

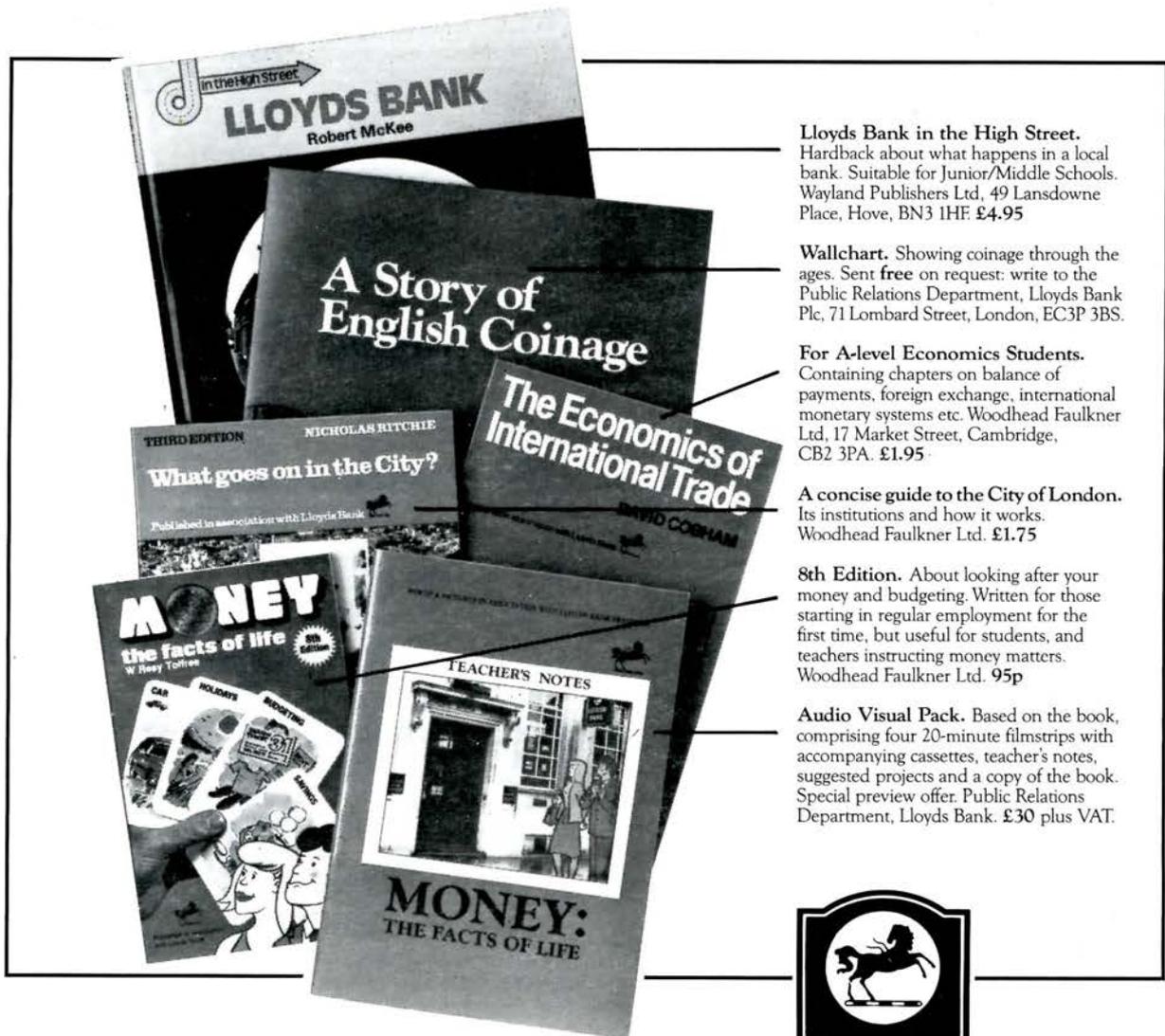
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EDITOR'S PAGE



Spring, it seems has finally sprung; and a sun-filled Easter provides exactly the right background for writing about this BfK Picture Book Special. Fingers crossed that the sky is still as blue when you read this in May. We could certainly do with some relief from the current gloomy educational outlook. Good picture books give a lift to everyone's spirits and there are lots in this issue.

Among other things we are celebrating the source of a steady ten year stream of heart-warming titles from Fontana Picture Lions. Rosemary Sandberg who started the Lions lists is a talented and exciting editor who has had a real impact on children's paperback publishing. As a publisher and as a person she is committed to making it possible for children to discover the pleasures of books and reading, and to getting good books to more children. Helping teachers to find out about books, Rosemary believes, is one of the best ways to achieve this and for several years now she has served on the board of the School Bookshop Association. We invited her to talk to us about Picture Lions (p. 8). By a nice coincidence we discovered that this autumn Picture Lions are publishing the first Ron Maris paperback — the delightful **Better Move on Frog**. (Barbara Jones writes about Ron Maris and Reg Cartwright on p. 24.) And Rosemary has also just secured the paperback rights to Tony Ross' **Towser** (p. 28), although it will be a while before the books appear as Picture Lions.

Shirley picks Patrick

One of Picture Lions' 'birthday' books is **Alfie's Feet** (another story about the small boy who had such a successful debut in **Alfie Gets in First**) by Shirley Hughes, the very special subject of this issue's Authorgraph (p. 14). Everyone loves Shirley Hughes. Rosemary Sandberg sums up all our feelings: 'She has everything as far as I'm concerned and a humanity such as is rarely found in any kind of writing. Her own spirit, her joy, her involvement and enthusiasm come out in every line she draws and every word she writes.'

As one of her many contributions to children's books outside her own work Shirley is a judge for the Mother Goose Award (Chris Powling reports on p. 10). The little man making shadow plays on our cover is Hob, as drawn by Patrick Benson, this year's Mother Goose winner. This is how Hob appears on the endpapers of four books of stories about him, written by William Mayne (Walker Books). Here is some of the best writing this year too: quirky, resonant, funny, observant. Each of these small, square books contains five stories of Hob, the house spirit, who lives in his cutch — or cupboard in the stairs — and watches over the family — the children can

see him, the parents can't. Pictures and text are in complete harmony in this beautifully designed series which is very collectable.

Children's Choice?

News of other awards (p. 10-12), includes the FCBG's Children's Book Award in which children have a say. The Book Marketing Council's latest promotion also gives children a voice (see News p. 23).

It's interesting that of the hardbacks they chose seven are pop-ups (no sign of a decline there!); six are non-fiction, and there's not a single novel among them. Are stories now exclusively associated with paperbacks among children? And hardbacks with information and novelty books? Most of the stories that figure have high profile already from TV (**Grange Hill** and **Marmalade Atkins**) or word of mouth (**Supergran** and **The Twits**). Confirmation also that children pass up the new (**The Witches**) for the familiar (**The Twits**) even when the author is as well-known as Dahl — conservative readers, children. I can't help wondering on what basis they made their choice. How different would it have been, say, if they had had to part with their own money for the books; or if they had known the books would really be their own for keeps?

It's clear that not all of the children had read all of the books and it's likely that the least read would be the longer stories. Even if some stories were much enjoyed by some children they would not appear in the voting — to get to the top in this system you have to appeal across a wide range and it's not in the nature of most longer novels to do that. This result shows once more how crucial the right kind of adult intervention is in helping children to extend the range of their reading beyond the familiar and immediately attractive, especially where longer and more demanding stories are concerned. This promotion may sell more books; it's not likely to do much for children's reading.

Listen Here

Of more use to teachers thinking about how to spend a meagre book allowance (apart from **Books for Keeps** that is) are the second editions of **The Good Book Guide to Children's Books** (Penguin, 0 14 00.7134 2, £3.50) — tried and tested favourites with some updating from last year's publishing; and **The Signal Review 2** (The Thimble Press, 0 903355 14 0, £4.50) — selections from 1983 which its editor, Nancy Chambers, refers to as 'not a set of definitive judgements, but an informal discussion document'. Very useful.

Those hoping to get children going with

stories might well consider £3.45 for a cassette of Maureen Lipman reading Jill Tomlinson's **The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark** money well spent. It is an excellent performance; one hour and ten minutes of complete and unabridged delight. **Cover to Cover**, the company which produces the tapes is the brain child of Helen Nicoll (see p. 21) who as well as being a joint creator of **Meg and Mog** is dedicated to putting stories and novels on tape — unabridged. Children's stories form a small but significant part of what is so far available and if the rest are as good as the one we tested they should be in every classroom and library that values listening and stories.

A Need for Talk

Another candidate for school-wide coverage is the latest from Dr Seuss (Dr Theodor Geisel who celebrated his 80th birthday in April). **The Butter Battle Book** (Collins, 0 00 195006 1, £2.95 pbk) is not the first of Dr Seuss' books with a 'message'; but it is, he thinks, his most important. With his customary swinging rhymes and inventive vocabulary he tells the tale of the **Yooks** (who eat their bread butter side up) and the **Zooks** (deviant butter-side-downers) who threaten each other with an increasingly destructive series of weird and wonderful war machines. On the last page one **Yook** and one **Zook** face each other angrily, each clutching the ultimate weapon — the **Big-Boy Boomeroo**. Who will drop it? 'We'll see. We will see . . .'. The End, but, Dr Geisel hopes, 'a starting point for the discussion that must take place between adults and children on this crucial subject.' Children have a right to be involved — it's their future. This book reminds adults of that.

Also out, at last, and on the same theme is Robert Swindell's **Brother in the Land** (OUP, 0 19 271491 0, £5.95) which we wrote about last September. The end of this story is without hope; the result for the older readers of this book, is to make discussion equally urgent.

There is so much to love, so much to learn, so much to lose: good picture books can show us that too, at any age. We are lucky to have so many.

Pat

Reviewers in this issue



Jill Bennett is in charge of a Reading Centre in Middlesex. She is the compiler of **Learning to Read with Picture Books** and of several anthologies of poetry for infants. Literary Editor of **Child Education** and on the Board of the SBA.



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



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



Colin Mills 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.



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

Terry Downie is a member of the English Department and teacher librarian in an Avon Comprehensive School. She has just joined BfK's regular reviewing team.

PICK OF THE PICTURE

Jill Bennett and Pat Triggs make a personal selection from what's

Three alphabets — all very different.

Animal Alphabet

Bert Kitchen, Patrick Hardy Books,
0 7444 0024 4, £6.50

Twenty-six letters, each adorned with an exquisitely painted animal or bird, plus an invitation to join in a name-guessing game. Little to engage the attention of the very young but much to delight older children and adults who appreciate beautiful design and high quality production.

A is for Angry

Sandra Boynton, Methuen,
0 416 46850 0, £4.95

Sub-titled 'an animal and adjective alphabet' this is an inventively conceived and designed trip through the pages to find an 'outraged opossum' facing a 'playful pig', 'nosy newts' peering at 'merry mice', the inevitable iguana 'ill' from eating into its green upper case I, and so on. Sandra Boynton's distinctive cartoon style gives the animals a very funny range of expressions — look out for a Jazzy jaguar, a real cool cat in scarf and shades.

Lucy and Tom's a.b.c.

Shirley Hughes, Gollancz,
0 575 03398 3, £3.95

Just when you thought there was nothing new that could possibly be done with an alphabet book — along comes Shirley Hughes with a book that breaks the mould and makes itself immediately indispensable. It's an alphabet all right (upper and lower case) but it is also an introduction to and reflection of life and living for the very young. As we follow Lucy and Tom from A to Z we find dogs, ducks, friends, Granny and Grandpa, light, oranges, ovens, rooms, voices, winter . . . an inexhaustible source for sharing, looking, talking, learning and reading (there's lots of text). Fantastic value — the A spread alone is worth the money for what it has to show about words, reading, books, artists, painting. If you work with young children and can buy only one book this year, it must be this one.

Teddybears and the Cold Cure

Susanna Gretz and Alison Sage,
Benn, 0 510 00163 7, £4.50

William, one of Susanna Gretz's gang of characterful bears takes to his bed with a feverish cold and is looked after by the others. Bright lively pictures complement and extend a text for sharing and reading alone.

Fix-It

David McPhail, Hutchinson,
0 09 156390 0, £3.95

More people as bears. Emma wants to watch breakfast TV but the set won't work and no-one can fix it, not even the fix-it man. All attempts to console Emma fail until, 'Finally her mother read her a book. "Read it again", said Emma.' By the time father has paid the repair man and found out what was wrong (lots to infer from the pictures) Emma is too busy to care — she's reading to her doll and the cat. An appealing 'message' for bibliophiles to pass on; good pictures, nice simple text for new readers.



From **Forget-Me-Not**.

Here Comes John

0 241 11199 4,

Here Comes Theo

0 241 11200 1,

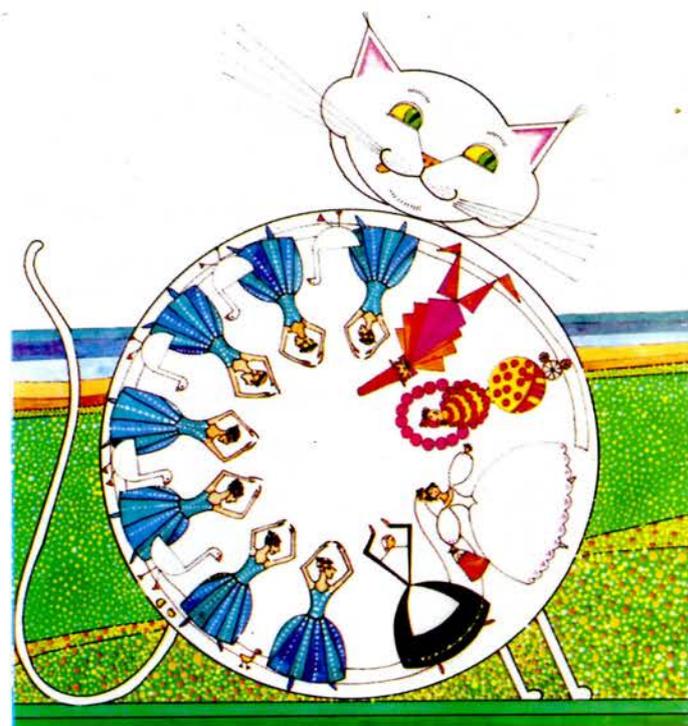
Bob Graham, Hamish Hamilton, £3.95 each

Take a snail, a Scottie dog, a small girl and an even smaller boy, add a few well chosen words and the talents and sense of humour of Bob Graham and hey presto! — two delightful little books for all small children and other discerning readers. It is surely a stroke of genius to depict a snail above the words 'It's in a hurry./Look at it go!' and make it appear to be breaking the land speed record.

Forget-Me-Not

Paul Rogers, ill. Celia Berridge, Kestrel,
0 7226 5870 2, £4.95

With some notable exceptions a rhyming text all too often spells disaster so far as picture books are concerned; not so here though: Paul Rogers' tale of a forgetful lion's trip to the seaside to visit his cousin and deliver a present reads well aloud. Each verse sets a puzzle — where has the hero left the



From **Fat Cat**.

various possessions he loses as the journey progresses? — the answer to which is to be found

by careful study of Celia Berridge's detailed illustrations in pastel shades. The form of the book: four lines of verse

BOOKS

been published so far this year.

and an accompanying vignette facing a full page picture, both being set within a single colour frame, remind me rather of some of the Ahlbergs' work but it is none the worse for all that.

Greedy Zebra

Mwenye Hadithi, ill.
Adrienne Kennaway,
Hodder & Stoughton,
0 340 32892 4, £5.50

A zebra's insatiable appetite leads to his undoing in a Kenyan folk tale which provides an explanation for how the animals acquired their striking appearance; and striking is just what Adrienne Kennaway's paintings are. Her stylised and primitive interpretation of this story is heightened in its effect by her use of shape and form. A book with much to offer both artistically and as an example of mankind's attempts to account for why things are as they are.

The Fat Cat

Jennifer Westwood, ill.
Fiona French, Abelard,
0 200 72806 7, £5.95

The circular nature of this traditional Danish folk story of the cat who gobbles everything and everyone in sight before finally getting his just deserts, is heightened by the abundant use of circles in Fiona French's artistically geometric interpretation and the board game which embellishes the end papers. And everything really is in sight because we actually see the successive meals enclosed within the growing circle that is cat's body.

Initially I found myself wanting to recite the text of Jack Kent's version, so firmly is it imprinted on my mind, with the result that I almost missed the nice alternative touches — 'five fowls in a flock', 'seven damsels in a dance' that Jennifer Westwood uses in her telling, and which should help to establish it as a favourite alongside the Kent rendition.

The Shoemaker and the Elves

Cynthia and William Birrer, Julia MacRae,
0 86203 166 4, £4.95

Wizardry with the needle is not the prerogative of the elf or the shoemaker and his wife, as is evidenced by the illustrations in this version of the ever popular story into which Cynthia Birrer works her own magic with a mixture

Where's the bear? There's the bear.



From *Where's the Bear?*

of appliqué, machine embroidery and quilting. Both words and pictures are framed within braided borders which serve to draw the reader in and hold his or her attention in fascination and admiration for the illustrations, at the same time ensuring that the importance of the text is not overlooked. A truly remarkable and original work of art.

Where's the Bear?

Pictures by Byron Barton, words by Charlotte Pomerantz, Julia MacRae,
0 86203 162 1, £4.95

It's the simplicity of Byron Barton's line and his use of large blocks of bold, bright colour which draw young children to his books, that and his ability to convey emotions on the faces of his characters within this seemingly simple form. He succeeds yet again here telling a story of how life's daily routine is interrupted by the discovery of a bear in the forest. Charlotte Pomerantz's minimal text comprising almost entirely the title sentence or the alternative 'There's the bear' is used to great effect through the form of dialogue and serves as an example of how such repetition

can hold, rather than lose, the interest of beginner readers.

Morning, Rabbit, Morning

Mary Caldwell, ill. Ann Schweninger, Hodder & Stoughton,
0 340 34807 0, £4.95

Minimal text is again effectively used in *Morning, Rabbit, Morning*. Here the key to success is the use of the imperative form: the reader directs rabbit's actions throughout the book but at the same time, the author's choice of rhythmic, rhyming words forces one to pay close attention to the form and nature of the language. Ann Schweninger's rabbit duly obeys in exuberant fashion as it frisks, whisks, jumps and thumps its way through the day.

Early Morning in the Barn

Nancy Tafuri, Julia MacRae,
0 86203 152 4, £4.95

Three fluffy chicks greet the new day and their neighbours in a brief trip around the farmyard, the only text being the onomatopoeic accompaniment of animal

noises. That special quality of early-morning sunlight reflects from each page of this glowing picturebook for the very young.

Old Macdonald Had a Farm

Tracey Campbell Pearson, Bodley Head,
0 370 30601 5, £4.95

Judging by the exuberant nature of her pictures one gets the impression that the artist had great fun illustrating this favourite song to which she has added some verses of her own. And I certainly got enormous enjoyment from such scenes as the frantic dash of assorted animals (and humans) across the fields in pursuit of the mule. Of course, once the form and pattern of the song are known, the reading of this book is easy.

I Want to See the Moon

Louis Baum, ill. Niki Daly, Bodley Head, 0 370 30971 5, £4.95

Two year-old(?) Toby wakes up and wants to see the moon. Dad changes a nappy, provides drinks, plays, reads and finally takes Toby into the garden to look at the moon. Lovely pictures in soft watercolours show a warm and loving relationship. I can already hear the chorus of objections about 'giving children ideas about getting up in the night'. Ignore them. Parents could learn from this one.

Badger's Parting Gifts

Susan Varley, Andersen Press, 0 86264 062 8, £4.95

Susan Varley's first picture book and there are echoes of Shepard and Ardizzone in the delightful illustrations for a very good text. Old Badger dies, his young friends grieve but find solace in sharing their memories of him and what he taught them. A book full of feeling which treats a difficult subject with tact and restraint.

The Great Big Especially Beautiful Easter Egg

James Stevenson, Gollancz, 0 575 03381 9, £4.95

Easter has gone and we don't make a big thing about the Easter Bunny as they do in the States where this book originated, but that's no reason for missing out on this wild and funny story of Grandpa recalling his quest for the egg of the title to give to Charlotte, the girl next door. James Stevenson's special brand of humour and his use of cartoon-type frames, speech bubbles and graphics should be better known here.

Rapscallion Jones

James Marshall, Bodley Head, 0 370 31000 4, £4.95

Another American import with a sophisticated line in humour for older readers and listeners. Pressed for the rent, Rapscallion Jones, the fox, is forced to think about getting a job. He decides to become a writer. ('You call that a job!' — says his cigar-smoking bulldog landlady.) Great pictures.

Mighty Mountain and the Three Strong Women

Irene Hedlund, English version by Judith Elkin, A & C Black, 0 7316 2398 5, £4.95

A long story with strong clear illustrations about how Kumiko, her mother and her grandmother show Mighty Mountain how to become the strongest wrestler in Japan. Nicely humorous and usefully anti-sexist.

The Headless Horseman Rides Tonight

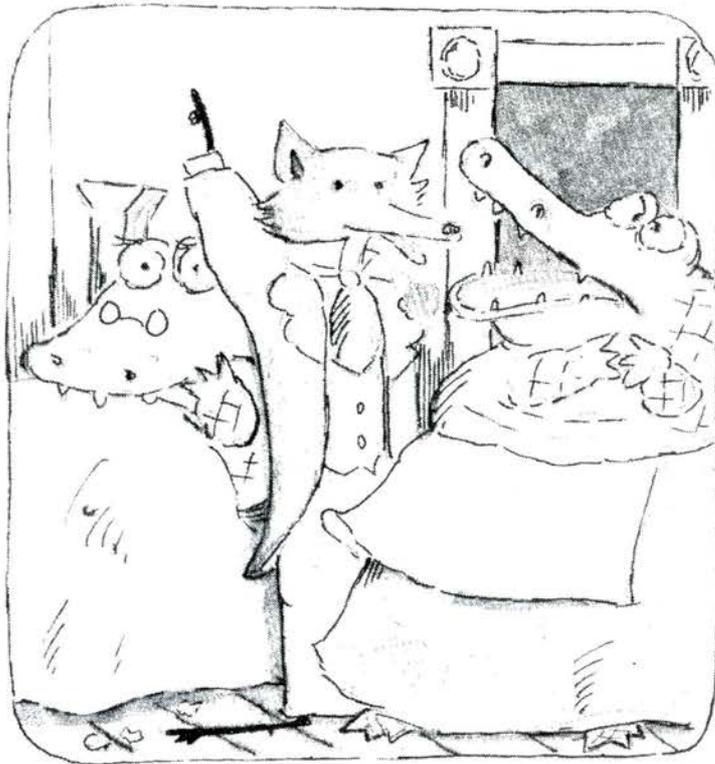
Jack Prelutsky, ill. Arnold Lobel, A & C Black, 0 7136 2383 7, £3.50

After *Nightmares* we have 'more poems to trouble your sleep'. The horror-hungry will find plenty to feed their appetites among the twelve nasties presented here, each accompanied by Arnold Lobel's shiverful black and white illustrations.

The Glorious Flight

Alice and Martin Provenson, Hutchinson, 0 09 154300 2, £4.95

The Provensons in detailed, atmospheric pictures and simple text retell the story of the Bleriot family and the accident-filled eight years in which Papa Louis developed the plane in which he crossed the Channel in 1909. Marvellous project potential.



From Rapscallion Jones.



From Mighty Mountain and the Three Strong Women.

Anno's Flea Market

Mitsumasa Anno, Bodley Head, 0 370 30591 4, £5.95

An antiquarian bonanza as Anno's latest wordless picture book shows a flea market packed with every imaginable artifact. Hours of poring, masses of information and some surprises for dedicated lookers.



From The Headless Horseman Rides Tonight.

The Wreck of the Zephyr

Chris Van Allsburg, Andersen Press, 0 86264 0636, £5.50

Rich, mysterious and beautifully evocative paintings illustrate a dream-like fantasy of a boy who learns to fly his boat. The cloud- and shadow-filled pictures of the sailing boat gliding through the night sky are eerily compelling.

Sketches from Bleak House

Mervyn Peake, Methuen, 0 416 45960 9, £8.95

Mervyn Peake's incomplete illustrations for Dickens' *Bleak House* with introduction and excerpts from the novel selected by Leon Garfield and Edward Blishen. Splendid material for stimulating response and discussion in those studying the text or reading for pleasure. ●

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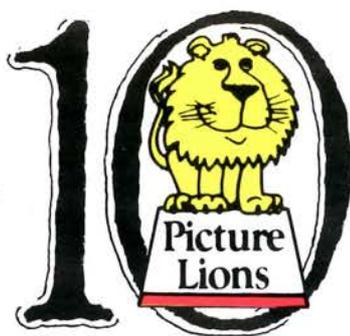
Paperback: £2.95

0 582 39275 6

Longman 



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

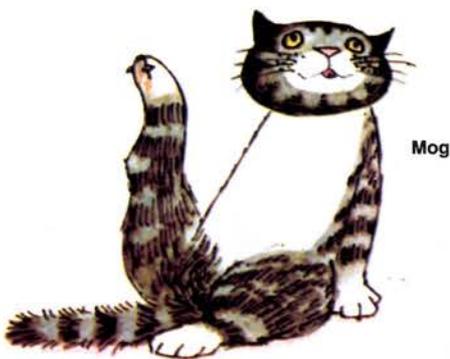


PICTURE LIONS!

This month Picture Lions celebrate ten years of successful publishing. A birthday present which pleased and somewhat surprised everyone at Fontana came in the form of the news that in terms of annual sales Picture Lions now lead all other paperback picture book imprints. The list which has sold ten million copies since it was launched now stands at just over a hundred titles. Each year twelve or fourteen new titles are added – a small number in paperback publishing – and because 90% of titles are kept in print the list has a reassuring stability. It also has a well-deserved reputation for high quality.

The person behind this remarkable achievement is the editor and founder of Picture Lions, **Rosemary Sandberg**.

We invited her to talk about her approach to publishing.



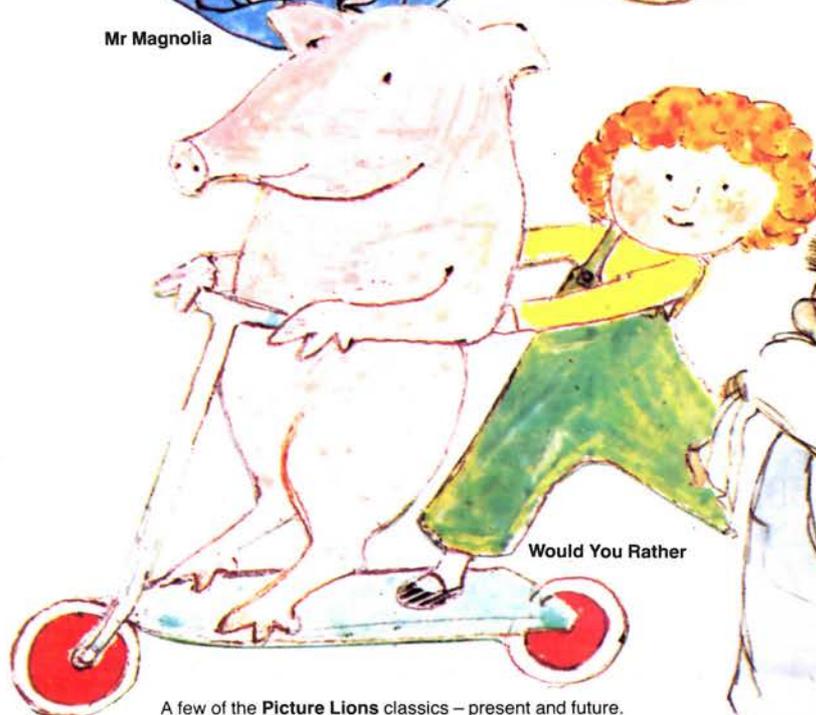
Mog



Alfie



Mr Magnolia



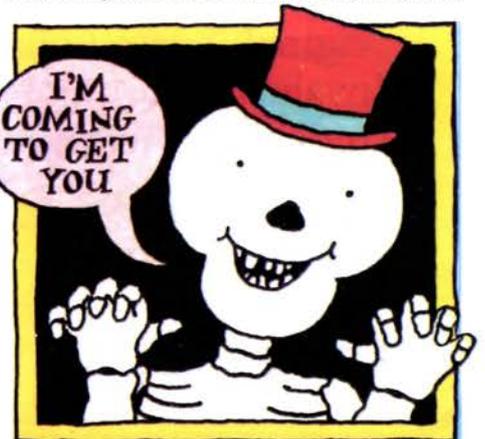
Would You Rather

A few of the Picture Lions classics – present and future.

I was extremely lucky that 11 years ago after working for five years with Kaye Webb at Puffin I was offered the chance by Collins to create a brand new picture paperback series. I had two children of my own – they were three and one then – and so I was in an ideal position to see books work or not. The importance, the necessity of having books around a child, even one as young as a year or eighteen months, so that they are as familiar as the teddy bear, just part of the household scenery – this came to me every day. So I suppose it was in a way natural that when choosing what to publish – an exciting but exceedingly daunting prospect – my first criterion became to imagine reading the book to a child. This is still the most important thing for me. I think of a child on my lap at bedtime, when the child is maybe a bit gritty: on the first page the book has got to capture the imagination – the child's and mine. It has to interest, excite, hold the attention and delight. It takes enormous skill on the part of the author and artist to do that, to create a world, build characters, tell a story with a beginning, a middle and an end, in the space of say five hundred words and to see and tell it all through the child's eyes without patronising: so many disciplines in so little time and space. It is only achieved by writers and artists of a high calibre and a sensitivity to the views and responses of the young child. Shirley Hughes can do it, and Judith Kerr. I chose two of her books, *Mog the Forgetful Cat* and *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* for the launch list. Thousands of enthusiastic parents, teachers and children have kept both those, and others of the original titles, in print.

I choose twelve or so titles each year. Maybe I could find more but the shops don't have elastic shelves and looked at in one way we could stop and not publish any more, there is quite enough. But, of course, we want to maintain interest and excitement and naturally some books go out of favour and new artists, writers, titles come in. Who wouldn't want to publish the Ahlbergs' *Each Peach Pear Plum*, Shirley Hughes' *Dogger*, Quentin Blake's *Mister Magnolia* and Gabrielle Vincent's *Ernest and Celestine*? These are absolutely timeless. I can't see any reason for them ever to go out of print.

A book has to be worth a child spending time on. The quality of the storytelling and pictures, the originality of the idea (or at least an original slant on an old theme) are the first and most important considerations in choosing. But there are others. The physical look of the book is extremely important. For Picture Lions we are reducing hardback books down to one of two sizes, 8" x 8" or 8½" x 6". I try to ensure that the reduction is not going to damage the look of the book in any way. We put the book under a machine which reduces the page so we can see what it is going to look like. I am also concerned about the size of the type. A young child may not be reading but it is getting used to the idea of words and letters, picking it up bit by bit. When the type is too small a little eye just gets confused. What we usually do is reduce the illustrations and keep



Funnybones

Ernest and Celestine



Rosemary Sandberg with a young reader.

the type size the same as the hardback, so in fact in proportion it's larger than in the hardback. Whether we can do this depends on the design. Many hardback houses show me artwork and stories first and, if I like it, and say 'Yes, that's going to work well with Picture Lions', they can then design their book with my reduced edition in mind. Hardback publishers are very much aware of this now. No-one wants to interfere in the creative process but it's just common sense, because I've only got two formats, that if they want to sell me a book they bear this in mind. I'm dependent on what hardback publishers are publishing; but they like to have the wider audience for their author and their books that a paperback brings, so it's very much a two-way operation.

Picture Lions are quite consciously directed at the younger end of the market. I am interested in the idea of picture books for older children but it would be confusing for the market if I included them in Picture Lions. Given that, I am conscious that children read at many levels; we can be too narrow in our thinking about books and ages. When we launched Picture Lions, I put at the back of each book a list of other books to be read in the series and I headed it 'For 3-6 year olds'. Immediately teachers wrote and said, 'Please don't print this kind of thing because we have slow learning 9 year-olds who really enjoy Picture Lions'. They were right. That is why I don't specify age groups on the books. I know booksellers would very much like us to do that because it would make it easier for them. But I don't want to spoil a book for a child who is going to be humiliated by the fact that this book is 'for a six-year-old' and there he is at ten actually rather enjoying it. In bookshops we can help booksellers

by displaying Picture Lions on a handy spinner (Young Lions are a more difficult problem). I'd like parents to recognise that there they will find books that will excite and extend their children, books that will offer variety in ways of seeing and depicting the world, different artistic styles, different points of view, books they can trust because they were chosen on the basis of children's response to them. I'd like teachers to be prepared to experiment, to look at Picture Lions for what they have to offer to children learning to read, real stories which while they help children to learn how to do it will be encouraging the reading habit because they are enjoyed. They may find a book like John Burningham's *Come Away from the Water, Shirley* which works on several levels at the same time. A young child can enjoy the pictures of Shirley's imagined exploits, older or more sophisticated readers will appreciate the wonderful double story that is going on. But it doesn't fail at any level and that's the important thing.

In deciding what to publish I go on hunch and experience, based in part on spending quite a lot of time with children, watching them read, watching them respond, listening to teachers, talking to librarians, booksellers and parents. At the moment I'm buying for 1985 and there are some excellent books being published. I think we've got over the clever, clever publishing period when a lot of picture books were really for the adult market — lovely to have picture books for adults but don't give them to children who will just be confused and bored by them. And pop-ups are settling into place — they are fun and there are some really good ones but they shouldn't arrive at the expense of real books with stories.

This year I'm thrilled to have John Burningham's *Would You Rather*; it's exactly the book to show children what reading is, from there they can rush on excitedly on their own. Helme Heine's *Friends* is funny, light and joyous; in contrast Susan Varley's *Badger's Parting Gifts* is about how old badger's friends console themselves, when he dies, with memories of his friendship. Done badly or even moderately it could be mawkish. This is beautiful. Everyone at Fontana loves Picture Lions; when I've bought a new one it goes round the office — hard-nosed fiction publishers and the non-fiction academic people all want to see it. There were a lot of lumps in throats in Grafton Street when that one came in. One last thing I particularly want to mention. The success of Picture Lions owes a great deal to the quality of British hardback publishing for children. Every year at the Bologna Book Fair I go to the American stand, I look at the French books and the German and I always come racing back to the British pavilion because there I find a sense of humour and a lightness of touch that is missing elsewhere. It's always a great joy to look at British picture books and realise that, neglected and forgotten as I think we sometimes are, our children's publishing is — I hesitate to say — the best in the world, but that's exactly what I mean. ●

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Joan E. Cass

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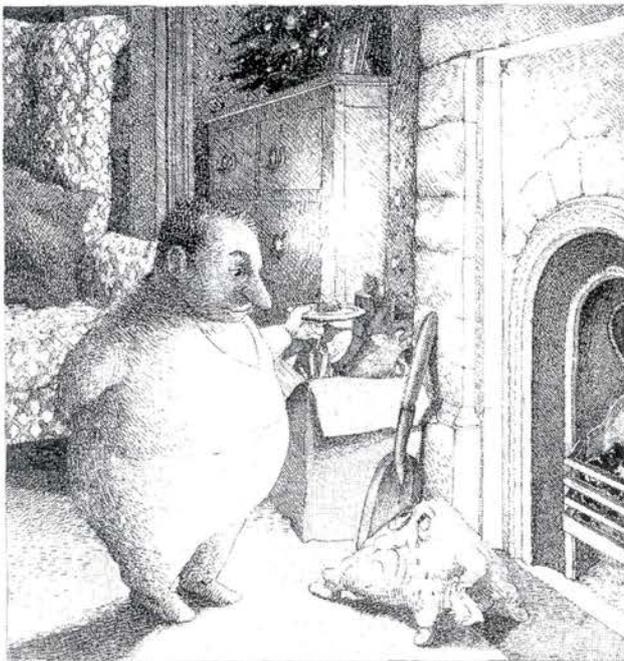
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The Mother Goose Award

Chris Powling writes about this year's winner: **Patrick Benson**.

In 1984, of all years, a panel of judges needs to specialise in hard looks and searching glances. So we risk the accusation that in our dotage we've become misty-eyed rather than beady-eyed when — for at least the third year running — we declare that our entry for the sixth Mother Goose Award was the best ever. How come? A steady upsurge in talent amongst newcomers to British children's book illustration? More publishers taking a risk on unknowns? Or just the message of Mother Goose slowly getting through? Perhaps we shouldn't ask but just thank our rising stars while congratulating the lucky ones who reached our final reckoning.

Not that Patrick Benson, our winner, needed any luck at all. From the start we were dazzled by his illustrations for William Mayne's *Hob* books (Walker). Mayne is one of our most distinguished writers for children but also one of the quirkiest. Visual interpreters don't get much help from his texts apart from the biggest help of all: sheer quality. But mightn't this daunt a young illustrator? Not Patrick Benson. He creates a world for the eye that matches perfectly Mayne's world for the ear — an in-depth performance which blends a real life-cum-magical setting with characters that range from the warmly recognisable to the frankly grotesque. *Hob* himself is an inspired creation. Had the pictures come first it would have taken a writer of Mayne's calibre to come up with a *text* that was good enough! Patrick Benson seemed to many of us not just a good winner this year but amongst the best of our winners in the past.

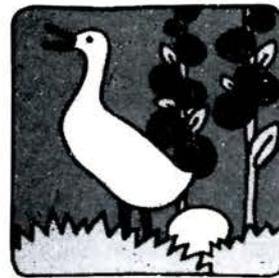


Hob finds the Sad, from *The Red Book of Hob Stories*.

Following what's become an established pattern, our main debate concerned the choice of runners-up. Two factors made this especially difficult. The first was a welcome increase in the number of entries from alternative and out-of-town publishers. Lovely! But it's not easy to assess accurately a fresh talent that isn't backed up by all the resources of an established, metropolitan publishing house. Would even Patrick Benson have looked so good without the superb book production he gets from Sebastian Walker? We struggled, *may*, contorted ourselves, to be fair. The second complication was a result, we hope, of our constant gripe in previous years about the shortage of non-fiction books submitted to us. For these, 1984 turned out to be a bonanza. Soon we were locked in the complexities of evaluating the potential accomplishments of airbrush and high-tech artistry as compared with lower-tech, more traditional skills. Eventually we'd agreed on two — or is it only one-and-a-half? — non-fiction



Patrick Benson, photo by Perry Ogden.



runners-up which is something of a Mother Goose breakthrough. Sarah Pooley's drawings for *Skin and Bone* (Bodley Head) bring a splendid vitality and humour to a book that might otherwise have been merely informative. Both design and style meet perfectly the needs of a varied and comprehensive readership. Is Graeme Sims' *Rufus the Fox* (Warne) a non-fiction book, though? Even with David Bellamy's introduction we weren't sure — though the sensitive simplification of his colour-spreads bring a personal, lyrical interpretation to a natural-history subject that greatly attracted us.

Our other runner-up — Angela Barrett — also showed talent bursting with potential. Her interpretation of Yehudi Menuhin's *The King, the Cat and the Fiddle* as a Lehar-type, turn of the century operetta gives her plenty of scope for richly decorated, meticulously researched interiors as well as the haunting vistas and distances which seem likely to become one of her specialities. The book is a sophisticated treat for any child with an exacting eye for detail and a taste for period charm.

A worthy five-some indeed. Yet we shudder at what we had to leave out. No prize for Naomi Russell's *The Dinosaur Who Wouldn't Get Up* (Methuen) when she hasn't even started at art-school yet? Or for Bay Athalye who took on the toughest of subjects with *Tariq Learns to Swim* (Bodley Head) a book welcomed by us all? Or for Clare Roberts' meticulous and misty impressionism in *Oak and Company* (Kestrel)? Or for . . . or for . . . and so we could go on. If the trend continues, next year will be tougher still. Let's hope so. ●



Hob and Black Dog. From *The Red Book*.

The Red Book of Hob Stories, 0 7445 0120 2,
The Green Book of Hob Stories, 0 7445 0121 0. Both published by Walker Books, £3.95 each. The Yellow and Blue Books will follow later this year.
Skin and Bone from the *Your Body* series by Dr Gwynne Vevers, Bodley Head. Five more titles in the same series.
Rufus the Fox, from *The Animals of Plashes Wood* series, Warne.
The King, the Cat and the Fiddle, Yehudi Menuhin and Christopher Hope, Benn.

The Mother Goose Award for the most promising newcomer to children's book illustration is sponsored by Books for Children booksellers.

The GUARDIAN Award

Stephanie Nettell writes about this year's winning author: **Dick King-Smith**.

The strands of Dick King-Smith's life, once alarmingly unravelling, are now plaited together most smoothly. Today he's doing the three things he enjoys most in the world: visiting local primary schools two or three times a month (something he relishes now he no longer works in one), doing his 'poor man's David Attenborough' on breakfast television (which is fun and brings in some useful money), and writing very successful children's books. Looking back, he must see an intriguing pattern to his life, but it was certainly indecipherable at those times when he found himself homeless and unemployed.

During the war, as a young subaltern with the Grenadier Guards inching their way north to Florence, he was hit by a hand grenade and put out of action for over three years. For the next twenty he was a farmer, but of a breed the modern countryside has little time for: good with animals, hopeless with money. In the end the bank manager told them, 'Your boat's sinking — are you going to get out and swim?' But with no home, no job and his wife ill from the stress of it all, it must have felt like drowning.

Friends hauled them to the surface, found them a cheap cottage, a free flat, a travelling job selling aluminium fire-fighting suits; after three years' increasing unhappiness in a boot factory, he decided to try a four-year degree course for teaching. Unknown to him, his elder daughter left publishing to do the same thing on the same day, and they both graduated at the same time as his son from Oxford. He was 21, she was 29, Dick King-Smith was 53.

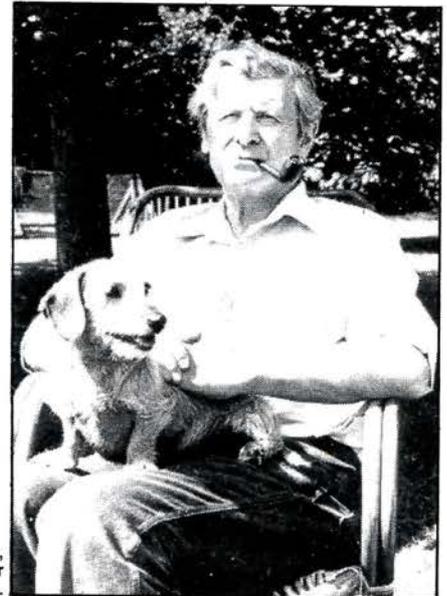
For the next seven years he was 'the lowest form of animal life' (a man) in a village primary school where the Head was the age of his daughter. But school holidays brought the chance to write — very successfully, as it turned out, so he risked leaving. Then, out of the blue, came Anne Wood and TV am's Rub-a-Dub-Tub looking for a writer who was also a teacher and a farmer — and how many of those can there be in the country? This was surely what the fates had been planning all along.

Now, at sixty-two, with six books that have beguiled children and critics alike, he is tucked up happily in a little seventeenth-century house near Keynsham in Avon, just three miles from his birthplace (from which, except in the war, he has never lived further than eight miles anyway). It's a picture-book heaven for visiting grandchildren, with rabbits and guinea-pigs, hens, geese, ducks and guinea-fowl, three miniature wire-haired dachshunds (including television-star Dodo), a Jack Russell, and Sam, a magnificent and bouncy German Shepherd who at eight months already tops 90lbs.

It must by now be clear that King-Smith knows animals as accurately as he knows children, which is why he can write about the one for the other with humour and affection and still avoid whimsy. His audience is the under-twelves, but his high spirits and engagingly stylish view of family life (animal or human) has universal appeal. His strongest virtue, however, is the ability to tell a good adventure story, to stack danger and adversity and terrible odds against an unlikely hero and then, to all the jokes and excitement, bring just the right degree of warmth — the mother-baby relationship present in all his animal stories is both loving and funny.

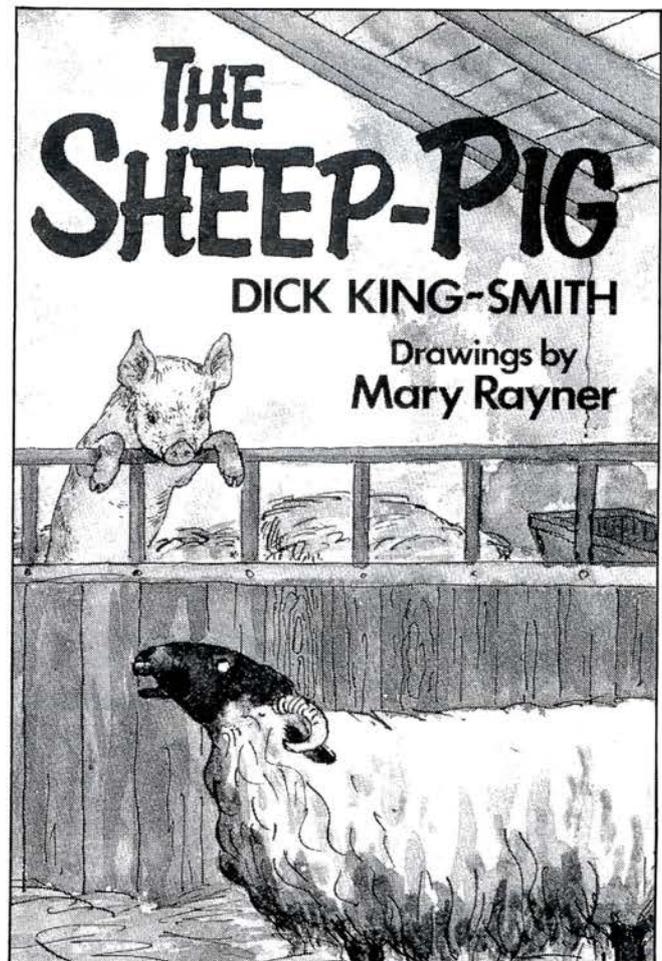
When the judges of the Guardian Award for Children's Fiction (authors Penelope Lively, K. M. Peyton, Michael Rosen and Geoffrey Trease, and myself) picked Dick King-Smith and *The Sheep-Pig* for this year's winner, it was in a sense a double tribute — to an amazingly consistent body of work and to an individual book that seemed to us to balance perfectly in one story the best qualities of all the others.

I have yet to meet anyone who was not captivated by this tale of a piglet, won at a local fair by a sheep-farmer, which realises that the only sensible way to handle sheep is to speak politely to them, and which not only saves the farmer's flock (and his own bacon) from rustlers but goes on to astound the whole world by winning the Sheep-dog Trials on television. It's deftly constructed, the animal and human characters are marvellously defined in dialogue, the suspense remains strong and quite



Dick King-Smith, courtesy of Victor Gollancz Ltd.

unbullied by the joke, and the style is so clean and economic that our hero wins through to a frenzy of cheers without a hint of sopiness. It's a most skilful piece of storytelling, and seemed to the judges to achieve its own aims as ideally as it's possible to do. There is no higher praise. ●



Stephanie Nettell is the Children's Books Editor of the Guardian.

The Sheep-pig is published by Gollancz (0 575 03375 4, £5.50).

The runner-up for the Guardian Award was *Summer of the Zepplin*, by Elsie McCutcheon (Dent, 0 466 06133 X, £5.95).

AWARDS

New Picture Books

Grandma, Felix and Mustapha Biscuit

Victor Ambrus

One day Grandma bought home a plump little hamster – Mustapha Biscuit, and from that day on Felix the cat dreamed of hamster on toast, grilled hamster, hamster in tomato sauce. And Felix pounced . . .

0 19 279789 1 £4.50

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Alex Brychta



Why did their wishes all come true when Danny and his grandparents had tea? The secret is revealed at the end of this amusing and magical picture book.

0 19 279786 7 £4.95

Junk

Nick Ward

When Dudly moved house everything seemed strange, and he felt very lonely. Then he began to collect junk. Before he knew what was happening he was on a strange planet . . . full of junk!

0 19 278203 7 £4.95

Each book has 32 pages of full colour, and hardwearing laminated boards.

Oxford

The Children's Book Award



Winner: **The Saga of Erik the Viking**, by Terry Jones with pictures by Michael Foreman.

This is the fourth year for this award which has now established itself as a significant landmark in the children's book world scene. Terry Jones, Michael Foreman and Pavilion books were all delighted at the news; Terry Jones it is reported was heard shouting 'I've won, I've won' to his assembled family when he took the call. They might well celebrate for this is the only award in which children play a part in deciding the winner.

Throughout the year members of the Federation of Children's Book Groups all over the country try out books with children in families, playgroups, schools and libraries and collect their responses. From all this testing an overall winner emerges, backed by a Top Ten selected from across the age range (0-14) which the award covers. The prize for the winner comes in the form of a book filled with messages, comments, pictures from the children who have enjoyed the book. Jones and Foreman join previous winners: Quentin Blake, Leon Garfield and Margaret Chamberlain, and Roald Dahl.

Pat Thomson, co-ordinator of the award reports on this year's winner.

Erik and his comrades set forth on a great adventure. They face many trials, confront many monsters but never lose faith and come safely home again to their families.

The story is told in a series of short episodes well within the concentration span of younger children but packed with exciting incident which held older readers. The illustrations make a real and independent contribution which adds powerfully to the story as well as being beautiful to look at.

A book enjoyed by children drawn from all age ranges but especially by under 11's.

The Top Ten runners-up are:

You and MeMe
Peter Curry, World's Work,
0 437 32952 6, £3.95

Teddy is touched and turned and the impression is that the reader is 'working' the book. The youngest really loved this one 0+

Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy
Lynley Dodd, Spindlewood,
0 907349 50 1, £3.95

A traditionally shaped rhyming tale — and they all joined in. Real fun. 2+

Ten in a Bed
Allan Ahlberg, Granada, 0 246 1151 3,
£3.95

Imagine a fairy tale character in your bed demanding a story every night. Lively idea, amusingly executed. 4+

Gorilla
Anthony Browne, Julia MacRae,
0 86203 104 4, £4.95

Very strong impact. A child fantasises about a kindly, protective gorilla in the absence of her father's attention. Striking art work. 5+

Archie's Acrobats
Chris Winn, Gollancz, 0 575 03096 8,
£4.95

The pictures generated enormous interest and speculation. A troop of tumblers meet all kinds of contingencies by forming a series of living shapes. 6+

The Sheep-Pig
Dick King-Smith, Gollancz,
0 575 03375 4, £5.50

Satisfying young novel about a courteous pig who becomes a successful sheep dog! A gift to read aloud. 6+

The Trouble with Mum
Babette Cole, Kaye and Ward,
0 7182 1986, £3.95

Mum is a witch and this tends to liven up occasions like PTA meetings. Very funny, bold pictures. 7+

Fireside Tales of the Traveller Children
Duncan Williamson, Canongate,
0 86241 047 9, £5.95 (hbk)
0 86241 952 5, £2.50 (pbk)

Fresh, alive stories. Magic read aloud. Part of our heritage and the children responded. 8+

Here Tomorrow, Gone Today
Tim Kennemore, Faber, 0 571 13011 9,
£5.50

Teenagers liked these short stories, finding them both witty and worrying as well as highly enjoyable. 12+

The Darkangel
Meredith Ann Pierce, Collins,
0 00 184149 1, £5.95

Fantasy of traditional lines with something to say about the relationship between good and evil. Totally absorbing. For older readers. 14+

A poster designed by Michael Foreman, featuring the winning book and the Top Ten, plus a Pick of the Year book list which includes over 40 recommendations, is available from the Federation.

Write to: Children's Book Award Poster, 3 Martin Close, Daws Heath, Benfleet, Essex, SS7 2TW, after June 1st. Cost: 75p including p&p. (Cheques and POs to FCBG).

The Saga of Erik the Viking is published by Pavilion Books, 0 907516 23 8, £6.95

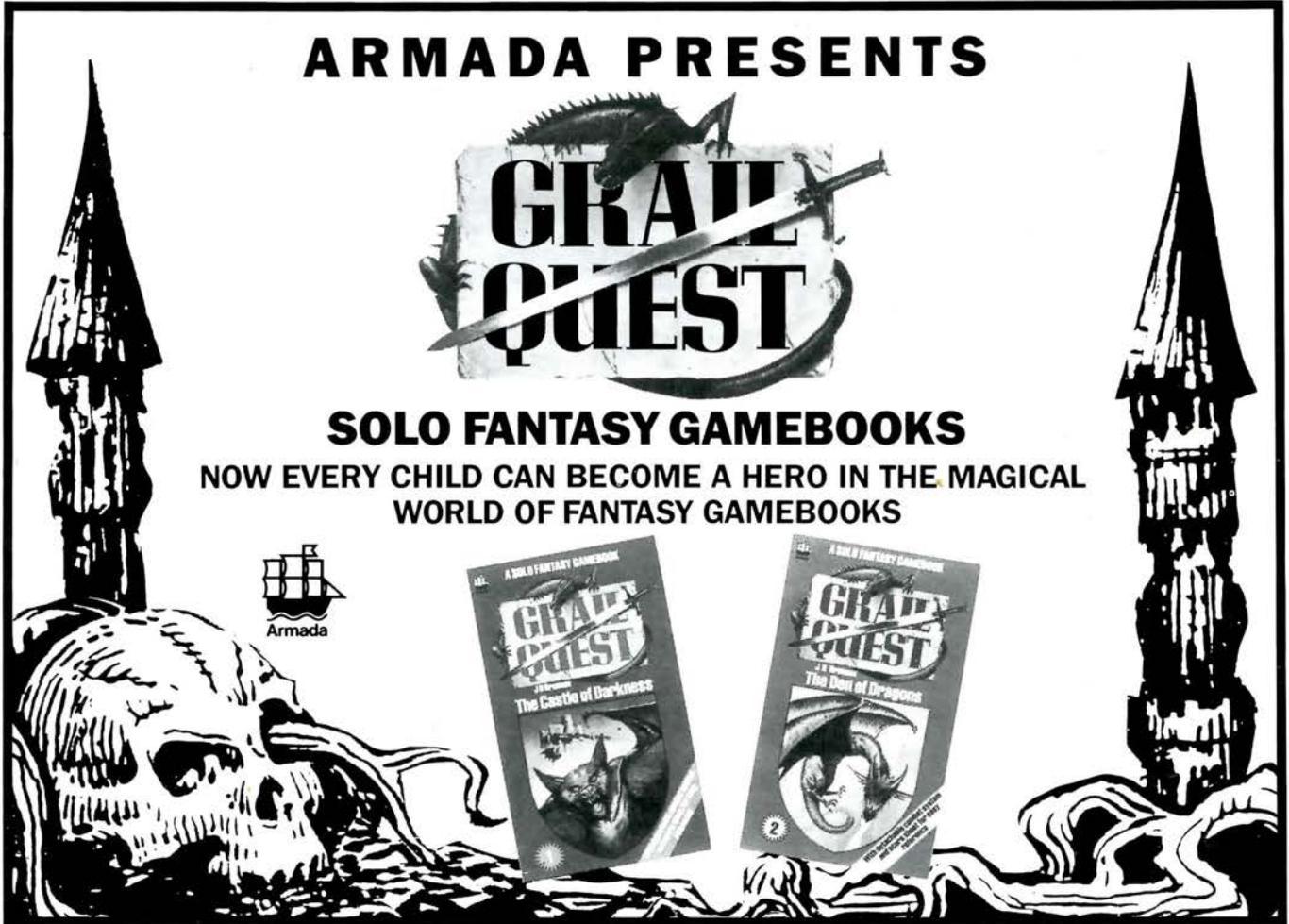
AWARDS

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MICHAEL PALIN (author)
CAROLINE HOLDEN (artist)

When Big Alf disappears Small Harry is left to pay the rent and deal with three nasty men who want to know the secret of the Big A Toothache Pill!

All Ages, 270 x 216mm, 32pp
416 23690 1 £1.95 May

Moon Man

TOMI UNGERER

A stylish and vivid picture book in which the man in the moon decides to visit Earth 'Easily one of the best picture books of recent years' Maurice Sendak.

Age 4+, 190 x 152mm, 40pp, 416 30130 4 £1.50 May

All Aboard with Jeremy Rabbit

DORIS SMITH

When Jeremy Rabbit goes to stay with his cousin Waldo the otter for a holiday he learns a lot about the sea very fast.

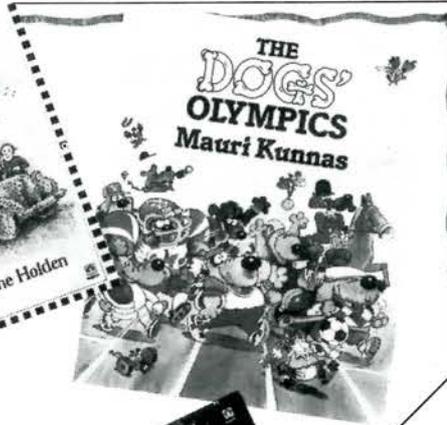
Age 4+, 190 x 152mm, 32pp, 416 45660 X £1.50 May

The Dogs' Olympics

MAURI KUNNAS

Dogs do everything! Swim, ride, play tennis, cricket and football — all in the Dogs' Olympics!

Age 4+, 295 x 234mm, 80pp, 416 50090 0 £2.95 July



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Photo by Robin Johnson

Shirley Hughes

Perhaps the best-known story about Shirley Hughes is also the least typical — how she came to write and illustrate 'Dogger' which won her the Kate Greenaway Medal in 1978. 'It was one of those ideas which fell out of a clear sky. In fact, he fell out of a cupboard which I happened to be tidying at the time. He is a very elderly stuffed toy (he'd been living in quiet retirement for about fifteen years) and he immediately reminded me of a drama which once happened in our family. It seems to have happened in a good many other families all over the world, too: a much-loved toy lost at bed-time, to the desolation of its small owner.' Thanks to 'Dogger' the world's small owners of stuffed toys now have a great comfort in time of need. Inspiration seldom drops in her lap that easily, however. 'Your best ideas come at your drawing-board,' she says, 'when you're actually working.'

Her own drawing-board is set up on an oblong kitchen table in a back bedroom of the house in Holland Park where she's lived for almost thirty years. In other hands it would be rather a grand house. As part of a handsome, mid-Victorian terrace enclosing at the rear quite an acreage of communal lawns and trees, it's the sort of residence much favoured by rising merchant bankers. As Shirley's house, though, it very much reflects her personality: warm, welcoming, and full of surprises and humour. On its walls, for example, a sketch by William Nicholson or Edward Ardizzone is likely to be hung up alongside a dazzling collage made in plasticine by one of her own children when young. Dogger himself keeps watch over Shirley's workplace. This has one crucial feature. 'The light — it catches the most marvellous London light'.

She puts it to good use. In addition to the Kate Greenaway, she won the Children's Rights Workshop 'Other Award' in 1976 and the Dutch Silver Slate Pencil Award in 1980. Yet, according to Margaret Meek, 'her talent is underestimated because of its very distinctiveness. A retrospective exhibition of her many modes would show her to be indeed a versatile and distinctive artist in the great tradition of English illustration.' It's easy, in fact, to overlook her originality. Who else could have handled so well the open-ended, strip-cartoon format of *Up and Up*, a text completely without words? Or worked the wiles of picture-book design on older children with *Here Comes Charlie Moon*? Or used the actual form of the book, the gutter down the middle where the pages are sewn, as part of the story in *Alfie Gets in First*? More than most illustrators with a secure reputation, Shirley Hughes believes in taking risks.

She was born in Liverpool and grew up in the coastal town of Hoylake. Her father, a prosperous businessman, died when she was four. Despite having no background in the arts her mother seems to have had an instinct for promoting creativity in her children — Shirley and two older sisters. 'We played, we mucked about, we dressed up, we made up stories and acted them to anyone we could make watch. We did a lot of writing, we did a lot of drawing . . . nobody ever interfered. We were just expected to get on with it. It was an ideal background for encouraging imagination.' Another advantage was her mother's good taste in books which brought an early acquaintance with illustrators like Rackham, Dulac and Heath Robinson. Comics and annuals were also permitted. Nor were these restricted to Tiger Tim and Pip, Squeak and Wilfred. 'I remember being in bed with measles when I was about nine. A lady friend gave me a whole pile of old American comics which were very different from the sort of things we'd been brought up with. Little Abner, Blondie and Dagwood, all that stuff, I lapped it up — we used to scour Birkenhead market looking for more.' Plans to send her to boarding school like her sisters were interrupted by the war. This remains a vivid memory. 'Liverpool was bombed every night at nine o'clock. You could actually see the docks burning from where we were. You couldn't go anywhere. Yet we did get to the point where we could go to the movies . . . to the cinema. That

WHAT I DO ALL DAY



I think I'll go out today and try to find something to draw.



Cats are nice



if only they'd stay still.



What about in here?



No, perhaps not.



This doesn't seem to be a very good place, either.

was a tremendous influence on me. It was the most thrilling thing in the world. We used to fight our way down miles and miles of windy prom to the Winter Gardens. My mother didn't realise that the cinema was about the most unsafe place to be in an air-raid. As we sat there, enthralled, plaster would be falling like snow. We saw just about every movie going . . . Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Buster Keaton. Buster Keaton was especially impressive. The silent movies of the great clowns are stuffed with picture-book ideas because it's all visual. I look at them even now and idea after idea comes to me.'

By the age of sixteen, with her talent for drawing already obvious Shirley left her local grammar school for Liverpool Art School. Then, after a brief period designing costumes at Liverpool Rep, she enrolled at the Ruskin School, Oxford. It was a very academic course with no formal training in illustration at all. Nevertheless, her ambition to become an illustrator grew — undeterred by a remark of one of her tutors who predicted 'You'll either make it to the top or you won't make it at all'. He also wrote to three art-editors on her behalf, though, launching her into the tough world of the free-lance. Years of hard slog followed illustrating education books, readers, stories with titles like 'A Madcap Brownie'. All of it was good training and none of it was well-paid. 'I still remember the wonderful moment when full-colour jacket art-work went up to ten quid! It was the equivalent of being in rep — there was no spotlight on me, I could concentrate on just trying to get better. It was a wonderful learning experience.' Also invaluable was the experience of raising three children — now grown up into a film-maker, a microbiologist and a painter — whom she observed so closely she feels she's able to draw youngsters from the inside out. 'We all live off the childhood of our children, don't we, and our own childhood. Somehow I managed to keep up my free-lance work and still meet deadlines, urged on by my architect husband John who supported me like mad and never doubted what I wanted to do for a single moment.' And steadily the success came — being chosen by Noel Streatfeild to illustrate her books about the Bell family, the Naughty Little Sister books with Dorothy Edwards, the story-anthologies edited by the Corrins, and of course her own Lucy and Tom books now enjoying something of a renaissance.

She loves her work. It combines all her enthusiasms — for storytelling, for visual narrative, for comics, movies and the theatre. Yet the basic difficulty always remains the same: how to retain in the finished work the sheer vitality of her first roughing-out which she does 'at a rate of knots in a few days'. Her method is to 'put down a monotone drawing in a sort of Vandyke brown and then I work up wash after wash after wash to get tonality, a recession of going back into the pictures. It's difficult because you're concentrating terribly hard on the drawing and all the details which takes much, much longer. Yet in the end you've got to bring it back to the flow you've got in the first rough. Every artist has this problem, I suppose, but I always tend to think it's just me.' What she hopes to communicate even to the youngest reader is sheer excitement — the 'feel and smell of the page, the shapes and patterns of the words and pictures as well as their content'.



Not that she thinks illustration is solely, or even mainly, for the youngest readers. 'I want to do books which are not picture-books but are very close to the picture-book experience for older children. I had a bit of a go with *Charlie Moon* but what I'm after now is a mixture of speech-balloons, stories, theatre, strip-cartoons and film; breaking the page up in all sorts of ways as a kind of four-decker narrative happening at once. It's been very exciting and has taken a long time to do because I've written it so many times and spent ages working on the design.' For this latest project she's come up with two new characters called Chips and Jesse who seem already to have taken on a life of their own. We'll see the final product early next year. Judging by the roughs, another Hughes tour-de-force is in the offing, but success even for so established a figure can never be guaranteed. 'The public quite rightly wants to know what it's getting so it's always difficult to break new ground. It takes time and effort and patience . . . I'm keen to expand the form even into the secondary age-range. Many children, I know, find it very hard to sort things out when they've only got a text to go on. I think there's a great deal of mileage in the old annuals

format, where you knew the characters in advance from a strip-cartoon and so were much more willing to pluck up courage and read the text.'

Through her own books, through talks and lectures, through her work on panels like the Mother Goose Award, Shirley strives to communicate her own enthusiasm and optimism about the future of illustration. 'I'd love to see more and more young artists prepare to take up black-and-white drawing, for example. They'd have it made if they developed this skill — though it does take about twenty years. Yet the real heights of happiness are when you've got a good job to do and a good pen and you don't have to think about technique because by now your hand is just an extension of your brain so everything works like a treat . . . that's wonderful. That's bliss. That's why it's always worth hanging in there.'

Already she's illustrated more than two hundred books. Yet for her 'there's still no excitement to compare with sitting down in front of a blank piece of paper on the drawing board. You always hope that this next one is going to be the best ever. ●



Photo by Richard Mewton



Ah, a tree! Well, it won't walk off, anyway.



Perhaps it might be better . . . to stay at home and draw, after all!

REVIEWS

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.

Nursery/Infants

Mr Bear's Trumpet
Chizuko Kuratomi, ill.
Kozo Kakimoto,
Macdonald,
0 356 11002 8, £1.95

The first appearance in paperback for a popular and friendly bear. Mr Bear seems blissfully ignorant of the fact that his trumpet playing is not a hit with his rabbit friends or the circus audience but he has all winter to practice. The sumptuous full colour illustrations are well served in this edition which is one of four just published in their full size format, on the same high quality paper as the hardcover originals. JB

The Cat, the Fish and the Fish Tank
Nettie Lowenstein, ill.
Paula Youens, Althea
First Books, Dinosaur,
0 85122 413 X, £1.10

A simple and unremarkable story of a cat trying to catch a goldfish which inevitably ends with a wet moggy and the fish safe and sound. Not in my view likely to inspire but better than many 'readers' at that early level. JB

I can do it!
0 14 050.401 X

I'm the King of the Castle!
0 14 050.400 1
Shigeo Watanabe, ill.
Yasuo Ohtomo, Picture
Puffin, £1.25 each

The everyday antics of a small ursine character will continue to delight his many friends in these two latest paperback editions. Essential fare for beginning readers. JB

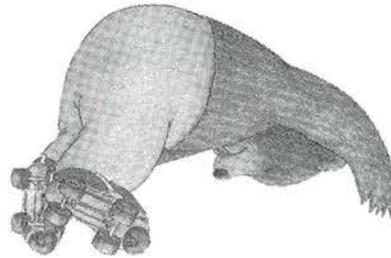
Hey Diddle Diddle
0 583 30700 0

Three Men in a Tub
0 583 30699 3
Alan Rogers, Granada
Dragon, 85p each

Not having seen the TV series I cannot see whether or not its popularity is justified; undoubtedly though, this popularity will help to promote these rather garish little nursery rhyme books. I found their bold borders made it difficult for my eyes to settle on the page but I imagine that those more familiar with the TV characters will have no such difficulty. JB



'I can roller skate.'



'Well, nearly.'
From *I can do it!*

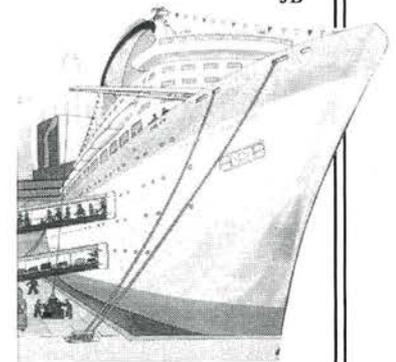
Bill's Balloon Ride
Reiner Zimmnik, Magnet,
0 416 46820 9, £1.50

A story of a small boy's finally successful attempt to realise his dream of being able to fly

— with the aid of dozens of gas-filled balloons. The rhyming text has a smooth rhythm and consequently reads aloud well as it carries the tale along to a happy landing. JB

Big City Port
Betsy and Ellen
DelVecchio, Hippo,
0 590 70319 5, £1.50

New York is the setting for this book which gives an insight into the workings of a modern port through a simple straightforward text. Something of the bustle of such a place and the sheer size of modern freighters is caught in the limited-colour illustrations. JB



Infant/Junior

In Summer When I Go to Bed
Juan Wijngaard,
0 907144 47 0

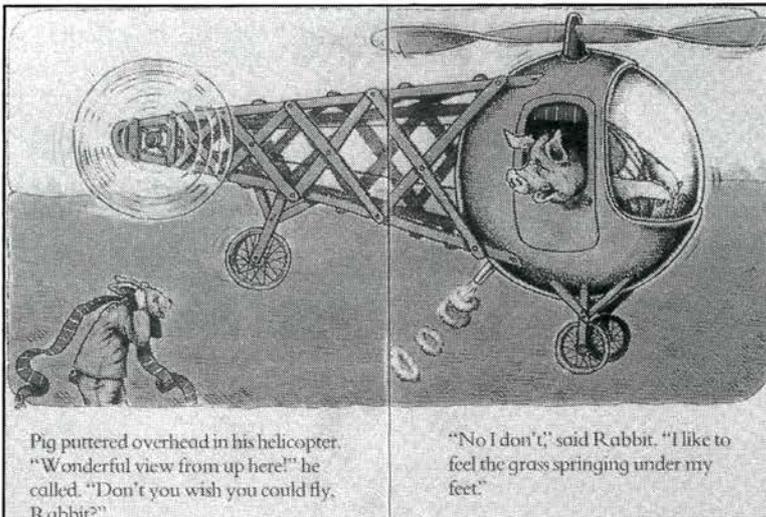
The Higher and Higher House
Janosch, trans. Anthea
Bell, 0 907144 52 7

Walk Rabbit Walk
Elizabeth Attenborough
and Colin McNaughton,
0 907144 51 9

Jack and the Beanstalk
Tony Ross
0 907144 49 7

Panda's Puzzle
Michael Foreman
0 907144 48 9
Methuen/Moonlight,
Pocket Bears, £1.50
each

This series is proving popular in classrooms and bookshops



Pig pattered overhead in his helicopter. "Wonderful view from up here!" he called. "Don't you wish you could fly, Rabbit?"

From *Walk Rabbit Walk*.

with its generally high quality of content plus a sturdy format. All that, plus a still reasonable price.

From the new batch, Wijngaard breathes imaginative life into

"No I don't," said Rabbit. "I like to feel the grass springing under my feet."

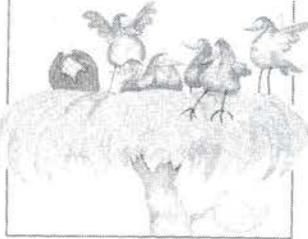
Thomas Hood's poem. Movement from the domestic, workaday into fantasy is well caught. Other artists would have exploited more fully those crocodiles of the Nile, leaping mountain goats and lounging lions, but these are

pictures to be looked at carefully, savoured and enjoyed. My six year old co-readers liked a picture book they could hold and tuck themselves away with. Their teacher now slots this series into her individualised reading resources.

Janosch's book has two stories. The title tale has Snoddle and his friend Snoddlepony building a house — the reader has to fill in key details 'in their most careful writing'. Similar ideas in the second story, *A Day Trip to London*. Lovely pictures and children may enjoy it for a while, but it's a bit earnest, over-teacherly. There's much more imaginative potential to be had from 'joining in' (see Rosen and Round reviewed in this issue).

By contrast, *Pocket Bears* are back on top form in *Walk Rabbit Walk*. Lovely collaborative feel as rich, poetic text (reminiscent of *Mr Gumpy's Outing*) blends with McNaughton's quirky-pastoral

He had many brothers and sisters, who were very noisy...



From *Benedict Finds a Home*.

pictures. Rabbit takes a walk and resists the temptation of lifts by balloon, sports car, motorbike, roller skates, etc. . . . one not to be missed.

I wondered how Ross' and Foreman's picture stories would transfer to the *Bears'* format. With slight reservations, it's worked. Ross gives the trad. tale some slick contemporary edges (Jack's family are down to last year's mouldy old potatoes) but retains the magic and the fearful from the original. The Giant is one of his best creations and my *top junior* (yes, honestly) readers enjoyed the depiction of Jack's family newly come into the money.

Foreman's breathtakingly rich fable about the little panda who travels the world to find who he is has the same freshness and musicality that enchanted young readers when it first appeared. I hope that not too much is lost by the inevitable toning down for the format. Foreman's glorious pictures need space to breathe — but I'm not going to carp as it's still a superb production and I want as many children as possible to get to this one.

CM

Charlie, Emma and Alberic

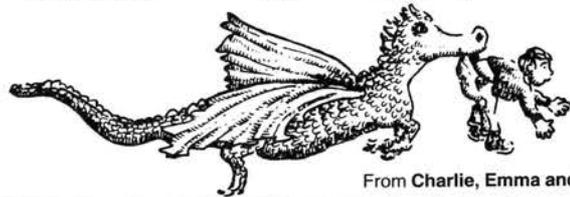
Margaret Greaves, ill. Eileen Browne, Magnet, 0 416 46990 6, £1.10

Another engaging book from an author who is strong on plot and dialogue as well as being skilled at dealing with magic without ever being fey.

Boy and girl adopt a lizard who turns out to be a dragon only visible to them. I serialised this with seven to nines and there are some glorious set pieces such as Alberic's part in the school play (St. George and the Dragon, of course!). The school bully gets his just deserts, too.

A lovely passage when the kids try to explain what reading and writing are for, and the school scenes are spot-on. Super cover and pictures. Recommended.

CM



From *Charlie, Emma and Alberic*.

CM

Small Harry and the Toothache Pills

Michael Palin, ill. Caroline Holden, Magnet, 0 416 23690 1, £1.95

A zany piece of Pythonesque story telling about two rather hollow, stereotyped characters. The author follows the 'pile it all in' rule for a children's story, often adopted by celebrities. He has good ideas, but the nine year olds I read this with taught me that he needs to know about the pacing of a tale and about the differences between adult and child humour.

I've a churlish feeling that the author's name may sell it to older juniors/middle schoolers. Caroline Holden's imaginative, characteristically sharp pictures do the story more than justice.

Junior/Middle



Moonman.

Moonman

Tomi Ungerer, Magnet, 0 416 30130 4, £1.50

Witty, poetic text and superb artistry combine to tell this sardonic tale of the time the Man in the Moon came down to Earth and was driven away by an over-defensive World. Look at the unbending shapes of the statesmen and the secret policeman compared with the light-bright butterflies in the double page spread of the garden. The young won't miss the point of the story as the artist shows rather than tells.

CM

Would you rather put your head in a dustbin or sit in a bathful of worms?

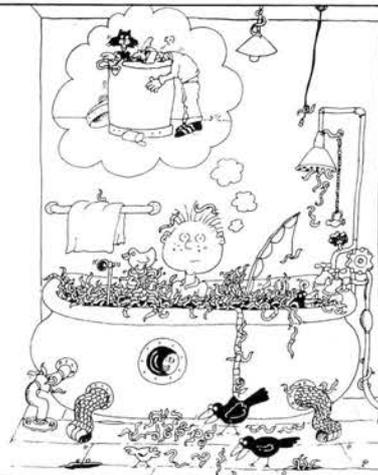
Would you rather eat slugs on toast or

?

Would you rather

or

?



From *How to Get out of the Bath and Other Problems*.

The Chewing Gum Rescue and Other Stories

Margaret Mahy, ill. Jan Ormerod, Magnet, 0 416 48470 0, £1.25

This one's a treat. Eleven short stories from a writer whose particular gift is in challenging, enjoyable stories for seven to eleven year olds. Magic and mystery lurks in unexpected places so that rubbish dumps, bus queues, gardens are the setting for the fantastic, and her stories are immediate, involving. I've used the first five paragraphs of *The Travelling Boy* with top juniors, student teachers and a primary school staff to start a discussion on how gifted writers 'get you in'



Therefore, individual copies essential: able readers and street-wise Rosenites will save up. Teachers should mortgage all those copies of *Bashing Away at English!* Splendid literary and linguistic fun which is saying and doing something of *vital* importance for all ages.

CM



to a story by creating a mood; planting clues . . . have a try. A splendid collection, better, I think, than her Carnegie winning *The Haunting*. Inviting cover, complementary pictures from Jan Ormerod.

CM

Bridget and William

Jane Gardam, ill. Janet Rawlins, Young Puffin, 0 14 03 1592 6, 95p

Two independent stories here. The title story was Gardam's 1981 Carnegie recommendation; *Horse* first appeared in 1982.

They are both miniature masterpieces, showing well this writer's art in folding up time, place and, moreover, the felt life of childhood within accessible stories.

Bridget is determined to keep her beloved pony and her trek down the hill, through the snow, is perfectly paced in the writing. In *Horse* a community is united across generations to save a remarkable landmark. Notice how, in both, the young learn their culture, and its

How to Get out of the Bath and Other Problems

Michael Rosen, pictures by Graham Round, Hippo, 0 590 70299 8, £2.50

Here's the one 'reluctant' readers and writers have long

lores, through the stories they hear from the old. A rare, special reading treat for seven to twelves. CM

Joseph the Dream Teller

Catherine Storr, ill.
Chris Molan, Methuen,
People of the Bible,
0 416 47030 0, £1.50

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber, ill.
Quentin Blake, Picture Puffin,
0 14 050 432 X, £1.95

The first is another in a series which received an extended review (BfK September '83) Storr's writing is spare and her narrative catches some of the magic involved in the retelling of Joseph's dreams. Molan's pictures are the Bible Hollywood-style: there were opportunities to convey the numinous nature of the story, but these are missed.

Kids may enjoy comparing a very different way of telling the same story. The Picture Puffin contains a large part of the libretto of the oft-performed show. Many of the words seem trite without the jaunty music, though I can see some R.E. lessons being livened up by this one. Blake adds sparkle to what could be mundane material: there's social comment in the very contemporary Eastern dignitaries who are Potiphar and his spouse. CM

Kevin and the Iron Poodle

J. K. Hooper, Hippo,
0 590 70304 8, £1.25

Left with time on his hands and to his own devices in the evenings, Kevin is universally regarded as a 'bad lot' for the activities he indulges in. The

final straw is the formation of the street theatre of Port Haven with his mates, to entertain outside the local pubs. Unfortunately, one of the 'stage' props is the pig's head that Kevin has stolen from Mr Grinser, the local butcher, much to the chagrin of Kevin's mother, who aspires to being the next Mrs Grinser! Mr Nebula's poodle could provide the solution by occupying the boy and keeping him out of trouble. As the poodle can talk and possesses a will of iron, the struggle is interesting. An original conception, which provides an excellent read for nine to eleven range. BB

The Famous 5 and the Treasure of the Templars

Serge Rosenweig and Bernard Dufosse, Hodder & Stoughton,
0 340 33984 5, £1.95

I don't know whether the by-line 'a new adventure of the characters created by Enid Blyton' is meant as an apology, but it certainly should be. This cartoon strip debasement of the original inventions lacks all the subtlety and twists of the earlier stories, substituting a transparent tale and comic-style captions, based on the assumption that today's youngsters want this kind of diet. Without being drawn into that kind of argument in a short review, it seems to me that here we have a classic case of trading on the original title and characters and giving very little back in value in return. BB

The Clock Tower Ghost

Gene Kemp, Puffin,
0 14 03 1554 3, 95p

Surely there is something magic in the way in which Gene Kemp creates characters that, while larger than life, are also eerily recognisable? The

raging Amanda, her parents, brother, teachers and even the ghost all have those traits that cause the readers to smile, tongue in cheek, about themselves or those they know.

Amanda lives in a constant rage. It is certainly not stilled when her family move from all that is familiar to live in a clock tower and run a museum. Her fury however eventually lays a despairing but selfish ghost who has been seeking his supposed murderer for one hundred years. The ghost forgives and is forgiven. Amanda's rage is calmed and all settle down to a quiet life — 'well, possibly' are Gene Kemp's parting words!

A hectic, exciting and satisfying read for all children of junior school age. CL

Bottersnikes and Gumbles

0 330 28191 7

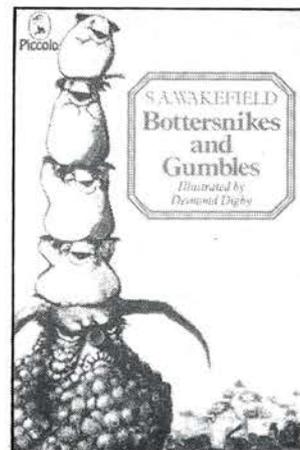
Gumbles on Guard

0 330 28192 5

S.A. Wakefield, ill.
Desmond Digby, Piccolo,
£1.25 each

Bottersnikes are very unpleasant creatures. They live in rubbish heaps on the outskirts of the Australian bush and grumble and mutter their ways through life. With green wrinkled skin and ears that burn red with anger they are off-putting to the most charitable of characters, even the Gumbles who also live in the bush. Gumbles are squashy, shape-changing creatures who spend much time protecting weaker creatures than themselves particularly birds. Bottersnikes devote a great deal of energy to hunting down Gumbles, squashing them into old jam tins and releasing them only to act as slaves.

Bottersnikes and Gumbles introduces the two species and each chapter is a separate episode in the attempts to capture and escape. **Gumbles**

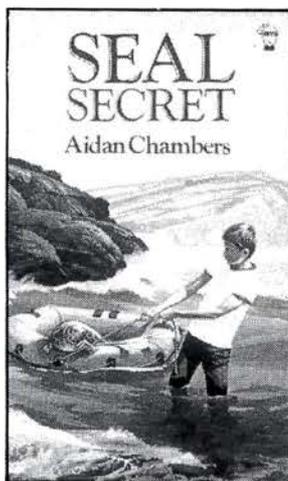


From **Gumbles on Guard**.

on Guard tells especially of the Gumbles' attempts to protect a lyre-bird chick from both the fox and the Bottersnikes.

Easy reads, delightful illustrations. Would the contents appeal? When a very reluctant reader said 'Brilliant! Can I take it home?' then I was sure. Short chapters, lots of amusing incidents. Make them available. CL

Middle/Secondary



Seal Secret

Aidan Chambers, Hippo,
0 590 70302 1, 85p

William has always spent his summer holiday in a caravan by the sea. When his parents take a cottage instead he is not pleased. That his father will spend the holiday fishing, his mother under a sun-ray lamp and William himself at a loose end does not help. Nor does the arrival of the territory-conscious local child, Gwyn. Reluctantly Gwyn reveals a secret to William. For William it is a horrific secret but one which draws from him signs of initiative and determination which make for a positive holiday after all. He rescues a seal, the air-sea rescue team

rescue him.

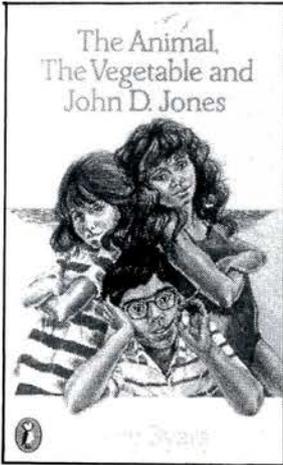
For me the strength in this excellent little story is not in the ecological tale but in the murmuring undercurrents of aggressive emotion. The fears and selfishness of all in the tale, adults and children alike are finally quieted but not fully tamed. There is a tugging tension throughout the story that causes it to move along most satisfactorily. A super book for all children of ten or more to read alone or in groups. There is a lot to think about and discuss. CL

Halcyon Island

Anne Knowles, Hippo,
0 590 70318 8, 85p

It was interesting to read this book alongside **Seal Secret** for their plots have much in common, particularly in the plight of a frustrated only child left to his own devices in the holidays. Unfortunately it is only the plot that presents similarities. There is something too cosy about the progress of Ken from non-swimmer to proficient swimmer and canoeist. As a reader I found myself constantly hoping for action that never materialised. Young testers were equally disappointed.

An easy quick read for those around ten but nothing solid. CL



The Animal, The Vegetable and John D. Jones

Betsy Byars, Puffin, 0 14 03.1563 2, £1.10

Byars' treatment of family, group and personal relationships strike a cord in her pre-adolescent readers. In *The Animal...*, a convincing story is told of the tension and pressures resulting from a holiday on which divorced father takes his kids, and tries to forge links with his new girlfriend and her son. The painful silences, the frustration of things not 'hitting it off', the lost tempers and the tantrums, they're all there, just like in reality. Very enjoyable and very sensitive, often funny but also sad in a poignant way. Thoroughly recommended.

BB



Danger — Marmalade at Work

Andrew Davies, Thames/Magnet, 0 423 00840 4, £1.25

It's possible to take the latest Marmalade book (simultaneous hardback publication by Abelard Schuman) on two levels. It is an extremely witty and clever tale about the world's naughtiest girl, which genuinely does amuse, with the heroine's exaggerated antics and the inclusion of an eccentric cast of thousands. Unfortunately the book also lays itself open to criticism for a number of below the belt jibes at the activities of Social Workers in general. The

comments are too sustained to be passed off as mere flippancy, or as the occasional barb that all institutions expect. Sad, because the humour at the expense of the Work Experience scheme is both funny and justified. Also, how many readers will find it amusing that Marmalade is kept in a cage, at one stage, and poked with a stick. Some of these sections fall flat and leave a sour taste which mars an otherwise marvellous book.

BB



From *The Song of Pentecost*.

The Song of Pentecost

W. J. Corbett, Puffin, 0 14 03.1689 2, £1.50

The paperback edition of the 1982 Whitbread Award winner will make this sensitive and perceptive story available to a wider young audience. Parallels have already been drawn and speculations debated about the theme's antecedents, suffice it here to say that *The Song of Pentecost* is a marvellous book, full of incident, finely written and containing all the ingredients of first class children's fiction. Corbett doesn't preach or moralise but so many of his incidental, almost 'throw away', remarks, drift out of their context in a passage, and remain in the reader's mind, not solemn enough to be profound, but thought provoking nevertheless. After all, we all have 'to learn to survive in a changing world'.

BB

The Kelpie's Pearls

Mollie Hunter, Magnet, 0 416 45690 1, £1.25

Another new edition of a rightly popular children's story, which surprisingly already dates from 1964. A tale that contains the balanced ingredients of mystery, suspense, magic and excitement, in all the right proportions to hold the attention of succeeding generations of youngsters. Alisdair the Trapper has no intention of sharing the pearls with anyone, and he certainly doesn't believe in the supernatural, particularly a water spirit that can turn itself into a huge black horse. However Torquil and Morag MacLeod know differently; but then again, is Morag a witch? Never overstated, never over-



Torquil & Morag, from *The Kelpie's Pearls*.

exaggerated, *The Kelpie's Pearls* is a superb book which can be warmly recommended to anyone unfortunate enough not to have read it yet.

BB

Fearfully Frightening

Barbara Ireson, Beaver, 0 09 933770 3, £1.25

Following hard on the heels of *Ghostly and Ghastrly and Creepy Creatures*, collected also by Barbara Ireson, *Fearfully Frightening* is an amiable collection of non-too-frightening 'ghost' stories. A splendid cast has contributed, including Nicholas Fisk, Joan Aiken and Jan Mark, but the whole is rather too comfortable and reassuring to frighten anyone. The most spine chilling line is the printer's statement that the text is set in Baskerville! However for nine pluses it's all good fun and with ten lively stories for £1.25, pretty good value.

BB

Eventer's Dream

0 583 3064 7 0

A Hoof in the Door

0 583 3064 8 9

Ticket to Ride

0 583 3064 9 7

Caroline Akrill, Granada, £1.50 each

A horsey trilogy which follows the fortunes of Elaine Elliott as she battles through trials, equine thrush and slipped stifles to realise her ambition of becoming a three-day eventer, an honour usually reserved for the wealthy and well-connected. Tangled up in events come a nouveau pauvre pair Nigella and Henrietta Fane along with mama, Lady Jennifer. Just for a romantic touch there's the tall, dark and handsome whipper-in, Nick Forster.

In Book One, Elaine accepts a precarious job with the impecunious Fanes and has to pull the stable back together literally and financially, eventually acquiring Legend,

the animal of her dreams, for training as an eventing horse. The winning of a scholarship to be schooled in the finer points of competition takes up Book Two and in the last volume Havers Hall is left behind to decay still further, whilst Elaine moves to the sternly regimented Equestrian Training School, where competition is fierce (and bitchy) and the work is hard.

There are some fairly unbelievable coincidences and you always know things will turn out well but Ms. Akrill has produced three lively stories, the pace of which should keep up the interest even for non-equine types. At the core of each novel are the human characters, especially Elaine herself. She, so wholesome and sensible — like bran — is balanced by the crazy, eccentric Fanes.

All three books are well recommended for the library or bookshop, not least by my 2nd Year girls, who enthusiastically devoured them in one evening.

DB

The Poacher's Son

Rachel Anderson, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672251 2, £1.25

This is another of those novels which adults rave over but which does not have such an immediately enthusiastic reaction from pupils.

I found it hauntingly depressing. The carefully drawn, crushing poverty of the Betts family at the turn of the century makes very sad reading and the cruel condemnation of Arthur, the son of the title, to a Reform School for truancy and for poaching to feed his fatherless family underlines basic injustices, which by and large are still current. Even joining up and fighting World War I provided no solutions; risking death did not provide any answers or release; still Arthur asks 'What am I left with? What have I got out of it all?' It's a novel for today about yesterday and its bleak subject echoes around the mind as it rightly should. It's worth persuading your readers to try it, or going out of your way to share it.

DB

Janey's Diary

Mary Hooper, Magnet, 0 416 46130 1, £1.25

This is bound to be compared with *Adrian Mole* — the female equivalent. In a slight way it is but in many ways it isn't. It is humorous and it is fun but it does lack the subtlety and scope of *Mole*, who after all was created for adults, I suppose, and our Janey really is very shallow. She niggled me to distraction but is a definite hit with my third year girls, which only goes to show that an adult's place is in the wrong!

Will Janey manage to ensnare heart-throb James, or would

Norman be a better catch; and what about fat Peter? On the other hand there's strong competition from Fiona and even best friend Anna . . . and so on.

It's harmless enough, stock it. DB

Cinderella in Blue Jeans

Tessa Kraling, Hippo, 0 590 70307 2, £1.20

What Game Are You Playing?

John Harvey, Hippo, 0 590 70301 3, £1.25

Two predictable offerings in the 'Sweet Dreams' tradition, lightweight and in that area of unreality which young female

readers like to believe is reality.

The heavily accented message in the former is to be true to yourself if you want to succeed and gain social success. Just to prove the point a couple of true-to-self adults are thrown in — a widowed potter with twins and a concert 'cellist. The trouble with Iolanthe Brown is that she wants to be like the wealthy family for whom her mother is dogsbody/caretaker; hopefully so like them that their elder son will want to marry her. Anyway, Pavel, the musician, soon puts that idea out of her head and she decides she wants to be liked by him instead.

As for Debbie in John Harvey's novel, she craves to be successful, not least at tennis.

Then Terry Clarke ambles into her life and after several false starts she realises that tennis isn't everything and Terry could be quite something. This particular story is so gratuitously full of the names of pop groups and songs, I can see kids soon needing a glossary to read it.

It'll keep kids reading and it's all very moral so I guess it's worth a copy in the library. My testers read both rapidly and declared them fit for adolescent consumption. DB

Great Days at Grange Hill

Jan Needle, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672211 3, £1.25

It's back to the beginning — Tucker's first term. 'Business as usual', the closing words, also describe the book. Judy's afraid of not making friends, Tucker's a clown, wild but good at heart, Trisha's defiant and hates uniform, Benny's too poor to have PE kit and suffers racial abuse, Justin's a posh weed, Ann's sane and serious . . . There is a lot of tension in and out of school — racketeering, bullying, dares, rivalry, election-rigging, truancy. The routine tedium of school life is, of course, absent. The writing is snappy, sarky, school-story style. Character is established and developed as far as is necessary for the plot. On a point of information, does any other school give 3-hour detentions, and if so, how? TD

Older Readers

The Bargain

Rex Sparger, 0 553 22823 4

Unnatural Talent

Les Logan, 0 553 23607 5 Bantam, Dark Forces series, both 85p

Dark Forces is a teeny-occult series from the same stable as Sweet Dreams and just as unappealing. What the publishers describe as 'the familiar high school world of romance, cars and rock and roll' is a success-obsessed place where only scoring counts — with a girl, with a basketball, with a rock number. The characters are failures in this world; Mephistophelian figures offer them stardom, a place in the team, an unblemished skin, a bigger bust . . . for the customary price. Perhaps because these characters are not equipped with any three-dimensional existence, let alone a soul, the manifestations of this price are terrible odours, red skin-marks, searing pains and a tendency to vomit green slime. (The last two can also affect the reader.) **The Bargain** transforms an ailing rock group into gold-disc superstars through the powers of Chort, a satanic impresario. In **Unnatural Talent**, Andrew's astounding basketball skill comes courtesy of a succubus called, oddly enough, Angela. Exorcism, with the usual effects — 'strings of obscenities', 'showers of glass' and more green vomit — ends both stories. Teenage readers with only a smidgeon of discernment will be able to resist the lure of this banal sensationalism. TD

Tucker's Luck

Jan Needle, Fontana Lion, 0 00 672395 0, £1.25

Peter (Tucker) Jenkins is out of a job, short of a girlfriend and hankering after a motorbike — otherwise

everything's fine. His mate, Alan Hargreaves' dad puts the first right by offering a job at slave-labour rates; Michelle puts the second right by inviting Tucker out and Merve the Swerve persuades our hero to buy a cheap, rather suspect machine, which Tommy Watson dunks in the canal. There's also Allison to reckon with and she's 'minded' by psycho Ralph Passmore, who hates everyone, except Allison.

Jan Needle has given Phil Redmond's T.V. scripts a raw, racy flavour which commends this novel more for older readers. Worth a teacherly skip through before you display or recommend it. DB

Ganesh

Malcolm J. Bosse, Puffin Plus, 0 14 031674 4, £1.25

Ganesh is Jeffrey Moore, a white American who has lived his fourteen-year life in south-east India. His self-image is Indian, his culture nearly so, his acceptance as Indian, when his father dies, disturbingly less than he expects. Part One establishes these facts in an interesting and moving way. In Part Two, he must become an American, live in the original family house, go to High School, be mocked or respected for his difference. Part Three provides either the climax or the weakness of the book. Opposing the destruction of the house by road-builders, Ganesh-Jeffrey enlists the support of other teenagers in a Ghandian sit-in. They and his elderly aunt fast for eleven days and the authorities give way. I was engaged with this on first reading. The exploration of cultural identity, through this unusual lens arrangement — fish-eye, zoom and wide angle — is quite fascinating. It's not just lenses, but mirrors also, reflecting, distorting and two-way. On second thoughts, I don't feel the third part quite

works. It creates a situation in order to resolve a situation and, though what the characters do is hard, what the author does seems a bit easy. Nevertheless, I shall offer Ganesh, to older kids and seriously consider reading it with them in class. TD

Slake's Limbo

Felice Holman, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672250 4, £1.25

It's not before time that this fine book eventually appears in paperback. Ignore the blurb — 'constantly hunted and bullied' — and let the author, in a few brief touches, move from Slake's past into the real, extraordinary and superbly written 'chronicle of events'. Slake's surface life condemns him to non-existence. He finds existence in a New York subway where, for one hundred and twenty-one days, he creates a home. Hell, for him, is other people and above ground. It's only down in the Columbus Circle that he can begin to make contact with others and, more importantly, with himself. It isn't easy, in a few words, to convey the power of this book. There's a bleakness, a remoteness and a compelling involvement. The subject, the detail, the narrative method

and the imagery work upon your unconscious reading and demand your conscious study. I'll recommend **Slake's Limbo** to a whole range of ages and abilities and certainly want to read it with children. TD

Let the Circle Be Unbroken

Mildred Taylor, Puffin Plus, 0 14 031605 1, £1.95

'This book was so painful that I don't want to read it again' was one of my pupils' comments on **Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry**, the novel which precedes this. Both are set in the American South during the Depression and are about a Black family and the community in which they live. The Logans own their land and struggle to keep it in the face of harsh poverty and oppression. In **Let the Circle**, the central character, Cassie, is now eleven and still painfully learning what it means to be Black. The book is painfully illuminating. Warmth and strength and intelligence shine through the bitter injustice. I think, despite his comment, that the pupil I quoted will want to read the sequel. Both books deserve a wide audience. TD



From the cover of **Slake's Limbo**.

THE OTHER HALF

Pat Triggs talks to **Helen Nicoll**, partner with Jan Pienkowski in a unique collaboration

If you are in the habit of stopping off for a cup of coffee at Membury Services on the M4 you might have noticed, from time to time, a man and woman engaged in animated conversation, very occupied with paper and coloured markers and, among other things, apparently concocting spells. What you were witnessing was a meeting of that unique collaboration between Helen Nicoll and Jan Pienkowski which has produced the very popular and successful **Meg and Mog** series. Membury Services — helpfully situated between London (Jan) and Marlborough (Helen) — provides a good place to work they say: 'No-one disturbs you.'

They first met over fifteen years ago when Helen Nicoll was the producer of **Watch** for BBC Schools' TV. 'A friend said, "I've got this Polish friend you should meet". Somehow I thought he'd be 50 with a beard! Jan and I worked together for four years on **Watch**. He did all the graphics for the titles and invented this crazy form of animation: he dressed all in black, with a black veil, black gloves, and drew onto tracing paper; filmed, lit from the front, he couldn't be seen.' With a little technical trickery this became a 2-3 minute animated story. 'We made up a story for whatever each programme was about. After about three years Jan said, "You know we are mad; we do all this, two transmissions and it's lost. We ought to do a book." And that's where the idea for the **Meg and Mog** books came from. We'd already done **Meg** stories on film.'

They signed a contract with Heinemann for two books. 'If we hadn't signed I would never have done it. I was working in TV until six weeks before my daughter was born and then I gave up. I don't think you can be a TV producer and a mother; they are both too time-consuming. We did the first book then and the second was due when Hannah was two months old. It was wildly inconvenient at the time; but nice to be able to go on writing after.'

The Nicoll/Pienkowski partnership is unusual in children's publishing because of the way they work. 'We had worked together for such a long time we knew we were *able* to work together. It's not unusual when people work together for one person to mind so desperately about their bit that they can't see what the greater good has to be. I've worked in TV so I am as involved as Jan in what the page looks like. And he's much better at spells than I am. I can never find the rhymes. If Jan thinks my storyline is hopeless we destroy it. In a true collaboration you've got to allow yourself to be relaxed, be able to see another direction which might do quite as well and end up in a better place.'

The ideas for the stories come in a variety of ways. 'For the early books we'd just start with a completely white piece of paper and say "What shall we do this time?" **Mog at the Zoo** came from a story I'd written on a visit to a school. I told David Wood about it when he was writing the **Meg and Mog Show** and he included it — so we knew we had to do that one. What David Wood did in the show helped us to see possibilities for future developments, it allowed the characters to develop for us. **Meg** always had been a complete character, of course, and we knew **Mog** was

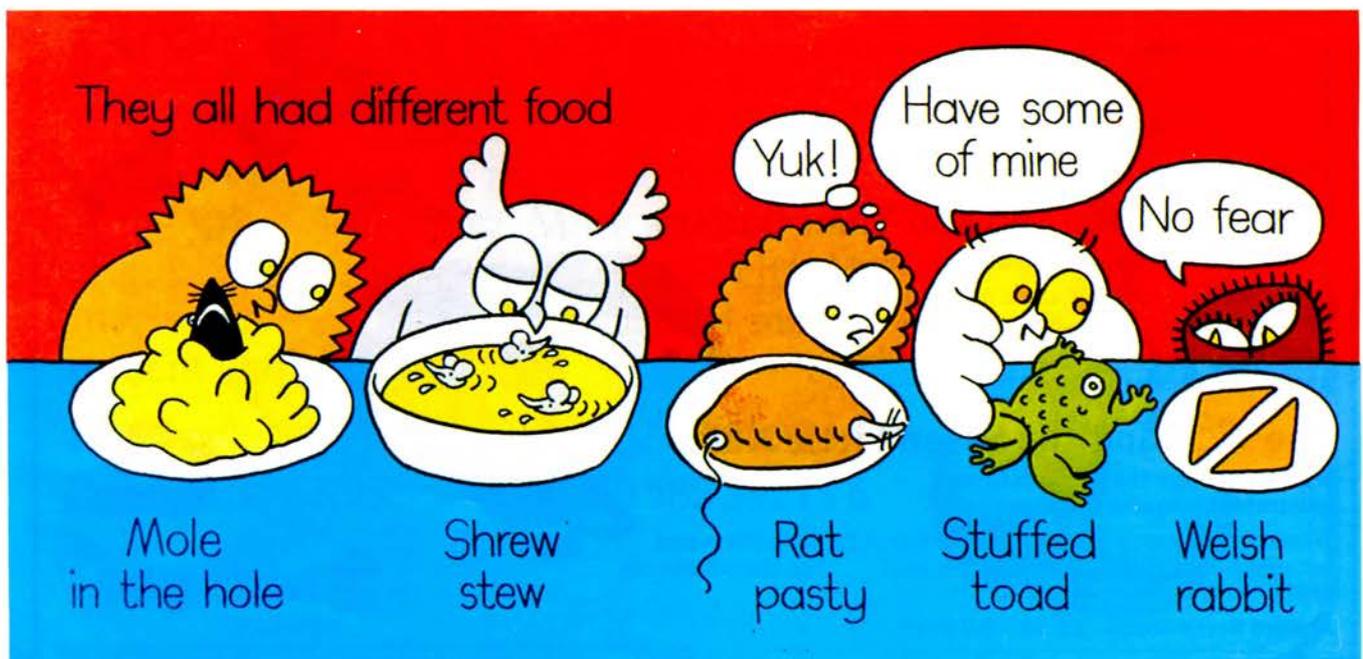
a sort of look-at-me-no-hands person, but we hadn't developed the daredevil in him as much as we could.' And now **Owl** is the central character in one of the latest books. 'Children in schools are always asking me to tell about when **Meg** went to school. It seemed a good idea for a book. I said, "We could send her to night school". Jan said, "I don't think we should. She's inefficient but that's the way she is. Let's send one of the others." Once we'd decided it would be **Owl** everything else followed.' Like **Meg** saying, 'Come on! You'll love it', lessons in swooping and pouncing, school dinner and Sports Night with **Meg** in a spell-made special hat.

Jan and Helen intended the first **Meg and Mog** books to be for children who had just learned to read and that hasn't altered. 'But there are 4 and 8 year olds who are in the same spot with reading. If you are eight you don't want babyish-looking material. That's why we do things like **Meg's Eggs** — no-one could be ashamed of reading that.' Three years ago Helen had the chance to do a very personal bit of market research on this. 'Tom, my son, was seven and having a very hard time with reading. But he was obsessed with medieval history, knights and tournaments. I decided to try him on **Meg's Castle** and see what happened. It worked. I could see it working and it worked for all the reasons we made it the way it is. That was very satisfying.'

Her family and **Meg and Mog** have kept Helen Nicoll busy but she has also found time to do the **Young Puffin** magazine, **The Egg** for two years ('Jan did the layouts; I became his paste-up slave. It was a happy time.'). produce an anthology for Kestrel, **Poems for Seven Year Olds and Under** with illustrations by Michael Foreman ('I don't know why publishers are so keen to keep writers and illustrators apart.'). played a large part in securing the franchise for Radio Wiltshire and in the last year has set up her own company, **Cover to Cover**, which produces sound tapes of unabridged novels and stories. To an impressive list of nineteenth century novels she and her partner have recently added some children's stories — **Just So Stories** read by Johnny Morris, **Stig of the Dump** read by Martin Jarvis, **The Worst Witch** read by Miriam Margolyes, **The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark** read by Maureen Lipman. (Plus, coming soon **Treasure Island** and **Flat Stanley**, and in preparation **Fantastic Mr Fox**.)

Helen Nicoll is passionate about this project which is still in its early days and in need of a lot of support. 'My royalties from **Meg and Mog** are helping to finance **Cover to Cover**. That's all right, isn't it — a sort of poetic justice.' A nice thought. But we hope she and Jan will find time for more **Meg and Mog** books in the future. ●

Mog in the Fog, Heinemann, 0 434 95430 6, £3.95
Owl at School, Heinemann, 0 434 95431 4, £3.95
Poems for Seven Year Olds and Under, Kestrel, 0 7226 5789 7, £5.50
Cover to Cover, for details write to Townsend Poulshot, Devizes, Wiltshire.

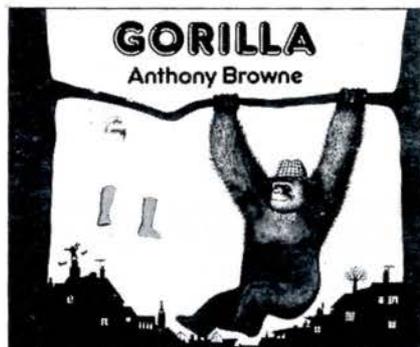


Dinner, from **Owl at School**.

Picture Books from Julia MacRae

Gorilla

Anthony Browne



Winner of the 1983 Kurt Maschler Award.

"Gorilla is a picture book of our time that makes bold statements with great subtlety." *Elaine Moss*

"The detail . . . will yield more each time to the reader — it is brilliantly worked out." *Junior Bookshelf*

"One of the best picture books for the over threes I've seen for a long time." *Parents*

0-86203-104-4 £4.95

Where's the Bear?

Byron Barton

Confusion reigns as a bear ambles around the forest and the villagers race round looking for him. This eye-catching creation by a favourite artist is bound to be a hit with young children.

0-86203-162-1 £4.95

Early Morning in the Barn

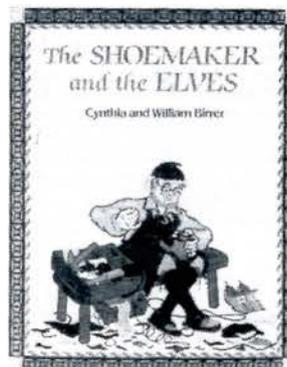
Nancy Tafuri

It is early morning, and one by one all the farm animals and birds come noisily awake in the morning. A simple, comfortable book for the very young. "A quite enchanting book, witty, wise and simple . . . Do buy it. It's lovely." *The School Librarian* said of Tafuri's previous picture book *Across the Stream*.

0-86203-152-4 £4.95

The Shoemaker and the Elves

Cynthia & William Birrer



A retelling of a favourite story from the Brothers Grimm, with remarkable illustrations created by a mixture of appliqué, machine embroidery and quilting, which give a stunning three-dimensional effect.

0-86203-166-4 £4.95

Julia MacRae Books

12a Golden Square
London W1R 4BA

Telephone: 01-437-0713



Blackie & Abelard

THE BEST IN PICTURE BOOKS

Sally's Story

Carme Solé Vendrell

After leaving her life on the farm, Sally the sheepdog tries hard to readjust to her new surroundings in a busy town. An endearing story with outstanding pictures by this internationally acclaimed artist.

£5.50 4-7 years

Fat Cat

Jennifer Westwood Illustrated by Fiona French

When the old woman goes off to visit her neighbour, she leaves the cat to watch the porridge boiling, but not only does the cat eat the porridge he also eats a lot more!

£5.95 4-7 years

The Miller, His Son and Their Donkey

A fairy tale from Aesop Illustrated by Eugen Sopko

Eugen Sopko's highly colourful illustrations make this simple and amusing tale an ideal picture book for the 4-7 age range.

Abelard North-South £5.50

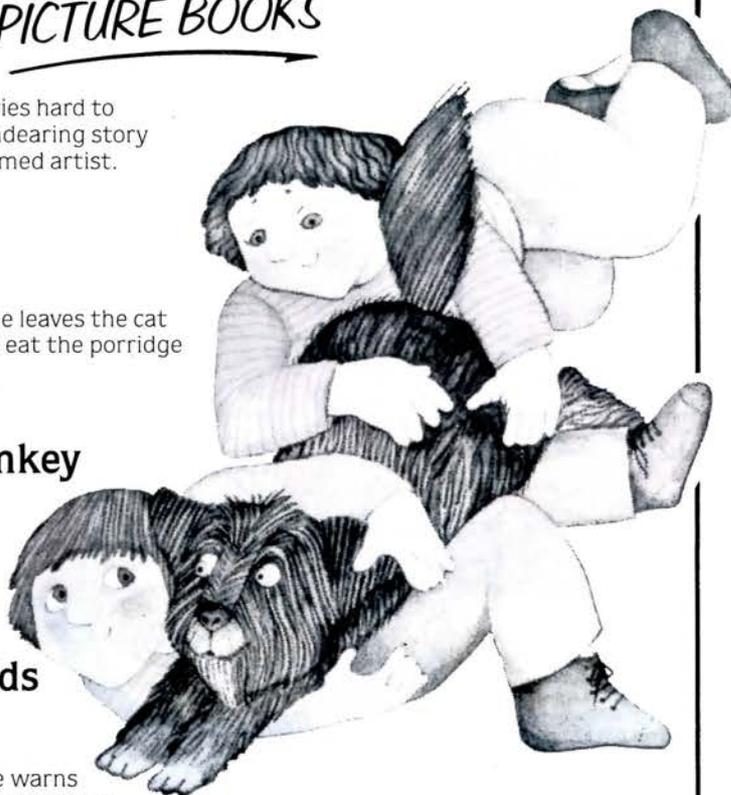
The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids

A fairy tale from the Brothers Grimm

Illustrated by Agnès Mathieu

When the old nanny goat goes to the forest for food she warns her seven little kids to beware of the wolf . . . then there's a knock at the door!

Abelard North-South £5.50 5-8 years





The Book Marketing Council's latest idea for a promotion is to feature 24 books which have been chosen by children themselves from a total of 122 titles submitted by publishers. (All books had to have been published in the last ten years.) The children — 500 of them, aged between 7 and 11 — came from two schools, Ladyton Primary in Dumbaron, near Loch Lomond, and Keresley Grange Junior, on the outskirts of Coventry. They had the books in school for a month and were allowed to read, browse and borrow as they liked. Parents and teachers were specially asked not to say or do anything which might affect the children's selection. The books the children chose are listed here and will be the subject of a BMC promotion from July 16–28th.

Out of interest the BMC asked a group of parents and teachers to choose their own 'best 24'. Parents and teachers it turned out had much the same taste but it was a poor match with the children's. Teachers chose only nine of the same books as their pupils, parents only eight which matched their children's preferences. Parents picked *Paddington's Story Book*, *The Borrowers*, *Avenged and The Famous Five* and *The Stately Homes Gang*, a Blyton clone — all a bit too traditional for the kids it seems. They preferred *Grange Hill*, *Marmalade Atkins*, *Supergran*, *Tintin*, and *The Twits* — all determinedly passed over by adults (though the teachers did go for Dahl's *The Witches*).

This bit of research, says the BMC 'makes it only too clear how great is the discrepancy between what adults think that children should read and what children actually choose for themselves'. In bookshops, this information suggests, adults are highly likely to buy books that children do not like. Yet another good argument for school bookshops? It's a rich ground for speculation all round. For more comment see the Editor's Page.

Honour for Gene Kemp

Gene Kemp, author of *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler* (winner of the Carnegie Medal and The Other Award) and many other popular stories has been awarded the Honorary Degree of Master of Arts by Exeter University. Mrs Kemp lives in Exeter and was a junior school teacher there before becoming a full-time writer. Her latest story of Cricklepit School, *Charlie Lewis Plays for Time*, Faber, 0 571 13248 0, £5.50, has just been published.

The Universe Prize

In its third year this prize, given by the Catholic Universe newspaper, concentrated on books published for children. The award was made to a book 'which made a real contribution to the Christian moral development of young people between 10 and 14'.

The winner was *A Parcel of Patterns* by Jill Paton Walsh, Kestrel, 0 7226 5898 2, £5.50.

The book is based on the famous story of the village of Eyam in Derbyshire which voluntarily cut itself off when

the plague reached it from London.

The judges commented on 'the portrayal of community feeling, with its strengths and weaknesses, the sense of constancy, of relationships that were caring and made to last'.

Close runners-up were *Redemption Greenbank*, David Johnstone, Methuen, 0 416 45050 4, £5.95. 'A rollicking yarn', and *Seaward*, Susan Cooper, Bodley Head, 0 370 30995 2, £5.95. 'Imaginative and intriguing'.

Also recommended but outside the age-group under consideration were: *The First Christmas*, Rachel Billington and Barbara Brown, Collins, 0 00 195048 7, £4.95, and *The Writing on the Wall*, Leon Garfield and Michael Bragg, Methuen, 0 416 25830 1, £4.50.

A new face at Gollancz

Joanna Goldsworthy, for many years the innovative children's editor at Gollancz and creator of an enviably impressive list, is moving to adult books. She will be replaced on May 1st by Chris Kloet, for ten years

Children's Choice — the titles

The following, in alphabetical order, are the titles chosen by children which will be featured in the campaign. The editions given are those publishers wish to promote. There may be others as well.

Hardbacks

The Big Book for Greedy Cooks
Alison Leach and Deborah van der Beek, Macmillan, £4.95

Haunted House
Jan Pienkowski, Heinemann, £6.50

The Human Body
Jonathan Miller, Cape, £8.95

Life at the Royal Ballet School
Camilla Jessel, Methuen, £5.50

The Most Amazing Hide-And-Seek Alphabet Book
Robert Crowther, Kestrel, £6.50

Our Changing World
Ingrid Selberg, Collins, £4.95

Peter Pan, A Pop-Up Book
J. M. Barrie/Borje Svensson, Hodder, £5.95

The Pop-Up Book of Magic Tricks
Ron van der Meer, Heinemann, £6.95

Robot
Jan Pienkowski, Heinemann, £5.95

Robots
Robin Kerrod, Granada Guides series, £1.95

Tintin and the Picaros
Hergé, Methuen, £3.95

Paperbacks

The Beaver Book of School Verse
Jennifer Curry, Hamlyn, £1

Black Harvest
Ann Cheetham, Armada, 95p

Crazy Joke Book
Janet Rogers, Hamlyn, 85p

Discovering Life on Earth
David Attenborough, Collins, £4.95

Fungus the Bogeyman
Raymond Briggs, Hamish Hamilton, £1.95

Grange Hill Rules — OK?
Robert Leeson, Fontana Lions, £1

Marmalade Atkins' Dreadful Deeds
Andrew Davis, Thames Methuen, £1.25

The Mr Men Sports Day
Roger Hargreaves, Thurman, £1

Supergran
Forrest Wilson, Puffin, 95p

The Warlock of Firetop Mountain
Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone, Puffin, £1.50

Hardback and paperback editions

Eric the Punk Cat
Adrian Henri and Roger W. Walker, Hodder, £5.50; Methuen, £1.50

Happy Families series
Allan Ahlberg, Kestrel, £2.50 each; Puffin, 95p each

The Twits
Roald Dahl, Cape, £4.95; Puffin, £1.10



Chris Kloet.

young people's librarian for Tameside, and well-known as a reviewer, compiler of book lists, enthusiastic member of IBBY and organiser of imaginative and highly successful Book Weeks.

News from Wales

The Welsh National Centre for Children's Literature send us details of a new annual magazine, *Dragon's Tale*, which deals with Anglo-Welsh children's literature. It promises

current information on books and authors, a guide to the best work and news of developments and events in the world of children's literature in Wales.

Price: £1.50 plus postage (£1.71).

Also, available in June, *Loughborough '83*, the proceedings of the 16th International Seminar on Children's Literature held last year in Aberystwyth. (It's called the Loughborough seminar wherever it is held, after the first venue. Ed)

The focus was on Welsh influences, particularly early Celtic myths and legends but matters of wider international interest and concern were discussed. Speakers included Alan Garner, Lloyd Alexander, Susan Cooper, Alison Morgan, Patricia Crampton, Elaine Moss, Peter Hunt and Charles Keeping.

Price £7.00, including post and packing.

Write to: The Welsh National Centre for Children's Literature, Castell Brychan, Heol-y-Bryn, Aberystwyth, Dyfed, Wales SY23 2JB. ●

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Barbara Jones writes about the work of two artists who although at the beginning of their careers in children's picture books have already made a considerable impact.

Ron Maris

It was Pat Hutchins who recognised that Ron Maris had the right talents and qualities to create distinctive picture books for young children and encouraged him to try. (The Hutchins and Maris families have been friends since Ron and Laurence — both ex-students of Northampton School of Art — worked together in the vacation at Northampton Rep.) The success of *Better Move On, Frog!* (Julia MacRae) which appeared in 1982 has proved her right.

Ron Maris, a Senior Lecturer at Huddersfield Polytechnic, lives near the top of a steep hill on the outskirts of the town. It's almost the countryside and it was there in his garden he found the idea for *Frog*. 'I like watching animals: there are lots of frogs in the ponds in the gardens; there are field mice and voles living in the garden wall; there are badgers up the hill; tawny owls live in the wood and often come into the garden and there are plenty of rabbits about. I wondered if there might be a clash of interests amongst animals choosing the same habitat as a home.'

The storyline in *Better Move On, Frog!* is neat and simple. Frog is looking for somewhere to live but each suitable hole he investigates is already inhabited, until he finds an empty pond. A 30 word vocabulary tells the 78 word long story. The type-face is large and open (18 point Plantin with a specially designed 'a' and 'g'). All combine to make a book ideal for children learning to read.

Ron Maris thinks using language well is important. The original text for *Frog* was longer; but he cut and cut until he found the right words. 'Doing it I realised how clever Pat Hutchins is — so clever that you are not aware until you try to write yourself.' For the pictures he works first in pencil using both drawn and photographic references. He paints with watercolour inks, whose bright clear colours survive the printing process well. The strong visual impact of his work is reinforced by careful composition and minutely observed and accurately recorded detail. In *Frog* you can find plantains, dandelions, scutch-grass, ivy, water-lilies and iris. Children respond to the humour in the story and absorb, en route, information about animals and their habitats.

Frog was not Ron Maris' first foray into children's books. In 1978 he did the line drawings for *Humblepuppy*, a Bodley Head collection of short stories selected by Eileen Colwell. He began, then, to look at children's picture books. 'A few, not many, as I didn't want to be influenced by anybody else. The overall impression I got was that many books aren't done for children at all, but to show how clever an illustrator is at using a

particular medium. Having taught in art schools since 1956 I am not impressed by the use of materials because making the marks is the easy part — thinking out what you are going to say is the difficult thing. The books that I liked showed a basic honesty of intent in the drawings, like Janet Ahlberg's. Children's picture books like any other good creative work, need the approach of someone wanting to communicate something honestly, rather than wanting to show how clever they are.'

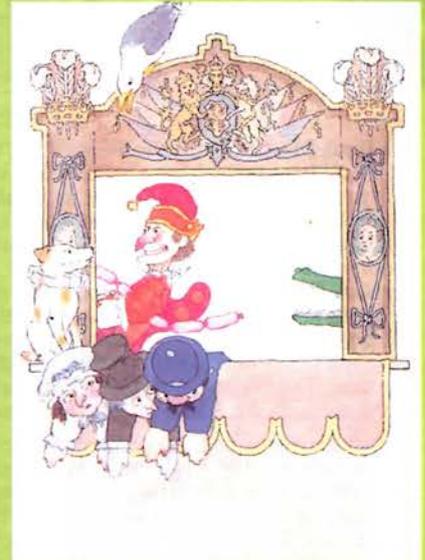
It's clear that a lot of thinking, of all kinds, went into *My Book*, Ron Maris' second picture book which came out last year and uses the device of split pages. The half-pages between the double-page spreads make a series of doors each of which opens to reveal the inside of a house, rooms and cupboard. In a split page book the mechanics have to be carefully worked out so that half and full page pictures are a perfect match. Take a careful look at the joins in *My Book* and see the clever ruses an expert designer has in his repertoire.

There are ten different words in *My Book*: 'My gate. My door. My bathroom. ;My bedroom. My cupboard. My bed. My book. My light. Goodnight.' This short text and the simple concepts in the book make it accessible to the very youngest children and suitable for early readers. A small child appears first on the cover and then disappears as the readers enjoy a conducted tour of the house with the cat as guide. When the child reappears he/she is in bed reading *My Book*.

The pictures are presented from the point of view of a small child looking upwards at scenes adults would see from above. Emphasising this the illustrations are without margins; they 'bleed off' the page with bright colour at top and sides and a light area which carries the text at the bottom. The book cover which protrudes around the edges of the pages acts as a frame for the pictures which are packed with the detail of familiar objects. The illustrations entice children to look and draw them in to 'read' the pictures. Colours are bright but not gaudy; the mass of detail is well-organised, avoiding confusion or fussiness; the level of understanding is simple but neither crude nor trite; and at the heart of the book there is a teasing ambiguity (Whose book/room/house is it? The reader's? The child's? The cat's?) which will provoke interesting discussions with observant children.

A sequel of a kind, *Are You There, Bear?*, is due later this year from Julia MacRae. The text is brief, the ideas uncomplicated, and the action features the toys which belong to the child in *My Book* as they search for bear who seems to be lost somewhere in the house. Ron Maris has again hit on an ingenious design feature: the search for bear takes place at night in the light of a torch beam so that only a circular area of the picture is clearly lit; the rest of the page is in shadow which obscures detail but does not obliterate objects entirely. It is sure to prove a great success with nursery classes.

The Punch and Judy Book, published this month by Gollancz, has a rather older audience in mind. Like *Frog* it offers possibilities for project work as well. Unusually for a picture book it is A5 sized (half the size of this page) and it too has split pages. The idea came from Ron's



collection of Punch and Judy puppets, which he carved and painted himself, and the recollection of his three sons' enjoyment of Punch and Judy shows when they were young. Children enjoy puppets and relish watching Mr Punch being appallingly naughty and getting away with it — a safe psychological channel for their own repressed aggression and sense of aggrievement.

The text is brief and includes repetition of all the famous catch-phrases. 'That's the way to do it', 'Oh no there isn't', 'Oh yes there is'. There is an establishing picture on the cover, of an Edwardian crowd watching a Punch and Judy show and inside close-ups of the action, with a cheeky seagull, the lion, the unicorn and two faces in the decoration of the booth acting as audience along with the reader.

Talent in drawing and painting, expertise as a designer, knowledge of printing techniques ('I was a print-maker for four years at the Royal College of Art so I've always had an interest in the technical side of producing pictures'): all are important qualities for creators of picture books. But not perhaps the all-important additional one that Pat Hutchins recognised, a quality that Ron Maris reveals as he talks about his approach to his books. 'I think perhaps I've never grown up — a common thing with creative people working in the visual area. Artists need to look long and hard at something to decide what they want to say about it — there is a need to look with the intensity that children have. When I was working on the books I trusted to my instincts to produce what was right.'

At the moment his instincts are leading him to a book with a circus setting and a central character, Lily the Lion Tamer. On the basis of the first three it will be well worth watching out for. ●

Better Move On, Frog!

Julia MacRae, 0 86203 083 8, £4.95

My Book

Julia MacRae, 0 86203 144 3, £4.95

The Punch and Judy Book

Gollancz, 0 575 03414 9, £4.95

Are You There Bear?

Julia MacRae, 0 86203 174 5, £4.95

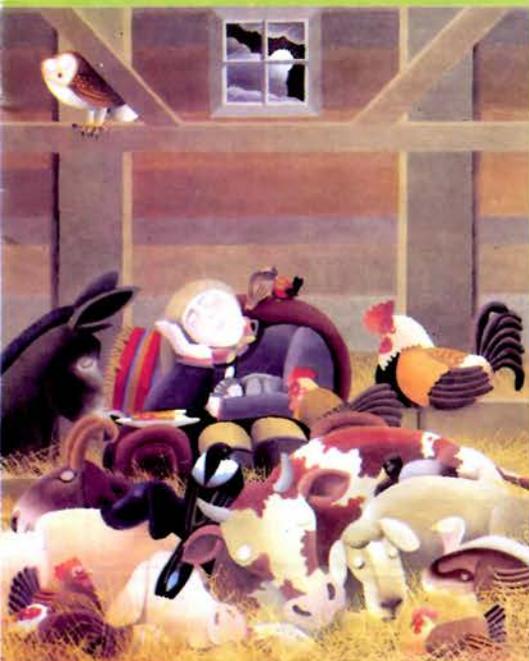


Ron Morris

Reg Cartwright

The story behind the production of Reg Cartwright's first book, *Mr Potter's Pigeon*, shows what a tenuous and accidental business the creation of picture books can be.

Reg Cartwright worked as an art director in advertising before he took the decision in 1974 to become a full-time artist and illustrator. His reputation grew and exhibitions of his work were mounted at the Portal Gallery in London. One of his oil paintings was a portrait of an old man standing in a garden in front of a shed and holding a pigeon. It was bought by an American tourist who took it to Barbados. Meanwhile someone at EMI had decided that the picture would make an interesting record sleeve; so another version was painted. Reg Cartwright's agent showed the record cover to a friend who worked for Hutchinson. The perceptive publisher realising that the picture might be the basis for a picture book telephoned the artist suggesting the idea. Reg Cartwright didn't think he could possibly write a story for children. All might have ended there had not a next-door neighbour, Patrick Kinmonth, an Oxford undergraduate reading English, called to look at Reg's paintings. He offered to write a story and it was duly finished in two hours that very afternoon. The three double-page spreads and eleven single plates which illustrate it took rather longer. Each illustration was done as a full-sized oil painting, 20" x 30", and the whole book was two years in the preparation. *Mr Potter's Pigeon* was published in 1979; Reg Cartwright won the Mother Goose Award as the most promising new illustrator of picture books and a new career was born.



The story of *Mr Potter's Pigeon* is simple but appealing. Shortly before an important race Lupin the cat unhooks the door of Mr Potter's racing pigeon's cage and the pigeon flies away in fright. She follows the river to the sea and collapses with exhaustion onto a lighthouse. Mr Potter is saddened by the loss of his pigeon. When she finds her way back home he is overjoyed and delighted that she will be able to race after all. During the race the pigeons are confused by thick fog. They are saved by Mr Potter's pigeon who recognises the lighthouse and is able to lead them home, thus winning the race. This crude outline does no justice to the quality and subtlety of Patrick Kinmonth's telling. The story is strong and memorable, poignant without sentimentality, offering opportunities to its illustrator which Reg Cartwright took in full.

Designing book jackets had given him experience in finding how to express the essence of a book visually, so when he analysed the text ideas for pictures came sharply into focus. 'It's not difficult to decide what to illustrate. I put myself into a child's position. What would I want to see if I was a child? Which bit would I like to look at? When I was a child I always looked at the pictures rather than read the stories. I thought the sign of a true intellectual was anyone who read the long bits at the bottom of the page in *Rupert Bear*; I only read the rhyming couplets.'

The artwork for *Mr Potter's Pigeon* has been described as 'painterly' which pleases Reg Cartwright who claims Douanier Rousseau as a strong influence. The paintings have a photo-realist quality in the reproduction of the textures of foliage, the wood of the pigeon shed and the bricks of the house. The details of the foxgloves and the cow parsley are very fine and provide both interesting surroundings for and a contrast to the central characters who are more simply worked. Reg Cartwright says, 'People say the style is complicated. It's not at all; it's very simple. The format, the design of the paintings is very straightforward: it's usually a horizontal and a couple of verticals if you pare it down.' This simplicity of composition has a strong impact on the viewer. There are also lots of details which children like to investigate. Colour reflects mood: serious and sombre in the sad pictures, strong and bright in patches where good humour is appropriate, carefully muted in the foggy scenes. Here too all kinds of light are exactly caught: bright sunshine, moonlight, fog.

The pictures show things from interesting angles: close-ups, aerial views, views through doors and a gap in a train. The lighthouse is first seen from the point of view of someone standing at the bottom looking upwards. Usually Reg Cartwright draws from life but he worked from memory for the lighthouse and the angle was inspired by recollections of illustrations of space-ships in his favourite childhood comic, *Eagle*.

The model for Mr Potter is alive and well and living near Kibworth Beauchamp, where Reg Cartwright lives in Leicestershire; so too is the woman farmer who inspired the



painting which sparked off the idea for *Norah's Ark*.

The story of *Norah's Ark* was written by Ann Cartwright, Reg's wife; the idea of calling the central character Norah came from their son, James; the cat in the story is Boddy, the family cat; the inclusion of the black dog, Henry, is homage to a late lamented pet: so the book is well and truly a Cartwright family production.

Norah's farm animals quarrel because their pond is too small. Very heavy rain floods the farm and resourceful Norah turns the barn into an ark. Instead of being pleased by the endless mud and water the animals complain because there isn't enough dry land. All problems are resolved when the floods subside, dry land reappears and the original pond is found to be much bigger. There were many drafts, revisions and refinements before Ann Cartwright was happy with the story. Her final version is full of charm and good humour. Description is interspersed with comments from the characters and nicely-timed jokes, and the relaxed rhythms of the telling mean it reads aloud well.

Reg Cartwright's artwork is flatter, less textured and more stylized than in *Mr Potter*. It is reminiscent of illustrations associated with folk tales, very suitable for a story that could be seen as a feminist update of Noah's ark. The detailed, textured backgrounds of *Mr Potter* would have been out of place in a story with so many characters; simplification was necessary to avoid too busy a picture. In place of texture we have areas of rich pattern created from the varied shapes and colours of animals and birds.

The whole book has been designed with flair. The major illustrations are full size single plates or double page spreads, smaller pictures are inset into the pages of text. The text page is framed by a thin grey line which contains the print and counteracts the tendency for small amounts of words to float about in a large white space. The type-face is round, open and elegant, with decorative capitals and the excellent layout of the pages makes one realise how much this aspect of design affects the quality of picture books, and how many could be improved.

Reg Cartwright is not an artist to be rushed. We have waited a long time for his second book so it's good to hear that he and his wife are already planning the next. A treat to look forward to. ●



Mr Potter's Pigeon
Hutchinson, 0 09 139450 3, £3.95;
Methuen/Moonlight Pocket Bears,
0 907144 37 3, £1.50

Norah's Ark
Hutchinson, 0 09 152750 3, £4.95



Affairs of the Heart ... CONTINUED

WHAT WILL THE PARENTS SAY?

Jessica Yates continues our discussion of teenage love stories and pinpoints some of the dilemmas teachers and librarians face when selecting books.

There is clearly often a clash of interests between young people who ache for 'forbidden fruit' in the form of sex 'n' violence fiction, and their parents who want them kept in innocence. Librarians want to encourage the reading habit as part of an overall educational aim, the development of the child through adolescence to young adulthood as a moral, critical being.

In her book *Pictures on the Page* Pat WynneJones says: 'Children's literature now covers such material as sex without marriage, unwedded motherhood, drugs and homosexuality... pessimistic, negative attitudes, especially towards family life make one wonder what social and family patterns books of this kind may lead to.' Some would dismiss this as 'Mary Whitehouse' talk. It would be more useful, I suggest, to consider that Pat WynneJones speaks for many parents who have not read widely and feel genuine concern.

Accepting the power of the book for good or ill we must appreciate parents' fears that reading about teenagers enjoying sex will encourage their own youngsters to follow suit with less happy results. There has been until very recently an unwritten consensus, challenged by, among others, Keith Barker and David Rees, that in fiction published on children's lists teenage sexual relationships should be shown to have unpleasant emotional or physical consequences: every book must carry a Pregnancy Warning.

Well, teenagers *do* use love stories as 'agony column' fiction, seeking information and advice. What should they find out? In real life it is not only pregnancy (and abortion) which frequently follows teenage sex; there are long-term problems like cervical cancer, the unknown effects of the pill, VD, AIDS, and the dangers of being drawn into prostitution. Homosexual acts for boys under 21 are illegal — so should the author of a 'gay' love story warn the readers? Dreadful warnings apart, if we provide stories in school which offer more than a sterilised sexual fantasy, what should we say to parents?

As a school librarian I found the moral consensus useful in justifying fiction, like *Forever*, with explicit sex scenes. However, I was unhappy about lending some books to under-13s, and with the Head's agreement I restricted borrowing of Young Adult and adult best-sellers to third-year pupils and upwards. *Forever* was kept on permanent reserve, and we always had copies in circulation! I would always defend stocking *Forever*, *In the Tent*, *The Lighthouse*, *My Darling*, *My Hamburger*, *Breaktime*, *Hey*, *Dollface* and many others, on the grounds that teenagers need to read about a variety of experiences, and luckily my Head supported me.

Not every school or public library is so lucky. I recently heard of a children's public library service which cannot buy some Young Adult books because they are too explicit, and yet may not pass on requests for them to the adult department because they are published on a children's list.

How a book is published — hardback or paperback, children's list or adult list — can have a disproportionate effect on how it is sold or lent and in the end on whether it reaches the readers. *Dear Fred* and *Forever* have made it into standard paperback format (though *Forever* is rarely found in general bookshops); but few YA novels get paperbacked. Rosa Guy's *Edith Jackson* is at last scheduled for Puffin Plus; but none of David Rees' novels for Dobson is paperbacked, nor is Aidan Chambers' *Breaktime*. The large format paperback originals, now priced at £3.50 or more, need to be re-paperbacked in cheap format before teenagers can afford them. When I visited my local Smith's I find rows of *Sweet Dreams* etc. among the children's books, and hardly any teenage fiction from Fontana Lions or Puffin Plus. As with libraries the problem in bookshops is where to put it and how to identify it. If the Deutsch and Bodley Head Originals were bought into stock shouldn't they be shelved with adult fiction? *Dance on my Grave* certainly should. As for David Rees' *The Milkman's on his Way*, I believe the decision to publish on an adult list (Gay Men's Press) was right. Here's a description of a teenage boy's first time — with a man.

... though it still hurt a bit... it was the most natural, normal and utterly beautiful experience. His hand, still slippery with K.Y., on my



Diane Weeks

cock, a sensation more superb than any I have ever felt, then orgasm so perfect I thought I was changed from a body into pure dazzling light. And he, coming, the spurt and gasp of him inside me: oh, yes; this is what life is for, Ewan: for this I was made.'

Detail apart, this passage isn't really very different from the 'hot fudge' romantic scene quoted by Keith Barker (January BfK). And the book does contain a warning about the age-of-consent law and about VD. 'Adult' book or 'Children's' book or 'Young Adult' book, we still have to decide whether to buy it for school. What would the parents say? What would we say to them?

Sex isn't the only area parents worry about. Pessimism and violence in fiction such as Robert Cormier's can cause concern, and also books like *Go Ask Alice* and *Tex* which include drugs. Many parents want teachers and librarians to protect their children from what others see as 'reality'. From other directions come pressures to identify and remove sexist material. *Sweet Dreams* are at one and the same time popular, 'safe' (from parental disapproval), and sexist. What to do?

And the argument is not confined to so-called 'children's' books. What about the selection of adult fiction for schools? At a librarians' meeting recently I collected a list of 'favourite reading': Danielle Steel, James Herbert, Stephen King, *Wife*, *The Omen* and *The Exorcist*. I kept most of the above in my office for older readers only, but refused to stock *Scum*, *The Omen*, Sven Hassel's books, and the *Skinhead* series (now mercifully out of print).

Aside from topical best-sellers which make even the broad-minded shudder, recent 'quality' fiction is not always acceptable in schools. I stocked *A Clockwork Orange* and *Midnight Cowboy*, *The Flute-player* and Tom Sharpe's books — but not Ian McEwan. We are now approaching the dangerous ground of censorship American-style. If we become over-sensitive, are we in danger of excluding important books, like the censors of the past who attacked *Ulysses* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*?

A study of the pamphlet *The Students' Right to Know* is useful. American censors are attacking books already acclaimed as having literary merit. 'Censorship attacks good books, not poor books'. Most of the complaints from parents and the 'community' received by American schools were about classic twentieth-century works like: *The Catcher in the Rye*, 1984, *Lord of the Flies*, *Brave New World*, *To Kill a Mocking-bird*, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, *Anne Frank's Diary* — and, inevitably, *Forever*!

Bearing the American experience in mind, we should still hold to the occasional decision not to provide a book which a pupil requests, for reasons which we readily give; but on the other hand parents must be persuaded to trust the professional book-person's choice of stock for the school library and bookshop. ●

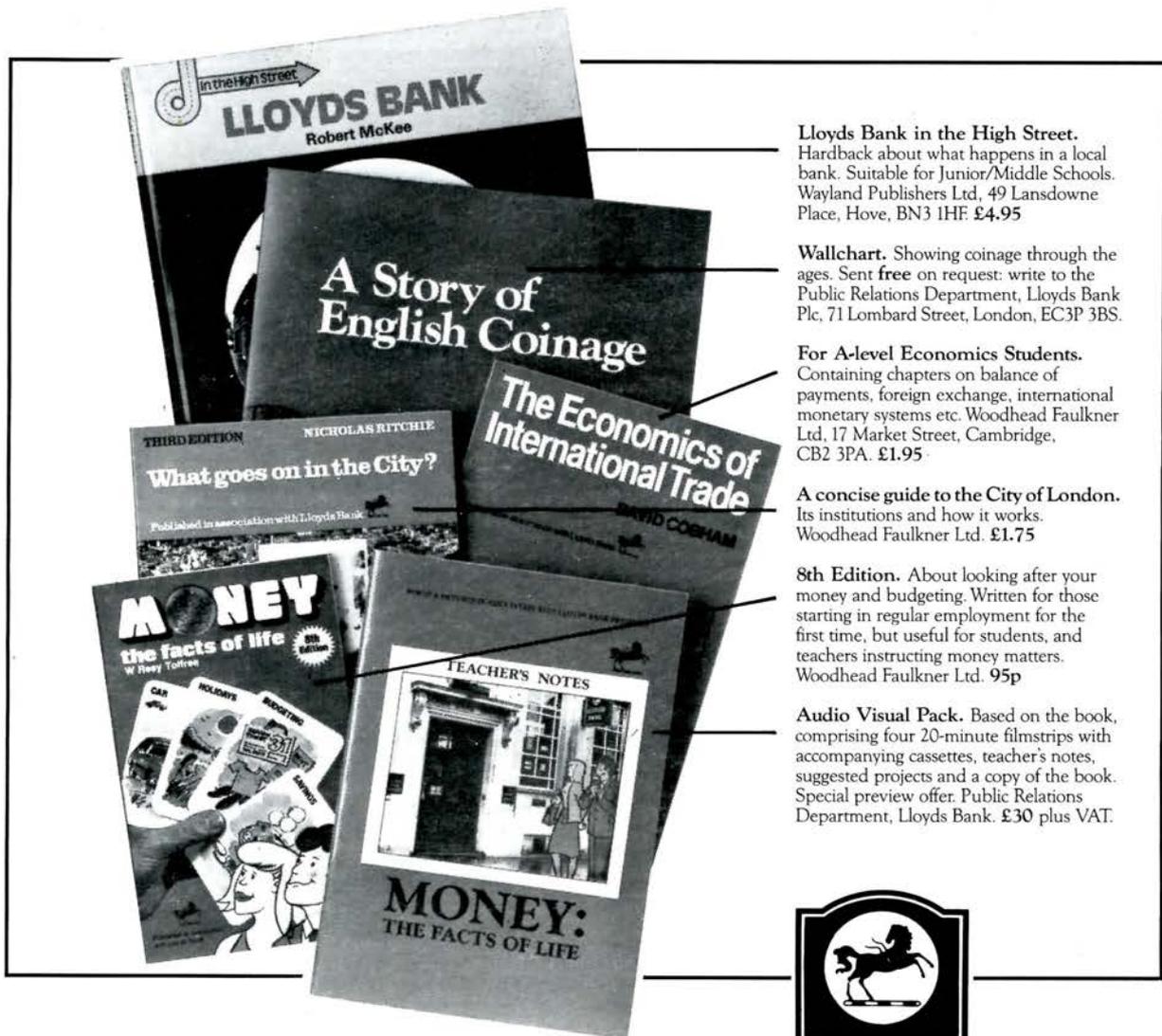
Jessica Yates was an ILEA librarian for ten years. She now combines motherhood with freelance reviewing and writing.

Pictures on the Page, Pat WynneJones, Lion, 0 85648 475 8, £1.95
The Students' Right to Know, Lee Burress and Edward B. Jenkinson,
National Council of Teachers of English, USA.

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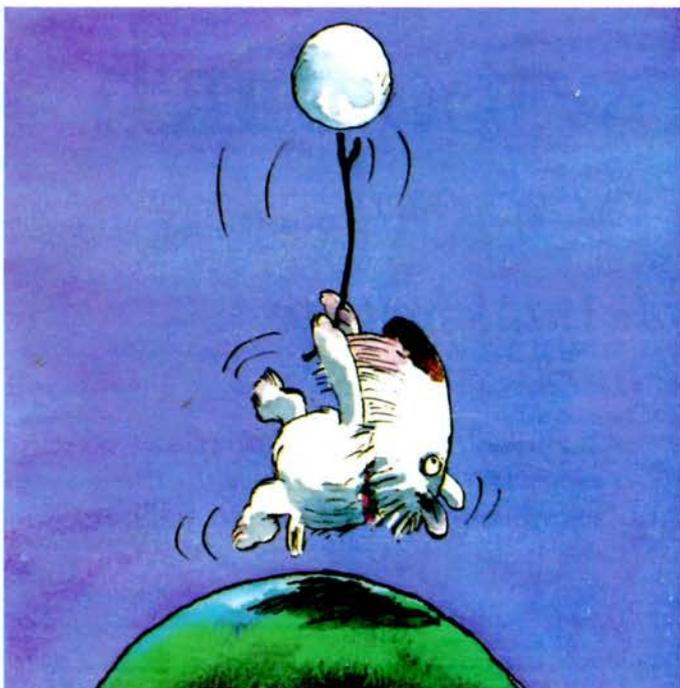
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SOUND & VISION

Towser trying to catch the moon for Sadie's birthday present.



Here Comes Towser

Bidding for a place alongside Paddington Bear, Superted, Dangermouse and other stars of the small person's small screen comes Towser, a dog of considerable charm and character who appears in his own series of 26 five minute films, scheduled to start on September 14th (ITV) at 4.15.

Towser, like King Rollo and Victor and Maria before him is the product of King Rollo Films, a company started four years ago by a very talented trio — David McKee, Leo Beltoft and Clive Juster. But he is the creation of writer/illustrator Tony Ross. Three Towser books-of-the-films are published this month by Andersen so there is plenty of time to get acquainted with Towser on the page before he bursts forth fully animated.

We talked to **Tony Ross** about his latest character.

'About three years ago David McKee had the silly idea I should do some films with them. I fished around in my rag bag of ideas and came up with this little dog I'd thought of once for some small books. I just sort of picked him out, gave him a good old English dog's name and licked him into shape. I didn't want him to be a conventional kind of hero figure like Superted or Dangermouse, going around performing marvellous feats. Towser has his flaws, his weaknesses; he's quite clever but his ideas often backfire on him — but he always wins in the end.'

In Towser's world anything can happen — real things alongside fantasies. And there's no time: kings, knights, space-ships, wizards, television are all part of the scene. His closest friends are Dr. Smelly the inventor, the King, and the Wizard — and he has a girl friend, Sadie, who

is a little ginger and white cat.

Tony Ross wrote the stories and did the storyboards and drawings for the films in Manchester and sent them to the King Rollo Studios in Twickenham. 'David made sure my scripts would work as films and then Leo breathed life into Towser with his animation. Making a film is very much a collaboration — the other three are so experienced and they contributed a lot.' However when Klaus Flugge at Andersen suggested putting Towser into book form it was all down to Tony. 'I didn't originally think of the stories as books but as all my experience has been in books I suppose the films are a bit bookish.' Even so it wasn't easy. 'In a film the combination of movement and sound can be very funny. In a book you have to re-create that effect in words.' So far he has done book versions of six of the films. That and producing the art work for jigsaws, games, puzzles, a toy clock, party cups and plates and a Towser annual (the result of highly successful merchandising of the character by Copyright Promotions who also 'handle' Dangermouse and the Mr Men — among others) has meant that Towser has somewhat dominated Tony Ross' life. 'I'm beginning to understand what E. H. Shepard meant when he called Winnie-the-Pooh "that foolish bear"!' Now, the books are about to be published and the films will soon be shown. 'I feel awful' says Tony, 'It's rather like having stage fright. The creative bit is over. You just have to wait for the opening night and see what everyone thinks.'

Well, we haven't been able to see the films yet, and paper partyware is not really our line; but we'd like to declare the books — and Towser — a resounding hit.

Towser and Sadie's Birthday (0 86264 049 0),
Towser and the Terrible Thing (0 86264 050 4),
Towser and the Water Rats (0 86264 051 2),
 all published by Andersen Press, £1.95.



Say Hello to Postman Pat

Postman Pat will be delighted to make a personal appearance at your book event. To book him: hire this all-in-one costume with integral head, hands and feet from his publishers!

The hiring charge is £5 plus cost of onward carriage. Bookings can be made by contacting Harriet Huxley at Andre Deutsch, 105 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LJ (01 580 2746).

Two new Postman Pat adventures were published in paperback by Hippo Books in May: **Postman Pat's Tractor Express** and **Postman Pat Takes a Message** by John Cunliffe, full-colour, £1.25 each. ●

Eleanor Graham, the first editor and creator of the Puffin list died on March 8th, aged 88.

As a bookseller, Eleanor Graham ran the famous Children's Room at Bumpus from 1927 to 1931. She knew her books inside out and was always ready with advice for parents, librarians, children and writers, who might pop in to see how their books were going. In the 1930's she wrote a regular children's book column in the **Sunday Times** and became known and respected as a reviewer. When Allen Lane invited her to become the editor of 'a series of sixpenny paperbacks for children' she agreed, but only if it was made up of 'the best of the new work then being done for children' and had nothing to do with out-of-copyright classics. A children's series comparable to the now established Penguins was exactly what Allen Lane had in mind and the bargain was

struck. Getting started was not easy: many publishers refused even to consider allowing their books to appear in cheap editions, librarians thought paperbacks were undermining their good works on behalf of 'the book', booksellers didn't want to sell 'wretched paperbacks' and war-time restrictions meant there was little paper to spare. Nevertheless, in 1941 the first five Puffins appeared — Barbara Euphan Todd's **Wurzel Gummidge**, Derek McCulloch's **Cornish Adventures**, Mrs Molesworth's **The Cuckoo Clock**, Herbert Best's **Garram the Hunter** and Will James' **Smoky**.

When Eleanor Graham retired in 1961 there were over 120 titles including many that remain today — Eve Garnett's **The Family from One End Street**, which was Puffin number seven, **King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table**, which she commissioned specially from Roger Lancelyn Green, **A Puffin Book of Verse** and **A Puffin Quartet of Poets**, which she edited

and Dorothy Edwards' **My Naughty Little Sister** stories, which along with Leila Berg's **Little Pete Stories** came to her via Listen with Mother at Methuen where she was also editing children's books.

The impact that Puffins have had on succeeding generations of children is immeasurable but when we look at the many children's paperback lists which we take so much for granted we would do well to remember Eleanor Graham's pioneering spirit and even more her insistence on giving children the very best. In an article she wrote for **Signal** after receiving the Eleanor Farjeon Award in 1972 for distinguished services to children's books, she recalled **The Puffin Years** and revealed how, with Allen Lane's support she held out against opposition. 'There was a good deal of criticism in the Penguin office about the early Puffin selection. It worried me, but not because I doubted my own choice. I was, of course, frequently urged to get some Blyton on our list, but I never did.' ●