

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

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PICTURE BOOK SPECIAL

Elaine Moss looking back / Shirley Hughes on Book Design
Susan Varley meets Harold Jones / Authorgraph: Graham Oakley

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EDITOR'S PAGE



Pat

By the time this May issue of **Book for Keeps** reaches you it will be June; like the summer we are rather late in arriving. We know the magazine has been missed because of the number of (in the main) friendly calls we've had asking what had happened. The second multi-cultural guide is what has happened; we've finally got it in our hands (and by now we hope into yours too) and that feat — along with one or two other things — has stretched our slim resources to the point where the May issue slipped back and we couldn't recover. We do apologise for keeping you all waiting; we have now caught up with the schedule and the July issue is on target.

Late though it is, we make no apologies for what is in this special Picture Book Issue of **BK** — it's full of the voices of people who have things to say about picture books and we defy you not to be interested and stimulated by what you find as you turn the pages. For a start there's Elaine Moss looking back at twenty-five years of picture books — an area of children's publishing about which she is an experienced commentator, who has played no small part in helping us to understand what these books have to offer to children and how we might more frequently bring them together. I hope Elaine approves that description; she steadfastly resists labels like 'expert' and 'critic' (although she is both in the best and most positive sense of those words). Her particular contribution is to share her enthusiasm and knowledge in a way that makes us confident that we can get there too, to invite us into the charmed circle of 'expertness' where there is room for everyone to contribute. This quality is captured exactly in the selections from her writing and lectures over the past twenty-five years that make up **Part of the Pattern** (Bodley Head, 0 370 30860 3, £8.95). The articles and interviews — arising from what Elaine characteristically calls her 'fieldwork in children's books' — are strung together by an autobiographical thread of comment and recollection. For those who have read the pieces as they appeared, their collection between two covers sparks off new ideas and insights; for those meeting them for the first time here is instruction and delight, an entry pass into a friendly world from one of its distinguished citizens.

Looking back and seeing through

One of Elaine's particular qualities is her capacity to be still excited and fascinated by the world in which she works. When we asked her to look back to the early sixties — a real watershed in British picture books — and give us some perspective on the mass of full colour books, whose regular appearance we now take for granted, it was as if we had offered her a treat. With typical thoroughness she explored her first interested reactions, went off to research, check, talk to people — the results you can read for yourself (see page 4). And when you've finished that turn over again and be further enlightened — as I was — by what Shirley Hughes has to say about the design of picture books. Shirley is that rare thing — a superb practitioner who is absorbed by her art but can communicate its complexities to 'outsiders'. As with Elaine, I always come

away from meeting or reading Shirley with something new to add to my own sum of experience. We know that the way books are designed is one of Shirley's particular interests; it's a hidden aspect of books which affects us although we may be unconscious of it. She writes about it in a way that makes us see more clearly, makes the invisible reveal itself to be examined. The illustrations for **Grand Designs** we must add, were chosen by us not by Shirley. She made lots of suggestions but we decided that the best way to illustrate an article on designing pages was to show you a double page spread from an artist who does it supremely well. **Chips and Jessie** has been so carefully and thoughtfully designed that the reader, is not aware of what is happening. Look carefully at the way the text is positioned, how the pictures extend and explain the text, how the speech bubbles are placed, how the frame at the edge of the pages is broken, how the eye takes in the page, and then consider the effect of all this on readers sharpening their expertise on longer stories. Magic.

More voices, more views

And there's more. Colin McNaughton — another practitioner who knows a thing or two about design — speaks out on behalf of the Mother Goose jury about a disappointing year for newcomers to children's book illustration. Susan Varley, winner of last year's Mother Goose Award for **Badger's Parting Gift**, was enticed to London from Blackpool to meet and talk to Harold Jones, a contemporary of Ardizzone, who has achieved the status of a classic illustrator in his own lifetime. Klaus Flugge, Susan Varley's editor at Andersen was sceptical about whether we'd get Susan to do it. She's a quiet person with a tendency to shyness, but she's an artist and, as we'd hoped, the opportunity to meet someone, whose work is very much in the tradition of illustration she favours herself, couldn't be resisted. We had a delightful time in Harold Jones' studio — the room and its contents would have made an article on their own — and it was a pleasure to see the link forged between the generations and to find how much they had in common. Susan's account of that meeting captures its flavour exactly (see page 24). I interviewed Lynley Dodd, in Durham at the Federation of Children's Book Groups eighteenth birthday party — she was disguised as a Scottish terrier (Hairy Maclary) at the time, having just won the fancy dress competition for book characters; she made the costume in Hong Kong on her way over from New Zealand. Another book person who really gets involved! And there is Graham Oakley — what better time to catch him for our Authorgraph than with a new book as exciting as **Henry's Quest** (0 333 40841 1, £4.95) which we are delighted to have on our cover (with a little help from Macmillan). The book is a real treat. Enjoy it yourself and make it available to those older children you know will appreciate its theme and enjoy the jokes.

I haven't mentioned the second multi-cultural guide. We are holding our breath waiting for the reaction. We hope you like it.

PICTURE BOOKS, TH

Elaine Moss looks at developments in picture books over the last twenty-five years.

How have picture books changed in the twenty-five years that I have been looking at the output of British publishers professionally? If there can be said to have been a recent turning-point in the long history of illustrated books for young readers, it occurred in the early sixties. For in 1962 the Oxford University Press published **Brian Wildsmith's A B C** – a fifty-six page full-colour-on-every-side picture book in which the background colour for each letter-and-word (on the left) was a different shade of orange, blue, green, purple, grey, pink, whilst the pictures on the right were painterly representations – in the tradition of Matthew Smith – of butterfly, cat, elephant, zebra, against a swatch of bright but richly subtle backcloths.

In what way was this book revolutionary? One glance at the picture books of the 1950s tells the story. The fifties picture books, with one opening in colour, the next in line, were in essence line-work, with simple almost flat colour laid over it. Artists like V. H. Drummond, William Stobbs, Kathleen Hale had had to make their own 'separations' of the colours in their pictures so that the printer could then make plates from these, ink them with the relevant colours, then print the plates one on top of the other to form the colour pages of the book. But by the mid-sixties, the post-Wildsmith picture book could be (and slowly became) an experience not in line but in paint. This 'new' picture book was made possible by a technological process that separated colours in the artist's work electronically. The artist could thenceforth use any mixture of colours – shades of green or purple or orange, knowing that the machine would separate these for him (in a way the human eye could not) into large or small dots of the primary black, cyan, magenta, yellow – in much the same way that heavy and light dots 'shade' newspaper photographs.

The application of electronic separation to colour in picture books (it already existed in the fine art world at a high price) came about through a peculiarly fortuitous set of circumstances. Brian Wildsmith, a young abstract painter in the fifties, took a portfolio of his work in to the Oxford University

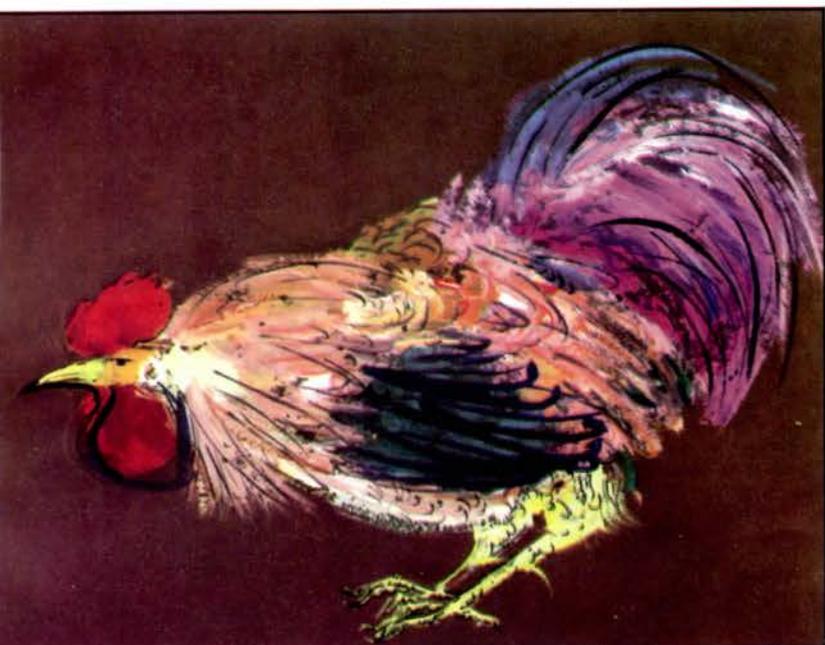
Press where Mabel George, a printer's daughter, had, after spending some years in the Production Department, recently become Children's Editor. Most children's editors are literary people who gather information about printing and book production techniques as they go along. Mabel George, however, knew all there was to know about paper and ink and print processes. So that when, shortly after Wildsmith's visit ('What a feeling for colour he had,' Mabel George once said to me. 'I felt, if only I could help him to use it for children') a representative of the Viennese printers Brüder Rosenbaum came to see her, Miss George's mind leapt to the possibility of encouraging them to adapt their colour processing techniques to the requirements of the picture book market. If they could find ways of reducing the cost of their process (which they eventually did) work like Brian Wildsmith's could be made available for, in Mabel George's words, 'people who were ready for it'. In the early sixties, **Brian Wildsmith's A B C** was printed for the Oxford University Press by Brüder Rosenbaum in Vienna, price in hard covers the equivalent of 62½p!

A new era had dawned. Raymond Briggs and John Burningham, the Charles Keeping of **Through the Window** and **Joseph's Yard** were joys soon to come.

As well as Brian Wildsmith, Mabel George had Victor Ambrus, Charles Keeping and William Papas on her sixties list. All three were essentially good line artists whose development as the decade advanced bridged the gap between the fifties style of illustration in picture books, and that made possible by the new technology. Ambrus was a traditional illustrator of folk and fairy tales in those days, but both Keeping and Papas took the picture book onto new ground and laid the foundations of the explosion in the field that was to take place in the 1970s. Charles Keeping has steadfastly chronicled, in book after book (in which colours bespeak mood as the line drawing beneath tells the story) the joys and sadnesses, longings and satisfactions of the urban child's world. Papas, all of whose books are now out of print, brought to young people of the sixties a sense of the absurdity of human progress if it, for instance, replaced the balalaika on a Greek island with a juke-box, or the water-carrier with piped water that didn't actually flow.

Rich colour, concern with the urban child and sociological comment are just three of the features of picture books in the eighties that had their roots in the genius of Mabel George who published Wildsmith, Keeping and Papas at the Oxford University Press in the 1960s. They were the vanguard of a movement that has brought us artists like Michael Foreman, Anthony Browne and Dan Jones – artists who express their views about human problems (from the family to famine in the Third World) through picture books whose colours flow and glow, courtesy the new printing technology of the sixties.

The sixties brought other developments too, that challenged us at the time, I seem to remember, but have now become readily accepted. Could a wordless picture book be called a 'book', for instance? Renate Meyer's **Vicki** (Bodley Head, 1968) was a sequence of paintings about the agonies of an exceptionally shy child. Silence was its natural medium – and that of its successor, **Hide and Seek**; but reviewers were uneasy, and teachers had not yet discovered that wordlessness offers a golden opportunity for talking with children about what they see in books and for telling stories together. Upon these have followed other textless works such as **Anno's Journey** and Raymond Briggs's cartoon story **The Snowman**, both of which have proved a wonderful medium for helping the diffident to 'read'.



EN AND NOW

The strip cartoon, frowned upon in Britain as sub-literature, was also to ask us to think about it carefully in the 1960s. The first Tintin in translation had arrived in Britain in 1958, and during the sixties many Tintins and Asterixes, brilliantly translated by Lesley Lonsdale Cooper and Michael Turner (Tintin) and Anthea Bell and Derek Hockridge (the punning Asterix) were published in quantity. Adults who were themselves totally addicted were still not too sure that the reading of strip cartoons, so reminiscent of the ubiquitous comics, should be allowed in schools – and the doubt persists. But we have now developed a strong British strain of cartoon story books – in Raymond Briggs's **Father Christmas** and **Fungus the Bogeyman**, Bob Wilson's **Stanley Bagshaw** series, Colin McNaughton's **Crazy Bear**, to name but a few. That there can be excellence in strip cartoon and bubble talk as well as in any other art form is a lesson that, over the past twenty-five years, the British have somewhat grudgingly absorbed.

With the advances in colour printing and the rising cost of raw materials publishers have, over the past quarter of a century, tried to keep the cost of printing picture books for the home market as low as possible by selling the rights in those books internationally, thus increasing the print runs and reducing the unit cost. This commercial internationalism ran, at first, alongside another more altruistic and spiritual thrust: in the early 1960s people of goodwill like Jella Lepman, one of the founders of IBBY, and Dr Walter Scherf at the International Youth Library in Munich, were engaged in trying to foster international understanding among the world's children in the hope that war would disappear from the Earth. (Erich Kästner, Walter Trier and Kurt Maschler had had the same idea in Germany in the ill-fated 1930s.) In 1964 the International Children's Book Fair was established at Bologna, a Fair at which the rights in picture books – and other children's books, too – would be bought and sold internationally. In 1967 the Bodley Head published **The Animals' Lullaby** by Trude Alberti with pictures by Chiyoko Nakatani; on the last page is the following notice, redolent of the philosophy of the sixties:

The idea for this book came from an Icelandic lullaby. A German writer, Trude Alberti, devised a set of verses on the theme of the sleeping baby animals, and a Swiss publisher, Bettina Hürlimann, asked a Japanese artist, Chiyoko Nakatani, to illustrate it. So the book, a result of true international cooperation, has been published simultaneously in Great Britain, Japan, Switzerland and the United States of America.

A good thing? Like all developments, the international rights element in picture books has its drawbacks: the British market is flooded, nowadays, with picture books of foreign origin in which the English text is either minimal or else so hurriedly constructed for a pressing international print operation that as a language experience for the listener it is null and void.

Rosie meets the Rooster

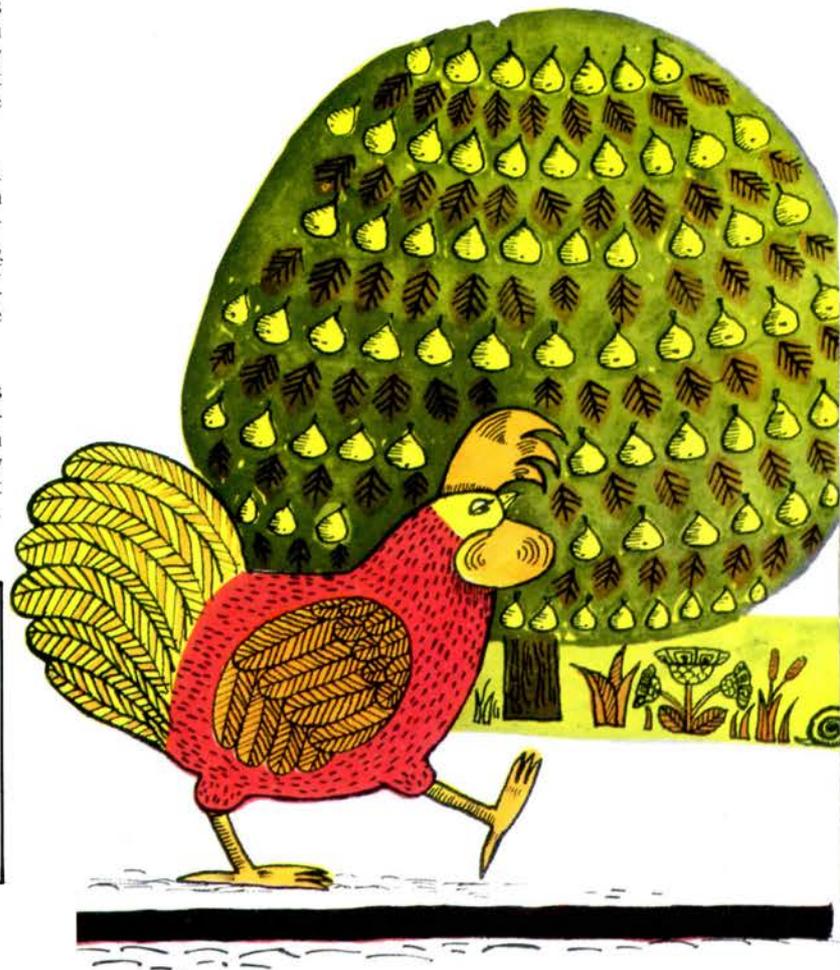
Pat Hutchins did her own colour separations by hand for **Rosie's Walk** (in the tradition of the 1950s which continued into the 1960s). Compare this with the colour made possible by electronic separation in **Brian Wildsmith's A B C** (1962) on the left.

Many fairy tale picture books fall into this category. And on the picture side of the coin, run-of-the-mill artists and publishers attempt to iron out singularly British elements (like red buses and pillar-boxes, policemen's helmets, cars with right-hand drive) in order to be flatly universal – to nobody's advantage.

But it is interesting and heartening to see that many British books in which no punches are pulled either in text or in illustration – the work of Raymond Briggs, Anthony Browne, Quentin Blake, Shirley Hughes – do sell to the markets that appreciate them and appear in successful foreign language editions world-wide.

The technology for reproducing rich colour work; picture books that are more than entertainment; the exploration of mood; wordless picture books; strip cartoon stories of excellence; and a growth in the international market: these are the movements, the seeds of which were sown in the sixties, that we have seen growing over the past twenty-five years. With the decline in the library market, so buoyant in the swinging sixties, we have also had a rush of so-called 'bookshop books' – flap-books and toy books, pop-ups of all kinds and much Masqueraderie – that, we are told, bring a new public into the bookshops. This may be. What is doubtful is whether these books make readers.

The 1980s may prove to be as big a turning point in picture book publishing as the 1960s. But whether we shall scale fresh heights in the years to come or feed our special talents to the ever open maw of television and of computer graphics, only the truly creative talents in the book world can decide. ●



GRAND DESIGNS

Shirley Hughes considers the state of the art of book design

'Design' is a word which seems to be on everyone's lips these days. Even the Prime Minister approves of it. Art colleges are encouraging it more than ever and design-consultancies are thriving. But, outside specialist circles, there seems to be some confusion about what good design really is, a vague assumption that it's something you spray on to a more-or-less finished product to make people want to buy it.

Book publishing, like the rest of our media, is run at the top by 'word' people; that is, highly articulate people who have been educated from an early age to write essays, pass written examinations, get most of their information (and a lot of their entertainment too) from the printed word. If they have also developed a good eye or any capacity whatsoever for draughtsmanship this will probably be through some accident of birth or happy chance outside the main thrust of their 'serious' education. This, of course, is very proper in an industry in which the most precious raw material is words, not pictures. But where this order of merit applies we tend to get a rather rigid division between verbal and visual communication.

Books will increasingly be required to thrive alongside other media, addressing an audience accustomed to getting stories in a variety of different ways. The design of a page, its attractiveness, clarity and accessibility is more than ever important if we are not to lose that audience. Originators of children's books know this better than anyone. Young readers require the utmost care in the way their books are designed. This area is of particular interest because, at its best, it can be a spearhead of experiment and innovation for the rest of the book trade.

With longer fiction the process is still traditional. An author may work closely with an editor during the writing of his or her book. When it's accepted he will be consulted about the illustrations if there are to be any. But the main decisions about how the book will actually look, the choice of paper, type-face, cover design will be made in-house (much of this depends on costing). The members of the design department have nothing to do with the editorial stage and rarely meet the author. This division of skills is often accentuated when the two departments are in different parts of the building, and in very big firms can be totally compartmentalised. Where an enormous number of titles are being put out pressure of work probably makes it impossible for the designers to read all the books, even if they wanted to. The illustrators, on the other hand, work free-lance and in this situation it is difficult for them to have a close rapport with the design team.

Picture-books are another matter. If they are from the hand of an author/artist they will probably be submitted at the rough-dummy stage with the position of all the type-areas already indicated and the illustrations sketched in round them. Not all author/artists, however, have a good eye for typography (if they have it will probably be something they have simply picked up rather than a matter of formal training) and may need a lot of help from the in-house designer. Author/artist collaborations have all too often in the past been vaguely assumed to be made in heaven – or rather, that the two have somehow magically got together to dream up this intimate combination of word and image. As in film-making, the pictures are part of the main ingredients rather than an entrancing afterthought, and have to be conceived as such. Good children's publishers regard it as part of their job to set up a framework in which these ideas can happen, develop and come to fruition as a finished book.

Rona Selby at Bodley Head has, in spite of her youth, a long experience in this skill. The most important thing about a picture-book, she says, is a good plot, whether this is told entirely in pictures, or in words, or any combination of the two. From the enormous number of texts which are submitted she will select the very few which have real visual possibility. Though herself a 'word' person by training, she must carry in her head a large memory-bank of possible artists, whose work might marry well with a certain text. She will try to bring the author and artist together at an early stage (if they live a long way from London it isn't always easy). What makes a good story told in words may nevertheless have to be adjusted for a picture book. For instance, a story about a journey with a small child in the back of a car was, after joint discussion, agreed to be visually too static and was changed to a train ride instead. The format of the book having been worked out with the illustrator, the design department will then draw up a grid. The choice of type-face is crucial. Rona must put the needs of her young audience first. She takes meticulous care that the line-breaks are of a length that a child can manage, that they relate to natural reading sense and aid reading aloud. This concern takes precedence over, for instance, centred or justified lines of type, however pleasing this may be to the adult eye.

Amelia Edwards at Walker Books was trained in the U.S.A. with a sound background in typography and graphic design. In a firm which so successfully specialises in children's picture-books, with a reputation for helping and bringing on new illustrators, she also finds herself working closely with authors. The open-plan atelier-style office facilitates a constant flow of ideas and exchange between the concerns of word and image, with both authors and artists positively



Getting it right...



encouraged to come in and work on the premises. Amelia says that, if an experienced author/illustrator prefers it, their policy is 'simply to leave them alone', but has found that when a writer has been brought together with an artist with an idea at an early stage, with 'a designer close by if they need one' the results can be very rewarding. She describes the combination of these open working conditions, with activity and distraction going on all around, with the kind of thoughtful availability the whole team offers to both authors and artists as 'very hard work, but well worth it in the long run'.

Children's publishers are much exercised at the moment with the design and illustration of the next stage beyond picture-books; that is, short-text stories on which tentative young readers may be encouraged to try their skills in reading to themselves. Just as there is no cut-off age in the enjoyment and use of picture-books, inventive design is important in books for any age-group, adults included.

Nick Thirkell is one of the most distinguished free-lance book-designers in the business with several awards to his credit. He ran the design department at Macmillan for some years and now has his own design consultancy partnership. His style springs from an elegant feeling for typography and a scrupulous attention to the needs of a particular text. Like an illustrator, he aims to give the book a visual pace, a dynamic which flows through from page to page. This, he feels, is what distinguishes design from mere layout. He applies this to non-fiction; art books in which the text may be minimal, such as a stunning boxed set of colour books for the Victoria and Albert museum on decorative papers. In his design for a luxury edition of *Larkrise to Candleford* (Century) he builds on



And getting it wrong.



the evocation of the period with pressed flowers lying alongside the letterpress (they are in reality artfully photographed and designed into the lines of text), and vignetted sepia photographs of turn-of-the-century rural life, off-setting carefully selected colour-plates of paintings from that period, dreamily pretty but just on the right side of schmaltz. All this was the work of months, combined with the skills of a picture researcher. It's the kind of job for which a publisher or packager, through pressure of time, would seek to commission a free-lance to give it exactly the right treatment.

Nick feels strongly that the amount of care and consideration taken is well worth it and shows up in the sales of the books. Tiny touches really are noticed by the reader and add up to a general feeling of rightness and harmony which is the essence of good design.

Of course, everyone knows about the highly designed book (usually non-fiction) in which the tail is wagging the dog; it looks wonderful in the shop, you take it home thinking that you've found your heart's desire only to find, in addressing the text, that it turns to dust and ashes. This is because the lay-out designers have disregarded the real essence and sense of the book. Some unfortunate writer has been brought in as an afterthought to fit some words into an already tightly-designed grid. But rigorous attention to the right kind of design, one which grows out of the demands of each individual text combined with exacting printing standards, will increase our reputation abroad and help to create a public at home who are not only readers but want to own and treasure books as desirable artefacts.

I have my own strong memories of books I had as a child where the design has stuck in my head even longer than the content. In *Bill the Minder*, written and illustrated by Will Heath Robinson (that giant of a draughtsman in both colour and line, lost to classic book illustration by his success in comic magazines), the pages seemed to me so astonishingly striking and intriguing that I never wanted to read the text in case it was a disappointment (most readers, I know, get this feeling the other way round). Who could forget that elegant and deceptive insouciance of Leslie Brook's *Johnny Crow's Garden*, or the guileful way in which E. H. Shepard gently scattered his line drawings into the pages of *The House at Pooh Corner*, or those garlanded ovals enclosing H. Willebeck Le Mair's illustrations for *Little Songs of Long Ago*, with colours like fragile fragments of faded silk, offsetting the austere lines of music on the opposite page? And who has ever equalled the rapturous simplicity of word and image achieved by my hero, William Nicholson, in his *Alphabet*?

More recently Edward Ardizzone's *Diana and her Rhinoceros*, Raymond Briggs' *Father Christmas*, Maurice Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen* and *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* and John Burningham's *Mr Gumpy's Outing* all struck me, from the moment I laid eyes on them, and ever since as a near-perfect blend of text and a strong illustrative style. Some day perhaps someone will write a history of how, in design terms, these actually came about. Speaking for myself, I'm just happy to know that they did, and hope that there will be others to equal them. ●



Before the Bazaar began Chips and Jessie were busy helping Mum arrange the stall. Quite a crowd of people were waiting to come in when the doors opened. Some of them stopped to look at the By-Gones. One or two of them even bought something.



Shirley Hughes showing how much good design can contribute to a story for young readers. A double page spread from *Chips & Jessie* (Bodley Head, 0 370 30666 X, £5.50)

And above, some illustrations lifted from *Two Shoes, New Shoes* in Shirley Hughes' Nursery Collection for Walker Books (0 7445 0303 5, £1.95)

There may not be a new McKee, but Andersen Press can still unlock treasures for Spring . . .

Already released is *IT'S MINE* a fable by Leo Lionni (86264 118 7 £5.95): squabbling frogs in Rainbow Pond discover the joys of sharing. *WHEN I'M SLEEPY* by Jane Howard and Lynne Cherry (86264 124 1 £5.95) is an exquisitely illustrated, soporific picture book. Fulvio Testa's stunning new book is *WOLF'S FAVOUR* (86264 108 X £5.95), a cumulative fable in the best tradition of Aesop. *THE BEAR WHO WANTED TO STAY A BEAR* (Reissue 86264 123 3 £5.95) by Jörg Müller and Jörg Steiner: a bear is mistaken for a worker. "The pictures are probably the best I've ever seen in a children's book . . . I highly recommend it." Robert Robinson on *The Book Programme*, BBC TV. March brought a new Tony Ross—I WANT MY POTTY! (86264 137 3 £4.95): royal pandemonium occurs when the little princess yells—and a reissue of his modern version of *LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD* (905478 37 1 £4.95). *THAT'S MY DAD!* (86264 133 0 £4.95) by Ralph Steadman, published in April, is a bizarre child's eye view of anatomical detail.



THAT'S MY DAD! by the inimitable Ralph Steadman (86264 133 0 £4.95)

Andersen Young Readers' Library has in store new titles by Hazel Townson and Philip Curtis. In *THE CRIMSON CRESCENT* (86264 130 6 £3.95) Lenny and Jake attempt to solve the local unemployment problem and all goes well until a priceless ruby vanishes and in *THE TOOTHLESS WONDER IN THE TOWER* (86264 131 4 £4.95) the Tower of London has a 20th century captive who must be released.

ANDERSEN PRESS, 62-65 CHANDOS PLACE, LONDON WC2N 4NW

AWARDS

This is the 8th year of the **Mother Goose Award** given to 'the most exciting newcomer in British illustration'. It was inaugurated by Clodagh Alborough who provided five bronze eggs to get things going. The eggs are now real goose eggs, gilded and engraved. There is also a cash prize of £500 provided by the sponsor, Books for Children.

Colin McNaughton reports on the views of this year's panel of judges

The crop has failed

So it finally happened. What all book prize judges fear: A 'Nothing' year. Nothing stood out and there was nothing to shout about. One sensed that something had gone wrong when the entries flooded in at the rate of about one a month. They were generally bland and dull. So few books came in, that we found ourselves cancelling meetings; there was just nothing to talk about. We kept on hoping for a last minute rush of entries and, to a degree, I suppose it came. But it was the same old story; there was nowhere that certain spark of originality we were looking for, nowhere that something different. Just the same old formulae: The-cute-bear-book-formula. The-richly-illustrated-Arabian-nights-tale-formula. The-Myths-and-Legends-formula. The-respectable-Poetry-Anthology-formula. The-My-Favourite-Nursery-Rhymes-formula. The-Cat-Book-formula. (Archa just sick of cats?) The Yet-another-Brambly-Hedge-Look-alike-formula. The If-I-Use-An-Incredible-Amount-Of-Detail-Perhaps-no-one-will-notice-there-are-no-ideas-in-this-book-formula. And of course there are those books where the pictures were so appallingly inept that they are referred to as 'naive' when in fact they were just 'naff'.

There were a few interesting books which elicited positive responses from the panel: Ted Hughes' **The Iron Man** (Faber) with Andrew Davidson's powerfully evocative woodcuts which won the Kurt Maschler Award; Alastair Graham's **The Jungle of Peril** and **The Planet of Terror** (Walker Books) which have their illustrative roots in animation and cartoon work; with their highly skilled slickness they are technically excellent (and very funny). Ian Andrew has

some lovely underwater pictures in his **Dolphins** (Hippo) but the subject was too limiting, we felt, to show his true potential. Maria Majewska's **Oscar Mouse finds a Home** (Methuen) showed promise but there was, we felt, lack of life and movement in the pictures; hopefully good editorial advice and a better story will help Maria in the future. **The Doom of the Gods** (Oxford): Tudor Humphries' drawings are strong and densely detailed; he has skill and technique and shows a real feeling for the Blood n' Guts of the Norse Myths.

But none of these books, we felt, really stood out enough as a winner, not when we look at the standard set by past winners of the award such as Reg Cartwright's **Mr Potter's Pigeon**, Satoshi Kitamura's wonderful **Angry Arthur**, Susan Varley's **Badger's Parting Gifts** or Patrick Benson's lovely pictures for William Mayne's **Hob Stories**.

So what happened?

What went wrong this year?

Where were all these exciting newcomers to children's books with their fresh ideas and new approaches? We know they are out there. We've seen them in the art schools. Full of crazy ideas for books – not always with the drawing skills to match – but that comes with time. What happened to those ideas between college and the publisher's desk and the finished book? Why did they end up as dull sanitized formula books?

Surely the fault lies not with the artists; they're young and easily persuaded, they're nervous and eager to please. They will do what is necessary to get published; unfortunately this usually means taking the safe path; producing safe, boring books. No,

the blame, it seems, must be placed on the broad shoulders of the publishers. They must take more risks and work harder with newcomers, or the whole business will simply stagnate. They cannot rely on their older artists for ever. And if the right kind of artists are not coming into the publishers' offices, then editors must go out and look for them. Some of our most talented illustrators are in advertising and editorial work: go poaching – sell them on the joys of children's books; lousy money but loads of freedom. Publishers must forge more links with the art schools, and not just the London colleges (some publishers are doing this already). They must take the time to go and work with the students, set them real projects, invest in them. They are the raw material, the future and the life blood of children's books.

Of course, most of the illustrators in this year's crop will, no doubt, go on to bigger and better things. This is what makes the Mother Goose Award such a difficult, almost impossible, award to judge; lots of well-known illustrators think that if the Mother Goose Award had been around when they started they would not have stood a chance of winning it with their own first book. And to an outsider, without this particular knowledge, it will appear that the harvest of 'exciting newcomers to children's books' in 1985 has failed.

As you may have guessed by now, we decided we could not give the Mother Goose Award this year. ●

The panel this year was Sally Grindley (Books for Children), Quentin Blake, Colin McNaughton, Jan Ormerod, Beverley Mathias (National Library for the Handicapped) and Jane Little (Lambeth librarian).



Some previous winners of the **Mother Goose Award**.

The Guardian Award

AWARDS

Stephanie Nettell reports on the decision of the judges to make this year's award to **Henry's Leg** by Ann Pilling.

The judges of the Guardian Award for Children's Fiction – Douglas Hill, Penelope Lively, K. M. Peyton, Michael Rosen and myself – were captured by an appealing freshness in Ann Pilling's **Henry's Leg**, a kind of defiant chirpiness that allows its essential seriousness to lie lightly on it. Like every other novel of 1985 (or so at times it seemed), it is saying important things about the realities of life, but it says them cheerfully, without pretension, self-conscious solemnity or grim didacticism.

It is set in a Lancashire town on the edge of the moors, whose mixture of seediness and gentility, the familiarity that is both comforting and boring, and local characters are viewed by Henry with exasperated affection. Henry himself, in his last year at primary school but big and awkward for his age, is a charmer – a young hero who is actually likeable. His room is piled with weird junk the rest of the world has discarded, and his inner life is filled with engagingly daft small-boy schemes to make money for himself and his mum – like secretly storing hedgehog corpses, destined for a research lab, in the freezer of an obsessively hygienic neighbour.

But two dreams above all others fuel his life: to own the pink leg he saw sticking from the dustbin outside Alice Modes one drizzly



Ann Pilling

evening, and to have his dad tire of his girl friend and come home again. The first lands him in an enjoyably complicated comedy thriller of the Boy Beats Local Crooks kind; for the second he can only wait and hope, powerless and bewildered by a lack of explanation for what is happening in the adult world. And it is this direct young longing that, more than anything, the reader shares and cares about. Ann Pilling has

succeeded in writing about the vulnerability of childhood with pace, humour, and a light, healing touch.

Two sharply different books shared the role of runner-up. **Trouble Half-Way**, by Jan Mark, is a characteristically perceptive and witty little book which explores the changing relationship between an anxious, rather proper, young girl and the stepfather with whom, in spite of his good-natured affection, she is still ill at ease. Subtly, the action lies less in their journey together across England in his lorry than in her discoveries about herself. **Mundo and the Weather-Child**, by Joyce Dunbar, is a bold experiment in portraying the uncomprehending distress, and its painful but triumphant conquest, of a seven-year-old who becomes suddenly deaf. A magical companion eases his devastating sense of isolation and transforms a symbolic study of the subconscious into an exciting tale of adventure and enchantment. For the first time in fiction, a deaf child has been given heroic status and the world of silence a voice. An ambitious book (for readers older than its own *Mundo*), it is a touching and striking work of the imagination. ●

Henry's Leg, Ann Pilling, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 80720 6, £5.95

Trouble Half-Way, Jan Mark, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 80188 7, £6.50

Mundo and the Weather-Child, Joyce Dunbar, Heinemann, 0 434 93590 5, £6.95.

Spring Picture Books

from Viking Kestrel

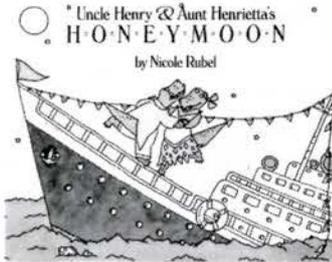
<p>Sally Kilroy TODDLERS TALES</p> <p>A series of first 'real' books which make an ideal follow-up to Sally Kilroy's Baby Board Books.</p> <p>On the Road 0 670 80337 5 Market Day 0 670 80339 1 Grandpa's Garden 0 670 80338 3 What a Week! 0 670 80336 7</p> <p>£1.99 each</p>	<p>Colin and Jacqui Hawkins MAX AND THE MAGIC WORD</p> <p>An exuberant lesson in manners for Max who can't get what he wants because he won't say the magic word.</p> <p>0 670 80853 9 £5.50</p>	<p>Paul Rogers SHEEPCHASE</p> <p>Illustrated by Celia Berridge</p> <p>The fair has come to town and Flossie the sheep wants to join the fun. Young children will enjoy the game of finding Flossie in her fairground hiding places.</p> <p>0 670 80599 8 £5.95</p>
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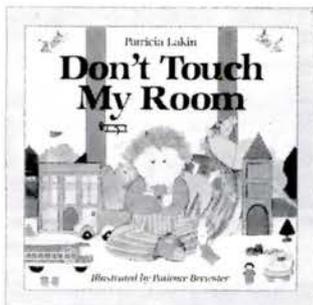


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Patricia Lakin Illustrated in full colour by Patience Brewster

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Is Anyone There?

Una Leavy Illustrated in full colour by Maureen Galvani

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REISSUES

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The Magician and the Sorcerer The Magician and the Dragon

Both by David McKee and illustrated in full colour

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CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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May we recommend . . .

Pat Triggs introduces Lynley Dodd

Lynley Dodd may not be the first name that springs to mind when picture books are talked about but mention **My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes** and everyone smiles at the recollection of a perennial favourite, Lynley Dodd did the pictures for that. Each year since it was inaugurated the latest story about Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy has appeared in the Federation of Children's Book Groups' Pick of the Year – there by virtue of its popularity with the children who do the picking. Lynley Dodd created Hairy Maclary.

Our lack of familiarity with this inventive artist and writer may be explained (but not excused) by the fact that she is a New Zealander. Her entry into children's books came when Eve Sutton – also a New Zealander and a relation by marriage – suggested that they should do a book together. But what should it be about? It so happened that about that time – the early '70s – Lynley had a cat who liked hiding in odd places and she liked drawing him. Eve got to work on the rhyming text and soon we had, among others, the 'cat from France' who 'liked to sing and dance', and the 'cat from Norway' who 'got stuck in the doorway', and the 'cat from Spain' who 'flew an aeroplane'. Illustrations – national stereotypes of these amazing cats – alternated with a funny and inventive series of pictures depicting how 'MY cat likes to hide in boxes' with often only an eye, an ear or a waving tail visible. **My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes** was accepted for Hamish Hamilton by Julia MacRae and published in 1973. Other titles followed, including **The Nickle Nackle Tree**, a counting book with a cast of unlikely birds – Seven haughty Huff Puff birds, thirteen grouchy Grudge birds – and a highly alliterative text, also by Lynley Dodd, who was now working solo.

Lynley Dodd is very conscious of being one of the few New Zealanders involved in creating children's books, and is quietly but firmly nationalistic. So it was a natural step to move, in 1978, from the British based Hamish Hamilton to Mallinson Rendel, a local publisher based in Wellington. It was a happy choice. 'I really do think small is beautiful,' says Lynley, 'and it's so helpful to be able to drop round to see your editor instead of communicating across the world.'

In 1982 Mallinson Rendel made a link with Spindlewood – another small and beautiful publisher, based in Barnstaple – and it was thus that in 1983 **Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy** arrived on these shores. Children, with no help from critics or commentators who weren't really looking, somehow found their own way to the book which with its simple structure, repetitive rhyming text, giggle-inducing word-play and lively easily read pictures has instant and essential child appeal. Who could resist a collection of dog characters like the dalmatian 'Bottomley Potts, covered in spots', the dachshund 'Schnitzel von Krumm with a very low tum' and of course the Scottish terrier Hairy Maclary himself. Children out walking have been heard to shout 'Oh look, there's Muffin McLay,' as a particularly hairy Old English sheepdog comes into view.

The same cast of dogs appeared in **Hairy Maclary's Bone** but in **Hairy Maclary Scattercat**, our hero is on his own feeling 'bumptious and bustly, bossy and bouncy and frisky and hustly,' looking for something to chase. What he finds is a collection of elegant cats – Slinky Malinki, Pimpernel Pugh, Mushroom Magee – to bother. His cocky progress continues until he pounces on the wrong tail and Scarface Claw – the terror of the first Hairy Maclary book – gives him his come-uppance.



Slinky Malinki was down in the reeds.

BUT ALONG CAME HAIRY MACLARY. . .

Spindlewood has re-issued several earlier Lynley Dodd titles and a delightful story information book **The Smallest Turtle**. This month her latest book **Wake Up Bear** is due out. Like the others it has a humorous, repetitive text and funny, appealing pictures in a blend that provides exactly the right support for beginner readers and is a pleasure for younger children to share with adults and older children. Like Hairy Maclary it has the makings of another classroom classic. ●

Lynley Dodd: the books

All titles in hardback by Spindlewood, in paperback by Puffin.

My Cat Like to Hide in Boxes, 0 907349 70 6, £4.95 hbk; 0 14 050.242 4, £1.25 pbk

The Nickle Nackle Tree, 0 907349 76 5, £4.95

Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy, 0 907349 50 1, £4.25 hbk; 0 14 050.531 8, £1.50 pbk

Hairy Maclary's Bone, 0 907349 96 X, £3.95

Hairy Maclary Scattercat, 0 907349 46 3, £4.25

The Smallest Turtle, 0 907349 35 8, £4.25

Wake up Bear, 0 907349 03 X, £4.50

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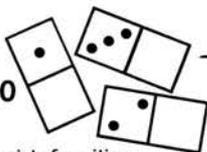
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Book Events Ahead

CHILDREN'S BOOK WEEK

Bob Cattell reveals his plans for CBW's tenth year

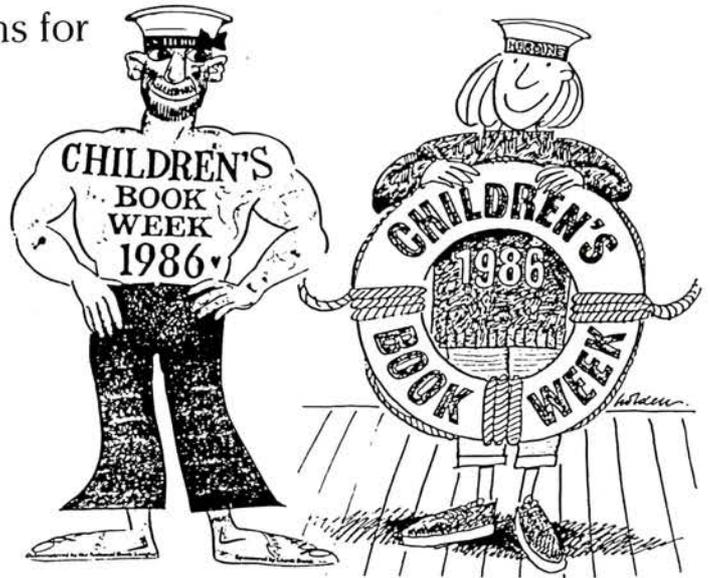
Judging from our mailing list and the greatly increased level of telephone calls and letters asking for information, there is going to be a substantial surge in the number of children involved in book events this year.

This year's 'official week' is 4th-11th October – although, a healthy trend, many organisers are holding their events at times to suit them, so Children's Book Week is gradually becoming an all-the-year-round promotion. It's also our tenth anniversary and plans are progressing for a double celebration with a launch at the National Theatre and the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester.

Themes for events are probably the basis for all successful Book Weeks – and this year we've suggested one which opens up a vast range of possibilities and interpretations, **Heroes and Heroines**. Caroline Holden's treatment of it in her splendid designs for the posters, balloons, etc is strictly nautical. In producing a series of drawings and designs for the promotional materials, I think she has managed to be funny, colourful and very eye-catching; but above all the drawings will appeal to older children as well as the young ones. Wait till you see them!

We're also taking to the stage with our theme this year. After talking to David Wood, the children's playwright and founder of the Whirligig Theatre, about heroes and heroines, his choice of subject was the Robin Hood story. Together with Dave and Toni Arthur, he's written two short (15-20 minute) plays for performance in schools. **Marion and the Witches' Charm** puts the women on stage for once, having conveniently whisked all the men off to a crusade. The other play, **Robin Hood and Friar Tuck**, follows the more traditional lines of the famous river meeting.

Both plays have only a small number of speaking parts but there are exciting crowd scenes and plenty of room for improvisation. Our three playwrights have also included some stage direction ideas and songs. Most importantly the plays are great fun, the scripts are free of charge and there are *no royalty fees* for public performances during the week. What we want to see is as many productions of the plays as possible in early October. Theatres and arts centres around the country are showing interest in putting on professional and amateur productions and we will be performing the plays at the launch parties, too.



One final incentive to put on a play. We're linking performances to a video competition. The best videos of the plays will be judged by David, Dave and Toni and we may even hold a presentation ceremony if the entries are good enough.

There will also be the full spread of other competitions and quizzes: a local radio and local newspaper competition and a national design and painting competition.

Finally, a word about next year. In the words of some publishers, this year is a 'year of consolidation' before we tackle a major event on the scale of last year's train (I can only say that 'consolidating' means a lot more than I'd thought). However, if we are to take on a major promotion in 1987, always assuming we have the sponsors to pay for it, then a decision will be needed shortly. (These things need a long time planning.) We would like to hear your views, comments, but most of all we want your ideas. If you don't let us know what you think now, your case for complaining later will be considerably weakened!

The address for information, promotional materials, plays and ideas is: Children's Book Week, National Book League, Book House, 45 East Pill, London SW18 2QZ.

CARIBBEAN FOCUS '86

Running through until November at the Commonwealth Institute in London and at venues round the country events of all kinds – music, theatre, exhibitions, dance – will be sharpening our focus on the Caribbean and encouraging us to look with new eyes at the countries and the peoples both in the region and in our own wider British society.

The Commonwealth Institute, working closely with governments in the Caribbean and with the Black community in Britain has organised a fascinating range of events to appeal to people of all ages.

From a varied programme look out for:
The Caribbean Book Festival

mounted by Soma Books at the Commonwealth Institute (ends June 30th)
The Caribbean Train touring the country from June 14-July 4 with carriages for food, tourist promotions and educational programmes
Music Village – calypso, reggae, folk and jazz in Holland Park, July 31-August 17
Carnival Costumes on display at the Commonwealth Institute's galleries in August and September
Caribbean Market Day – crafts and goods for sale, all the sights and sounds of a Caribbean market at the Commonwealth Institute in the Autumn Term.
In addition there is a new permanent exhibition at the Institute. Caribbean Eye looks

at the past, present and future of the Caribbean region using reports and accounts contemporary with the events described. The first Caribbean peoples, the Amerindians; trade with Europe; the plantations and slavery; the story of 'King Sugar'; the labour movement; the fight for independence are all included.

Under 5's Book Fair

3-5 July at the Thomas Coram Foundation, London

This will be the very first Book Fair to concentrate attention on books and materials for the very young. In particular the intention is to promote the importance of stories and reading in the development of all young children. A wide

range of books will be on display with particular emphasis on the needs of our multi-cultural society. There will also be special exhibitions, sessions with authors and illustrators, a teddy bears picnic and puppets.

The organisers expect that on July 4th visitors will be drawn principally from pre-school groups, schools, librarians and other professionals. Saturday July 5th will be for parents, children and the general public.

The Fair is organised by VOLCUF (Voluntary Organisations Liaison Council for Under-Fives) a national federation of groups which includes the Pre-school Playgroups Association and the National Childminders Association.

For details contact VOLCUF c/o Thomas Coram Foundation, 40 Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1AZ.

Book People in the News

Happy Birthday Topsy and Tim

The amazingly enduring twins are celebrating the 25th anniversary of their first appearance in print and Blackie have a new novelty book to mark the occasion. **Happy Birthday Topsy and Tim** (what else?) features a birthday party for the twins and all their multi-racial (now there's a change in 25 years) little friends. Turn the last page and the book plays 'Happy Birthday to You' with the sort of tinny jolliness that drives parents and teachers bonkers!

But, like them or loathe them, there's no denying the popularity of the predictable pair – huge sales and over a million borrowings of the T and T titles from public libraries last year.

Jean and Gareth Adamson, Topsy and Tim's creators, met while studying illustration at Goldsmiths College, London; but it wasn't until several years later when their paths crossed again that they married and decided to try to make a living as freelance writers and illustrators. They did several children's books before getting together on the Topsy and Tim series – Gareth writing the stories and Jean doing the pictures which she deliberately filled with all the domestic detail of suburban living. Their own three children were a source of inspiration as Topsy and Tim went to the doctor, had their eyes tested, learned to ride bicycles and ponies, went to a wedding, a football match, on holiday abroad, in a caravan . . . and so on through nearly 70 eventful, frequently didactic, ultimately cosy and reassuring stories.

Topsy and Tim have appeared in hardback and paperback, in large format and small, in board books, shape books and press out dressing up books. It's no wonder that from time to time Jean and Gareth swapped roles – she wrote the story and he did the pictures!

In 1982 Gareth's sudden death was a terrible blow to Jean and their children; but she kept on working and now daughter Gabrielle has joined 'the family business' with six titles to her credit already.

Topsy and Tim's many fans would doubtless enjoy meeting their creator – Jean Adamson, who lives in Cambridgeshire, enjoys visiting schools, libraries and book fairs.

(Contact Rosanna Nissen at Blackie [01-734 7521] for details.)

Marilyn Malin – Own Brand Books

The name of one of the best-known figures in children's books is about to appear on the spines of a new range of books. After eighteen years developing Methuen's children's list Marilyn Malin now has her own imprint; the first Marilyn Malin Books will appear this summer. With a shrewd and sensitive eye on what kind of books children actually want to read Marilyn, as ever, is still concerned to produce books of quality and value. Her move into 'own brand books' is 'in association with Andre Deutsch' a company she respects for being 'old-fashioned book people, rather than thrusting new marketing people.' Like Julia MacRae – another famous editor/publisher who went independent with her own imprint – she understands the importance of working closely with authors and illustrators and building up a trusting relationship with them.

The new imprint will cover books with a wide age appeal but prominent among the first titles are **Toppers**, a series for children tackling their first 'real novels'. Short (48 pages) with full colour illustration throughout, **Toppers** are not a million miles from



Heinemann's very successful **Banana** books. But, says Marilyn, the emphasis in **Toppers** is on contemporary situations – single parent families with no spare cash, unemployment and high rise living – treated with warmth and humour and without 'talking down'. Vivien Alcock, Helen Cresswell, Mary Hoffman, Dick King-Smith, Sheila Lavelle and Alison Prince are the authors of the first set of six (published July 24th); (the illustrators are as well-known and gratifyingly receive almost equal billing on the covers). At £2.50 in hardback they should help to fill the 7-9 'gap' and even perhaps appeal to older but less experienced readers.

We'll let you know when we have tried them out.

Judith Elliott – a new harvest?

Another famous name, Judith Elliott – until last September director of children's publishing for the Heinemann group – is behind another new children's book imprint launched in August. **Orchard Books** which, like Julia MacRae Books, will run alongside Franklin Watts is starting strongly with a new Pienkowski pop-up, **Little Monsters**. Later in the year will come titles from other artists, Faith Jaques and Emilie Boon, previously published by Judith Elliott at Heinemann, a fantasy for teenage readers, a funny ghost story for 7-10s, and a picture book from a new illustrator. The '86 list also contains two



Judith Elliott

books which were originated in the USA. Orchard Books is designedly transatlantic; it also has a New York office and editor; it is intended that many books will be published both here and in the States. From eight titles this year Judith plans to expand quickly with 40 titles in the pipeline for 1987.

Changing Places

In recent months a lot of people in children's books have been moving around and familiar figures keep appearing behind each other's managerial and editorial desks. Just to keep you up to date:

Ingrid Selberg has moved from Corgi to Heinemann. Philippa Dickinson has left Puffin for Corgi. David Grant

has gone from Hamish Hamilton to Hodder and Jane Nissen has gone from Methuen to Hamish Hamilton. At Penguin Elizabeth Attenborough now has editorial oversight of Viking Kestrel and Puffin while Sally Floyer, leaving Puffin, now concentrates on the Frederick Warne titles and on merchandising Beatrix Potter et al. More news next time the music stops. ●

Reading Matters

(Helping your child with reading)

by Brian Cutting

The importance of collaboration between teachers and parents in helping their children to read is now widely recognised.

Reading Matters is especially written for parents and teachers working together. It emphasises the value of the shared-reading experience and is written for all parents as enthusiastic non-specialists.

The first section deals with pre-school reading and stresses the vital contribution of the bedtime story to the aim of 'reading for pleasure'. The author then outlines how parents can extend their involvement when the child starts school. Section 2 goes on to explain how reading is taught in schools and the final section describes the actual process of reading.

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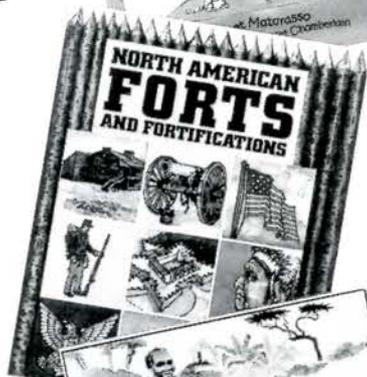


Why Can't You Grow Up?

Janet Matarasso

Angela's brother said: 'You're such a baby, why don't you grow up?' So she tries all sorts of things to hurry it up, and asks all kinds of people what she ought to do — but nothing seems to happen. Until her grandfather gives her the best advice of all — and that is simply to wait. And sure enough, it happens.

A simple and delightful tale, told through vivid colour illustrations and easy to read text. **Hard covers about £4.95**



North American Forts and Fortifications

Michelle Pangallo

The historical heritage of the USA and Canada is vividly portrayed in the forts and fortresses built at strategic points across the land, scenes of many a human story and dramatic event. This book, beautifully illustrated in full colour, is about some of the most interesting and famous of them, from Fort Donelson, the scene of the Union's first great victory in the Civil War, to the Alamo, defended amongst others by Davy Crockett.

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Legends of the Animal World

Rosalind Kerven

From all around the world Rosalind Kerven has collected an exciting and varied array of stories to explain the relationships between man and the animals and the characteristics of different kinds. Full colour illustrations bring these delightful stories to life.

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from Step 1 to Step 3

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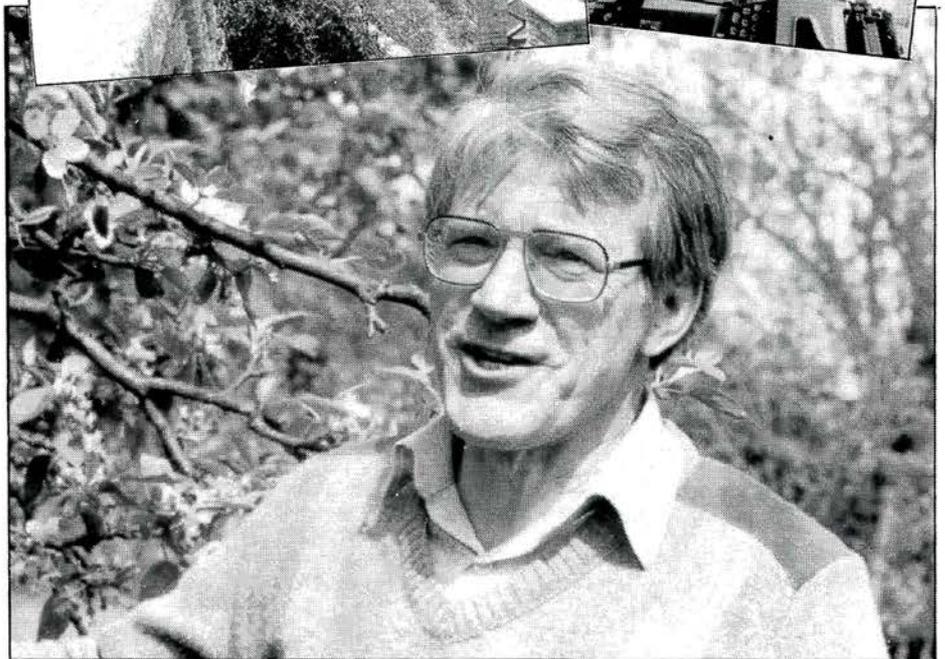
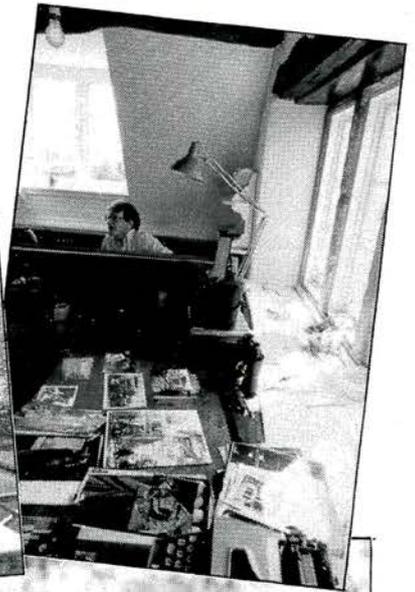
Authorgraph No. 38

Graham Oakley

'I'm a great admirer of mice, actually,' says Graham Oakley. This is just as well since he's currently working on his tenth picture book in *The Church Mice* series – in this case the diary of Humphrey, the bossy, know-all, ex-teacher mouse who by now seems effortlessly to upstage both his worthy fellow-mouse, Arthur, and Sampson the vestry cat. Along with the rest of its mouse inhabitants they've made St John's Church, Wortlethorpe famous. It's hard to explain the popularity of these very English books in places like Japan, yet a world-wide appeal they certainly have. Perhaps it's something to do with the fact that mice are 'incredibly enterprising animals. The lengths they'll go to to get what they want! If it served their purpose to walk on their hind legs they jolly well would do.'

Once, soon after he'd bought and begun to renovate the old mill in Wiltshire where he now lives, Graham Oakley decided he'd have to do something about the mouse population which was over-running it. 'So I acquired one of those humane traps that doesn't kill them since I felt I couldn't really kill my own bread and butter. When I finally caught one I took it well away from the house and released it . . . and watched it beat me back to the house straight ahead all the way. They're wonderful creatures.'

They're also, as he's the first to acknowledge, a gift to the illustrator. For a start they have *hands*. This is an enormous bonus if you want them to behave like human beings and the Oakley books are uninhibitedly anthropomorphic. 'If you object to this then you're objecting to a sizeable chunk of children's literature. Mind you, though my mice have maintained and even developed their person-like qualities through the course of the series, Sampson the cat has become steadily more cat-like. Now I never allow him to do what a real-life cat wouldn't. In the later books he doesn't speak, for example. Arthur does all the talking for him by a kind of telepathy.' Altogether, *The Church Mice* series has very obviously taken on a life of its own. These days the town of Wortlethorpe, which began as a sort of Warrington set in East Anglia, has more than a touch of Shrewsbury and



Chippenham too. And so many changes have been made to St John's to accommodate various adventures 'it would be impossible to draw a ground-plan anymore.' Even Humphrey's rise to prominence came about naturally. 'The classic instance of a bad character being more interesting to write about than a good one, I suppose.'

What all the books have in common, though – from the first *The Church Mouse* (1972) to the most recent *The Church Mice in Action* (1984) – are two instantly recognisable Oakley assets. Whether his characters are abroad, adrift, at bay, spreading their wings, coping with Christmas or on the way to the moon (and the series has taken them through all of these) they're presented in a verbal and visual style their author has made very much his own.

Firstly, as an illustrator Graham Oakley is unashamed about being *painterly*. He believes in drawing rather than graphics and has a special admiration for contemporaries like Shirley Hughes and Nicola Bayley who

combine a very individual vision with the ability to represent the world the way it actually looks. His greatest love is for Victorian illustrative painting – also for American artists like Walker and Pile and Remington. His particular favourite is Norman Rockwell whom he describes as 'quite simply the perfect illustrator'. One reason for the superbly detailed settings in which the action of his books takes place is that 'the background interests me as much, and sometimes more, than the central characters.'

Secondly, when providing himself with a text he makes few concessions to his child audience. His writing is both droll and formal. Who but Graham Oakley would come up with a phrase like 'without more ado she bore Sampson off'? And that's from the latest book in the series! 'I know a lot of it will go over the head of some children but it won't go over the head of adults. As long as there's enough for everybody it doesn't matter that a lot of it is missed. Anyway what are parents for? Particularly in the States I get an awful lot of criticism for my long words. They

say you should only use words a child understands but my argument is that if you do that how do they ever learn new words? Only if the parent doesn't know the word himself could it be embarrassing but, after all, there's always a dictionary. I wouldn't hesitate to use trade-words or phrases of obscure meaning; in **The Church Mouse** I bring in triple-bob-majors. Obviously a child wouldn't know what a triple-bob-major was but it's quite easy to find out.'

The same sort of demand is made by one of the most justly celebrated aspects of the Oakley opus: its humour. This permeates both words and pictures. What other current picture-books make such a sustained use of irony for instance? Sometimes this is employed to make a political point as in the opening of the Michelangelo Shopping Precinct in **Hetty and Harriet** where the sharp-eyed will spot that the Mayor, Herbert Scroggins Esq., has a much greater interest in this urban venture than merely opening it. Similarly wry observations, from the reading-habits of choirboys to the hubris of Research-Scientists, are there to be picked up by the verbally and visually alert in every Oakley outing. The interplay between text and illustration is one of the delights of the series since 'as my friend Geoffrey Patterson remarked in a recent **Books for Keeps** Authorgraph there's no point in a picture-book if the two merely duplicate each other.' In his next book they actually contradict each other with Humphrey's self-approving commentary consistently undercut by what's seen to be happening all round him.

Which comes first, then, the words or the pictures? 'The words, actually. Once I've sorted out the text and its spacing I'm free to improvise with the drawings - that's the bit I enjoy most.'

Doing what he enjoys most, however, was a long time coming. He was born and spent his early years in Shrewsbury before moving north to Warrington. 'I was a duffer at school,' he claims. 'The only thing I could do reasonably well was draw. In fact at the grammar school I attended you only did Art if you were useless at everything else. My teachers could see no way of making a living out of art. I can remember my headmaster saying on my leaving-report that it wasn't worth the paper it was written on.' Two years at art school followed, interrupted by National Service, after which he got a job as a commercial artist in London before enrolling at the Bradford Civic Theatre School to study theatre design for six months. Then came a stint at Huddersfield Rep. as a scene-painter and a return to London 'the magnet for everybody in the theatre business'. Here he worked at the Royal Opera House with artists like John Piper and actors like John Gielgud though 'in a very humble capacity'. Already he was freelancing as an illustrator with an edition of **Kidnapped** for Dent and **The King of the Golden River** for Hutchinson. Much of his work was for Richard Garnett, the art editor of Rupert Hart-Davis. 'Thanks to him I

just about kept the wolf from the door. The most I was ever paid for a book-jacket was fifteen pounds . . .

I can remember doing a book of poetry for the London University Press - forty illustrations for something like thirty quid. I was glad to get the work, what's more.' After five years, and a period back in advertising, he joined BBC television's design department. He stayed there for fifteen years. By 1972, though, 'I thought it was high time I did something of my own and produced **Magical Changes**.' This split-page tour-de-force, with its umpteen combination of scenes surreal and fantastic wasn't eventually published till after the first two **Church Mice** books and did better in France and the United States than England. Astonishingly, it's never appeared in paperback. It wasn't till 1977, with his BBC contract coming to an end and seven books in print that the chance came to live off his own work. 'Something else was prompting him, too. 'I wanted to live in the country - the real country.'

It's easy to see why. Kellaways Mill is situated on a river-bend with open fields all round it. There's more sky and more water than a city-dweller could comfortably cope with - even with the walls and lawns and landscaping Graham Oakley has added over the years. The house itself, built in the early eighteenth century, is long and low with an interior at once simpler and more stylish than any appearing in his books. He works in a living room almost as timbered as a ship, on a gallery like an ample crow's-nest. It's as unfussy and practical as its owner who 'spends almost all my time here at the mill. I rarely seem to leave the place now! What I tend to do is draw during the winter and during the summer I work on the landscaping round here. During those winter months, though, I keep very regular office hours. I start at half-past eight or nine without fail and stop at five having had a very quick lunch. Invariably I work to the accompaniment of music. Early classical music I find the most stimulating, baroque music. That about covers my working habits, really.'

This is a modest account, of course. It overlooks the albums of photographs

and pictures he collects to keep alert the eye for buildings and scenery he developed during his theatre days, the skill he's developed to make sure his depiction of Sampson, for example, is accurate from any angle. He's just as modest about the freshness of his pictures ('that comes from the reproduction because they use transparent inks - my original artwork looks very laboured and worked over') and their marvellous sense of movement ('that's a standard compositional thing to do with the rhythm of a picture. It's the first art-school exercise you do.').

Where he's not at all modest is in his ambitions for picture-books. He's acutely aware of the inherent limitations of its standard thirty-two page format. The density and detail of his approach to illustration is partly to offset these and partly to give value for money. 'I feel you've got to use every inch - these very self-indulgent books you get with a tiny picture in a sea of white and opposite a page with four lines of text in the middle of emptiness offend my economic sense.' The latest book, **Henry's Quest**, shows his approach at full stretch. His aim was to create 'a landscape for writing adventures' with a hero as simple as Simon but as tough as Raymond Chandler's Marlowe. The result, calling on the experience of a dozen previous books and fifteen years-worth of film and television storytelling technique, is a world like a post-holocaust Gormenghast . . . a world which he makes no secret he'd like to re-visit again and again since 'a series is one of the ways of moving forward from those thirty-two pages. We must do this if picture-books are to stay alive.'

Which leaves Oakley admirers, of course, in something of a double-bind. More Henry, welcome though this prospect is, would mean no more Humphrey and Co. Is it goodbye to St John's, Wortlethorpe?

Well . . . maybe. Mice really are incredibly enterprising animals and Graham Oakley has tried to get rid of them before. Who's to say they won't beat him back to some future picture-books, straight ahead all the way? ●

The Books

(published by Macmillan)

The Church Mouse, 0 333 13259 9, 4.95; 0 333 23576 2, £2.25 pbk

The Church Cat Abroad, 0 333 14825 8, £4.95; 0 333 23575 4, £2.25 pbk

The Church Mice Spread Their Wings, 0 333 18566 8, £4.95; 0 333 27644 2, £2.25 pbk

The Church Mice and the Moon, 0 333 16784 8, £4.95; 0 333 24873 2, £2.25 pbk

The Church Mice Adrift, 0 333 19760 7, £4.95; 0 333 25529 1, £2.25 pbk

The Church Mice at Bay, 0 333 23235 6, £4.95; 0 333 30792 5, £2.25 pbk

The Church Mice at Christmas, 0 333 30549 3, £4.95; 0 333 32483 8, £2.25 pbk

The Church Mice in Action, 0 333 33635 6, £4.95; 0 333 35922 4, £2.25 pbk

Magical Changes, 0 333 25816 9, out of stock at present

Hetty and Harriet, 0 333 32373 4, £4.95; 0 333 35844 9, £2.25 pbk

Henry's Quest, 0 333 40841 1, £4.95

The Diary of a Church Mouse, 0 333 42614 2, £5.95 (October 86)

The Church Mice Chronicles (The Church Mouse, The Church Cat Abroad, The Church Mice and the Moon), 0 333 42613 4, £5.95 (October 86)

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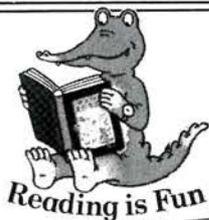
ROALD DAHL DIRTY BEASTS

MOG in the FOG

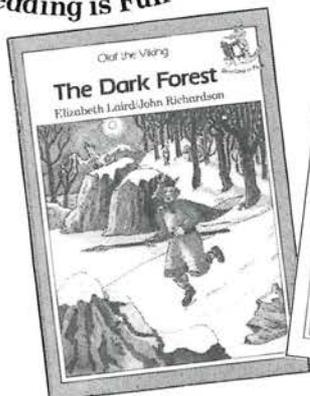


Helen Nicoll and Jan Pieńkowski

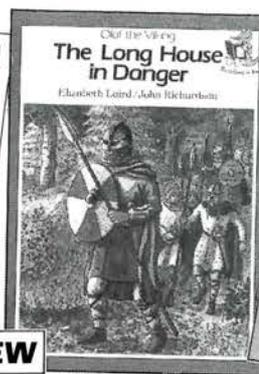
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Ernest the Fierce Mouse
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Up Along Down Along Under and Over

Published in September:
Alfie Alligator: How Big? How Small? How Short? How Tall?
The Lost and Found House
Night Time
The Playground

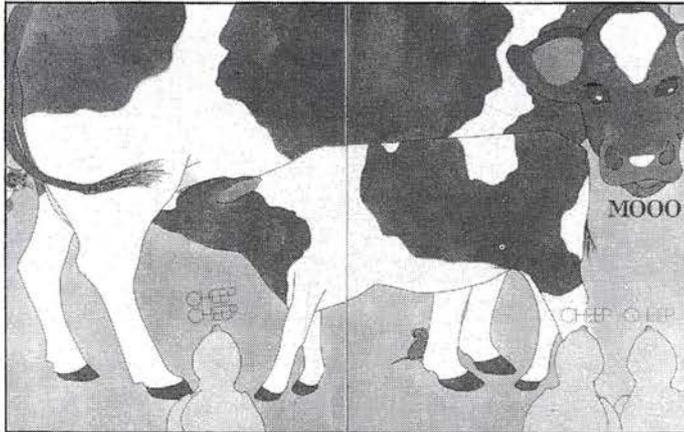


All available in paperback at £1.75 and hardback at £3.95

Collins

REVIEWS

Nursery/Infant



From *Early Morning in the Barn*.

Early Morning in the Barn

Nancy Tafuri, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.614 4, £1.50

The barn in the early morning becomes an increasingly noisy place as three chicks leave the safety of their nest and go exploring. Executed with a deceptively simple economy of line the emphasis of the bright story telling pictures is on form and colour. Perfect for sharing with the very young either singly or in a group when your classroom could be ringing with the sounds of the ducks, geese, dogs and many other farmyard inhabitants.

JB

The Red Peephole Book

0 00 138461 9

The Yellow Peephole Book

0 00 138460 0

The Green Peephole Book

0 00 138463 5

The Black Peephole Book

0 00 138462 7

Dorothy Savage/Gillian Chapman, Collins, £1.00 each

Printed on stiff card and claimed to be 'a first look at colour' each book comprises five spreads showing various items of the colour in question. The spreads are linked through the peephole cut through the pages and by the rhyming questions which lead to the final and unexpected revelation. A novel idea that soon wears thin and surely children learning about colour

are well past the board book stage which is what these essentially are. JB

Postman Pat's 123 Story

0 233 97875 5

Postman Pat's ABC Story

0 233 97874 7

Story by John Cunliffe, drawn by Jane Hickson, André Deutsch, £1.25 each

Postman Pat turns teacher in this pair of paperbacks wherein he goes to great lengths to help Tom Pottage (and young listeners) to learn to count and to associate words with initial letters. Somehow to me these books have an over didactic feel to them both in form and content and although young fans may well enjoy the lessons I much prefer Postman Pat in straightforward stories. JB

Wake Up Charlie Dragon!

Brenda Smith, ill. Cherry Denman, Hippo, 0 590 70440 0, £1.75

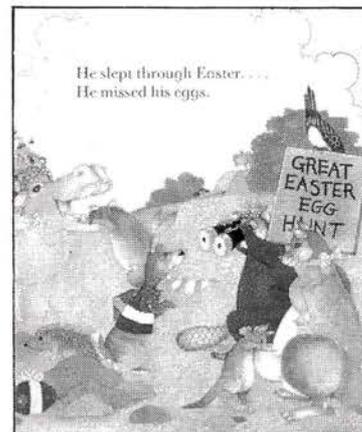
Charlie Dragon's year round sleep is hard to understand: he sleeps through Christmas, Easter, summer, his birthday, Hallowe'en. Only the combined efforts of all the animals of the jungle wake him up on November 5th so that he can light the bonfire. And then we discover why he sleeps so long - after all you'd be tired if you had to celebrate bonfire night, Christmas, Easter and your birthday all on the same day. A nicely patterned predictable text and fun-filled illustrations make this a good bet for learner readers. JB



Mog in the Fog

Helen Nicoll/Jan Pienkowski, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.497 4, £1.75

Meg and her two faithful friends, Mog and Owl, continue to charm new readers and delight their countless old fans all of whom will relish their latest mountaineering adventure in which they venture forth in search of the abominable snowman. Multiple copies advised. JB



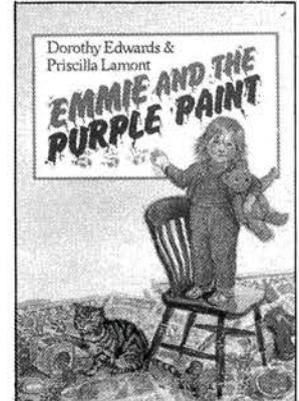
From *Wake up Charlie Dragon!*

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.

Smile Please, Ernest and Celestine!

Gabrielle Vincent, Picture Lions, 0 00 662381 6, £1.50

Celestine's discovery of Ernest's hoard of old photos first delights and then dismays the little mouse as she realises that her bear guardian hasn't a single photograph of her. But Ernest soon puts that right. The touching relationship between the unlikely pair shines through the delicate watercolour illustrations of the original hardcover and I hope the paperback edition too. But my copy had the look of a very faded old photograph indeed, so do check your copy before buying. JB



Emmie and the Purple Paint

Dorothy Edward, ill. Priscilla Lamont, Magnet, 0 416 52080 4, £1.75

Dorothy Edwards's stories about the misdemeanours of small children have delighted generations of young listeners and readers: so too will this one wherein a small girl refuses to go to Play Group but does want to try her hand - not to mention her nose - at printing with inevitably messy results. Priscilla Lamont's illustrations are an added treat for both adult readers aloud and those children who read or listen to the tale. Dorothy Edwards is right about the purple paint too - it's almost impossible to wash off! JB

Witches Four

Marc Brown, Picture Corgi, 0 552 52305 4, £1.50

Witches usually go down well with young readers and this quartet should be no exception with their liking for 'bat-wing sandwiches' and 'frog-eye soup'. Their adventures in which they lose their magic hats and acquire four cats are told in a short rhyming text with suitably zany illustrations which is ideal for beginner readers. JB

The New Red Bike and other stories

0 14 03.1226 9

The Picture Prize and other stories for the very young

0 14 03.1879 8

Simon Watson, ill. Charlotte Voake, Young Puffin, £1.25 each

I like this writer's quietly imaginative style, his clear and

refreshing storytelling and his real-sounding children and situations. The tales in each book (Fifteen in **The Picture Prize**; sixteen in **The New Red Bike**) involve a chirpy preschooler called Wallace and his little bother Henry. Everyday events (losing a tooth; riding a horse; going to the seaside; having hair washed) are slowed down and written about in an



illuminating and personable way.

The best writing here, as in so many good stories for the 4 to 7s, is where the familiar and workaday borders on the unknown and the magical. The best-enjoyed by my three and five-year-old co-readers were 'The Magic Chickens' (in **Picture Prize**) and the title story and 'A Ride With The Builders' in **The New Red**

Bike. But all the stories will appeal. Simon Watson is good at details (of meals, walks and games) and the dialogue reflects well eighties-style family banter!

Highly recommended readalouds for infant (and nursery) classes. Congrats. to Puffin on such attractive editions. CM

Infant/Junior



From **Wise Dog**.

Wise Dog

Ruth Craft/Nicola Smee,
0 00 171458 9

Isn't it Time?

Judy Hindley/Colin King, 0 00 171444 9

The Dark Forest

0 00 171434 1

The Long House in Danger

0 00 171429 5

Elizabeth Laird/John Richardson

Collins, £1.75 each

Collins have added a further batch of titles to their recently launched 'Reading is Fun' series for learner readers. In my view only one, **Wise Dog**, lives up to the maxim for the series: Vernon and his mother are at odds as the pair hurriedly prepare to leave the house in the morning. They are watched by Rumble, the family dog who wisely lies low and in turn helps Vernon to dispel his mother's temper as well as getting more than his fill of breakfast. Rumble's expressions tell a great deal of the story and help readers to anticipate what is going to happen.

Isn't it Time? is a frenetic dash through the school day ending with a party and a birthday watch. I found both the rhyming text and the pictures far too busy.

Olaf the Viking features in the other two titles, both told in rhyme which I feel learner readers may well find less than helpful. Each comprises a series of four line stanzas with two, three, four and never more than five words per line.

This structure whilst appearing simple needs an experienced reader if it is not to sound awkward and stilted. The realistic and historically accurate pictures contain a great deal of incidental information about the period and these to me are the strongest feature of the books. JB

The Small Potatoes Club

0 00 672464 7

The Small Potatoes and the Magic Show

0 00 672465 5

Harriet Ziefert, ill.
Richard Brown,
Fontana Young Lions
'I Am Reading',
£1.50 each

Lively, accessible stories about a small group of children who form a gang, with membership rites and rules. We get to know them in the first book and a sparky lot of individuals they are... 'Sue has plaits and Scott does not.' It's good to have spirited girl characters, and there's a dog called Spot. Don't let that put you off! The lay-out of the text and the pictures make these just right for 'bridging' books - they'll go down well with the newly-independent. Length of chapters, repetition, sense of fun and involvement make them just right for sixes to eights. There are some good ideas for forming a club, too, which readers will enjoy. CM

Katie Morag Delivers the Mail

Mairi Hedderwick,
Picture Lions,
0 00 662432 4, £1.50

One of those enchanting picture books which shows us again how artistry can make sensitive readers. When her Mum can't deliver the mail on the Isle of Struay, Katie gets the chance to do it. Expansive pictures tell the story of the little girl's adventure. The young will read the diversity within the community, and I like the spirit of an author-artist who creates a Grannie who wants a spare part for her tractor!

Things go a little wrong when everybody gets the wrong



parcel, but Grannie helps sort it out in a beautifully secretive conclusion. The readers (from five up to nine) will read the story, then go back to read the jokes in the pictures. A splendid one, not to be missed. I hope we see more of the artist. CM

Herbert the Hedgehog Paints the House

0 590 70531 8

Herbert the Hedgehog Goes to the Fair

0 590 70532 6

Herbert the Hedgehog Goes on Holiday

0 590 70533 4

John and Linda Kelham, ill. 'Riggers', Hippo,
95p each

On first sight, these might look garish, but there's action, pace and some engaging writing in these three books about a winsome hedgehog. The fun lies in the fact that the creature's always discovering things and having new experiences. Readers around five to seven will know all about that. I wish that the talented storytellers had found an artist who left more to the readers' imaginations, but there's some visual fun when, on a visit to the fair, Herb gets covered in candy floss, and when he decorates the house when his parents are out.

Herbert the Hedgehog Goes on Holiday is the sparkiest: he misinterprets a Punch and Judy show for real life and

joins in and I like the witty observations... 'And look at all those young humans building castles...' Have a look at these, they may fit in to classroom collections. CM

Skipper and Sam

Carolyn Dinan, Magnet,
0 416 54410 X, £1.50

Endearing and sensitively written story by a writer whose style appeals to the newly-independent reader (probably, here, sixes to eights). The plot has been used before. A little boy wants a dog badly: when it comes, it causes domestic troubles. But it's given a freshness by Ms Dinan's clever depiction of the little boy's life and community. The ending is beautifully managed. The cover, pictures (by the author) and the lay-out are particularly impressive. I'll read this aloud to sixes-up, hoping that they'll later get to P. Pearce's **A Dog So Small**. CM

Kamla and Kate

Jamila Gavin, ill.
Thelma Lambert,
Magnet, 0 416 50450 7,
£1.50

Two little girls make friends and learn about each other's culture, food and life styles. Through independent and crisply-told episodes about such events as Bonfire Night and visiting cousins from India, we see the children sharing and learning.

The messages - that similarities far outweigh differences - are never pushed,

but sixes to nines will tune their reading to a writer who is truthful. The writing is poetic at times, and always at the right level. One to be read aloud. CM

Pugwash and the Midnight Feast

John Ryan, Young Puffin, 0 14 03.1923 9, £1.25

Two individual tales of the ever-popular seafarer. There's spirit and adventure in both. I use these books a lot with novice readers (around six or seven) and their teachers to show the ways in which a clever author/artist extends the competences that children have learned from picture books (and the TV).

Here, the reader has to tune his (or her) reading to get the jokes and follow the pattern of the action. The cartoon formats, speech bubbles and the interplay of pictures-text all help them do that. I like these books so much that I'll bury my teacherly anxieties and make sure I show them some others that do not reveal primitive peoples in such stereotypical ways. Lively and literate fun. CM



Little Nose and Two Eyes

John Grant, BBC/Knight, 0 340 38728 9, £1.50

Splendid collection of five short tales involving the ever-popular Little Nose. His exploits in trying to become a fully-fledged member of his tribe will be as popular with sevens plus as the other books (all published by BBC/Knight). I enjoy reading them aloud with sevens to nines. I think they enjoy the fun to be had in 'finding out about the world', making discoveries and dealing with difficult situations. Mr Grant's writing is as witty and as well-pointed as ever – the title story is particularly fine.

Author, illustrator and editors skilfully combine elements (songs, rhymes, visual tricks, balance of text and pictures) to help the novice reader. Read aloud and my experience teaches me that you'll need lots of copies for the bookshop. CM

Tales of Little Grey Rabbit

0 330 26601 2, £1.50

Tales of Little Brown Mouse

0 330 29243 9, £1.95

Alison Uttley, ill. Faith Jaques, Piccolo

Handsome editions of these two collections of these beautiful classic stories. The tales in **Little Grey Rabbit** were amongst the first that the author ever wrote for children – in the thirties. I wish that this collection could have included a foreword the writer put in my early childhood edition, then modern children would have learned that '... the country ways of Grey Rabbit were the country ways known to the author'. But I think the young will still hear the strong voice of a writer who drew on her own childhood. The tales still work on the level of 'what happens next'. The characters live as freshly as ever: the practical Grey Rabbit; the boastful Hare; the timid Squirrel; the Wise Owl.

The Tales of Little Brown Mouse came much later in Alison Uttley's output – in the



fifties. If anything, the descriptive language is more vivid. Read the first page of the first story to see how a writer first creates a place for her readers (and listeners) to be. The splendid upwardly-mobile characters provide as much pleasure as ever.

These editions are visually appealing, with delightful covers. The gifted modern illustrator has been generous in not veering too far from Tempest's originals, yet bringing her own idiosyncratic touches to the creatures and places. The freshness of the pictures heightens the vigour of the language. Copies please for the bookshop. CM

Junior/Middle

A Dragon in Class 4

June Counsel, ill. Jill Bennett, Young Corgi, 0 552 52313 5, £1.50

Charlie, Emma and the School Dragon



Margaret Greaves, ill. Eileen Browne, Magnet, 0 416 53640 9, £1.50

Two stories about dragons who go to school, each told with a confident author's voice. June Counsel's tale is funny, humane and cleverly unfolded. When her dragon, Scales, joins a junior school classroom, she catches the feel of the children and the classroom in a rare and unpatronising way – spelling mistakes, TV programmes, nature table and all. Good contemporary-sounding children and teachers: a lovely readaloud.

We've met Margaret Greaves' dragon in her previous books (also paperbacked by Magnet). Smashing school scenes (the dragon can't spell and the teacher reads some great poetry!) and a more subtle, less rumbustious kind of fun than in Ms Counsel's book. The writing catches the

mythological origins of the creature. I'll read both of these aloud to sevens to tens and encourage the listeners and readers to compare them. CM

Burglar Bells

John Escott, ill. Maureen Bradley, Young Puffin, 0 14 03.1895 X, £1.25

Suspense and derring-do in this well-told yarn about a threesome who catch a stealthy burglar through their ingenuity. I liked the fact that the well-intentioned adults were rounded, not caricatures – the School Secretary is happily married at the end of the story.

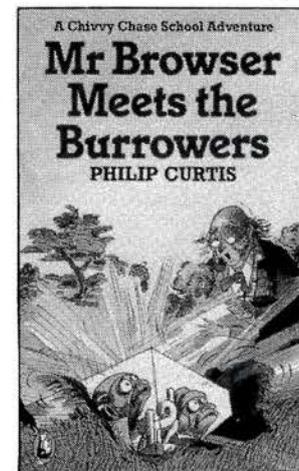
The author gives us a good strong girl character, not just one who 'helps' the boys! He knows how to keep the action moving in his writing and it's a satisfying read for eights to tens. Hope Puffin's helpful label 'for those who have developed reading stamina' won't stop this one being read aloud. CM

Dirty Beasts

Roald Dahl, Puffin, 0 14 050.435 4, £2.50

Ideally tailored to cater for the macabre humour favoured by so many of today's youngsters is Roald Dahl's menagerie of 'dirty beasts' in verse. The cast of creatures includes the lion, 'the meat I am about to chew is neither steak nor chops. It's You', the scorpion, who 'wants to make a sudden jump

and sting you hard upon your rump', and the crocodile who 'on Saturdays likes to crunch, six juicy children for his lunch'. There's even juvenile philosophy and basic monetarism from the pig, who works out that 'they want my bacon slice by slice, to sell at a tremendous price'. All this and Quentin Blake's illustrations in colour too, for £2.50. 'By gosh, that's jolly steep!' 'No, it's very cheap.' BB



Mr Browser meets the Borrowers

Philip Curtis, Beaver, 0 09 943680 9, £1.50

Mr Browser is education with a capital E, of course. He only has to start reminiscing about 'dreams I have known and loved...' for his longsuffering

class to expect the inevitable. Out pens and paper and 'I'd like you to choose the dream which has interested you the most and WRITE ABOUT IT.' Oh no, groan, groan, not write about it. How much? Will half a page do? I can't think of any dreams... Selwyn Jordan saves the day – there's always one isn't there – because he has had a dream. Or was it a dream? Well, actually it was the Borrowers... yes, the story does rather struggle to the surface. Desperate attempts not to compare it with his earlier **Comet Crisis**, which was a classic, fail, and the Borrowers lose... but not by so much that this won't be read and enjoyed by nines and tens throughout the land. BB

Ramona Forever

Beverly Cleary, Puffin, 0 14 03.1916 6, £1.75

Ramona finds that growing up is hard work. Adults are generally difficult. Howie's uncle is by far the most impossible and becomes even more so when Ramona discovers that he is to marry her favourite aunt. At the same time as coming to terms with this Ramona has to bury the family cat and accept that she will no longer be the baby of the Quimby family.

However by the last chapter Ramona has decided that being a new baby is far harder and that she is coping quite well with the business of maturing. Lots of smiles rather than laughs. The setting

is very American but the problems are those of most families and most little girls. A happy addition to the Ramona list. CL

Wilkes the Wizard
Jackie Webb, Grafton Books, 0 583 30751 5, £1.50

If you saw it on BBC Television's 'Jackanory', then this zany tale will need no introduction. If not, then... the Gram Tam of Dusseldorf is looking for something new to do. He's already beaten inflation, reformed the Trade Unions, built a new bus

shelter, etc... What else is there? Cracked it. A Wizard! Dusseldorf, like any self-respecting city, needs a wizard. Surely a big, clear advert in the local daily paper will bring a clutch of eager applicants. There wasn't exactly a stampede, but there was Mr Wilkes... Great stuff, totally mad, but a marvellous read... for nines to elevens. BB

Am I Going With You?
Thurley Fowler, Hippo, 0 590 70539 3, £1.25

Carlton is the name of a prominent Australian Rules Football team. When your proud father calls you after the team and particularly if you live in Melbourne, then the embarrassment is considerable. So it was for Carlton Browne, the more so because, having given his son the painful tag, father left home leaving Carlton to cope with the jibes alone.

At ten, Carlton is a scrawny red head, gifted at cricket but not much else. When his

mother chooses to abandon him also he is sent to his uncle's farm to begin a new life, a life where he is expected to be tough, organised and hardworking. Carlton lives through barrages of criticism eventually to prove his worth and be reunited with his mother and Melbourne. Initially the story line is difficult to grasp; getting out of Melbourne takes a long time. However as the tempo quickens this becomes an exciting and touching story with a strong flavour of Australian country life. Could be an involving story for some in the 10+ age group. CL

Middle/Secondary

Grange Hill After Hours

0 416 64640 9

Grange Hill Graffiti
0 416 64650 6

Phil Redmond, Magnet, £1.50 each

Yet more 'books of the BBC series...' from the prolific pen of Phil Redmond. That sounds as trite as some of the storylines. Social consciousness - not again - is injected into **After Hours** through the vehicle of Ziggy, obviously a refugee from 'Brookside'. Ziggy's family have arrived in Grange Hill's catchment area, 'as there was no chance of work in Liverpool or anywhere else in the North.' (Quote). No wonder the region is having such a difficult time attracting new businesses if this sort of sweeping, and erroneous, generalisation is being propagated. Ziggy's attempts to integrate within his new environment are helped by dad, who is given such philosophical lines as, 'If you're feeling like a right Herbert - so is everyone else! You're all the same under the skin.'

Ziggy survives to appear in **Graffiti** where his accent comes under analysis. 'Taking a pike at the Speaking Wall,' Ziggy replied. This enables half a page of dialogue to be consumed to establish that 'pike' (as spoken in Scouse) means 'a look at something'. If you're an addict, and you really want to know what's going on between Ant Jones and Georgina, or who Imelda will attack with fibre glass next - then read on regardless. If not, there are plenty of more worthwhile, realistic and valuable 'school' fiction books available. BB

The Tasks of Tantalos
Steve Jackson, Puffin, 0 14 03.1969 7, £2.95

Intriguing colour clues (illustrated by Stephen Lavis) tax the ingenuity of young readers in this 'fantasy

questbook'. Tantalos is the wizard of the court of Gallantaria (sounds more like an inedible confection). Even wizards must age and decline in power, so Tantalos devises this 'epic adventure quest' to seek out his successor from the kingdom's sharpest minds.



Everything you need to know is contained on the page, disguised, camouflaged in the artwork, so good hunting! BB

Tiger of the Track

Michael Hardcastle, Magnet, 0 416 62190 2, £1.50

Possibly better known for his fast-moving, action stories about football, Michael Hardcastle here concludes a trilogy about motorcycle racing. If the earlier **Roar to Victory** and **Fast from the Gate** are familiar, then the style and storyline will need no explanation. If you are newcomers, the action centres around the Skalbroke Schoolboy Motorcycle Club and focuses on the rivalry between the two Parnaby brothers, Lee and Daz. Unfortunately the latter doesn't come up whiter than white, in fact everything gets a bit muddled on 'the toughest circuit in Britain'. BB

Tilly Mint Tales

Berlie Doherty, Fontana, 0 00 672557 0, £1.50

Short, read aloud, or first reading, stories about the universal Tilly Mint. Used to be a northern euphemism for someone who was a penny short in a pound, a bit on the dizzy side. Mrs Hardcastle is the ideal foil for Tilly's adventures, always ready with the quotable quote. 'That sky is just about prickling with stars.' 'You're as cold as a goldfish.' Mind you it does help if you're the sort of youngster who can get lions to step out of the television screen to give you a piggyback ride across the night sky. BB

Boy

Roald Dahl, Puffin, 0 14 03.1890 9, £1.95

Subtitled 'Tales of childhood', this is a fascinating insight into the young life of Roald Dahl. All are true, and act as indicators of the sources of much of the material in Dahl's books. 'An English school in those days was purely a moneymaking business owned and operated by the Headmaster.' So, naturally, money could be made by encouraging parents to send parcels of food to their offspring, thereby reducing the amount he would have to spend on school meals. Part and parcel of the 'make your own Headmaster kit' was 'the kind of flashing grin a shark might give to a small fish just before he gobbles it up.' Very interesting and worthwhile reading as background to the developing Roald Dahl, from dot to twenty, an adolescent world of boarding school and boaters, fagging and tuck boxes holding frogs and slugs. BB

Trouble Half-Way

Jan Mark, Puffin, 0 14 03.1588 8, £1.50

Amy is depressingly straight in all senses of the word. Mind you with a fussy mother like

hers it's not surprising - she even irons non-iron shirts! Amy's knight in shining armour, her saviour, is Richard, the step-father who must have seen something endearing in her mother, and who, through circumstances, is forced to take Amy on a long-distance lorry trip with him. That journey becomes a symbolic and very practical time of maturing and widening of horizons for Amy. Not only does she find freedom by losing some of her ingrained caution but she also recognises Richard for the amazing step-dad that he is.

Jan Mark writes with her usual gifts of sharp insight, humour and keen perception. I don't doubt that most teachers will relish this book. I'm not so sure, however, that all kids will find it as absorbing. DB

The Ghost Within

Alison Prince, Magnet, 0 416 52140 1, £1.50

The Shirt Off a Hanged Man's Back
Dennis Hamley, Lions, 0 00 672530 9, £1.75

Two useful short story additions to secondary bookshelves; well worth including in lower/middle book collections.

The Ghost Within contains eight tales of fifteen pages or less, just right for reading aloud in a single lesson and adequately full of suspense and shadowy surprise. A past romance of a senile granny engulfs her grandson as the old lady in 'Dundee Cake' departs this life dreaming of happier times; Julia in 'The Pin' discovers witch-like powers that mitigate against her enemies and fatally against herself, whilst Matthew in 'The Fen Tiger' is the tragic victim of a bitter curse on his parents' decrepid smallholding; all the more tragic because his lifting of the curse renders him an imbecile and changes his family's prosperity for the better.

Dennis Hamley's collection of

nine longer stories are less about the strange in ordinary things and more about the past visiting a powerful influence on the present – bare-fist pugilist Lanahan of the title story seeks the forgiveness of a young ancestor of the man he killed in a fight and to be buried in sacred ground; Brother Leofric seeks to remove the fiend of his medieval making from musically gifted Colin Chiltern in 'Hear My Voice'; whilst Alfie in 'Study Skulls' is drawn into a chilling flashback, which sets the record straight between two brothers, one dead and the other hell-bent to wreak vengeance. Of the two collections, these are marginally more demanding and possibly more suited to older readers. DB

Robin of Sherwood – The Hooded Man

Richard Carpenter/
Anthony Horowitz,
Puffin, 0 14 03.2058 X,
£1.95

Local hero Robin is dead, the outlaws scattered and Marion abducted by a madcap ally of King John – but daring adventure, mystical magic and heroism still lurk behind the next oak tree or castle fortification especially when a hooded man takes on the mantle of our erstwhile outlaw chief, becoming himself Robin i'the Hood, son of Herne the Hunter god, enemy of the scheming Sheriff.

This is an imaginative, exciting, well-crafted re-write of the TV scripts and follows two other titles, also in Puffin. I could see it spanning both lower and middle secondary, enjoying the readership of both sexes. DB

The December Rose

Leon Garfield, Puffin,
0 14 03.2070 9, £1.75

Nothing is what it seems in the Victorian world of espionage and counter-espionage created in a characteristically vivid and humorous style by Leon

Garfield, who writes the book of the TV series. It is a world into which Barnacle, the sweep's boy, literally blunders by mistake, and which, in time, sucks into its shady, relentless tentacles his new found friends amongst the bargee people.

Intrigue and treachery amongst the high folk and the low folk carries the tale forward at a lively, exciting pace right up to the unexpectedly explosive ending, where the truly bad get their just deserts, the repentant bad redeem themselves and the good and down-trodden are well-rewarded – just as it should be! The TV tie-in alone should ensure readership through the secondary school. DB

Ghosts at Large

Susan Price, Puffin,
0 14 03.2021 0, £1.25

A slim volume in which the voice of the story teller is eerily present telling the tales of death in varying garbs. 'Fearless Mary' makes her fortune keeping the ghosts of her masters' families away. A soldier finds that conquering death and living for ever more is not the perfect answer. A traveller trades his shadow with the devil and another keeps company with a headless ghost. Each story is short but packed full of atmosphere. There is a sense of truth in the tone which truly haunts. An excellent selection for reading aloud to older children. CL

Comfort Herself

Geraldine Kaye,
Magnet, 0 416 61690 3,
£1.75

A book for thoughtful adolescents who might consider the dichotomy for the black child born in this country of a black parent and a white parent. Comfort must decide for herself where she belongs. Her white mother has been killed in a road accident and her black father had left years before to return to his homeland. Respectable English grandparents expect

Comfort to conform to a life of private school and conventional behaviour. When Comfort plucks up courage to contact her father she finds herself whisked away to Ghana, to the native compound. She becomes her black grandmother's prize; ingenuity and initiative is expected but there is very little future for a woman. Comfort struggles to balance all the attractions and disadvantages of two possible lifestyles and eventually decides what she wants.

A challenging story. It moves quickly and is not linguistically demanding but the content raises several questions for young people to consider. CL

The Caves of Klydor

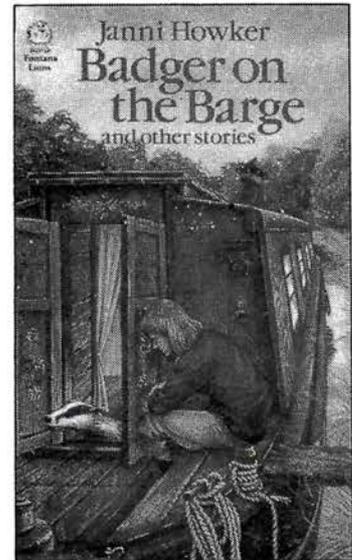
Douglas Hill, Puffin,
0 14 03.1768 6, £1.25

(Story so far, see BfK 36. Did they enjoy *Exiles of ColSec*?) The survivors of exile to Klydor battle with more monsters and ColSec Crushers hunting a renegade space explorer who proposes liberation from Earth's tyranny. The teenage exiles are becoming 'characterised'; try predicting behaviour or delete the names and identify by speech patterns; write them into a space adventure simulation program. Examine the rhetoric – muscular paragraphs, staccato phrases. Or stick it in the library. Anyway, the cliffhanger is will they mobilise Earth-rejects in the cause of freedom? A terrifying and irresistible prospect (in preparation). TD

Badger on the Barge and other stories

Janni Howker, Fontana
Lions, 0 00 672581 3,
£1.95

The greatest disappointment in reading these stories was coming to the end of each one. Watch out for Janni Howker. She writes with such sensitivity and such an awareness of the needs and relationships of young people that there must be more to come.



In each of the five stories a young person works through a difficulty by discovering a perspective in the loneliness of someone much older. 'Badger on the Barge' tells of Helen, coming to terms with the sudden death of her brother and with her parents' reactions. Through old Miss Brady and the badger kept on Miss Brady's barge, Helen comes to realise her own worth and leads her parents forward to accept a future without their son. Recognising the cruelty of racist jokes, the loneliness of the old, acceptance of death and the need for independence are dealt with in the other stories and worked out through blending the needs of the young and old. The language is at times quite startlingly visual and the sense of being part of the story very strong. Excellent stories for sharing with the twelve to fifteen-year-old group. I look forward to more. CL

Older Readers

The Freedom Tree

James Watson, Lions,
0 00 672640 2, £1.95

The bloodshed that soaks these pages, the vivid description of the destruction of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War and the tragic waste of young life inexorably point to Will Vijoen's own conclusion – 'There must be other ways to win justice, protect liberty.' When he'd set out with the Seven Bells Brigade led by Candy Sam, it'd been little more than an idealised Boy's Own Adventure; but the reality, fighting for the

Republicans, was a nightmare of brutality, hardship and staggeringly adverse odds, during which Will, who would be the only one to survive, would learn more about the price of liberty in a few months than he could ever have bargained for.

There is humour; there's certainly action, but above all there's compassion. A well-recommended book for older readers who relish challenging material. DB

Orange Wendy

Maureen Stewart, Puffin
Plus, 0 14 03.1908 5,
£1.50

This was first published in 1974. I used to see it circulate the 4th year alongside *What About if Sharon?* and *Vicky Takes a Chance*. A good one for the book box with discussion, where readers could explore style and how texts echo texts, as well as the issues. It's autobiographical exorcism; orange is how Wendy felt in the good bits and what she hopes for the future. She's 15, fat, ugly and bright, asked out by a boy and

involved in shop-lifting; there's death, betrayal and rejection. Wendy talks to us, edits her story, works through her feelings about this grey period. She writes so she 'knows it's real' in a conversational way with casual literary references ('you can always skip the bits you want to' – useful tip) and ends with poems that make her feel deeply – McGough, Prévert, Tennyson, Yevtuschenko... she makes them her own and hopes we'll share that understanding. Wish I'd asked those 4th years to respond to that. ● TD

Susan Varley meets Harold Jones



Susan Varley

Harold Jones was illustrating children's books long before I was even born. The last 50 years of his life have been immersed in the craft, so for someone who has only just dipped her toes into the water, it was a wonderful opportunity to be able to meet him at his home in Putney, South London, and talk to him about his work and his career.

You would expect many differences in the work of the old and the young, particularly as new ideas, new styles and new printing processes have all had a big impact on children's book illustration since the publication of Harold Jones's first book **This Year: Next Year** in 1937. Yet surprisingly, I found there were many similarities.

For a start, his work is firmly based in the traditional style of British book illustration, an approach that I very much admire, so I was especially interested to hear his views on illustration. 'I have a very positive idea what is meant by illustration and a lot of the illustrated books I see don't fulfil that idea. I think that an illustration has to be more than just a representation of facts and things. I think it also has to perform the function of decoration.' He went on to tell me that he compares this with the fourteenth and fifteenth-century Italian artists who painted the walls with mural decorations to tell stories to the people because they hadn't the access to books. 'The artist had a very positive purpose. He didn't want to, as it were in three dimensional description, bash a hole in the wall. He had to preserve the flatness of the surface, so he married two dimensional pattern with three dimensional description of what was contained within and of course that was the art of the artist. Whenever I've drawn pictures for illustration I've always thought of them as mural decorations.'

One artist he particularly admires for his sense of decoration is Heinrich Hoffmann, even though he is in a very different cultural tradition from himself. Pointing to a screen standing in his studio decorated with drawings from 'Struwwelpeter' he said, 'Although he couldn't draw in the mature sense, he could get his story and action over very vividly. He's rather naive but he's got a tremendous imaginative sense. I admire his drawings tremendously.' He also admires such 'giants' as Beardsley and Bewick, and his contemporary Ardizzone.

He talks about illustration with a youthful enthusiasm belying his 82 years, and the sound of a mahlstick slapped down firmly into his hands after each point he made seemed to emphasize his strength of feeling about his profession; a profession which he says was never 'just a job to be done'. It was 'something much more than that. Something which filled the whole of one's living.'

His work is based on sound draughtsmanship and a strong sense of design; and is characterized by a firm, yet very delicate, sensitive penline. It is a style that is instantly recognisable and one that has changed little over the years. Although he had no training in illustration, he studied etching and engraving at the Royal College of Art, and the techniques of drawing in line and crosshatching developed in these two disciplines were a fine apprenticeship – when it came to drawing in pen and ink he found that he could translate one medium to

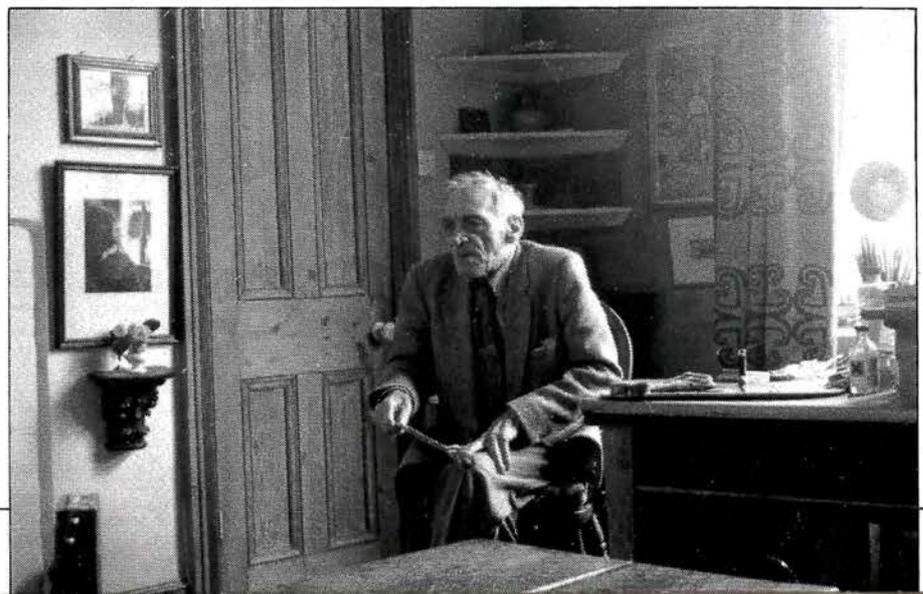


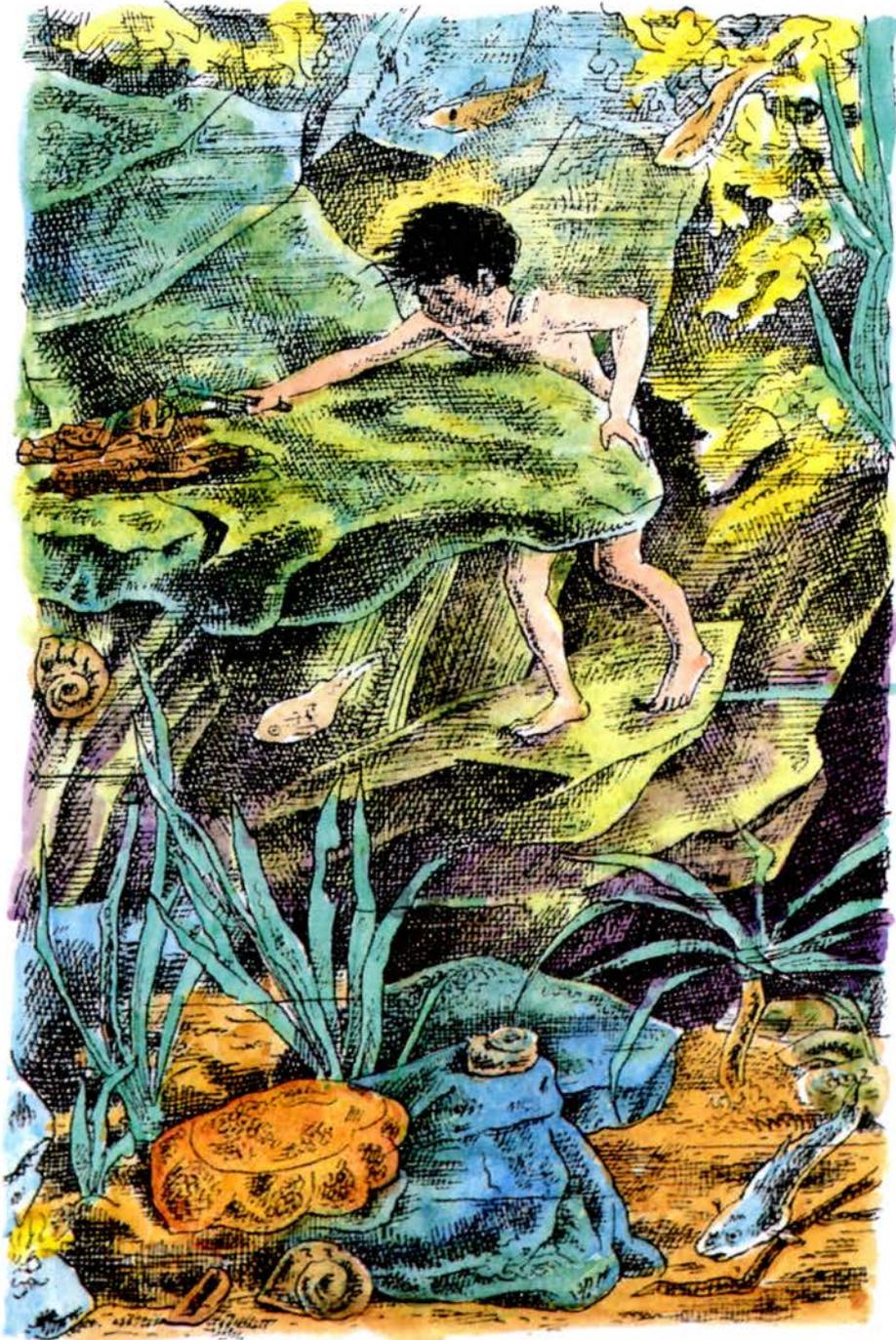
another without much difficulty. He is very dismissive of his own talents, but he did tell me that in the experience of drawing he has found that there does come in time 'a blessed state when you can sit down and watch the drawing making itself. You are purely a spectator.'

He has illustrated such classic books as **The Water Babies**, **The Fairy Stories of Oscar Wilde** and **Lavender's Blue**, a book of nursery rhymes compiled by Kathleen Lines, which has been in publication for the last 32 years and must have brought pleasure to countless numbers of children. Harold Jones was responsible for the complete design of **Lavender's Blue**, which has 170 pages of illustrations in both colour and black and white. It was a mammoth task, taking him a year to complete 'working from 10 o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock at night, every day including weekends.' He made three dummies before he was satisfied with the arrangement, planning it so that when the page opened the design would run right across the page from corner to corner.

It is clear though that the subject matter interested him more than anything. 'Hey Diddle Diddle is a fantastic piece of imaginative thinking. Surrealism is it not? Well why have some of the greater minds eschewed them? You would have thought they would be tremendously popular. Wonderful subjects. Every one has got a suggestion of extraordinary fantasy about it.' Very often it is the sound of the words that inspires an illustration just as much as their meaning, and he remembers singing the rhymes to himself as he was illustrating the book, which he believes helped him enter into the spirit of the particular line. Certainly the rhythm and movement of the rhymes is echoed strongly in the illustrations.

The rhymes are depicted in a variety of ways, from fairly elaborate double page spreads, to simple arrangements of delightful vignettes, but they are not set in any particular period of time. 'A nursery rhyme is something which has got to have a feeling of having existed for a long while. I don't think one wants to be specific about any particular fashion otherwise you date it, so I just invented it in a vague sort of way. Clothes which one felt they would be dressed in.'





In this particular case he relied on his instincts, but like many other illustrators he has often drawn on his own childhood memories. He told me that initially he made the wrong choice of career, spending a year farming in the Warwickshire countryside. As he was brought up a town child, being in the countryside was a 'tremendous pictorial experience' for him. 'Though with great lamentation I ended that year thinking well that's one year I've lost, it was curiously enough the reverse, because those memories of the countryside were so deeply engrained on my mind, that throughout my life as an illustrator I haven't had far to go. They were all there.'

He has lived through an important period of change in the way that books are printed. Thanks to the recent technological advances I am fortunate to have my own artwork reproduced accurately in every detail. But when Harold Jones started his career it was a very different story. For his first books he drew his own lithographs, a laborious and time consuming process, but one he never found difficult. 'There was a time when they didn't come back so accurately. The colours were wrong and there was a sort of

roughness about them, but I find today they reproduce so exceedingly clearly. The last book I did you just did your watercolours on a sheet of paper, handed them in, bob's your uncle, they came back exactly as your drawings were, which is rather wonderful isn't it?'

A Happy Christmas published in 1983 was reproduced in this 'wonderful way'. It is the third story he has written and illustrated about a toy rabbit called Bunby. The illustrations are imaginatively drawn using his familiar delicate penline washed over with watercolour. I was curious to know where Bunby came from, and responding with almost childlike enthusiasm he brought a small cloth rabbit out of a cupboard. 'A bit seared by age but nevertheless quite vital I think. I saw him lying on my table one day and I thought well dash it all, I wonder what he does when I'm fast asleep, so I thought a bit and tried to solve that little riddle.' Clearly his imagination is as strong as it ever was.

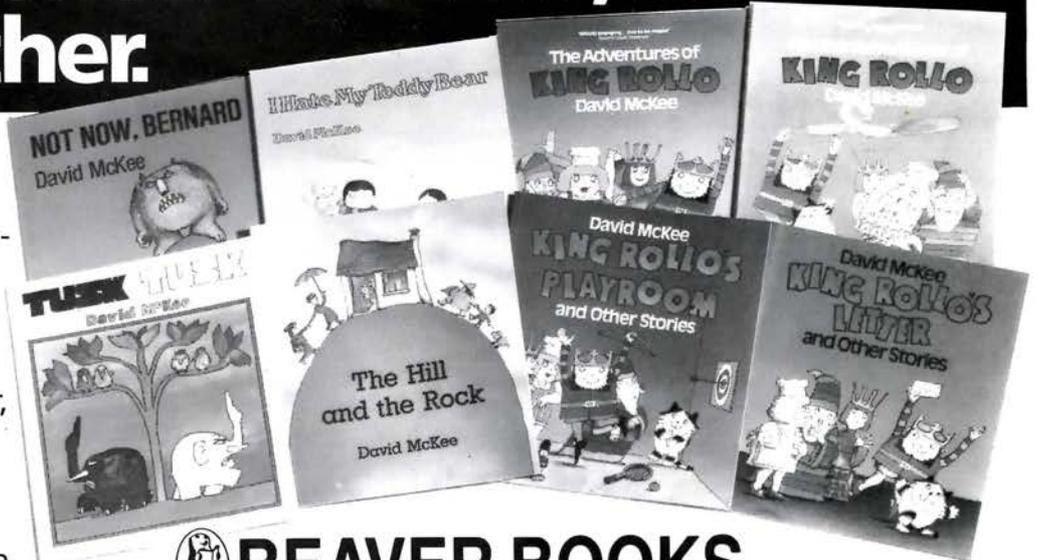
I wondered how much he had the children who were going to read the books in mind when he was doing the illustrations. 'Not at

all. I never thought about children. I never even thought about them looking at the books, it never occurred to my mind. Do you find that odd?' No I said, I don't find that odd at all, and suddenly the age difference no longer seemed quite so significant. No doubt many people will find it odd, but it's something any children's book illustrator who draws for their own pleasure and creates books simply because they have a desire to do so will understand, whether they're 82, 24, or somewhere in between. Technology, styles and ideas may have changed the face of children's books over the last 50 years, but the underlying and most important factors involved in their creation are still the same.

There is no doubt that Harold Jones still enjoys his work. Resting on easels in his studio were pictures he is in the process of painting; rich in pattern and colour, and full of the decorative qualities in which he has always taken so much pleasure. Summing up his career he said, 'Anyone who can take such subjects as children's literature and go on working all their lives with tremendous interest is one of the lucky people.' It was a delight to meet one. ●

"There's a monster in the garden and it's going to eat me," said Bernard.
"Not now Bernard," said his mother.

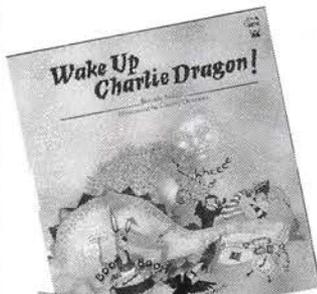
David McKee's unique insight and humour combined with his understanding of everyday life from a child's point of view have made his picture books universally popular. His best-loved character, KING ROLLO, is every four- or five-year-old in disguise, while the monster in NOT NOW BERNARD is treated in a way all children would recognise.



BEAVER BOOKS

The full colour paperback editions of David McKee's picture books are available from all good bookshops.

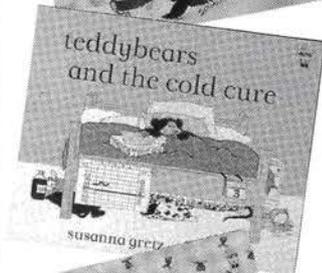
Happy reading with a Hippo



WAKE UP CHARLIE DRAGON!
 Brenda Smith
 illus. Cherry Denman
 ISBN: 0 590 70440 0
 Price: £1.75
 Pub Date: 6 March 1986

Charlie Dragon had been asleep for almost a year and all the animals were desperate for him to wake up in time to light their bonfire.

A delightful story for young children with stunningly beautiful illustrations.



TEDDYBEARS AND THE COLD CURE
 Alison Sage and Susanna Gretz
 illus. Susanna Gretz
 ISBN: 0 590 70469 9
 Price: £1.50
 Pub Date: 3 April 1986

One day William didn't eat his breakfast and complained of feeling ill. So all the other bears raced round fetching him things until they were heartily sick - of William!



GERALDINE'S BLANKET
 Holly Keller
 ISBN: 0 590 70434 6
 Price: £1.50
 Pub Date: 1 May 1986

Geraldine loved the blanket Aunt Bessie had sent her when she was a baby and took it everywhere. But her parents were determined the blanket had to go when Aunt Bessie sent a new present. Geraldine had her own ideas!

KITTEN CAN
 Bruce McMillan
 ISBN: 0 590 70496 6
 Price: £1.75
 Pub Date: 5 June 1986

KITTEN CAN depicts the antics of a delightful tortoiseshell kitten who can squeeze, stretch, stalk and spring, among other activities, before curling up to rest. An endearing sequel to HERE A CHICK, THERE A CHICK.



BERTHA AND THE GREAT PAINTING JOB
 Eric Charles
 illus. Steve Augarde
 ISBN: 0 590 70463 X
 Price: £1.50
 Pub Date: 3 July 1986

The first story in the new children's TV series about Bertha the Big Machine and all her friends at Spottiswood and Company.

When Mr Sprott the designer invents a painting machine that goes wildly wrong, Bertha turns up trumps by making the all-purpose robot T.O.M.



BERTHA AND THE WINDMILLS
 Eric Charles
 illus. Steve Augarde
 ISBN: 0 590 70464 8
 Price: £1.50
 Pub Date: 3 July 1986

This time Bertha has made some wonderful windmill money boxes. Everyone enjoys putting in their money and watching the sails turn round until they find they can't get their money out again!



HIPPO BOOKS 10 Earlham Street London WC2H 9LN Tel: 01-240 5753

An Excellent Season

Chris Powling finds reasons to be cheerful as he takes his pick of recent picture books

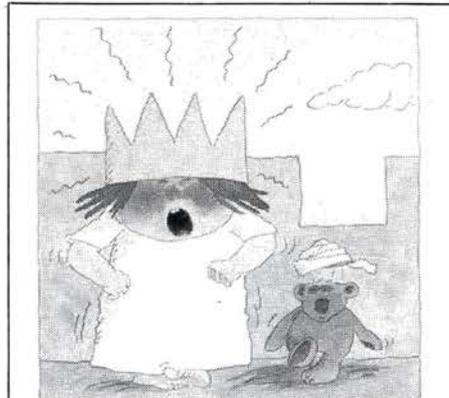
So high are our expectations these days that it's all too easy to be off-hand about excellence: don't ring us Ms. Berridge, Brown, Murphy, Hutchins, etc. – not to mention Messrs. Blake, Foreman, Oakley, Ross and Steadman – we'll ring you. Or maybe we won't. We'll just log your latest as being no more than we deserve.

If we do, though, it'll be an injustice. Yes, it's sad that for the first time in eight years there are too few exciting newcomers to justify making the Mother Goose Award, but this shouldn't blind us to the quality of established talent. Judging by this batch of books, there's much we can still celebrate.

For example . . .

I Want My Potty

Tony Ross, Andersen Press, 0 86264 137 3, £4.95



"I WANT MY POTTY!" she cried.

Here we have Tony Ross at his outrageous best. His subject is the potty-training of a mini-royal – not so much the Princess and the Pea (though given the 'accident' with which it ends this fits too) as the Princess and the Po. Only those with a face to match won't be entranced by the slim-line text and sharp-line drawings funny enough to counter every inhibition.

That's My Dad

Ralph Steadman, Andersen Press, 0 86264 133 0, £4.95

This is fairly unbridled too. It offers infants an eye-view – or, in this case an ear, nose and throat view – of Dad seen from unusual angles. These build up to a portrait which is, quite literally, Something Else. A striking blend of colour and cartooning from an artist whose child-appeal can't always be guaranteed, but who here gets it hilariously right.

Our Cat Flossie

Ruth Brown, Andersen Press, 0 86264 120 9, £4.95



A straightforward charmer. If the combination of simple text and painterly pictures doesn't have you rolling over for a tum-tickle then either you're a cocker-spaniel or allergic to all things feline. Sheer quality lifts this conventional treatment of a conventional subject into a class of its own.

Where Are You Ernest and Celestine?

Gabrielle Vincent, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 242 3, £5.50

Why change the title from the French original 'Ernest et Celestine au Musée'? A failure of nerve, possibly – museums being something of a minority taste. But so perhaps are the Ernest and Celestine books with their exquisite line and delicate wash. In this one, big bear and small mouse lose each other in the Louvre though not before Celestine's smile has been matched with the Mona Lisa's . . . okay, so it *is* for a minority. Let's hope it's habit-forming, too.

The Doorbell Rang

Pat Hutchins, Bodley Head, 0 370 30726 7, £5.25

Something of a tour-de-force since it's the exact opposite of Rosie's famous walk: here it's more a matter of arrival than travelling hopefully as would-be cookie-consumers crowd into a kitchen which is almost identical in every spread. How can so static a scenario exude such vigour? That's Pat Hutchins's secret. Even so, when Granny turns up with extra cookies it's in the nick of time.

George Shrinks

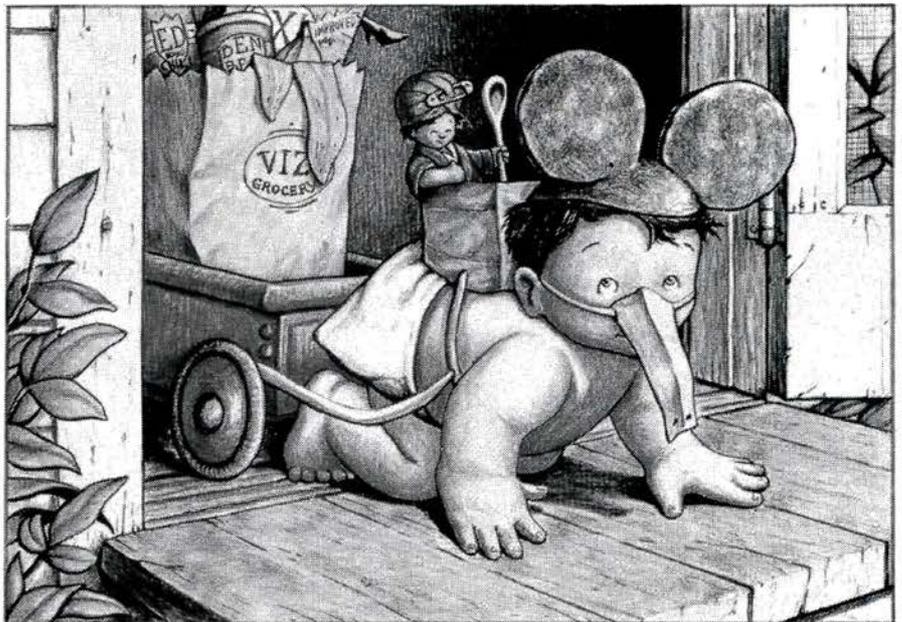
William Joyce, Gollancz, 0 575 03794 6, £5.95

George wakes up to a list of chores, a baby brother and absent parents. Maybe he shrank to pay them out. This is William Joyce's debut as author and illustrator so never mind the quality of the logic, feel the width of his invention as George tom-thumbs his nose at all difficulties in drawings as bright and solid as nursery building bricks. A talent worth watching, this.

Whiskers and Rhymes

Arnold Lobel, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 186 9, £6.25

. . . and so is Arnold Lobel's even if we have been watching it for years. His verses are splendid as usual – loony, lumpy and deft just like his drawings. Every character here is a cat, hence the title, so it's only right that each page is about nine times as lively as the average picture-book. Best of all is the bearded bookcat who sits beneath a teetering pile of publications as if to reflect the tradition within which this marvellous illustrator is working. Or maybe, with any luck, they represent his future contributions to it.



From *George Shrinks*.



"'Because I want five minutes' peace from you lot,'" said Mrs Lodge."

"'Sorry Jack," the miller says, "There are no sheep about. There's nothing here but heaps of flour." But what's that peeping out?' From *Sheepchase*.

Five Minutes Peace

Jill Murphy, Walker Books, 0 7445 0491 0, £4.95

Yes, something of a Murphy set-piece, but still worth the re-run. Elephants, not teddy bears, appear here, as Mrs Large struggles for a bit of time to herself amidst the bedlam of a family breakfast. Where's Mr Large do I hear you ask? Well out of it, apparently, with the bold, chunky pictures depicting a situation which both kids and their keepers will recognise instantly. Mrs Large must be slow on the uptake or she'd have reached for a book like this to keep them quiet.

To remind us how hot the competition is for classic status these days consider a couple of illustrators with books newly re-issued. In hardback from Blackie come Joanna Troughton's *Tortoise's Dream* and *How Rabbit Stole the Fire*, each at £6.50, the sort of folk-tales in read-aloud prose and gasp-aloud colour which get design and decoration a good name. And in paperback from Oxford, at £2.50 each, we get Brian Wildsmith no less with *The Lion and the Rat*, *The North Wind and the Sun*, and *The Lazy Bear*. Seeing these favourites – so sumptuous, so distinctive, so familiar – in such mint condition is enough to eclipse the mere novelty of what's new.

Well, almost. As we move up the age-range there's even more scope for that weird alchemy which can combine words and pictures into something richer than either achieves on its own.



Sheepchase

Celia Berridge and Paul Rogers,
Viking Kestrel, 0 670 80599 8, £5.95

Paul Rogers's verse and Celia Berridge's pictures plot the hide-and-seek progress of Flossie (a sheep this time) through countryside as idealised as Rupert Bear's Nutwood. Miraculously, it casts the same sort of spell, too – buckled shoes, broderie-anglaise smocks and all. Flossie's frolic brings her, satisfyingly, back to her starting-point with real life kept firmly at bay.

Jyoti's Journey

Helen Ganly, André Deutsch, 0 233 97899 2,
£5.95

Jyoti's journey, though, is sadly one-way – from the brightness of an Indian village to the drabness of an English tenement. A beautifully understated exploration of culture-shock in a series of collages based on wallpaper cut-outs. There's text at the foot of each page, but most kids won't need it given the eloquence of these highly-stylised pictures which, for all their attractiveness, bring real life firmly to the fore.

Stanley Bagshaw and the Short-Sighted Football Trainer

Bob Wilson, Hamish Hamilton,
0 241 11783 6, £6.50

Still-perky as a cloth cap. Stanley triumphs once again in Bob Wilson's latest reminder that the tradition of verse and comic-strip isn't confined to Rupert Bear. Of course, this celebration of all things Northern is just as idealised in its way. Stanley's last-second penalty-save comes as a Total Lack of Surprise. Who cares? In this case familiarity breeds utter content.



From **Stanley Bagshaw and the Short-Sighted Football Trainer**.

Panda and the Bushfire

Michael Foreman, Hamish Hamilton,
0 241 11656 2, £6.25

By now, Panda and his winged-lion chum are pretty familiar too. So prolific is Michael Foreman that every new book threatens to devalue his currency – yet ends up confirming a talent impervious to the normal mechanisms of the market-place. Here his odd, curiously resonant, duo bolster their epic status with koalas, firefighters, and spread-after-spread of the Great Yonder, blue and otherwise. Makes most picture-books seem stay-at-home.

The Rain Door

Quentin Blake and Russell Hoban,
Gollancz, 0 575 03097 6, £5.95

Russell Hoban has a healthy sense of Yonder too – but sometimes leaves the rest of us behind in his pursuit of it. Even this image of a summer storm as the overspill of a junkyard-cum-wasteland in the sky won't convince everybody. Has Quentin Blake ever been better, though? His illustrations bring such verve and pace and atmosphere we scarcely notice the contrivance of the text. Look at the last page, where Harry says goodbye to the cosmic rag-and-bone man, to see how sheef deftness of line and brushstroke can shrivel the pretensions of language.



"Thanks for helping me out," said the rag-and-bone man. "See you."
From **The Rain Door**.

Yellow and Pink

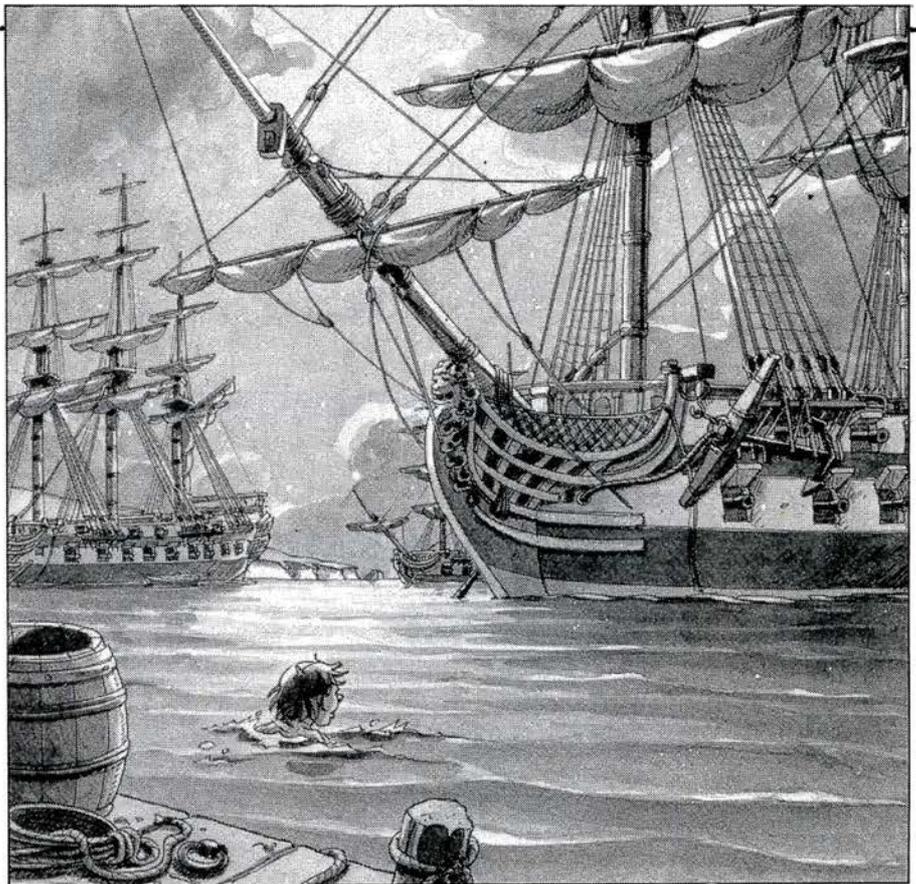
William Steig, Gollancz, 0 575 03795 4, £4.95

On the other hand, words have their place too when it comes to effing the ineffable. Philosophically, William Steig's rumination on *We Come From* is a cheat, but kids bright enough to be interested will enjoy the deadpan comedy of the text as much as the witty, off-hand illustrations. This debate about their origins between two mannikins is a lovely example of the range of subject-matter picture books can encompass... even if it does raise questions about the age of the intended reader.

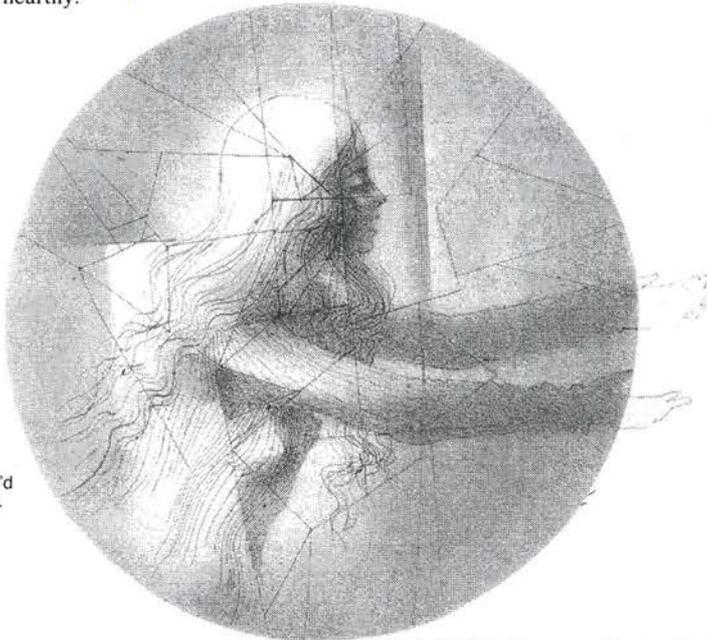
Anno's Three Little Pigs

Mitsumasa Anno and Tuyosi Mori, Bodley Head, 0 370 30898 0, £6.95

So does Anno's latest offering. In this version of the well-known nursery tale, the wolf is Socrates no less, with Xanthippe his wife ravenously in attendance. Prior to eating the three little pigs, Socrates tries to work out their current deployment between four cottages. Thereby he raises them to the power of digits in a full scale exercise in combinational analysis, mathematical permutations and combinations. These are laid out in page after exquisitely designed page. I don't doubt for a second that Anno and Tuyosi Mori, his collaborator, have got their logic right. Nor am I surprised that Socrates and Xanthippe lose their appetite for bacon in the end. This is the perfect book for a toddler with advanced computer skills or a systems-analyst of whimsical disposition. When I next come across either I shall recommend it heartily.



From the cover of *Jack at Sea*.



'The mirror crack'd
from side to side'.
From *The Lady
of Shalott*.

The Lady of Shalott

Charles Keeping and Lord Tennyson, Oxford, 0 19 276057 2, £4.95

Charles Keeping on the other hand, reminds us only of Charles Keeping – which is just as well perhaps when he's illustrating so well-known a poem. Nothing less could dislodge the private vision created by the words themselves – in this case an alternative black-and-white view that's awesomely powerful but suprisingly statuesque. The famous flowing, skimming and winding down to Camelot is presented here as a series of well-struck poses. As tableaux they're superb. Doesn't the live theatre of the verse upstage them, though?

Son of Dracula

Victor Ambrus, Oxford, 0 19 279813 8, £5.95

This is Victor Ambrus in his gore-blimey vein – like Ronald Scarle in technicolour. Creatures creepy and tacky devise a school curriculum, Transylvanian-style, for the Nigel Molesworth in all of us. The emphasis is on terrible jokes. Great fun even if it can't compete with what Sir Keith is doing in real life.

Jack at Sea

Philippe Dupasquier, Andersen Press, 0 86264 128 4, £5.95

In comparison this is strictly for the rough trade. It begins with a press-gang and ends with a shipwreck as young Jack (Tar?) discovers that life is not so jolly when you sail before, beneath, behind and atop the mast – and such an all-round view is what we get from Dupasquier's pictures which are linked with the minimum of text. What emerges draws on realism for its detail and on strip-cartoon for its energy, but isn't quite either. A fetching combination, though, for youngsters sea-struck rather than word-struck.

The Baron on the Island of Cheese

Patrick Benson and Adrian Mitchell, Walker, 0 7445 0334 5, £4.95

Maritime exploits again, but wordier withal, as Adrian Mitchell, alias Munchausen, narrates another tale tall and surreal enough to be proto-Python. The real Baron here,

though, is Patrick Benson, a former Mother Goose Award winner, whose pictures were supposedly 'drawn in the belly of a whale'. Gorgeous, detailed and unflinchingly inventive, they respond to every manic twist of the storyline while retaining a distinctive style of their own. What more could older children ask of a picture-book?

Henry's Quest

Graham Oakley, Macmillan, 0 333 40841 1, £4.95

Well, Graham Oakley, perhaps. As ever, the mock-verbosity of his text is a perfect counterpoint to his mock-heroic illustrations seen here in full-spread splendour as Henry embarks on a quest for petrol – a dubious resource in a post-industrial world rampant with myth, superstition and anachronism. Jokes abound, though the humour is darker and the theme more sombre than usual. Once again, Oakley never lets words do the work of pictures and assumes no less care and attention from us than we assume from him.

Altogether, I'd suggest, an up-cheering consignment. But the handiest opportunity to assess current verbal/visual standards comes with Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories* now issued as Picturemacs at £1.75 each. Ambrus, Blake, Foreman and Keeping appear again here along with Baker, Baynes, Brierley, Cheese, Ebborn, Stobbs, Taylor and Thorne – to place them in cautious alphabetical order. It's a rare chance to compare first-team talent working at full stretch. This must have been quite an assignment for all of them. Words as good as Kipling's not only challenge the most gifted of illustrators, there's another snag too: the best ever *Just So* pictures were drawn by someone with an unfair advantage – Kipling himself.



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Produced and directed by Noël Hardy, all three videos have won awards at International Film and Video Festivals in the Education categories.

Price: £20 each including VAT, post and packing for VHS or Betamax formats from:
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In addition to the above, Lloyds Bank has also sponsored other schools videos—one describing the work of the Young National Trust Theatre, and another made for Ballet Rambert for use by students of CSE, 'O' and 'A' level dance.

Further information from: Sponsorship Section, CCD, Lloyds Bank Plc, 152/156 Upper Thames Street, London EC4R 3UJ.

Arthur is the Children's Choice

Pat Thomson reports on the winner of this year's Children's Book Award

Arthur sits in the pet shop window, hoping for a comfortable home but everyone prefers the other animals. With more optimism than skill he tries to persuade the customers that he, too, is a rabbit, a snake, even a fish.

Although he positively exhausts himself, his efforts as an actor are unsuccessful – until someone comes in and asks for 'that extraordinary dog who performs all sorts of tricks'. So runs the storyline of **Arthur**, a picture book by two young Australians, Amanda Graham, the writer, and Donna Gynell, the illustrator, both relatively new to children's books.

Children, particularly those of about 7-11, but also across a wide age range, were both amused and sympathetic. They found Arthur practising at being all the other animals irresistibly funny but they knew all about wanting to be popular, about the need to be chosen and responded accordingly when Arthur finally finds a home. The comedy is slapstick, the theme is simple but the content goes deeper than a casual reader might imagine.

Arthur is published by Spindlewood, 0 907349 06 4, £4.95.



Donna Gynell



Amanda Graham

The 'Top Ten' runners-up are:

Two by Two

Betty Young, Bodley Head, 0 370 30555 8, £5.25

The Noah's Ark text is elegant and rhythmical but it was the embroidered illustrations which captured the children. Every texture and shade is successful and the pages were stroked as well as read. (2+)

One Bear All Alone

Caroline Bucknall, Macmillan, 0 333 39819 X, £4.95

'One bear all alone sitting by the telephone.' A rhyming picture book which invites the reader to count some very appealing bears. Instantly successful with the younger readers and listeners. (3+)

The Very Busy Spider

Eric Carle, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11430 6, £7.95

Bold, clear pictures of familiar animals, plus an ever growing spider's web which is raised on the page. The story was followed with fingers as well as eyes, and proved very absorbing. (4+)

Lost and Found

Jan Mogensen, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11431 4, £5.50

A loved toy is lost and there is an anxious wait in the lost property office with corresponding relief when the toy is reclaimed. A mini-drama in large, sympathetic pictures and soft colours. (5+)

Hairy Maclary Scattercat

Lynley Dodd, Spindlewood, 0 907349 46 3, £4.25

The return of Scarface Claw! Rhyming picture book in which Hairy Maclary teases all the local cats until he meets the 'toughest Tom in town'. A great favourite. (4+)

Saddlebottom

Dick King-Smith, Gollancz, 0 575 03715 6, £5.50

Saddlebottom, who should have been a Saddleback, is rejected by his well-bred family but finally triumphs in a Royal day of glory at the head of the Regiment. An invaluable author for this age group who gives us good fun in a real story. (6+)

Gaffer Samson's Luck

Jill Paton Walsh, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 80122 4, £6.50

James moves to a Fenland village where the local children are hostile but he makes friends with old Gaffer Samson and gets into difficulties looking for the old man's 'luck'. A good, modern story, eventful and full of detail. (9+)

Trouble Half-Way

Jan Mark, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 80188 7, £5.95

Amy is rather shocked by her new step-father's easy-going attitude to life but the journey they take together gives her confidence and starts her on the road to independence. Both funny and serious. (10+)

Janey

Bernard Ashley, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 208 3, £6.95

Janey, a thief's assistant from a deprived background, makes friends with the elderly Nora and the power of that friendship changes her life. The narrative grips from the beginning. (11+)

Drift

William Mayne, Cape, 0 224 02244 X, £6.95

Rafe, lost in the North American forest, only survives through the help he receives from some Indian women. He learns and understands much but the distance between them remains. A fascinating and vivid book, not easily forgotten. (12+)●

The Children's Book Award is a national award, judged by children and given annually by the Federation of Children's Book Groups. A book list, **Pick of the Year**, is produced which reviews the winner and the 'Top Ten' runners-up, and recommends a further 30 books which were well received during the Award testing programme. The Federation makes this available as a reliable list of books which they know children will enjoy.

For a full-colour award poster and **Pick of the Year** (£1.00 post free) write to Maggie Colling, 8 Dymoke Road, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 1AA. (Please make cheques payable to Federation of Children's Book Groups.)