditionally structured, delightful re-tellings do not break it. The fantasy world she introduces is a very different one from the bizarre and frightening one of all the above books. There were some entertainingly paternalistic reviews by the High school group, approving the lack of frightening material and recommending this collection to all 'little' children. It is indeed well up to the standard of Ruth Manning-Sanders' very pleasurable and satisfying anthologies. Recommended for all teachers for reading aloud to junior school classes and an ideal reading book for able junior and lower middle school children.

Watching children peruse these books there is one certain lesson for publishers. Covers must stand up to their promise. The goriest cover may tempt those looking for excitement but brings forth the most damning comments if it fails to provide the anticipated thrills and chills. In causing such disappointment it may cause also a backward step to be taken by the less eager to read. ●



Schools & Space Travel, Marmalade & Grasshoppers?

MARMALADE ATKINS IN SPACE

Andrew Davies

Marmalade Atkins, as you well know, is a Bad Girl. So bad, in fact, that as a final attempt to make a Bad Girl Good, she's blasted into space... Expelled from endless schools, persistently naughty, all other attempts to improve her behaviour have failed. And Marmalade is determined that things should stay that way!

Marmalade Atkins in Space, already a popular TV play, is to be serialised on television this year. This is second in the *Marmalade* series, which began with *Marmalade and Rufus* ("explosively funny", T.E.S.) by playwright, scriptwriter, novelist and Guardian Award Winner Andrew Davies.
Publication: February £4.50



Curl Up With A Grasshopper... Goodbye To Pine Street *Mabel Esther Allan*

It's almost the final term at Pine Street School for the Almond House Gang, about to move on to Ash Grove Comprehensive. Yet the term proves anything *but* dull when Mr Shaw's replacement, Mr Drake, takes charge. And there's a trap to be set for bullying Bert Clay and his cronies...

Sixth in the popular *Pine Street* series which began with *The Pine Street Pageant*, this highly acclaimed writer who has written over 140 books for children.

Publication: February £3.95 hb, £1.25 pb
A Blue Grasshopper

TOPSY AND TIM ACTIVITY BOOKS

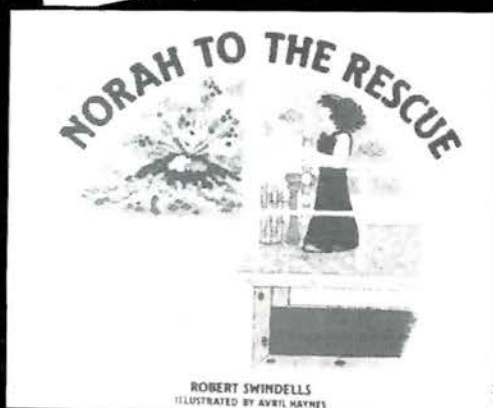
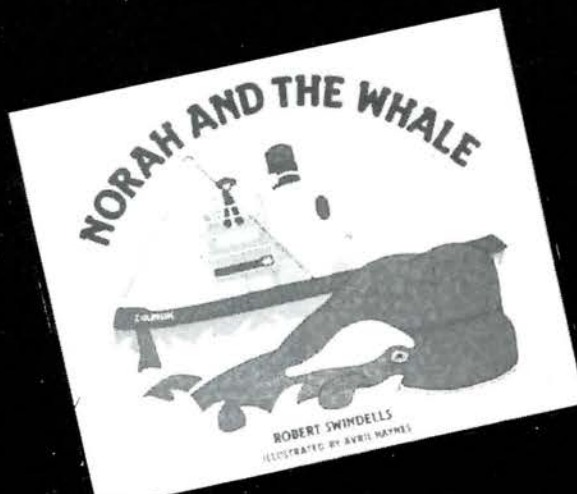
Topsy & Tim Can Help Birds
Topsy & Tim Can Make Music

Jean and Gareth Adamson

Lively and instructive books in the well-loved *Activity* series, which make learning with twins Topsy and Tim such fun.

Easy-to-follow text and pictures.
Publication: March £2.05 hb, 95p pb

the best in books from Blackie and Abelard



New books from Wheaton

NORAH TO THE RESCUE NORAH AND THE WHALE

ROBERT SWINDELLS

Full colour illustrations by Avril Haynes

In *Norah's Ark* this intrepid and resourceful eight-year-old returns a collection of zoo animals to their natural homes; in *Norah's Shark* she vanquishes a killer shark with the aid of a treacle sponge. Now in *Norah to the Rescue* she answers an S.O.S. from the people of Turtle Island who are threatened by an erupting volcano; and in *Norah and the Whale* she takes revenge on the cruel and boastful whaler Captain Larsen.

Norah to the Rescue 0 08-024979-5 £3.75
Norah and the Whale 0 08-024980-9 £3.75
Norah's Ark 0 08-024177-8 £3.75
Norah's Shark 0 08-024178-6 £3.75

For ages 4-8 Each book cased

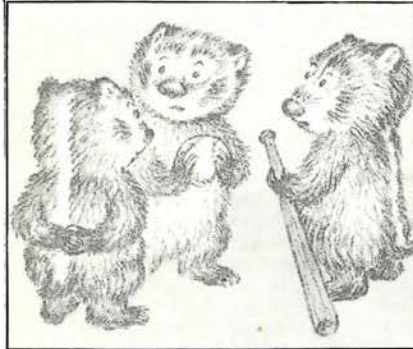
A. WHEATON & CO. LTD.,
HENNOCK ROAD, EXETER EX2 8RP

THREE HOBAN HITS

All Russell Hoban's stories — if we let them — show us ourselves. Many of them with the collaboration of a series of talented artists have been turned into picture books.

We've picked three characters to bring you three ages of man — Hoban style.

The stories about Frances tell of the sort of thing most young badgers who have just started school have to cope with: getting to sleep, food fads, a new baby in the family, jealousy. For human beings — young and adult — it can be comforting to see how much you have in common with a loving family of nice furry animals. Here Frances finds out how to deal with 'best friends'.



"Let's play baseball," said Frances.
"I can't," said Albert, "today is my wandering day."
"Can I wander with you?" asked Frances.
"No," said Albert, "the things I do on my wandering days aren't things you can do."

The next morning when Frances went to Albert's house, Albert was playing ball with his friend Harold.
"Can I play?" asked Frances.
"She's not much good," said Harold to Albert, "and besides, this is a no-girls game."



"If any boys come, they can't play," said Frances, "and I think I will be your friend now."
"How can a sister be a friend?" said Gloria.
"You'll see," said Frances ...
"Will it be just today, or longer?"
"Longer," said Frances, "and today we are going to do something big, with no boys ... we will have an outing."
"What good is an outing without boys?" said Albert.
"It is just as good as a ball game without girls," said Frances, "and maybe a whole lot better."
"Can't I be a best friend?" asked Albert.
"I don't think it is the kind of thing you can do," said Frances, "and it would ruin my whole day to have to explain it to you."

Best Friends for Frances
Faber, 0 571 09584 4, £2.95
Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.272 6,
60p

The two stories about Tom and Captain Najork are a triumphant celebration of the superiority of small boys over rigid, repressive adults who do not believe in "fooling around." Quentin Blake's pictures are the perfect complement.



Tom lived with his maiden aunt, Miss Fidget Wonkham-Strong. She wore an iron hat, and took no nonsense from anyone. Where she walked the flowers drooped, and when she sang the trees all shivered.



"Really," said Aunt Fidget Wonkham-Strong to Captain Najork, "you must make an effort to teach this boy a lesson."
"Some boys learn hard," said the Captain, chewing his moustache. "Now for snodball."

The Crocodile family has two teenage offspring. "Between his table manners and his electric guitar that boy will destroy the world," said Mother. Mr and Mrs Crocodile despair of their son, Arthur, until his sister, Emma, brings home a new friend, Alberta Saurian. When the Saurians invite the crocodiles to supper Arthur decides it's time he learned how to eat.

"The fork, Arthur," said Emma. "Watch how I hold it. Don't make a fist like that."
Arthur watched how Emma held her fork.
"Howmaydays wegot?" he said to Emma.
"Not with your mouth full," said Emma.
"We have five more days. Lots of time."

Every evening Arthur practised eating the way Mother and Father and Emma did, and for every dinner Mother cooked different things for him to practise on. On Monday night she said,
"I ought to have made a cheese fondue instead of mackerel. If they have a fondue tomorrow he's going to be in trouble."

"Arthur," said Father, "don't ball up your napkin in your left hand like that."
"Too many things to think about," said Arthur. He was breathing hard.
"Relax," said Father.
"Listen to how Emma breathes."



How Tom Beat Captain Najork and his Hired Sportsmen
Cape, 0 224 00999 0, £3.50
Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.244 0,
70p

Dinner at Alberta's
Cape, 0 224 01393 9, £3.50
Young Puffin, 0 14 03.1267 6,
70p

Authorgraph No. 12



RUSSELL HOBAN

There's a stillness about Russell Hoban which draws you in and makes you want to know more about him. His character seems to be a mixture of reserve, gentle humour and reflection, so that when you talk to him you feel as if you're watching the surface of a swiftly flowing river. From a distance it appears to be motionless, reflective. Closer in, you can see the strong current, but however close you look, you know you'll never get to the bottom. Unless you fall in.

Last year saw the publication of his fiftieth book. Appropriately enough for such a milestone, it was that haunting modern fable, *The Serpent Tower*, a book deeply imbued with a feeling for the way children see the world, and plugged in to the magic of number, symmetry and words. Most of his books — 46 in fact — have been children's titles, and it's only in recent years that he has begun to write novels for adults. But the same strength is apparent in both his children's and his adult books. In many ways, the soul that sits inside Russell Hoban's head, staring out through the skull's eyeholes, knows two things. First, the way children think; and second, that every adult is still a child, only dressed in grown-up clothes.

The stillness of non-being passed into motion for Russell Hoban when he was born in Lansdale, Pennsylvania in 1925. He began to display talent at an early age. 'I drew well from the age of five, and it was always assumed that I was going to be some kind of visual artist.' However, he didn't go straight to art school. He did five weeks at university first before transferring, only to be swept up into the United States Army and the second world war a year and a half later.

'After getting out of the army I painted in a desultory way, and I had a whole lot of jobs before I settled down.' His jobs included working for small magazines and in advertising, and five years as a television art director. He eventually settled down to being a freelance illustrator.

'It was during my time in advertising that I learned the discipline to become a freelance,

but my careers kind of overlapped. It was while I was a freelance illustrator that I began to write children's books.'

It was in 1959 that his first children's book, a non-fiction title called *What Does It Do and How Does It Work?* appeared. 'There was a time when I was concentrating on drawing construction machines, and some friends saw some of my drawings and said they thought they would make a good children's book.' An introduction to the children's book department at Harper and Row in New York through another friend followed, and Russell Hoban the published author was born — he produced both text and pictures for the book.

'After that it just happened that having become a published author I naturally went on writing books.' Another non-fiction title followed, and then his first story book — *Bedtime for Frances*. 'I don't know how it happened, I just started writing about the things children come up with.'

After the first three books he began to concentrate on writing while his first wife Lillian — with whom he had four children — drew the pictures. He, meanwhile, continued his career as an illustrator in other fields, but with growing disenchantment.

'Around 1965 I didn't want to be an illustrator any more because I felt that I wasn't temperamentally suited to it. I wanted to put more into every assignment than was appropriate to the job. I used to say that I never made more than 50 cents an hour, because if I was given 5,000 dollars for a job I'd put in 10,000 hours.'

'I pretty well gave up illustration then, but most big career decisions aren't straight decisions so I really just changed my way of acting and, I found out later on, that I had made a decision. I just went round with my portfolio less and less and the phone rang less and less too.'

So in 1965, to confirm the new direction of his career, he took a job as a copywriter for the famous advertising agency Doyle, Dane and Bernbach. 'I was there from 1965 to 1967, by which time there were enough

royalties coming in from the children's books to allow me to become a full-time writer.'

Apart from the royalties reaching the right level in that year, 1967 was also the year in which *The Mouse and his Child* was published. He began writing the book in October 1963, and the four years which it took to finish straddled his careers as illustrator and advertising copywriter. He still has the toy which inspired him to write the book — and it still works.

'It just happened that I became preoccupied with a particular toy. There's a lot of paths in the way they look and the way they move, and having first seen it in a collection of toys under a friend's Christmas tree, I found that the Mouse and his Child stayed in my mind. There seemed to be a story there that wanted to be put down.'

At first he thought it would make a slightly longer book than the picture books he was doing. 'But it kept on getting longer and longer, and by degrees it became a novel-length story.' He sent his editor, Ferd Monjo, at Harper and Row each chapter as he finished it, and believes his help was vital in his progress as a writer.

'It was with his coaching that I began to be able to explore the material of a story idea and just stay with it until it got to where it wanted to go. It seems a simple thing, just common sense, but it isn't that easy to get into the material-exploring habit. At first you tend to want certain things to happen and you try to make your story go that way. It takes some discipline to have the patience to look at everything and see what's there — and let the story go the way it wants to go, which might not be the way you want.'

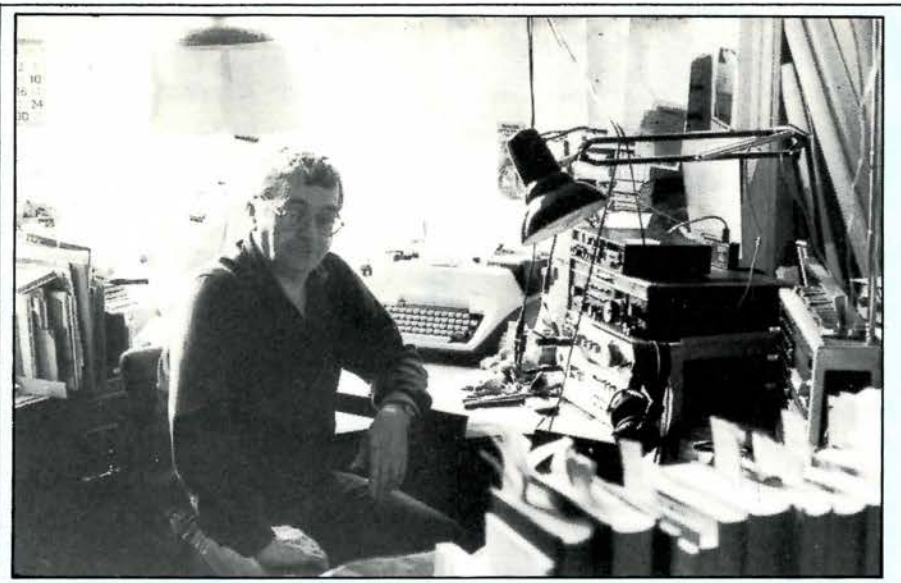


The Mouse and his Child — the original toy which inspired the book

It's interesting that he never actually thought of *The Mouse and his Child* as a children's book. 'I thought I was writing an adult's book at the time. It was simply as much as I could write with all of the resources I could command. There were no concessions made to vocabulary or level of comprehension, and I didn't attempt to sell it as an adult book because I didn't think anybody would publish an adult novel about a clockwork mouse.' It was, in fact, his connection with the children's department of Harper and Row which led to it being published as a children's book.

For the last 12 years Russell Hoban has been living in London, and he explains his transatlantic migration quite simply. 'It's a curious kind of thing, but I had always liked English writers and I had always assumed that some time in my life I would spend some time in this country.'

'After writing *The Mouse and his Child* I thought, well, now I've written a novel I'll just go on writing novels, but I didn't have an idea for a novel-length story for a long time. So I thought, well, now's a good time to have a couple of years in London.'



Russell Hoban at his desk, with his short-wave radio equipment.

Two things happened in London which changed his life completely. One was the break-up of his first marriage, and the second was a new development in his writing. 'What happened was that London became the transition joint for me from children's books into adult novels. After I broke up with my first wife I hurled myself headlong into adult fiction, and ever since then that's what I've been doing. When a place is a place where the really big events of your life happen, you and that place have something between you from then on.'

Another event which changed his life was his marriage to Gundula Ahl, and the birth of three more children. Readers of the two books he did with Colin McNaughton last year — *They Came From Aargh!* and *The Great Fruit Gum Robbery* — would recognise Jake, Ben and Wieland immediately. Things seem to have come together for Russell Hoban in every way in recent years. His adult books — *The Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz*, *Kleinzeit*, *Turtle Diary* and *Riddley Walker* — have all been received very well, as have his latest children's books, and

there's a lot of interplay between them and his daily life as the father of three small children. One way of describing *The Mouse and his Child* could be that it's a book about finding a place to be. Russell Hoban has found his place, both physically and metaphorically.

'I've often heard people say that every artist has a particular theme which he goes through over and over again, and I suppose my theme has to do with placing the self, finding a place, and in one way or another all my characters in all of my books go through it.'

'I'm also a firm believer that if we pay attention to kids we can see in them some fundamental states of being that we get conditioned out of as we get older. I'm reminded of watching Jake when he was little with a toy. Gundula's German, and the kids are bilingual, and when he was little Jake would sometimes break a toy — make it kaput — and ask me to make it heil — whole again.'

'It began gradually to impress itself on me that kaput was not necessarily less good for him than heil was. It was just another state of things. I think that our need to impose order, to keep things whole, is often fear-motivated. It's a kind of holding on, we're

afraid to be carried along on this one-way trip and we cherish the delusion that if only we can make everything tidy perhaps there will be a return somehow.'

In *Turtle Diary*, one of the adult characters — Neera, a children's writer — says that we're telling kids continually 'this is the way to be' and we're afraid that one day they'll say there isn't any way to be. And in *Riddley Walker*, his last novel, a haunting story set in Kent, thousands of years after a nuclear holocaust has totally destroyed civilisation 'as we know it', a key phrase is the '1 Big 1', which stands variously for the nuclear bomb itself and also the unity of all that there is in the universe, a unity of which we are all fragments.

'This being my second family, and this being a new life violently distinct from the old life, I'm noticing things in a different way and taking them in a different way. Having these kids around me, I'm aware all of the time that they are closer to the 1 Big 1 than I am. They're closer to the unity in which there is multiplicity, and I get a lot out of their being and their doing. With all of them at different times and in different ways I'm getting fresh reinforcement for continually opening perception and being open to what I'm receiving.'

Russell Hoban is a man who chooses his words — both in conversation and print — very carefully. *Riddley Walker* took him five and a half years to write, and he's currently working on a new adult novel set in the period of the first crusade, for which he has to do much arduous research — which he doesn't enjoy. Writing books like *They Came From Aargh!*, *The Dancing Tigers* and *Ace Dragon Ltd* come, he says, as something of a relaxation in the course of his deeply committed — and very philosophical — work on his novels. 'They're also a bit more like poetry. The work I do might only take a day or a week, but it's very concentrated, very intense.'

In the meantime he sits at a desk in the bay window of his Fulham house, looking out on to a park and a children's playground, surrounded by short wave radio equipment on which he tunes in to radio stations all over the world. 'I suppose what I'm really writing about in the end is the surpassing strangeness of being alive. And the older I get the more I get to believe that you just have to let go and tune into the vibrations around you in whatever you do.'

Russell Hoban books

Children's

The Serpent Tower
Methuen/Walker,
0 416 05600 8, £4.50

The Mouse and his Child
Faber, 0 571 08844 9, £3.25
Puffin, 0 14 03.0841 5, 95p

They Came From Aargh!
Methuen/Walker,
0 416 05840 X, £2.95

The Great Fruit Gum Robbery
Methuen/Walker,
0 416 05790 X, £2.95

Flat Cat
Methuen/Walker,
0 416 89960 9, £3.50

Arthur's New Power
Gollancz, 0 575 02835 1,
£3.50

A Near Thing for Captain Najork
Cape, 0 224 01197 9, £3.50

The Twenty-Elephant Restaurant
Cape, 0 224 01707 1, £2.95

Ace Dragon Ltd
Cape, 0 224 01706 3, £3.25

The Dancing Tigers
Cape, 0 224 01374 2, £2.95

Harvey's Hideout
Cape, 0 224 00957 5, £2.50

Crocodile and Pierrot
Cape, 0 224 01172 3, £3.50

La Corona and the Tin Frog
Cape, 0 224 01397 1, £3.50

The Mole Family's Christmas
Cape, 0 224 00958 3, £2.50

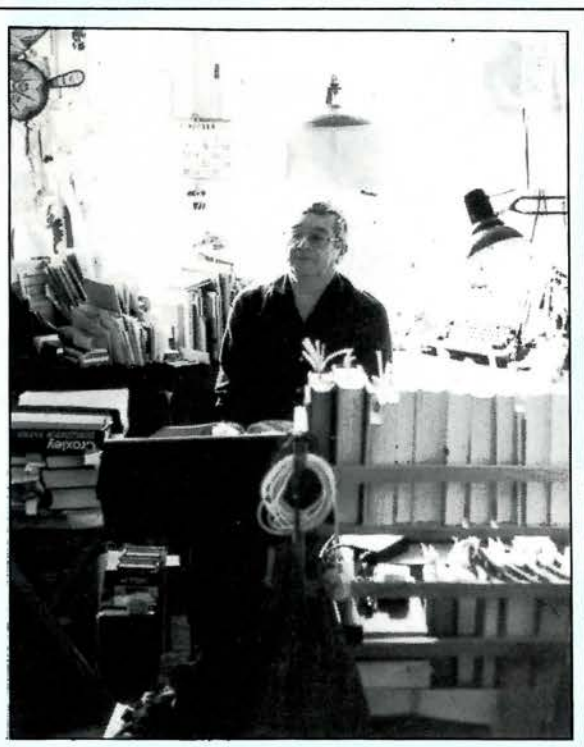
Adult

Kleinzeit
Cape, 0 224 00964 8, £5.95

The Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz
Cape, 0 224 00831 5, £5.95
Picador, 0 330 24160 5, £1.25

Turtle Diary
Cape, 0 224 01085 9, £5.95
Picador, 0 330 25050 7, £1.00

Riddley Walker
Cape, 0 224 01851 5, £5.95
Picador, 0 330 26645 4, £1.95



News about Awards

The Young Observer/Rank Organisation Prize for Teenage Fiction

Held for the first time in 1981 the competition was for the best full-length published novel written for teenagers. The judges were Lionel Davidson, Frank Delaney, Emma Tennant, Leon Garfield and Janet Crumbie, editor of *Young Observer*.

The winner who received a cheque for £500 is Ian Strachan for *Moses Beech* (OUP, 0 19 271451 1, £5.95). Published last May *Moses Beech* is the story of a relationship between an old man and a young boy running from a no-hope home where his failed layabout father has forced him to leave school. Holed up with Moses in his isolated cottage, his amusement at such a simple way of life turns to admiration.

This is Ian Strachan's first published book, but not the first he has written. He first tried his hand at a novel for young adults in 1977. It was rejected by OUP but created enough interest for them to look carefully at his second book, *Moses Beech*, and accept it.

Ian Strachan, who is 43, is a producer at BBC Radio Stoke-on-Trent and lives with his wife and small son in a valley in Staffordshire very like the one in which his story is set.

Six other books were shortlisted for the prize:

Sweet Frannie, Susan Sallis, Heinemann, 0 434 96165 5, £4.95

Goodnight Mister Tom, Michelle Magorian, Kestrel, 0 7226 5701 3, £5.50

Poona Company, Farrukh Dhondy, Gollancz, 0 575 02901 3, £4.95

The Islanders, John Rowe Townsend, OUP, 0 19 271449 X, £5.25

Horse of Air, Lucy Rees, Faber, 0 571 11559 4, £5.25

Mother of the Free, Colin McLaren, Rex Collings, 0 86036 149 7, £5.00

The Kathleen Fidler Award — New Rules

Announced last year as a memorial to Kathleen Fidler who died in 1980, the award is 'to encourage both new authors and established authors, new to writing for the 8-12 age group'. Originally limited to writers born or living in Scotland, the competition is now open to writers of any nationality and age.

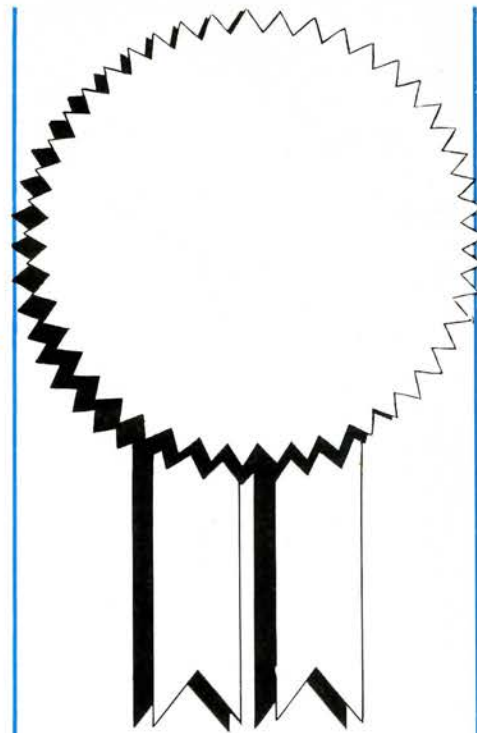
A panel of young readers will be involved in the selection process. The winner receives £500 plus a rosewood and silver trophy. Entries by 31st March 1982 to The Kathleen Fidler Award, c/o NBL Scotland, 15a Lynedoch Street, Glasgow G3 6EF.

Beaver and Hamish Hamilton in search of an Adventure

Adventure stories, as confirmed by the recent research report **Extending Beginning Reading**, are certainly top of the pops with upper junior readers. Looking for an exciting, readable story in this genre are Beaver and Hamish Hamilton who announce a

competition open to new and established writers. First prize is £500 with the possibility of publication. Closing date — 30th June 1982.

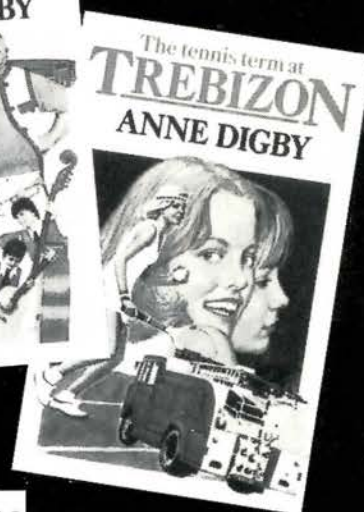
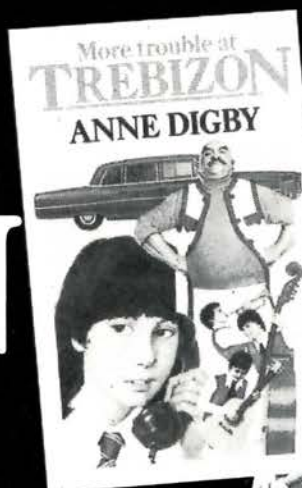
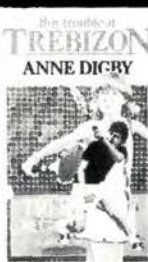
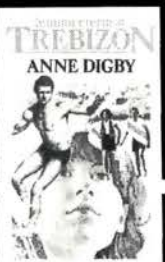
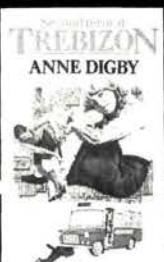
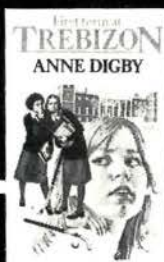
Details from: Hamish Hamilton/Beaver Junior Fiction Prize, Hamish Hamilton Ltd., Garden House, 57-59 Long Acre, London WC2E 9JZ.



TWO NEW ADVENTURES IN THE BEST-SELLING TREBIZON SCHOOL SERIES ANNE DIGBY

The present day adventures of Rebecca Mason
and the rest of 'the six' at Trebizon School

Also in this series



**GRANADA
PAPERBACKS**

Greyfriars to GRANGE HILL

It's over seventy years since the first of the 'chaps' of Greyfriars appeared in the pages of that immortal comic, **Magnet**. Since then we have had two World Wars, the rise (and fall) of state Grammar Schools, the arrival of Comprehensive education, and massive social change — including the growth of a popular 'youth culture'. Hardly surprising then that in that time the School Story lost its place as the dominant form of children's fiction. At one time it seemed to have disappeared for ever in favour of 'family adventures', social realism or, that first division of children's books in the 1960's, fantasy. But school stories are staging a comeback. In *The Turbulent Term* of Tyke Tiler Gene Kemp showed the junior school to be full of possibilities for action-packed, humorous storytelling. Others have followed her example, not least Tim Kenmore whose first novel, published last year, is firmly set in a village primary school. And of course the huge success of *Grange Hill* first on television and then in Robert Leeson's stories has given the secondary school story a new lease of life.

The world the fans of *Grange Hill* were born into is far, far removed from that of the readers of the tales of Greyfriars. So how different is Comprehensive, co-educational Grange Hill from its boarding school predecessors, Greyfriars, St. Dominics, and the Rugby of Tom Brown? Nowadays, we are told, they tell it like it is. Realism comes to school stories: kids get into trouble in and out of school; there's shoplifting, gangs in the precinct, bullying. But remember Flashman and his cronies 'roasting' Tom Brown? Flashman carried back to school drunk from too much gin punch? Tom caught by the keeper for poaching? Skittles, billiards, beer and gambling at the Cockchafer out of bounds to all the boys of St. Dominics? Perhaps it's the 'code' that is different: stiff upper lip, the honour of the school, no sneaking, stand up for the underdog. Is all that past? How different is Tucker Jenkins from Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton?

And what about the girls' school story which has its own history? How would Trisha Yates or tomboy Annette Firman, a new Grange Hill character, fit into a story by Angela Brazil? Could you see them at the Chalet School or Malory Towers? (Institutions which kept their fans right through the school story recession and have recently been joined by Ann Digby's Trebizond which is straight out of *School Friend*.)

What is the appeal of the school story? How 'real' does it have to be? Many of the most enthusiastic readers of the Greyfriars tales had never been to boarding school. Many of the fans of *Grange Hill* are not at urban comprehensive schools. Even if the outward trappings are different, perhaps the *experience* of being at school is much the same in any time or place. There is more than one way of being 'real'. Perhaps too some readers are not looking for realism in school stories. They may be seeking instead an excitement, an order, a justice which is missing from their own boring, chaotic, arbitrary existence. ●

To give us some perspective on all this we have compiled a seven page special feature on **School Stories**.

Mary Cadogan surveys school stories of the last sixty years. Her list is not meant to be comprehensive; but if you are interested to follow up the subject this is the place to start. It's also the place to find some new names to offer to those developing or pursuing a taste for the school story.

Also in this feature: a brief look at school stories for the youngest; an interview with a new young writer who sees school as a natural background for her stories, and a chance to get to know the man behind Grange Hill, Phil Redmond.

A 7 page Supplement on SCHOOL STORIES



The Rise and Fall and Rise of School Stories

Mary Cadogan traces the history of the school story since the beginning of the century.

The twentieth-century school story began with Angela Brazil's *The Fortunes of Philippa* (1906) and Charles Hamilton's tales of St Jim's in the 1907 halfpenny story paper, the *Gem*. In real life, many girls were at last getting away from domestic restraints by going to boarding school. Angela Brazil caught — and glamorised — the new mood of expansive excitement that the world of school symbolised for them, and she swept away for ever the mawkishness that had characterised earlier school stories for girls by L.T. Meade and others. Hamilton, first as 'Martin Clifford' in the *Gem* and then as 'Frank Richards' in the *Magnet* (1908), had more to build on, but also more to demolish in the boys' school genre. With the establishment of Greyfriars he lifted this from muscular but oppressive morality into addictive entertainment for several generations of children.



A 1937 'Magnet' cover from Bunter's Orders.



'Mam'zelle gave a shriek,' from our Editor's own 1946 copy of *Claudine at St Claire's* by Enid Blyton.

Angela Brazil achieved her ends with 'jinky' girlish jargon, 'spiffing' stunts and a positive mania for games and sport. Hamilton was successful because he never wrote down to the child; he dispensed with stereotyped 'goodies' and 'baddies' and created larger-than-life (literally in Billy Bunter's case) characterizations that were nevertheless believable. Adding his own exuberance to the ironies of Kipling's *Stalky & Co* (1899) and Wodehouse's amalgam of drollery and languid individualism in *Tales of St Austin's* (1903 and now available in Puffin), Hamilton hit on the formula for the school story's enduring appeal. This was, of course, the setting up of school as a vigorous world in microcosm, where juveniles — despite the ostensible adult authority of the teaching staff — came into their own as initiators and organisers.

This pattern was embroidered and refurbished over several decades by Hamilton/Brazil imitators and successors. Bernard Ashley has clearly redefined this formula, for the 1980s, in terms of his own school stories, which, he says, deal with 'a boy's attempts to cope with a crisis point in his life, each crisis presenting a problem as serious at the time as any he will later have to face as an adult'. (Like Hamilton and most other successful authors of school stories, Ashley manages not only to express juvenile experiences as if from the inside, but also to convey hints of the child character's adult potential in a way that is revealing and satisfying to the young reader.)

Decline and virtual demise of the genre occurred during the 1960s, when real life children in mixed comprehensive schools increasingly found tales based on single sex boarding schools anachronistic. But recently the school story has been inching back into fashion and, according to several publishers, it is now alive and well. It has, of course, been given a boost by the popularity of the television *Grange Hill* series, possibly also by

Mary Cadogan is an author and reviewer of long standing. In the children's book world she is probably best known for *You're a Brick, Angela!* (about girls' stories) which she co-authored with Patricia Craig (Gollancz, 0 575 02061 X — unhappily out of print but worth pursuing in libraries). She is also known for her widespread reviewing and articles in, amongst others, the *Sunday Times*, *TES*, *Guardian* and now, we're delighted to see, *Books for Keeps*.



Mary is a governor and Secretary of the Krishnamurti Foundation, and she also teaches Movement and Dance. She is married with one teacher daughter and lives in Beckenham, Kent.

Other books include *Women and Children First*, 1978, Gollancz, 0 575 02418 6, £7.50 (aspects of war in literature) and *The Lady Investigates* with Patricia Craig, 1981, Gollancz, 0 575 02885 8, £9.95 (about women detectives).

The Public School (Radley) programmes, and the TV serialisation of Delderfield's *To Serve Them All My Days* which, as well as reawakening adult appetites for school adventures, may also have stimulated juvenile interest. On the market now we see two distinct types of school story — those that look back to classic boarding-school conventions, and those that are firmly contemporaneous and set in co-educational junior and comprehensive backgrounds.

In traditional boarding-school mould, some of the Jennings books are still available in Armada. The first story was published in hardback in 1950, and new titles continued to appear until the late 1970s. Predictably, with such a long series, a certain amount of stereotyping has set in, but the generally lively, genteelly anarchic mood still attracts readers whose social and educational experiences differ vastly from those of Anthony Buckeridge's hero. Jennings and Derbyshire have perfected their own blend of enterprise and ingenuousness which easily confounds adult authority. They still natter in their 1950s slang — 'Mouldy chizz!' for commiseration, and, to express approval, 'Superfantabulistic!'

It was Elinor Brent-Dyer, in fact, who first injected the word 'fabulous' and its jaunty abbreviation 'fab' into school stories. This adjective could appropriately be applied to her own publishing history, as the first of her 58 *Chalet School* books came out as long ago as 1925 and today in Armada the series goes from strength to strength. (In recessionary 1981 its sales were up by 20,000 on the previous year's.) The *Chalet School*, a single sex, but tri-lingual and international Alpine school, is an extraordinary amalgam of British Grit and foreign glamour. Brent-Dyer updated Brazil's turn-of-the-century progressiveness and, while adhering to the basic boarding-school story formula, she added colourful embellishments and, above all, a sense of pace and drama. Girls regularly fall into icebound rivers, get stranded on exposed mountainsides or narrowly escape death by burning.

In the first five books, for example, heroine Joey saves the lives of at least six girls and one dog! All this explains, perhaps, why despite the rival fictional attractions of co-ed schools, adolescent romance and pony sagas the *Chalet School*, in its author's own jargon, still 'turns up trumps'. Like certain other children's writers, Elinor Brent-Dyer was not only a teacher but a school Principal; one often wonders how she found time for her school, and to produce her hundred or so novels for girls.

Enid Blyton, of course, was another teacher-cum-prolific-author, and her school stories date back to the 1940s but still survive tenaciously (*St Clare's* and *Malory Towers* in Methuen and Granada; the *Naughtiest Girl* series in Beaver and Armada).

With less charisma and definition than the Chalet School adventures, they appeal to younger girls. Blyton skated over the surfaces of pubescent allegiances and animosities, but never missed a trick, spicing up her school tales with the expected gruelling lacrosse games and dormy revels, and also with animal antics and sleuthing exploits.

Antonia Forest's school stories also began in the 1940s, and three of them are available in Puffin (**Autumn Term, End of Term, The Cricket Term**). These combine the conventional trappings with a practical, uninflated approach that ensures their continuing sense of realism for today's readers. However, the fact that these long surviving stories — like those of Brent-Dyer — offer plentiful action suggests that girls now demand this as a quintessential ingredient of the genre.

Anne Digby provides it in her Trebizon books, which began as recently as 1978 (six titles are now in Granada paperbacks). The series is midway in mood and style between Brent-Dyer and Blyton, addictive but anachronistic. There are, however, intriguing concessions to social change. For example, Brazil's schoolgirls were often packed off to boarding-school because their parents were away administering the outposts of the British Empire — but Anne Digby's heroine boards at traditional single-sex Trebizon because her oil-expert father is working for the Saudi Arabians. The Trebizon series is an exception to the general rule of today's stories for both boys and girls which, apart from reissues, have moved almost entirely away from boarding-to-day-school themes.

The break with the old tradition came first in Geoffrey Trease's Black Banner books. The first, **No Boats on Bannermere** (Heinemann 1949) reflected the expansive, post-war mood. It skilfully introduced the flavours of outdoor and mystery adventure into a day-school setting (the background is the Lake District and echoes of Arthur Ransome are psychological as well as physical), and provided an intelligent perspective on contemporary issues. The adolescent participants matured during the course of the five-book series, which tackled many of the currently popular 'new adult' themes. The schools were grammar rather than comprehensive, and sexually segregated, but there was lively and realistic joint activity between boys and girls. There were flashes of feminism, too, but this — in the girls-and-boys-together context — was predictably a fluctuating business; there is, for example, a satisfactory moment when Penny and Sue roll Tim down a rock into the lake for calling them 'feeble females', but generally leadership is firmly foisted on the male characters.

The day-school background was also exploited with distinction by Mary K. Harris in **Penny's Way** (1963), which is now available in Puffin. Penny is an unusual heroine — nervous, sensitive and not academically bright — but one with whom many readers can identify. Her school friendships, first with the ingratiating Mavis, then her real meeting of minds with Nicola, are as well defined as those that were so superbly realized in Dorita Fairlie Bruce's between the wars stories. (Her most popular and heavily idealised character, 'Dimsie', might not succeed with today's readers, but one wonders why some enterprising publisher hasn't resurrected her excellent day-school 'Nancy' series in paperback, as this provides all the elements for addictiveness.)

Realism has taken off since **Penny's Way** and the Black Banner books to tackle, with increasing vigour, the challenges facing many children today; their feelings of rejection in alien environments, complexities of relationship in multi-racial groups, or struggles to establish themselves in new and unfriendly schools. Honest and unsentimental examination of social antagonisms, cultural gaps, individual and collective responsibilities are the keynote of the best contemporary school stories. The pill has been sugared with iconoclastic humour in Tony Drake's **Playing It Right** (Puffin). But essentially the mood at Drake's underprivileged, under-equipped Jubilee Street junior school is hard-hitting, and it applies not only to the cricket which is the book's ostensible theme but to its deeper one of airing and alleviating multi-cultural tensions. In **All My Men** (Puffin), Bernard Ashley also exploits with sensitivity intimidation and the misuses of power in a junior school setting. Ashley's experiences as teacher and headmaster have, of course, given him vivid insights into many of the predicaments of the child under class and playground pressures, and he deals effectively with these for various age groups. The individual's need to understand and take responsibility for himself is well tackled for very young primary children in **Dinner Ladies Don't Count** (Julia MacRae Books).

Tim Kennemore's **The Middle of the Sandwich** (Faber) discusses disorientation at the upper junior level, and it is an

index of the author's skill that she brings a sense of freshness and discovery to this well trodden theme. Helen, the heroine, has to leave her London home and school because of her mother's illness, and spend a term at a country village school. At first everything and everyone seems hostile, but Helen eventually learns how to cope by harnessing unsuspected inner resources. There is plenty of dramatic action and humour as well as perceptive use of the confines of school to heighten emotions and awareness. A very different new girl, this time at a co-ed comprehensive, is featured in 'Chutzpah', one of the two school stories in Jan Mark's **Hairs in the Palm of the Hand** (Kestrel). Aggressively resilient Eileen makes it clear from the word go that she will not be regimented by anyone, and on her first day she thoroughly confuses her teachers and schoolmates. She campaigns for pupil-power and, especially, for women's rights (wood- and metal-work classes instead of domestic science, for a start). There is an almost farcical pile-up of disruptive events but the witty, pacy narrative is always well-controlled — with a satisfying twist in its tail that reveals the real strength of Eileen's position.

Since William Mayne's 1965 **No More School** (Puffin), the save-our-school-from-closure-or-destruction motif has attracted several writers. Mayne's original, which focussed on the interests of rural children, had a quirky warmth and charm. Gillian Cross's recent **Save Our School** (Methuen) is a much more anarchic affair. Barny, Spag and Clipper are an irrepressible trio of juniors who, despite being bang up to date as their nicknames suggest, still manage to hark back to the inventive antics of Richmal Crompton's William Brown or Evadne Price's Jane.

In **Save Our School**, Clipper — like Jane in the 1940s and 50s — is strongly feminist, and leader of her group. Her adherents are boys; they are white and she is black. Grange Hill pupils too in their latest exploits (**Grange Hill For Sale**, Fontana Lions) have to put aside individual antagonisms and toe the team-spirited line to save their school. Lively as always, this Grange Hill story nevertheless seems to have lost some of the freshness of the preceding books in the series. (The success of Grange Hill has prompted Armada to launch a new series about a co-educational comprehensive later this year; this time it is a rural school and the author is Alison Prince.)

A heroine who doesn't preserve her school but practically breaks it up is Gene Kemp's Tyke Tiler. **The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler** (Puffin) is a truly innovative book which has given new horizons to the day-school story and an exhilarating boost to juvenile feminism. (The author's follow up, **Gowie Corby Plays Chicken** (Puffin), also about a rebel in a school setting, is entertaining but doesn't rise to Tyke Tiler's literally shattering rooftop heights!)

There are two other really original books which stand half a head above the wide range of currently available school stories — good though so many of these are. **Cora Ravenwing** by Gina Wilson (Faber 1980) and Jan Needle's **My Mate Shofiq** (Fontana Lions 1978) are, like **The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler**, concerned with school friendships of an unusual nature, and also with the gradual reconciliation of 'the outsider' with the privileged, accepted child. In **Cora Ravenwing**, Becky resists but is irrevocably drawn to Cora, an odd, lonely, gipsy-like girl, friendship with whom threatens Becky's status in her 'posh' school — and indeed the reputation of her whole family in their new and conservatively affluent social environment. Community pressures pile up and coerce; the story ends on a note of irresolution and frustration, but the reader is left with a deep sense of the real meaning and quality of friendship. (It's astounding that this beautifully written story hasn't yet been snapped up by paperback publishers.)

In **My Mate Shofiq** the 'outsider' character is the quiet Pakistani boy who stands up to the bullies and eventually strikes up a friendship with the white, ordinary and conformist Bernard. It is difficult to add much to what has already been written about **My Mate Shofiq's** impressive tackling of multi-ethnic problems, except to say that one looks forward to developments of the new and stimulating dimensions that this book has opened for the school story.

Many changes have overtaken this addictive branch of English fiction since its beginnings, but it is satisfying to note that though their methods differ, Shofiq and Bernard, and Tucker Jenkins and his gang are putting down thugs and bullies as decisively as Harry Wharton and other heroes of the Greyfriars remove have been doing since 1908. The wheel of the school story has come full circle with them. Since 1970 the Howard Baker Press has been publishing (in facsimile) more **Magnets** every year than were issued in the original 2d weekly editions during the paper's

1920s and 30s heyday. These are doubtless read mainly by nostalgic adults, but also by some children. The Edwardian manly-boy mood of Greyfriars is perhaps not so far removed after all from that of the tough, co-educational, contemporary, urban comprehensive, Grange Hill. ●

Greyfriars to Grange Hill Booklist

Tales of St Austin's
P.G. Wodehouse, Puffin,
0 14 03.0994 2, 60p

Jennings series
Anthony Buckeridge, Armada,
6 available, 60p-85p

Chalet School series
Elinor Brent-Dyer, Armada,
approx. 15 available, 75p-85p

St Clare's series
Enid Blyton, 6 available,
Methuen, £3.50, and Granada,
75p

Malory Towers series
Enid Blyton, 6 available,
Methuen, £2.95-£3.50, and
Granada 75p

Naughtiest Girl series
Enid Blyton, Beaver, 2
available, 75p, and Armada, 1
available, 85p

Autumn Term
0 14 03.0954 3, 95p

End of Term
0 14 03.1019 3, £1.25

The Cricket Term
0 14 03.1137 8, £1.10

All by Antonia Forest in Puffin

Trebizon series
Anne Digby, Granada, 4
available, 60p-85p
Also, published in January
1982:

More Trouble at Trebizon,
0 583 30434 6, 85p

The Tennis Term at Trebizon,
0 583 30433 8, 85p

No Boats on Bannermere
Geoffrey Trease, Heinemann,
0 435 12016 6, £2.90

Penny's Way
Mary K. Harris, Puffin,
0 14 03.1202 1, 85p

Playing It Right
Tony Drake, Puffin,
0 14 03.1298 6, 80p

All My Men
Bernard Ashley, Puffin,
0 14 03.1131 9, £1.10

Dinner Ladies Don't Count
Bernard Ashley, Julia MacRae
Books, 0 86203 017 X, £2.75

The Middle of the Sandwich
Tim Kennemore, Faber,
0 571 11678 7, £4.25

Hairs in the Palm of the Hand
Jan Mark, Kestrel,
0 7226 5728 5, £4.25

No More School
William Mayne, Puffin,
0 14 03.0376 6, 75p

Save Our School
Gillian Cross, Methuen,
0 416 89800 9, £3.50

Grange Hill For Sale
Robert Leeson, Fontana Lions,
0 00 671813 2, 85p

The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler
Gene Kemp, Puffin,
0 14 03.1135 1, 85p

Gowie Corby Plays Chicken
Gene Kemp, Puffin,
0 14 03.1322 2, 90p

Cora Ravenwing
Gina Wilson, Faber,
0 571 11471 7, £5.25

My Mate Shofiq
Jan Needle, Fontana Lions,
0 00 671518 4, 70p

Greyfriars series
Frank Richards, Howard Baker
Press, 150 available, £4.75-
£7.95

First School Stories

School stories for four and five-year-olds stand or fall by how accurate and reassuring a picture they paint of this new environment. School here is no background for exciting plots of mystery and intrigue; its activities, its rituals, the personalities and relationships of the people in it are all of absorbing interest to those developing a personal survival kit for institutional life. Two of the very best on offer at the moment are

Lucy and Tom Go to School, Shirley Hughes, Gollancz, 0 575 01689 2,
£1.75, and Carousel, 0 552 52145 0, 95p,

and

Timothy Goes to School, Rosemary Wells, Kestrel, 0 7226 5740 4, £3.95.

In *Lucy and Tom Go to School* the events of Lucy's first day — finding a peg (with name and picture), meeting Miss Walker, the busy classroom, playing shops, saying goodbye to Mum, the noisy playground, sorting, colouring, having a story — are all recorded in Shirley Hughes' detailed pictures. Her ability to capture exactly how children sit, stand, play and be makes these especially realistic pictures to explore with children. And Shirley Hughes doesn't make it all sound like a bed of roses either.

Timothy Goes to School, like Rosemary Wells' equally splendid *Benjamin and Tulip*, *Noisy Nora*, *Morris's Disappearing Bag* and *Stanley and Rhoda*, has furry animals standing in for people. Timothy is really looking forward to starting school but sitting next to Claude who is popular and good at everything, especially at making newcomers feel small, unwelcome and wrongly dressed, makes him wonder. His mum tries hard but by the fourth day he's feeling very low.

Suddenly everything begins to look a lot better. The new friends can't understand how they've missed each other — and there's a special pleasure in going back over the pictures to see how Violet was there all the time.

As always with Rosemary Wells it's the interrelationship of words and pictures that makes this apparently simple book so much richer than a first glance might suggest. ●



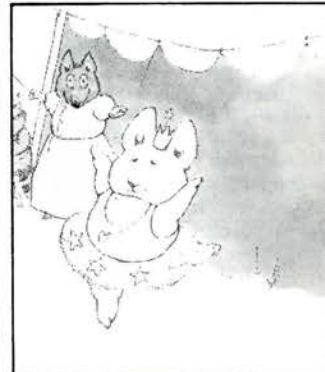
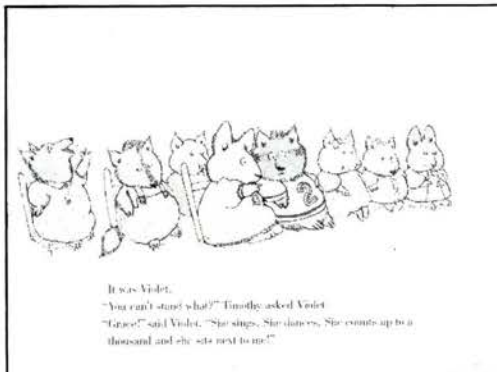
▲ 'Lucy's best thing at school was music and movement. Lucy's worst thing at school was a boy called Neil Bailey who kept pushing her in the playground. Some days Lucy looked forward to going to school and some days she did not want to go very much, but she soon got used to it.'

▼ 'That morning Claude played the saxophone.

"I can't stand it any more," said a voice next to Timothy. It was Violet.

"You can't stand what?" Timothy asked Violet.

"Grace!" said Violet. "She sings. She dances. She counts up to a thousand and she sits next to me!"



A NAME TO NOTE

Three books published in less than a year. Not a common occurrence for any writer; almost unheard of for a new one. But that's exactly what's happened to **Tim Kennemore** whose first novel **The Middle of the Sandwich** appeared last May. The third, **Wall of Words**, is due out in March.

We sent Pat Triggs to find out more about this talented young author.



The first thing to note about Tim Kennemore, not the most important but the first, is that she is not a "he". She hasn't always been Tim. The name arrived at one of the eight schools she went to. "I had it foisted on me by friends. There was some sort of rule; we all had to have one syllable names. I liked it. It felt like me. Now everyone calls me it." What about her original name? "I don't talk about it. Even some of my closest friends don't know." There's a quiet, amused satisfaction at creating a mystery. Also perhaps a more fundamental need to keep an inner self hidden. Anyone who plays around with words and creates characters knows the magic power of names. Give away your name (or your face — Tim hates being photographed too) and they've got you.

In any case Tim Kennemore isn't concerned with self revelation. She's an observer — an acute, funny, deadly, detached observer. And her books are the product of that detachment. **The Middle of the Sandwich**, her first book, is a school story about the summer term Helen Keates spends in a village primary school, sandwiched between time at a private prep school and going to a London comprehensive. The school is drawn in detail from a real school where Tim spent a year when she was ten. "I remember everything about it; how the days were, how it all worked. It was so different from all the other schools I went to, so small, only about sixty or seventy of us. I wanted to write about the school, creating Helen was just a way of getting there." Many of the characters are also drawn directly from memory — some so thinly disguised that she hopes none of the originals are readers of children's books. Other memories were useful too. "I had an awful lot of being the new girl; being the one who didn't know things, feeling shut out. It's awful." Is Helen based on herself? "Heaven's no. She's so wet. She's so much nicer, more obedient and nicely behaved than I was. I suppose she's like me a bit in that she's an only child, and she's got some of my sense of humour. But that's all."

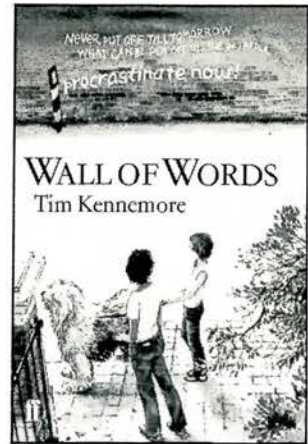


Although she remembers this small country school fondly Tim hates the countryside and paradoxically it was "the awful feeling of being stuck" in a village outside Southend that made her start writing **The Middle of the Sandwich**. "I did it out of boredom." But there was something else too. "I wanted to be good at something. There was nothing else I could do — I had no qualifications, no training. I thought I could write. I had to drive myself to do something. I didn't have a clue what was going to happen after chapter one; that would panic me now."

That was in 1979. Five years or so earlier when she was about seventeen she had sent the manuscript of her first novel to Faber (I'd always wanted to be published by Faber. They had all my favourite authors — Antonia Forest, Helen Cresswell, Catherine Storr.) She had a letter back saying more or less, "no, not really; but keep trying." What about writing at school? "What they liked you to do for school wasn't the sort of thing I liked doing. I could do what they wanted competently, but not with any interest. I didn't think of it as writing and I wasn't doing any of it for myself." For her own amusement she wrote send-ups to make her friends laugh. She's good at that. Each of her three books is different but across all of them you will find her particular brand of humour: a delight in word play, a touch of black comedy, a love of jokes, and send-ups in every form from the gentle sarcasms and ironic observation of **Sandwich** to the full-blooded satirical bite of **The Fortunate Few**. She analyses her strengths and weaknesses. "I'm good at conversation and dialogue. I'm good at humour, bad at action. And I'm totally hopeless at description. I don't even attempt description especially of places. Plots aren't my strong point either." But she's working on that. "**Wall of Words** is the best plotted book I've done. All the strands came together beautifully. It was very pleasing."

How did she come to be published? One publisher was interested in **The Middle of the Sandwich** if she could cut it by a third. So she did — ruthlessly. "I went through it taking a third of the words off each page. I think now I overcut it." When that editor decided that she couldn't take it after all "because of the recession", Tim sent it to Faber along with **The Fortunate Few** which she had just finished. Both were accepted. Which was just as well. "I was just on the point of giving up." She is not the sort of person to go on writing seriously with no prospect of being published; although the motive behind **The Fortunate Few** was pure enjoyment.

"I first thought of it while watching Robin Cousins win the European Championships. I decided to write an Absolutely Terrific book about skating." As it turned out, the story Tim found herself writing wouldn't work with skating. "It had to be something where you could have teams all over the country — and there just aren't enough ice rinks." The teams became young girl gymnasts in a future where gymnastics is the number one spectator sport and Big Business. The book is a funny and chilling extension of some aspects of sport today. "It's based on the current football system. I've made it be about gymnastics but I don't think it could ever happen in that sport. I'm sending up



journalists and advertising as much as anything."

The Fortunate Few was written in twelve days and not specifically for an audience of children. The other two books are very definitely for children. "It never occurred to me to write anything else. Apart from pure satire writing for adults doesn't attract me." **Wall of Words**, to be published in March is the longest book so far, "174 pages — a proper length." Among other things in it, "Kim, Anna and the boy next door have a morbid obsession with embalming, spontaneous combustion, amputation and things like that. When they discover their teacher's husband is an undertaker . . . It's black humour but gentler than **Fortunate Few**. Great fun to do." There are also lots of graffiti jokes; "but all there legitimately because it ties in with the plot."

That book was written in five or six weeks before Christmas 1980. "My editor told me to slow down so I hardly wrote anything in 1981 except some short stories." They are to be published in 1983. So far there are three school stories and three more in the 'future satire' form. "I think I must be obsessed with exploitation because they are all about that in a way." So there has been a lot of time for Tim's other interests: watching sport ("I'm fascinated by all of it. It's live drama, happening to real people and there are terrific tensions.") Ice-skating ("I skate four times a week at Queens Club — for fun I write send-ups of what's going on there.") listening to music ("rock and classical, nothing in between.") and the radio ("I'm addicted to Capital.") and reading ("I couldn't manage without books."). And for having half a thought about the next story. "Something about journalism I think. And set in a school — where else? A school newspaper — think of what you could do about free speech . . ."

The Middle of the Sandwich
0 571 11678 7, £4.25

The Fortunate Few
0 571 11732 5, £3.95

Wall of Words
0 571 11856 9, £4.95

All published by Faber.

PHIL REDMOND TALKS

A new series of **Grange Hill** starts this month.

Tucker and Co, five original **Grange Hill** short stories, is published in February.

Going Out, a six part series from Southern TV about a bunch of sixteen-year-old school leavers, was much discussed — for lots of reasons — when it appeared at the end of last year.

The creator of all three is **Phil Redmond**, who talks here to **Tony Bradman**.

TB Let's start with the most obvious question. How did you become a writer?

PR I was never a childhood scribbler. I was never up in my room writing short stories or anything like that. I got into writing seriously because I used to be a quantity surveyor and I hated it. One day I was so cheesed off I came home and said to the Mrs I wanted to go on the dole to see if I could become a writer and . . .

TB What was her reaction to that?

PR The only bit of writing I'd done previously was comedy sketches which I'd sent to people like Mike and Bernie Winters and Harry Secombe. I sold about five in five years or something. It was nothing great but it was the only other thing I had ever done. Her view was that I was so miserable as a quantity surveyor there was no point in carrying on. So I signed on the dole and gave myself six months. Nothing happened, so I gave myself another three months and then the Thursday before the Monday when I was going to go and start another job as a quantity surveyor I got a commission from London Weekend to do one of the **Doctor in Charge** series. That was just the result of writing off and phoning and pestering the producer. I pushed in other ideas and outlines for him and he commissioned another and I thought well, this is it.

From there I did a kids' series for ATV called **The Kids from 47A**, and I was just beginning to get along when the Arab-Israeli war happened in 1973 and the industry closed down. It was last in — first out for me. A good time I thought to get rid of my working class chip about not having a university education and having missed out in some way. So I went to Liverpool University to do a Social Studies degree; it was the one subject I felt included things which would help me in my career. Coming from a working-class background writing, for me, was a way out.

TB Was yours an ordinary working class background?

PR Oh yeah, yeah. I wasn't one of the *really* deprived. I lived on a council estate — Huyton — one frontier town, and I went to school in another frontier town, Kirby. I passed the 11 plus and I was supposed to go to one of the Catholic grammar schools; but

it was 1960, the dawn of the great new Jerusalem, and Comprehensive was the thing; so I was bussed 12 miles into Kirby to the biggest Roman Catholic Comprehensive school in Britain. I know now we were guinea pigs, the grammar school intake. It was just a social experiment. At the end of seven years I came out with four O Levels and one A Level, and I felt bitter and resentful because I knew I had the ability to get ten O levels and five A levels. Looking back, it was the best thing that ever happened to me. I believe totally in the comprehensive system; not in the sense that it provides a good education because I don't think any of our educational structures provide a good education, but because it's all about meeting other sections of society. That's why I'm all for it. I think any kind of restricted school, of whatever type — single sex, single social group, single intellectual ability — is bad; it's wrong because it gives kids a totally false view of society.

TB You've obviously thought a lot about education and schools.

PR I suppose it started when I went back into it to do my degree — the sociology of education was part of the course. But what I've seen in secondary schools lately through **Grange Hill** has confirmed it. It's almost like the Final Solution — selecting the ones who are going to survive and the ones who aren't. Schools don't give kids the credit for the intelligence they all start with. It's just about sticking labels on them and encouraging them to stick labels on themselves. Kids are often classed as idiots, or the teacher doesn't like them, so they start to think they are no good. By the time they are 13 or 14 they've given up. It's sad; it's really depressing.

TB Why is it like that?

PR It's all to do with those magic bits of paper you've got to have. Even the most mundane jobs are demanding more and more paper qualifications.

TB My Dad was saying the other day you practically needed a degree to clean the toilet.

PR I say it a little bit more profoundly than that (said with a smile) in **Going Out**, when one of the characters says you've got to have O levels to wipe your arse.

TB Are you more interested in the kids that fall by the wayside?

PR I suppose I am. Some are survivors; for others it's more difficult. When I was on the dole I was fortunate enough to be able to argue with officials on their own level and was able to get out of the system what I was supposed to get out of it — and probably a bit more. But I remember going to sign on and standing in the queue behind kids of 16 or 17, straight out of school. They could hardly write, hardly sign their name on the form. It would take them a good two minutes and all the time they're getting aggro. You know, 'What are you doing? Are you thick or something?' And the people who are saying that are supposed to be helping them to get a job and explaining the system to them.

GRANGE HILL GOES WILD



ROBERT LEESON

GRANGE HILL RULES O.K.?



ROBERT LEESON

GRANGE HILL FOR SALE



BASED ON THE BBC TV SERIES
GRANGE HILL BY PHIL REDMOND

A Sound & Vision SPECIAL

NG

TB How does all that translate into writing *Grange Hill* and *Going Out*?

PR Well, as you get into TV you realise that it's the most powerful form of communication we've got. If you want to say something about society TV is the place to do it. That's what motivates me to write. *Grange Hill* deals with real issues like the shortage of resources; it looks at personal relationships, it looks at the things that aren't talked about much like bullying and the physical abuse teachers hand out to kids. I wanted to write a series which people from my sort of background could identify with and I knew that if I could get it on the screen it would be successful. The original idea was to go from Year One to Year Seven; but as we got to the third year we started to get into sex and drugs and rock and roll, and of course on children's television that's death! So we tend now to concentrate on the 11-13 age group. But the bulk of our audience ranges from 5-18. Obviously the core of the audience is 11-13, and they identify with it exactly. I suppose the older kids look at it as a kind of nostalgia, and the younger ones just like seeing what the big kids do.

TB When you sat down to write *Grange Hill* did you see it as filling a gap?

PR Yes, that was the main motivation. When I was at school we had *Ivanhoe* and *Robin Hood* and all that sort of stuff. That or Enid Blyton. There was no growing up or being beaten up on your way home from school. There were no books or TV programmes about families going through divorces or kids being taunted because they didn't have enough money to buy the proper school uniform. Everybody on television seemed to have tremendous amounts of money. They were always well dressed; they always lived in the country; they played around with horses, captured atomic spies, saved the universe. And it was all great stuff. But I'd never seen any of that going on on a council estate. So that's why I wanted to do *Grange Hill*. I wanted to deal with reality.

TB That all sounds very gloomy and intense. But *Grange Hill* isn't like that.

PR No, you're right. *Grange Hill* is entertainment. It's got a tremendous comedy strain through it because life has. That's where people who try to imitate it miss the point. They say we are going to make this new series. It's going to be tough and hard and gritty. And when it's done it's all on one level. Forget it! No-one goes around in a permanent state of aggravation or depression; even when you're having a confrontation with someone there is always humour in it.

TB Do you think ITV can produce a rival to *Grange Hill*?

PR To make any inroads into *Grange Hill* now they'd need to do something with a lot of episodes, and no ITV company has got the money for that. They're in a cleft stick. They want the success but they are frightened of the risk. They are also frightened of controversy, frightened Mary Whitehouse is going to be offended. So the great conspiracy goes on. Television is run and operated by people who make 'nice' programmes. They don't want all the aggravation that goes with being controversial. Everyone tells me *Going Out* is a great programme for adolescents; but no-one is interested in making another series.

TB How did *Going Out* come to be written?

PR The initial thought was to make a British *Happy Days*. I said if I do anything I'll do a British *Saturday Night Fever*

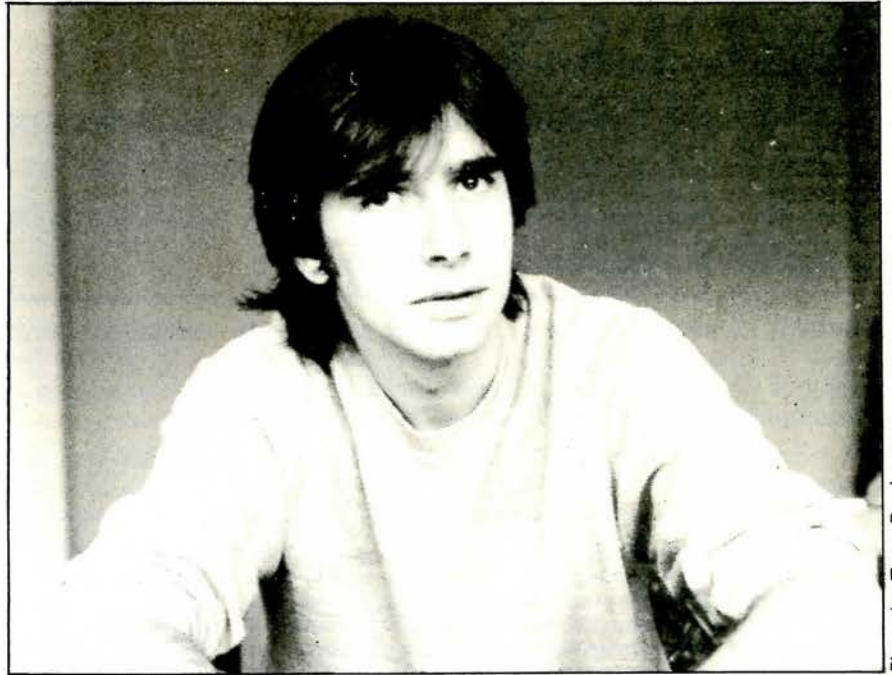


Photo by Tony Bradman

without the music. And they said 'Yeah, yeah!' though at the time I don't think they'd even seen *Saturday Night Fever*; they just thought it was a really cool move.

TB Did you encounter much opposition to the sort of programme you wanted to make?

PR We got great support from Lewis Rudd at Southern and once we got into the project they committed themselves to it totally. But there were a few dodgy moments early on about the language. When the scripts came in they said, 'We can't make this, it's absolutely disgusting. I think it's because a swear word written on the page looks out of place. If you see 'piss off' written down you immediately think of the hardest connotations of it. But when it's spoken it can be quite gentle. The scripts were going round Southern in brown paper envelopes, all well-thumbed and well read but all 'vile and disgusting.' Then when we were into cutting and editing everyone started saying, 'These are the best things we've ever made,' and they really got behind us.

TB You had other problems too, didn't you?

PR We started in 1980 and we were supposed to make 13 programmes. But then the TV strike came along and we had a choice of waiting till 1981 to make the 13 or making six then. Knowing TV, we chose to make the six. As it turned out if we hadn't done that we wouldn't have made any.

TB And after all that there was the fight to get it on the network.

PR Yes. I said 10.30 was the time to put it on. It's the ideal time for adolescent programmes. They sit down after coming in off the street or coming back from whatever they have been doing, having a last cup of coffee before going off to bed. That's when they watch the football, that's when they watch *Soap* and *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, that's when they listen to John Peel. But yer TV makers (he makes beeping computer noises) can't think like that. They put 'adolescent programmes' between six and seven: after 'children' and before 'grown-ups'! As it turned out Southern lost the franchise and *Going Out* had to be transmitted before December 31st. So we ended up being offered late night spots all over the place: different times, different days, different weeks on each station.

TB How did you feel about that?

PR It's really frustrating. The industry is saying the big growth area is 16-24 year olds. Report after report says there should be more programmes for that age group. We make what we think is the best programme

so far for them and it's being shown at midnight. The IBA had a seminar and they said *Going Out* was the sort of programme that should be made. Then the programmers say it has to be on late because of the bad language and the sex. It just doesn't make sense, and the hypocrisy of it all makes me sick. Some critics were sympathetic and pointed all that out when it was broadcast. Where it did get shown at 10.30 it did well. On ATV it got a really good rating, a 23% share of all homes. They get 23% for *Worzel Gummidge* on Saturday afternoons.

TB Does the writing come from memory? Or do you do research in schools?

PR Yes it does come from memory, memory and observation. I don't really do research, but at the end of every year I try to go to schools to ask them what they liked or didn't like about *Grange Hill*, and what they want to see. That's to keep the reality of it, and I also like to pick up the bits of current slang and stuff. But it's really about just keeping your eyes open in the street, being perceptive, observing what's going on around you. You just assimilate it all. Something I read once said all writers are like sponges, they just soak things up. With any piece of writing you create characters, you put them in a situation and then you just project what they will do.

TB Did you always think about being a TV writer when you started out?

PR Yeah, oh yeah. I'm not a literary writer. TV is my medium. You can reach millions through TV. I'm trying to increase awareness of problems in society. But I don't go in for very profound statements; that gets really boring. I like to think I write stuff my mum and dad could watch and understand and get something from. And I don't think I'm making a revolution; changing society is an evolutionary process. Someone does something on TV, then someone else builds on it, and in five years, maybe, something has changed. It's a slow process.

TB While you are waiting, what gives you the biggest kick in all your success?

PR It's knowing that at five o'clock on Tuesdays and Fridays for a good chunk of the year twelve million people are concentrating on something that I've created. That gives me a great buzz. ●

Tucker and Co

A collection of five original short stories by Phil Redmond featuring old and new *Grange Hill* characters.
Fontana Lions, 0 00 672017 X, 85p

SKULLS

The Times Educational Supplement Information Book Award (Senior category) for 1981 has been won by Richard Steel for *Skulls*, which, the judges said, stood out from its competitors for its originality and lack of inhibition.

Skulls is a handbook on how to collect and identify animal and bird skulls. In the introduction the author writes 'I began this book when I realized there seemed to be very few people who were enjoying the hobby of skull collecting, and even fewer books which gave help in the identification of finds.' By the time he completed it, Richard Steel was sixteen years old.

We asked Sara Steel, Richard's mother, to tell us about her son, his book and how it came to be written and published. For a taste of *Skulls* turn over.

I bet I'm the only author's mother in the world who dusts skulls, hoes around a pile of decomposing cows' heads, scrabbles on hands and knees to find fox incisors under the washing machine and is called to admire a huge bull's head ('That's the horny pad, Mum. Have a look inside the ears.') as it is brought through the living room to join those cows' skulls in the garden. Living with a son like Richard is certainly interesting, adding considerably to Life's Rich Pattern. The fully fleshed bull head was a recent acquisition of his from the slaughterhouse where he works.

Since he was about four years old, Richard has pursued a single-minded path through life, skilfully avoiding teachers and their ideas of academic achievement. At Infant school, while they struggled to impress on him the importance of writing News and doing Sums, I was thankfully abandoning, at his request, the Dinosaur book I'd read to him every night for two years for *Animal Life*, an adult magazine offering an A-Z coverage of the world's animals. Richie's stubborn yet friendly resistance to educational coaxing is epitomised in his Infant prayer for Mother's Day which omits to mention his mother:

'Thank you dear god for The sea there are little fishes in the sea and there are lobsters and crabs. You can eat crabs and lobsters and you can eat fishes.'

Every week-end we would gather polythene bags and take a bus to the downs lying north of Portsmouth city. Richie's skull collecting hobby must have started there, though neither of us can remember the exact moment or the exact skull. We were always collecting things; feathers, stones, egg-shells etc., and once brought back some dung beetles to study briefly before we let them loose on a pile of manure in a neighbouring garden.

The first time I was conscious of the skulls hobby was when I caught sight of him, a solemn eight-year-old boy, crouching on the garden path with my carving knife in his hand, intensely studying some neatly arranged flesh and pelts. He had collected weasels and stoats from a gamekeeper's gibbet and was busily discovering things about their insides before he cleaned the skull for collection. Since then, we have suffered a variety of smells, ranging from the unpleasant to the unbearable. In his book, he describes finding a dead seal on Aberdaron beach:

'I packed a bag with a sheath knife, bill hook, rubber gloves and plenty of large dustbin bags and persuaded my parents to bring a spade and drive me down from our farm cottage. They started digging (upwind) in a steadily increasing drizzle and also began to complain about the stench. Luckily, I hardly noticed this as my nose seems to be permanently congested — a fortunate ailment with my hobby.'

'I began to remove the head. The skin was very thick and tough and, although the evening was chilly, I was dripping with sweat. My mother had to hold her nose at one stage and come round to me to wipe my face, as I could hardly see what I was doing! . . . We had small audiences at various times, but the only people who stayed for any length of time were children; adults seemed to find the sight and smell too awful. I held the head up at last, to a chorus of sad sighs from the children. We rolled the body into the huge hole and covered it up.'

Richie was then fourteen and had already started writing *Skulls*. It all started by accident. The children at the primary school where I teach knew that any nests, or bits of bodies or dead birds could be identified by Richie and regularly brought in specimens for us to see. One child refused to believe that a skull was a



How to transport 19 rabbits (not Richard's record catch) from a nearby farm.

piglet's, since her farmer father said pigs didn't look like that. Richie was very offended that his integrity should be questioned. 'Farmers don't know anything about country life,' he said. We tried to find verification, but apart from one very basic book on bones and one highly complex one (neither of which were helpful), there was nothing to prove him right. A friend of mine, Gerry Gaston, who later did the illustrations for us, said he really ought to write about his peculiar hobby as there couldn't be anyone anywhere else like him! (This has proved to be wrong, as since publication he has received letters and visits from similarly peculiar people from hopeful eight-year-olds to a middle-aged artist.) So at odd moments, whenever the call of the wild outside was not too strong, Richie lounged about on the sofa eating doughnuts and quaffing mugs of tea while I took down his dictation.

I typed up the chapters and we took six photostats before writing to tell various publishers that we would be in London on such and such a day and could we call in. (We've since heard this is NOT the way to approach publishers!) Roger Smith of Heinemann agreed to see us to help us find a publisher as the book was not suitable for them. He politely welcomed us, looked at the drawings and the manuscript and said in surprise: 'Hm. This must be taken seriously.'

He promised to read the book and let us know what he thought of it, but his face had that 'I think it's good' look. When the book was accepted, everyone except Richie leapt around and planned parties to celebrate. To him, if you wanted to publish a book you simply sat down and wrote it, then someone published it.

In the meantime, his school career had progressed to the stage where he was considered too weak to take CSE Biology, although this decision was later revised. He ploughed through revision for a mixture of O Levels and CSE's and decided to use some of his book (he took out the anecdotes) for his Biology project, which made up one third of the marks for his final

assessment. We were all shaken to hear that he had earned only a Grade II for the project. When my husband and I went to discuss this with the school, they protested that they did not think it was his own work since he had not stated this on the work. Despite our explanation that it had been accepted for publication, the school would not move from their original assessment. (Richie — ever modest, or perhaps not seeing school as anything to do with his real life — had not told them about the book.) It seemed to be educationally insane. Richie had not only sustained a hobby for many years in isolation from the enthusiasm of fellow collectors, he had evolved his own knowledge, built up from first-hand experience, and from practical successes and failures. As teachers, my husband and I were bitterly disillusioned at the shallow criteria apparently used to assess these projects and to discover that other teachers could not recognise talent when they saw it, nor could they recognise the years of quiet original research involved in building up the knowledge required to write with authority about such a subject.

Richie's slight regard for school took a further nose-dive. 'It interferes with my life really. I could be ferreting or fishing, finding skulls or stuffing animals.' Meanwhile, taxidermy had entered his passions and one day we came home to a horrific stench as he and his minions were slitting open a dead badger. We did watch with some admiration as he peeled the skin off, informing us that the lips are particularly difficult to remove successfully. Some of the minions were sent off to search for a shop selling dolls' eyes while the others chewed away on corned beef sandwiches, heedless of the carnage before them.

Apart from a few queries (what is a mustelid please and can you describe a purse net?) and the fact that the man from the Zoological department of London University found an ambiguity in one animal description, the editing was plain sailing. David Bellamy wrote the foreword and a photographer arrived to take 180 photos for the jacket.

When the book was published, our local bookshop displayed skulls and books in its window and photographers and journalists came to take the same photographs and ask the same questions. There were two articles in Sunday colour supplements, but this was not unexpected, we thought, after all, he was surprisingly young and the book was about such a weird subject. Until we



Richard and his younger brother Simon find the only sheep on Alderney (see page 7 of *Skulls*).

heard he had won the Information Book Award, we had no idea it was an especially good book.

I think it was only when we arrived at Stationers' Hall for the award and saw dozens of waitresses pouring Madeira into 200 glasses that Richie finally realised that what he had done was unusual. He blanched noticeably but seemed calm throughout. At the gorgeous lunch afterwards, Heinemann's inspired cook treated him to extra helpings of a fantastic banana pudding. As he sat, surrounded by Important People in publishing, Stuart MacLure, editor of the *TES*, asked him if he had enjoyed his day. 'Yes,' he said politely. 'Especially the banana pudding.'

Very unflappable is Richie; his priorities seem to be right. He even refused a Radio 4 broadcast because 1,000 cows needed de-warbleflying. His enthusiasm is undiminished. At Christmas we had a goose, acquired from an elderly friend of Richie's. 'He bonked it on the head very carefully for me,' said Richie, 'so that I could have the skull.' Did you know that a goose has filters on its beak AND filters on its tongue? However gory Richie's offerings may be, they're always interesting.

I just wish he would get on and stuff the kestrel and the raven in my freezer, I need the room. ●

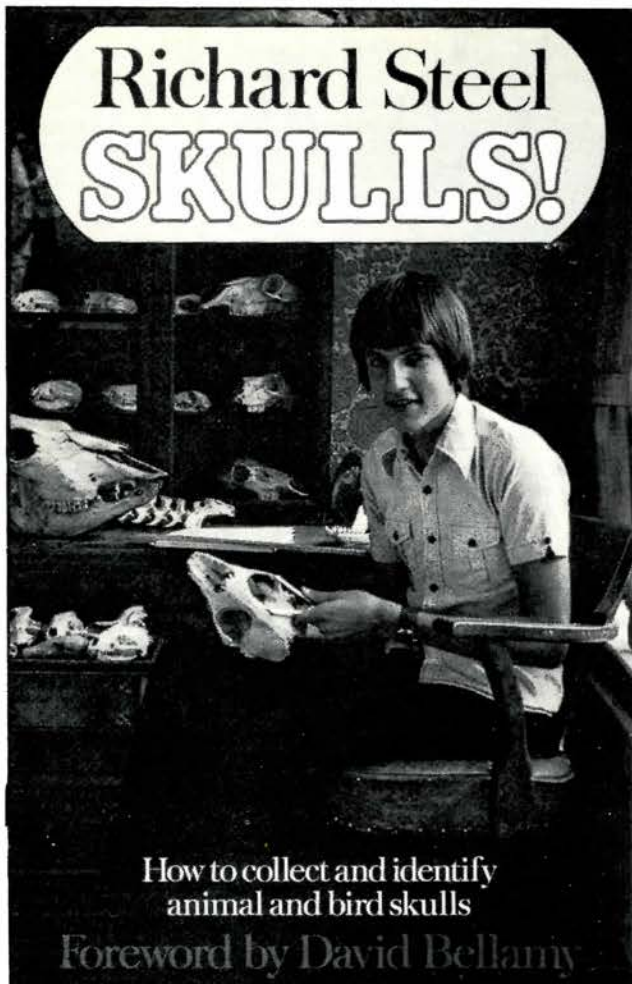
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Award-winning information

Skulls is rich in anecdotes like the one Sara Steel quotes in her article. Told with directness and humour, they give tremendous life to the book and make taking up skull collecting as a hobby seem eminently possible — given a consenting family.

But there's more to it than that. The chapters on 'How to Begin' and 'Cleaning and Preparation' are realistic and practical and the sections devoted to Identification are properly academic and admirable for the clarity with which facts are explained.

The judges for the Senior TES Award (books for those aged 11–16) were Valerie Alderson, Edward Blisshen, Gerald Haigh (Headmaster of Henry Bellairs Middle School, Warwickshire) and Stuart MacLure.

The judges in the Junior section (books for children up to 10) did not make an award this year. 'Books were thinner, dearer and poorer than in previous years. There was a lack of finish and quality about them, and the texts were undistinguished and often too complex for their intended readership. Indexes were either inadequate or non-existent and there was a shortage of hard information.'

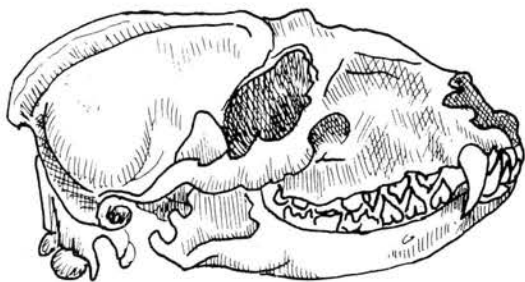
Skulls by Richard Steel
Heinemann, 0 434 96450 6, £3.95
Piccolo, 0 330 26655 1, approx. £1.00 (to be published in April)

Here is the entry for the Badger.

Badger (actually omnivorous, see p 11, but has basically carnivorous-type teeth)

Habitat: Everywhere except Scottish islands. Lives in sets in woods and copses especially bordering pastureland.

Places to look: Find a set and try to find the badger's rubbish pit which will be some distance away. You may find a body there. I have found many of my badger skulls near such pits. Sometimes the badger disturbs the buried body of another when it enlarges or alters the set and you can find a skull in the general pile of diggings. Badgers are creatures of habit and use the same pathways and routes from their set when they go out foraging for food. Quite often, a small country lane has become a major thoroughfare for traffic over the years and badgers are knocked down by cars as they cross these roads, still following the old path that has been used for hundreds of years by their ancestors. You need to be on the alert therefore on car journeys for bodies by the side of roads.



SKULL

Size: 116–150 mm (shown two-thirds life size)

The most noticeable feature is the ridge of bone running down the top surface and this ridge is called the sagittal crest. This can be one centimetre high in places and is an important part of the attachment of the great jaw muscles. Now this ridge is not

developed in a young badger and you may find a skull where the suture lines (the jagged edges to each bone section) are still open. If you find this, and cannot easily identify the skull, suspect it is not of an adult. Sometimes the skulls of the young are rather different in shape and formation from the adult (ie pig and piglet, sheep and lamb), and then you need to rely on the teeth for identification and the gradual growth of your own experience.

If there is just a small ridge then, you need to look for other clues to see if it is a badger. He has another strong ridge, jutting out at the back of the skull. This is called the occipital crest. All these ridges give the skull great strength and power.

One of the most noticeable features about the badger is the interesting articulation of the lower jaw. It fits into a groove in such a way that it will not dislocate, and usually the skull with be intact, with the lower jaw seemingly attached — unlike other skulls where the lower jaw bone is loose from the rest of the skull.

I have recently acquired a skull with a deformed lower jaw. Obviously the jaw was broken at some time and healed completely, but the bone is thickened and distorted, bulging downwards.

The badger has prominent canines and sharp premolars, but the back molars are somewhat flattened to grind up vegetable food. It has been said that a badger can break a man's arm by clenching it in his jaw, and he is certainly able to crush a cow's bones to extract the marrow. If you have ever seen the huge size of a cow bone then you could certainly believe this story. The cheek bone (zygomatic arch) is thick and strong and you will soon discover that it is easy to recognise a badger's skull merely by handling it, because of the strength and thickness of bone.

Badgers are the heaviest land carnivore, weighing up to 13 kg (30 lb). I have been badger watching with a man who has visited the same set for eleven years. The badgers trust him so completely that he can lay trails of nuts, fat, grain and Smarties (!) and sit quietly on the ground covered by a tough tarpaulin and

SOUND & VISION

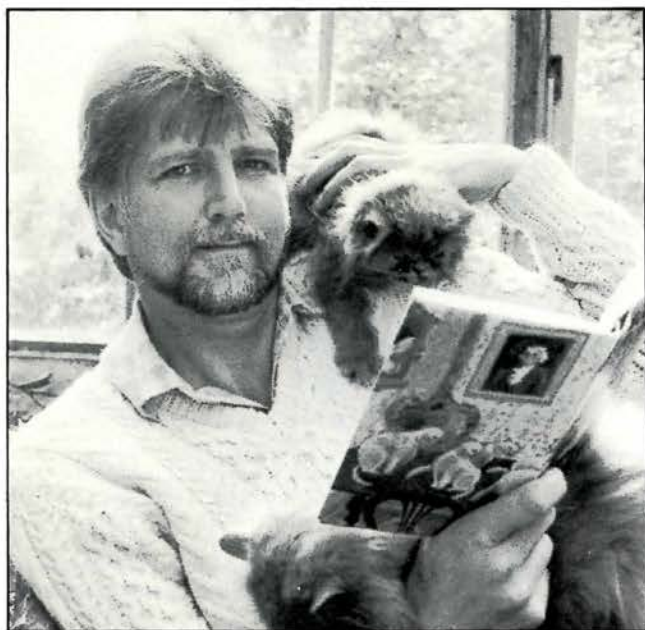


Photo of Stephen Moore courtesy of Yorkshire Television

Stephen Moore is now well into his stride as the new presenter of **The Book Tower** but the programme remains a lone beacon of hope for all who would like to see more *direct* coverage of children's books on TV. Yorkshire TV retained its franchise in last year's free-for-all and Joy Whitby will no doubt still be fighting for children's programmes in that company.

Another well-known name however has been on the move. Anna Home, the person behind so many good book-based children's

serials at the BBC, is now Head of Children's and Young Adults' programmes for TV South — the new company broadcasting in the south and south-east — who won the franchise from Southern. It will be interesting to see what she and her counterparts at Central (who replaced ATV) and Television South West (in Devon and Cornwall) have to offer now that the new companies are on the air. Provision of programmes for children and young adults was apparently an important issue in the IBA's deliberations about the new contracts. Make sure you let the independent companies know what you think about their offerings. And tell us too.

Challenge to Grange Hill

Starting on 22nd March (ITV) in sixteen half-hour episodes, **Murphy's Mob** 'about real kids acted by real kids'. The tie-in will be published by Puffin. More about it in **Books for Keeps 13**.

In View Soon

Woman in White, Wilkie Collins (BBC 2, March) starring Alan Badel and Diana Quick.

Plague Dogs, Richard Adams (April) an animated film from the same team who made **Watership Down**.

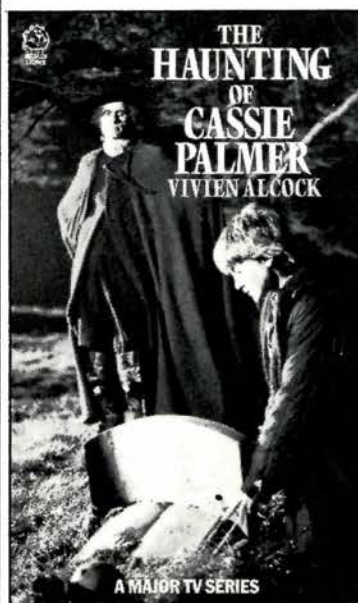
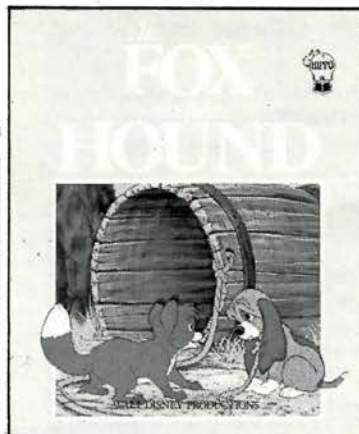
The Fox and the Hound

If you know children anxious to relive every minute of this film that they saw in the Christmas holidays when it

was on general release everywhere, there are two versions on offer.

For £3.50 you can have a pop-up version (12 pages — six double spreads with paper sculpture and/or pull tab on each), with minimal story and fairly crudely drawn artwork. The moveables — with the exception of one which in my copy only succeeded in tearing the page — are averagely inventive, printed one side only. (Collins, 0 00 183765 6)

For £1.25 you can have a fairly full and detailed story and the relationships and motivations are more clearly spelled out in this version. The illustrations look like the film animations and some of them — the bear fight sequence in particular — are well up to Disney-frightening Class 1 standard. (Hippo, 0 590 70131 2)



At the end of February Fontana Lions are publishing **The Haunting of Cassie Palmer**, Vivien Alcock's first novel. Publication ties in with transmission of the television series which is being networked by ITV, starting on 26th February and running for six episodes.

In **The Haunting of Cassie Palmer**, Vivien Alcock (the wife of Leon Garfield) has written a family story involving psychic powers and a strange, ghostly figure. Cassie is the seventh child of a seventh child and this, according to her mother, means that she will inherit psychic powers. Cassie is reluctant to acknowledge her inheritance and is secretly afraid of the 'gift' she might have. Strange things happen when she accepts a dare to raise a spirit.

The Haunting of Cassie Palmer, Vivien Alcock, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671895 7, 95p

THE ALDER TREE

Ann Halam

The alder tree was dead and dangerous, it had to go. Michael enjoyed the tree-chopping. The wood, Wormwood, seemed full of subtle and mysterious life that day, and besides there was cousin Francine, who made everything she did attractive . . .

Of Ann Halam's last novel critics said:
'Ann Halam has a genuine descriptive gift'
Times Educational Supplement

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Picture Books for 9-13s



Photo of Elaine Moss by Michael Abrahams

In 1976 Elaine Moss wrote two linked articles for the journal *Signal* which suggested a whole new way of looking at picture books. *Them's for the Infants, Miss* described her experience with picture books at Fleet Primary School, London where she is a part-time librarian. The articles opened up the idea of using picture books with the over-nines. Indeed it's Elaine Moss's contention that many of the picture books produced in the last ten years are more appropriate for older children. Encouraged by Nancy Chambers, Editor of *Signal*, Elaine has produced an annotated booklist *Picture Books for Young People 9-13* which she hopes will achieve for these books the audience they deserve and the audience that deserves them.

We are delighted to be able to reprint here a substantial extract from Elaine Moss's introduction to this excellent booklist, one which no teacher of children in this age range will want to be without.

Picture books for the early years (Pat Hutchins's *Rosie's Walk*, Shirley Hughes's *Dogger*) are recognized as vital to the young child's development, are bought, used, treasured. Picture books for adults (*Masquerade*, *The Book of Gnomes*, the psychedelia of Aldridge and van Meeuwissen) float effortlessly on to the coffee tables for which they were designed. But there is a curious belief among many parents and teachers that in between, during the years of 'serious education', the relevant picture books (of which there are plenty) have no place. Children are seen climbing a ladder away from pictures into the 'more demanding' world of print.

The different way in which young people must come to terms with their world is largely conditioned by the mass media, principally television. Indeed, the world comes into the living room. But opportunities to explore the issues raised in those startlingly brief flashes of pictures accompanied by clipped commentary are essential if the adolescent viewer is to become a discerning adult.

Every medium that opens up such opportunities for discussion and deeper understanding is to be welcomed. The new-style picture book for older readers, a development of the past two decades, is one such medium, but *because it is partly visual and at the same time a book* there is reluctance to welcome it into the top junior, middle school or lower comprehensive classroom.

The picture books chosen for this guide examine various aspects of life openly, controversially, often humorously. They are not a substitute for the novel or for the formal information book any more than a newspaper is a substitute for works of depth; but they should be part of the diet of the maturing young person of the 1980s. The pictures draw the eye, but often it is the tone of the texts that catches the reader's imagination. Mostly these texts are the work of the artist, but no less than five of the picture books in this list spring from witty stories by Russell Hoban, that arch-analyst of the human zoo.

For the teacher of young people in the nine-to-thirteen age group the key to using the books in this list successfully is to know them, to enjoy them and to have them in the classroom (or library) in sufficient quantity for the format to appear natural, the

choice to be wide. Many teachers believe that their classes will reject books in large format that look 'babyish'. That indeed may be the initial reaction if the occasional book is introduced out of the blue. But since the ever popular *Tintin* books are in this format, and so indeed are the proliferating Macdonald Education series, a tactful arrangement of class book corners in the junior and middle schools can make the size and shape of the picture book unexceptional.

In libraries, especially in primary schools where much younger children are seen poring over picture books, it is vital to create a separate location and identifying mark for picture books for the older child. A top shelf close to the novels is the best place, and in the school where I work I call this section 'Gold Star Picture Books'. Each picture book in it has a gold star on its spine — and a gold star appears, too, in the top right hand corner of the relevant catalogue card. The books are used naturally, argued over fiercely, delighted in, by those eleven-year-olds who are already tackling *Lord of the Rings* as well as by those who still stumble through *Frog and Toad are Friends*. A great unifier in mixed ability classes, these picture books offer fruitful entertainment: a book about football (*Football Crazy*) may really be poking fun at over-enthusiastic enthusiasts; a book about moon shots (*The Church Mice and the Moon*) neatly satirizes the space programme; a travel book (*Anno's Italy*) postulates theories about layers of culture and national character.

The new picture book is a demanding medium; it makes the reader think; it encourages discussion in groups. Because it is of high standard artistically it helps to develop a critical approach to the picture trivia with which children, adolescents and the rest of us, are pounded from morning to night, willy-nilly. ●

Picture Books for Young People 9-13

The Thimble Press,
0 903355 07 8, £1.65

The list contains detailed annotations of 84 books. It is divided into four sections, each with its starred artists whose contribution is examined in some detail alongside other recommendations.

Part 1. A Wry Look at Ourselves features in particular the work of Michael Foreman, Anthony Browne and Colin McNaughton.

Part 2. A Deep Look at Ourselves focusses on Maurice Sendak and Charles Keeping.

Part 3. Keep Moving: Ourselves in Picture Strip features Raymond Briggs.

Part 4. Cosmorama: A Relative Look at Ourselves in Time and Place 'stars' Mitsumasa Anno.

To get your copy, write to The Thimble Press, Lockwood, Station Road, South Woodchester, Stroud, Glos. GL5 5EQ. The price of £1.65 includes postage.

A National Book League touring exhibition based on the list is available for hire for £17.00 per fortnight (£13.00 NBL members) plus cost of onward transport (variable). For details, apply to the NBL, Book House, 45 East Hill, Wandsworth, London SW18 2QZ.

Starting in our next issue

LifeLine Library — a series of five articles by Elaine Moss on books no teacher should be without. (See also Editor's Page, page 3.)



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MONEY — THE FACTS OF LIFE **6th edition by W. Reay Tolfree**

As part of a continuing programme of educational sponsorship this book has been produced by the Bank, in association with the publishers, Woodhead-Faulkner Limited, 8 Market Passage, Cambridge.

Written for those starting in regular employment for the first time, the book contains useful information such as how wages and salaries are paid, how to look after money and how to budget. Suitable for school-leavers, students, and teachers instructing in money matters.

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A new audio-visual teaching pack based on the book has now been produced, comprising four 20-minute filmstrips with accompanying cassettes, teachers' notes, suggested projects and a copy of the book.

Specifically for classroom use, the filmstrips trace the early working lives of two cartoon characters, Zack and Zelda, through numerous drawings, photographs and charts, combined with a lively informative soundtrack.

Each pack costs £30 plus VAT and is available under special preview offer from Public Relations Department (FS), Lloyds Bank, 71 Lombard Street, London EC3P 3BS.

Opinion

Sue Palmer asks why not let children choose?

Steve Bowles (*Books for Keeps* No. 10) covered himself admirably at the beginning of his article on 'mind-rot' in children's fiction ('Nancy Drew', the 'Hardy Boys', et al.) by announcing that he tries to be liberal about it, and is confident that few children will want to read such stuff for long. But the burden of his argument is, nevertheless, that such books are *not good* for children.

Why not? Why is it that whenever children find (usually without adult prompting) an author whom they love to read, we grown-ups feel obliged to disapprove? It's happened time and again. From Blyton and 'Biggles', through 'Nancy Drew' and Willard Price, to the remarkable Judy Blume — as soon as the author catches on, we start looking to criticise. 'That's pap,' we say, 'that's prissy; that's prurient.'

As a teacher with an interest in children's fiction, I'm as guilty as the next man. I've seen someone in my class, happily engrossed in a 'Famous Five' mystery, and I've

leapt over flourishing a Gene Kemp or a Betsy Byars. 'You'll enjoy this, you know. It's good, this one is.' And the child has politely, resignedly, put aside its chosen novel, and read the *good* one to please me.

It's an awful thing to do. How would I feel if, during one of my cosy self-indulgent leisure hours, someone wrenched away my P. D. James and tried to entice me to read Tolstoy?

We're in this business — parents, teachers, book producers alike — presumably to help children become readers. We want them to read for pleasure, to experience the same kind of pleasure that we find in books ourselves. Surely then, we should allow *them* to decide what pleases them? And if it's the 'Bobbsey Twins', or those ghastly boys who go about catching elephants in far-flung corners of the world, then why not leave them to it? Once they *are* readers, and come to us asking, 'Read any good books lately?' then we can start doling out the Carnegie Medal-winners.

One of the problems is that there are nowadays so many wonderful books on the children's fiction shelves — Katherine Paterson, Jan Needle, Jan Mark, Bernard Ashley, and so on — that we adults get drunk with delight. We're dying to share them with children — after all, dammit, they're children's books — and it's such a disappointment when the children don't want to know. A few bright sparks will consume them willingly, but the others, the 'quiet, undemanding average-ability girls, higher-ability boys' just want to go on reading their pap. Good books are harder, of course, and children, being people, are lazy. Most don't want to be stimulated or confronted or moved by their choice of literature — they just want a good read.

William Golding in *Free Fall* tells the story of a schoolmistress beating a child for lack of attention in a divinity lesson: "God" Smack! "Is" Smack! "Love." Smack! Smack! Smack! Too many of us seem to be doing the same sort of thing: READING (Oh no, not *another* Enid Blyton!) IS (Look, why not try this one instead? It's a lot better written.) FUN! (I'm not having you reading the 'Hardy Boys' in this classroom. Go and choose a Good Book from the library corner.)

• School Bookshop Noticeboard •

An idea from Lynn Simpson of The Cardinal's Bookshop, Middleton, Manchester.

Lucky Bookstamp Competition

We mark some of our book savings stamps with a star. The child who buys the Lucky Bookstamp wins a book, or an item of stationery (we sell pens, pencils, folders etc. as well as books) or an additional book stamp, value 10p or 20p.

A good incentive to keep saving.

The Cardinal's Bookshop is in a secondary school. It was set up in September 1980 and with enthusiastic promotion in the shape of bright ideas like the one we pass on to you here, it is a thriving and lively feature of school life.

Ideas for '82

This year is A.A. Milne's centenary. He was born on January 18th 1882. Lots of possibilities for activities from a Bear Celebration to a Parents Evening to show the excellent film *Mr Shepard and Mr Milne*, available for hire from Weston Woods and also of interest to top juniors, middle and secondary schools.

A list of the Best of British authors to be promoted this year by booksellers includes Leon Garfield and Rosemary Sutcliff.

Why not latch on to this or have your own Best Author promotion?

• Too small to have a school bookshop?

Nigel Spencer, Deputy Head of Ramsey County Primary School in Essex and committed bookshop promoter pours scorn on the idea that bookshops are not viable in small schools.

"Our bookshop serves a school of one hundred pupils and in 2½ years we have sold over £1,100 worth of books." He also comments on problems of book supply raised in *Opinion*, Bfk 10. "The service we've had from Books for Students has been excellent — orders arriving within days and outstanding back-up services. Incidentally, congratulations on *Books for Keeps*; it's an exceedingly interesting magazine. Parents and staff both like the format and we've found the Authorgraphs very informative."

Nigel's was the first bookshop of its kind in the Harwich area. He has run courses for teachers on running bookshops in Chelmsford and Clacton, and we hear there is another planned for Colchester.

• I'm a Sucker for Books



This inspired bit of publicity was the winning entry in the competition to find a logo for the first ever Book Fair at Wingfield Primary School in London. It was designed by a third year Junior boy, Simon Lyons and became a familiar sight all over the school from January when preparations for the big event really began to roll. The school managed to make the Book Fair a real part of school life for six months, sustaining the children's enthusiasm and gradually building up to a climax. (For how it was done see the next issue of Bfk.) And when it was all over what did they do? They opened a school bookshop of course.

• Fighting the Cuts

A marvellous example of co-operation between a voluntary organisation (Edinburgh Children's Book Group) and a school (Lasswade High School Centre, Bonnyrigg) was the three-day Lasswade Book Fair where £1,800 worth of books was sold and a good time was had by all. Many events took place after school and on the final day, a Saturday, the Fair was open to the whole community.

The Cuts mean that this year school premises will not be available after school hours which everyone regrets. But Lasswade is determined to keep its Book Fair and is making it possible for Edinburgh Children's Book Group to organise a week long Fair during school hours.

• Galactic Winners

A huge entry for our Galactic competition sponsored by Werford told us the following winners from the following schools: St Thomas More C.H., Piccolo, produced a fine crop of winners from the following schools: Westwood High, Leek; Aec Stubbs High, Braintree; Harmondsworth School, Middx; Comiston Primary, Edinburgh; Spalding; Peckover School, Isleworth; Monkhouse C.P.; Wisbech; Bushey School, Thomas, London; Westwood St School, Salisbury; Tile Hill Wood, Coventry; Neale-Wade School, March; Llynn Junior, Basingstoke; Brighton High, C.P.; Peterborough; Northborough Primary, Peterborough; Orwell School, Bromley; Picardy Secondary, Belvedere, Kent.