

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

No. 39 July 1986
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Books about Travellers
Science for Infants • Carnegie Medal at 50
Authorgraph, Joan Aiken

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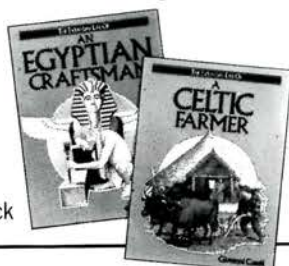
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Important Information

Unfortunately the book information was omitted from Susan Varley's article on **Harold Jones** in May **BfK**. The beautiful full colour illustration on page 25 is from the cover of a new paperback edition of Charles Kingsley's **The Water Babies**, Gollancz, 0 575 03879 9, £3.95 – out in August.

Other titles

Lavender's Blue, OUP, 0 19 279537 6, £6.95

The Water Babies, Gollancz, 0 575 00259 X, £6.95

The Fairy Stories of Oscar Wilde, Gollancz, 0 575 02170 5, £6.95 hbk; 0 575 63614 1, £2.95 pbk

The Silent Playmate ed. Naomi Lewis, Gollancz, 0 575 02618 9, £6.95; retitled, **The Magic Doll**, Magnet, 0 416 44110 6, £1.50 pbk

Tales to Tell, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 169 9, £5.95

Bunby Adventures

Silver Bells and Cockle-Shells, OUP, 0 19 279726 3, £2.50 hbk

Happy Christmas, Deutsch, 0 233 97606 X, £3.95 hbk; Magnet, 0 416 46260 X, £1.25 pbk

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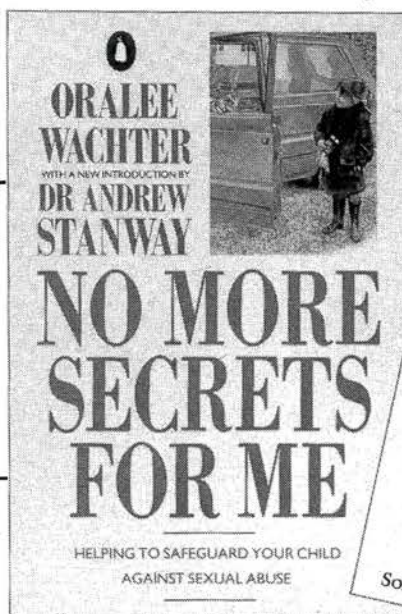
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Cover story

Our cover is taken from *A Traveller Child* by José Patterson (0 241 11573 6, £3.95), a title in *The Way We Live* series from Hamish Hamilton.

We are grateful to Hamish Hamilton for help in using this illustration.

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Editorial correspondence: Pat Triggs,
36 Ravenswood Road, Redland, Bristol,
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EDITOR'S PAGE



Pat

In this issue we thought we'd offer some things you might like to think about over the long hot summer holidays (if only ...) and maybe a few ideas you could use with those bright eager new faces which will greet us in September.

Infant Science – an area of the curriculum that is coming in for a lot of attention just now – seemed a good bet for a solid feature on non-fiction; but before we knew where we were the Eureka people (see page 20) were showing us how useful fiction (especially picture books) can be as starting points for enquiry. Amazing how a passing comment can change your whole perspective. Suddenly I was looking at picture books in a whole new light and when *The Lighthouse Keeper's Catastrophe* (Deutsch, 0 233 97891 7, £5.25) – the latest in the Armitage's delightful series about Trinity House folk – I found myself enthusing about its potential for problem-solving, demonstrating the use of pulleys, etc., etc. It's a good story too.

Multi-cultural omission

The idea for our main feature *Getting to Know You*, (see pages 4-7), began in January at the exhibition based on our two guides to *Children's Books for a Multi-cultural Society*. 'Why are there no books about Romanies?' demanded one visitor, with justifiable irritation. We explained that the omission of that culture, along with some others, had been a conscious decision; but our visitor's enthusiasm and commitment set us thinking and we decided that perhaps we could slightly redress the balance by a special feature in *BfK*. As things frequently seem to fall out with us as soon as we started planning I suddenly began to bump into all sorts of people connected with Travellers, books about Travellers and the education of Traveller children. The more we found out, the more sure we were that we should do the feature so that those of our readers who were as ill-informed as we were when we began might find something to think about and a place to start, and more of you already partly involved and aware might find information to help you go further. (It's the same approach we took to compiling the multi-cultural guides).

José Patterson, whose book *Traveller Child* we feature on our cover with one of Liba Taylor's delightful and informative photographs, was a mine of information, not least about the life-styles of different Traveller groups. The Gypsy Travellers have the most clearly defined culture, having their own language, literature and customs. But the patterns of living of Fairground and Circus families, the two other groups José defines, are as 'strange' to most of us and as prone to being distorted. The best assault on damaging stereotypes is a blend of information and imaginative story-making. We are grateful to José Patterson and Liz Wilson for showing us the way.

Carnegie is 50

The focus is on fiction too in our Awards feature which celebrates 50 years of the Carnegie medal. This feature may not be greeted enthusiastically by all our readers. That is if any share the views of one of our subscribers who wrote in January asking for –

'less of the commercialism of books: who has won which award; ... notes on publishers etc., and more of the quality articles which originally recommended your publication to one ... less froth and more matter.' I don't know how many would agree with that – perhaps you'd like to tell us.

We carry reports and feature articles on award-winning books because the giving of awards seems to us an interesting part of the world of children's books. Some awards seem to be given more for 'commercial' reasons (i.e. specifically to sell more books) than others but we hope our reporting reflects that. Many more awards – the Carnegie and Greenaway included – we believe draw attention to the quality and range of children's books available, and raise questions and issues about how children's books are judged, what gets published, the quality of design and production etc. which all of us involved with children and books could usefully ponder. Colin McNaughton's article on *The Mother Goose Award* (not given this year) in the May *BfK* is a good example of this as is Keith Barker's interesting historical look at Carnegie (see page 10-11) and Gill Johnson's fascinating glimpse of how panels go about making awards (see page 8).

Writing to me about the Library Associations' Awards Gill commented 'I think that once people had seen one or two of the early titles in the series they saw later ones as "just another Banana book". Librarians are always trying to convince teachers that they should look at each book as an individual piece of work so I hope this award will show that we do try to practice what we preach sometimes.'

The garlanded and the unsung

Anyway, its good to be able to congratulate Kevin Crossley-Holland as the Carnegie winner for *Storm* – a little jewel of a book. It says something for the way an award reflects its time, I think, that the Library Association has finally felt able to give the award to a novel for younger readers.

Amazingly Joan Aiken, our Authorgraph for this issue (see page 12) has never won the Carnegie Medal. (Now *there's* something to think about.) Her many fans will be delighted to welcome another Dido Twite story – she must be one of the most attractive and enduring heroines of all children's fiction.

Someone who *has* been honoured – and deservedly – is Judith Elkin. We were all delighted when we heard the Eleanor Farjeon had gone to Judith. She has done so much and all of it without fuss or trumpets. It's time for a fanfare. It has been (and we are sure will continue to be) a pleasure to work with her on the multi-cultural guides. Congratulations Judith!

One footnote on fiction: Make sure you grab a copy of a new book from another Eleanor Farjeon winner. Dorothy Butler – author of *Babies Need Books* has now moved up the age-range with *Five to Eight* (Bodley Head, 0 370 30672 4, £4.95 pbk) a really enjoyable read and an invaluable guide to books for these crucial years.

Happy holidays.

GETTING TO KNOW

'“But gypsies!” I cried, thinking of the unsavoury stories I had heard of them – dirty people, thieves.'

'I don't think people like that are altogether to be trusted. Nobody knows where they live, or how.'

'... a fierce wandering tribe who would steal children for the sake of their clothes and pilfer anything they could lay their hands on.'

Three references to 'gypsies' taken from stories for children; the first published in 1977, the second in 1953, the third in 1887. A remarkably consistent portrayal spanning nearly a hundred years. A long time? Dennis Binns' fascinating analysis of how Gypsies are depicted in children's literature from which these examples are taken shows that this image was clearly established at the beginning of the nineteenth century and is still current in books being published today. Gypsies by these accounts are dishonest, dirty, given to petty thieving and child stealing; they tell fortunes and the women in particular have mysterious and magical powers; they live outside 'normal' society and while not to be trusted can be seen as romantic, exotic and strange, colourful people, free spirits, with 'swarthy faces and flashing eyes', a threat and challenge to the dull and everyday.

The fear, suspicion and hostility which so often greets the Gypsies as they move about the country cannot be unconnected with such a longstanding stereotype. Indeed it is so firmly established that it is reflected in entries in currently available encyclopaedias for children. As the Swann report pointed out, no matter how individuals behave negative perceptions are exaggerated and unfairly generalised to all Travellers.

An HMI discussion paper, issued in 1983, estimated that there are between 12,000 and 15,000 Traveller children of school age in England. Those that attend school, and many do so only seasonally or sporadically, are inevitably brought face to face with this prejudice. Many local authorities make special provision for the education of Traveller children; teachers involved in this work recognise that as well as adapting what they do to the particular culture of the children they teach they have also to combat stereotyped views among non-Traveller children. So what is the truth about Travellers?

The term 'Traveller' denotes a range of different groups: Gypsy, Fairground and Circus people. While many Travellers are fully nomadic, others move seasonally. The Gypsies, who form the largest group, include communities from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland each with its own ethnic identity and language. For many, educational disadvantage is compounded through lack of adequate site provision. Those who do not live on authorised sites have great difficulties finding places to camp. This factor, combined with racial prejudice and hostility, leads to continual harassment and evictions.

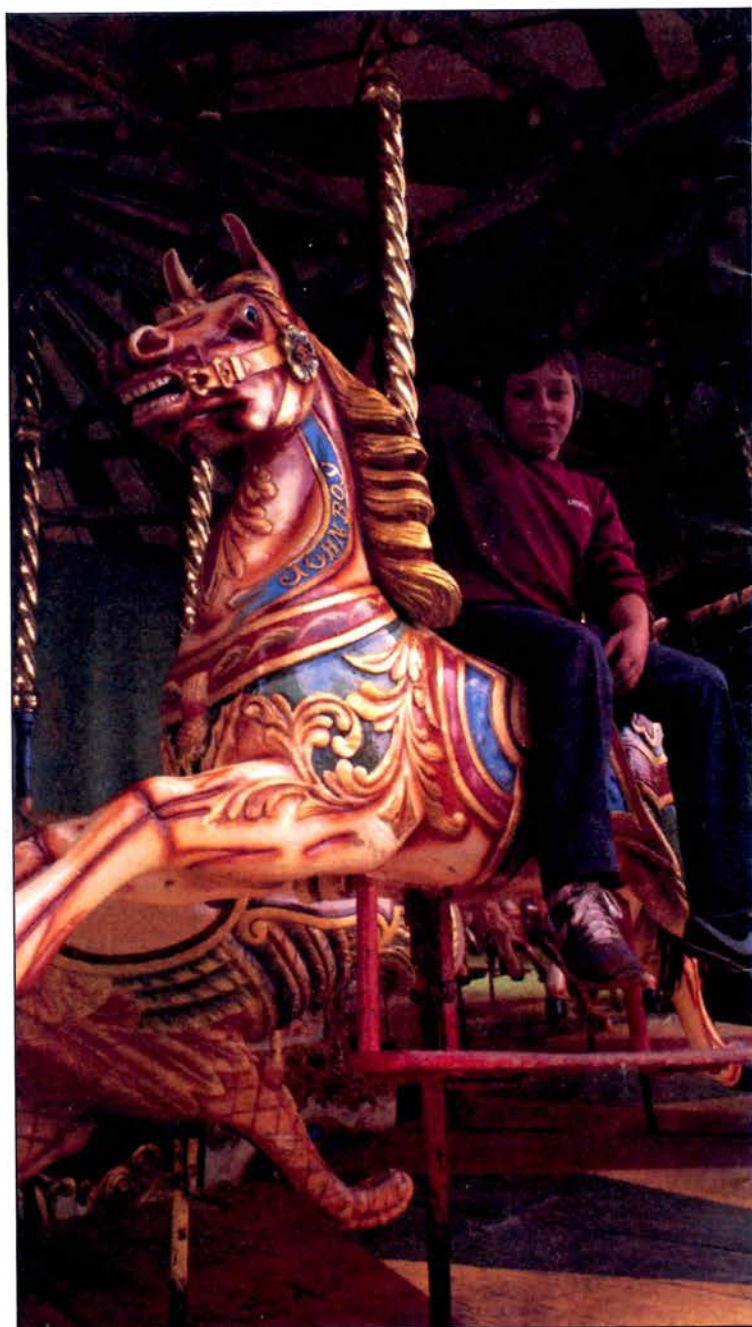
The 1968 Caravan Sites Act gave local authorities a duty to provide caravan sites for Gypsies 'residing in or resorting to their areas'. When adequate accommodation is provided, the county becomes 'designated' and unauthorised camping a punishable offence. Some authorities abuse 'designation' by using their powers of eviction without having qualified for it under the government's own regulations. Thus the shortage of official sites where the children can usually benefit from mainstream education, coupled with the effects of 'designation', forces the Traveller to lead an unstable and unsettled existence on illegal or roadside encampments.

The Fairground families settle into their winter quarters in late October until March when the first fairs coincide with Easter. They have their own strong central association – the Showmen's Guild – and their own newspaper, *World's Fair*, which helps to keep them all in touch. A Chief Steward is elected from the Showmen's Guild for each large fair. Many schools which children attend during the winter provide individual programmes for their pupils to be completed during their long absence in the travelling season. The responsibility for 'homework' rests mainly with the mothers, many of whom are often stallholders in their own right. Their children work alongside, developing a natural business and money sense and practical skills – often undervalued in schools.

For circus families the time spent in their winter quarters has become

shorter in recent years. The soaring costs of animal fodder and council pitches compel circuses to remain on the road for longer periods of time to cover their costs. This constant movement forces the children at school into the role of perpetual 'new pupils'. Two big circus companies have recently established their own mobile schools with the support of their local LEA who have equipped the schools and appointed the teachers. In this way educational continuity is maintained and the timetable adapted to give the children time to practise their own circus skills.

Gypsy, Fairground and Circus children share many characteristics. They are part of an extended but close-knit family unit and have a highly developed sense of responsibility to the family in its widest sense. Gypsy girls, for example, are expected to assist with the chores and help mind their younger siblings or relatives. Growing up in a large, caring extended family, the Traveller child becomes a member of adult society from an early age. New friends from outside 'the family' are not a high priority.



From *Fairground Family* (A&C Black) photograph by Dick Scott-Stewart.

W YOU

José Patterson reveals the stereotypes and shows us the real lives of different sorts of Travellers

Traveller children are part of the economic work force of the family and are trained from an early age to take their place in the group. Thus Gypsy children are allowed to earn their own money, which gives them a feeling a self-sufficiency. Fairground children are trained to take charge of their stalls and rides and Circus children acquire a variety of skills from their environment.

Feelings about going to school can be ambivalent. Many Traveller parents lack formal education, or at best, have memories of unhappy educational experiences. It is not surprising that some of their fears and anxieties are transmitted to their children. Traveller children, like all children, enjoy listening to a good story. Though some may not be literate they frequently have a rich stock of oral stories and are good tellers of tales; a fact which may be undervalued or ignored in school.

The strength of story in the Traveller culture points to one obvious and enjoyable way in which the attitudes of Gaujo – non-Travellers – can be changed and their knowledge of the Traveller life-style and heritage increased.

As a teacher involved in Traveller Education I was commissioned by Hamish Hamilton to write two books for their non-fiction series 'The Way We Live' which focuses on children in our multi-cultural society. The first of these was a **A Traveller Child**. My first task was to gain the consent of a Traveller family which was prepared to accept publicity – not an easy task – and my request was turned down by several families. Lee's parents understood that I was trying to portray them in a positive light and gave me every support. Liba Taylor's beautiful photographs serve to challenge stereotyping by portraying, for example, the immaculate interiors of their homes. Phyllis's old traditional Gypsy skill of making paper and wooden flowers was utilised in supporting a school fund-raising project. Lee's family live on a small well-planned permanent site and are protected from the difficulties of being 'moved on' in contrast to the situation portrayed in Mary Waterson's fine book, **A Gypsy Family**. Although the book was written to inform the young Gaujo reader, a teacher wrote to tell me that after seeing it a Traveller boy had been inspired to show her how to make paper flowers!

A Circus Child, the second book, was easier to research. John Roberts Junior welcomed the proposal and the entire company were kind and



From **A Circus Child** (Hamish Hamilton) photograph by Liba Taylor.

There are many good books written about Travellers, but those written by Travellers themselves (or edited from tape recordings) give us the best insights of all. **The Book of Boswell** (sadly out of print) is a classic of its kind. Betsy Whyte's **The Yellow on the Broom** (now in paperback) is a moving account of a Scottish Tinker family, while newly published **Traveller** by Nan Joyce describes her hard life in Ireland and her struggle for tolerance and understanding. **I Remember Wagon Time** by Nan Maughan uses her first steps to literacy to describe how her father built barrel-top wagons. Duncan Williamson's fine **Fireside Tales** gives us (thanks to the efforts of his wife) a written account of the rich oral tradition of story telling – not just for children! Traveller children have contributed in a special way. **The Black Unicorn and other Stories**, edited by Dennis Binns and Julie Smith, is the fourth anthology of children's stories and poems. **The Travelling People's Story**, a poem by Margaret Gavin aged 12, gives her account of life on a site – it is direct and devastating.

A good book about Travellers is one in which stereotypes are exploded and the Travelling people dealt with as human beings. Geraldine Kaye, Olga Sinclair, Rumer Godden, Barbara Applin, Mollie Hunter and William Mayne – all non-Travellers – have made notable fictional contributions in this area.

cooperative at all times. Through my contacts with Bernie Hasler I learned a great deal about circus life and the hard work needed to make the circus school a success. The text of the book emphasises the care given to performing animals, the way in which the children adapt to school and their training, and the world of clowns and clowning.

My work with the Regional Advisory Service for Travellers' Education in Oxfordshire and Berkshire involves visits to sites, supporting teachers in school, liaising closely with Education Welfare Officers and other professional groups, and arranging in-service meetings and conferences. One of my first contacts was with the library services in both counties – a sound investment! We now have an interesting collection of books on Travellers which reflects the life of Travelling communities and the literature it has produced. Some selections from that collection with annotations and additional information follow this article. Nathan Lee, President of the National Gypsy Education Council, was asked how the public at large could help the Travellers. He replied, 'What we need is more sites, more tolerance and more understanding.'

I hope that the information here will encourage wider awareness and use of these books and help to combat ignorance and foster that much-needed understanding.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Books about Travellers

INFORMATION BOOKS

Gypsies

Thomas Acton, Macdonald Surviving Peoples series (1981), 0 356 05956 1, £5.95
Widely acclaimed as 'the best book for children on this subject'. Very comprehensive, lots of excellent photographs and packed with follow-up information. Interesting and approachable for children 9-13 but anyone could profitably read this as a starting point.

A Time to Come Alive

Wilfred Hall, pub. Wilfred Hall (1976), 0 9594992 0 X, £1.50

A photo essay capturing in black and white the atmosphere and delight of Appleby Horse Fair in June. Brief captions. Available from Romanestan Publications.

At the Fair

Helen Herbert, Cambridge (1984), 0 521 31933 1, £1.25 pbk

The Gypsies: Wagon Time and After

Denis Harvey, Batsford (1980), 0 7134 1548 7, £9.95

A pictorial celebration of the gypsies of Britain. 230 picture showing all aspects of gypsy life.

The Gypsies

John Hornby, Oliver & Boyd Signpost Library (1965), Blackwell (1970), o/p
A little dated and romanticised now but quite a good semi-fictional account for the younger reader.

Gypsy Vans

Juliet Jeffery, Strand Press (1983)
Collection of drawings showing different vans, carts, wagons and tents. Available from Juliet Jeffery, Memorial Cottage, Compton, Chichester, Sussex PO18 9AD.

Fairground Family

Mog Johnstone, A & C Black Beans series (1985) 0 7136 2702 6, £3.95
An account of the life, work and heritage of a family who own a traditional galloping horses roundabout. Colour photographs. Bright and informative.

Traveller: an autobiography

Nan Joyce, Gill & Macmillan (1985), 0 7171 1388 4, £4.95

Very direct and absorbing, dictated by Nan Joyce. This articulate and independent woman speaks of the concerns of Travellers, their rights, her life and hopes. Nan Joyce is the campaigning leader of the Irish Traveller movement. Secondary.

Men of the Road

Charles King, Muller (1972), 0 584 10170 8, o/p

History, customs, language: the Gypsy in modern society, a useful look at the international picture. 9-13.

I Remember Wagon Time

Nan Maughan (1983)

Reminiscences of a Traveller describing life in a wagon in Ireland in the 1940s. Eighteen pages. Suitable for juniors. Available through 'Write Here', 697 Attercliffe Road, Sheffield S9 3RE.



Irish Traveller children from *Gypsies* (Macdonald).

A Traveller Child

José Patterson, Hamish Hamilton (1985), 0 241 11573 6, £3.95

A real family shown living on a fixed site. Lee goes to school. Points of contact found between Gypsy and Gaujo life-style and culture. Colour photographs. 7+.

A Circus Child

José Patterson, Hamish Hamilton (1986), 0 241 11817 4, £3.95

Circus life depicted from the inside through the life of a real family. Colour photographs. 7+.

Gypsies

Olga Sinclair, Blackwell (1967), 0 631 06710 8, £2.95

A simple text with no stereotypes. Fairly comprehensive, accurate information. 6-9.

Make Things Gypsies Make

Marjorie Stapleton, Studio Vista (1976), o/p
Step by step instructions, drawings and photographs show how to make pegs, flowers, baskets, wooden chrysanthemums, etc. 7-13.

Gypsies and Nomads

Ruth Thomson (ed.), Macdonald First Library series (1973), o/p

Seven pages in this title are devoted to gypsies. Useful information without stereotypes but some generalisations.

Gypsy Family

Mary Waterson, A & C Black Strands series (1978), 0 7136 1831 0, £3.50

Text with black and white photographs traces day to day living in a mobile Gypsy family. Excellent. 6-10.

Fairs and Circuses

Paul White, A & C Black (1972), 0 7136 1323 8, £4.50

Historical survey using contemporary sources and illustrations. 9-13.

The Yellow on the Broom

Betsy Whyte, Chambers (1979), 0 550 26365 6, o/p; Futura, 0 7088 2938 4, £2.25 pbk

An autobiographical account of her childhood and life as a Scottish Traveller. Betsy Whyte was born in 1919.

Romano Drom Song Book

Denise Stanley and Rosy Burke, Romanestan Publications (2nd edition 1986), 0 947803 01 7, £1.95

Thirty songs of Gypsy origin from English and continental sources. Music and words with black and white drawings. Translations given. Valuable cultural meeting point for Gypsy and Gaujo alike.

At the Circus/At the Fair Picture Pack

Macmillan Education (1982), 0 333 31836 6, £14.95

24 large colour photographs showing circus and fair scenes.

NOVELS

Appleby Fair

Barbara Applin, Macmillan Ranger series - range 2 (1980), 0 333 27791 0, 85p

A story centred on Appleby horse fair. Part of a structured reading scheme - junior level, 12+ interest.

The Diddakoi

Rumer Godden, Macmillan (1972), 0 333 13848 1, £5.50; Puffin, 0 14 03.0753 2, £1.50 pbk

Televised as *Kizzy*. A very enjoyable story about the pressures on eight-year-old Kizzy to assimilate and live 'in brick' when her grandmother dies and her travelling life must end. Good detail, no stereotypes, happy ending. Top junior/lower secondary.

I'll Go My Own Way

Mollie Hunter, Hamish Hamilton (1986), 0 241 11685 6, £5.95

An absorbing account of Catriona McPhie's life as a Scottish tinker. Set in the 1970s, it takes an interesting contemporary line on Traveller tradition in which a father passes on his skills to his firstborn son. Cat is Jim McPhie's only child; he is keen to teach his daughter - she, eventually, enjoys the learning but will this make her the kind of girl no Traveller boy will want to marry? Slightly idealised and some jarring notes but a good read for 14+.

Nowhere to Stop

Geraldine Kaye, Hodder and Stoughton (1972), 0 340 16253 8, £4.95

The only one of Geraldine Kaye's 'gypsy' stories that is still in print. At Christmas time young Liberty Lovell and his family try to stop on the town dump. Angry residents, six gypsy children at school, the Christmas play, tentative friendships, Liberty's pregnant mother, a campaign for a proper site for the Travellers all combine to produce a believable and unsentimental story.

Tawno Gypsy Boy (Hodder 1968) and **Billy-Boy** (Hodder 1975) like *Nowhere to Stop*, have Gareth Floyd's excellent covers and line illustrations and deal, as do **Runaway Boy** (Heinemann 1971) and **A Different Sort of Christmas** (Kaye and Ward, Early Bird Series 1976) with meetings between gypsy and Gauje. **Children of the Turnpike** (Hodder 1976) has a similar theme with an early nineteenth century setting. All

worth searching out in libraries. The stories have worn well and are particularly good for reading aloud.

A Strange Experience

Kathleen Love, *New Canterbury Tales* Vol. 1, 80p

Written by a Gypsy adult literacy learner at a centre in Kent. A ghost story about Travellers settling into a house for the first time and being frightened out by a ghost. Available from Romanestan Publications.

Winter Quarters

William Mayne, *Puffin* (1985), 0 14 03.1681 1, £1.50

Drawing on the customs and language of the Travellers, Mayne tells the story of Issy's search for the Travellers' true chief, long-since mysteriously abandoned by them. The quest is closely tied up with the Travellers' need to establish their right to their winter quarters.

Gypsy Girl

Olga Sinclair, *Fontana Lion* (1981), 0 00 671963 5, £1.25

This story of ten-year-old Minty's life with her father reflects many aspects of traveller life including weddings, encounters with the police, bender tents and Appleby horse fair. When Minty's dad is disqualified from driving they have to abandon their trailer; Dad finds an old vardo and a horse and they take to the roads in traditional fashion. A good story for juniors and younger listeners.

Skewer's Garden

Carolyn Sloan, *Chatto* (1983), 0 7011 2663 9, £5.50

Skewer is part-Gypsy. This story tells how Skewer tries to make a garden from the junk-filled yard that surrounds the family house.

The Queen of the Pharisees' Children

Barbara Willard, *Julia MacRae* (1983), 0 86203 148 6, £6.25

Sim Swayne is half tinker, half pedlar; he lives the wandering life with his wife, Moll, and their children, Will, Delphi, Fairlight and baby Star. But the family is attacked and robbed of their cart and horse and they have to make shift as best they can. When Sim is accused of vagrancy the family is cruelly separated and all Moll's magic as the Queen of the Pharisees (the fairies), as she seems to her children, can do nothing to prevent it. A powerful historical story. A challenging but rewarding read.

TRADITIONAL TALES

Traveller's Tales

Peter Rush, *Kaye & Ward* (1983), 0 7182 5085 0, £4.95

Excellent collection, well-written and realistic. Pleasant illustrations. 7-10.

Russian Gypsy Tales

Collected by Yefim Druts and Alexei Gessler, trans. James Riordan, ill. Harry Horse, *Canongate* (1986), 0 86241 082 7, £7.95

Colourful tales told by Gypsies from all over the Soviet Union. Translated by Jim Riordan with a delightful feel for the different voices of the tellers.

Fireside Tales of the Traveller Children

Duncan Williamson, ill. Alan Herriot, *Canongate* (1983), 0 86241 100 9, £3.95 pbk
Collected traditional tales from a Scottish Traveller storyteller. An excellent introduction gives background to the tales and the teller. Not to be missed.

The Broonie, Silkies and Fairies: Travellers' Tales

Duncan Williamson, ill. Alan Herriot, *Canongate* (1986), 0 86241 104 1, £3.95 pbk
Magical tales from Highland crofters and Travellers remembered from Duncan Williamson's early years in Argyll. Incidental glimpses of Traveller life.

TRAVELLER CHILDREN'S WRITING

Tootsey and the Pups (1980), 50p

The Black Unicorn and Other Stories (1985), 30p

National Gypsy Educational Council

Available from Romanestan Publications.

Alphabet Stories

ILEA Teachers for Travellers (1983)

A set of seven booklets written by Irish Traveller children, each containing simple stories and drawings about life on a Gypsy site. Obtainable from c/o Hague School, Wilmot Street, London E2.

Some books in this selection are out of print but are worth seeking out in libraries.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Children's Literature and the Role of the Gypsy

Dennis Binns, *Manchester Travellers' School* (1984), £1.80

A fascinating examination of the role literary heritage plays in perpetuating fears and anxieties about Gypsies. A survey of 120 books for children since 1814 illustrating enduring and developing stereotypes. Obtainable from the author or publisher (see Useful Addresses).

A Gypsy Bibliography (2 volumes)

Dennis Binns, *Dennis Binns Publications* (1986), £5.00

First volume compiled in 1982; second volume, made up of entries from annual supplements, added in 1986. Over 2,000 items in all, covering books, pamphlets, articles, broadsheets, theses and dissertations pertaining to Gypsies and other Travellers post 1914. A must for any teacher or student concerned with Gypsies.

Journal of Traveller Education Today

Ed. Dennis Binns, £1.80 (annual publication)
Includes stories and drawings by children, and reviews of book on Travellers suitable for children. Volume 21 contains an article by Bob Pullin on 'The Fairground as a Curriculum Resource'. Available from Romanestan Publications.

The Traveller - Gypsies

Judith Okely, *CUP Changing Cultures Series* (1983), 0 521 28870 3, £7.95 pbk
An anthropological study which challenges popular accounts of gypsies.

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Romanestan Publications

Thomas Acton, 22 Northend, Warley, Brentwood, Essex CM14 5LA.
Tel: 0277 219491.

Supplier of books and materials. Very useful source of information on addresses, recent publications, resources, journals, tape recordings, etc. Also, information about NGE (National Gypsy Education Council).

Dennis Binns

18 South Drive, Chorltonville, Manchester M21 2DY. Tel: 061-881 2411.



From
**Gypsy
Family**
by Mary
Waterson.

Manchester Travellers' School

c/o Abbott CP School, Rochdale Road, Manchester M10 7PR. Tel: 061-834 9529.

ACERT (Advisory Committee for the Education of Romanies and other Travellers)

Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AJ. Tel: 01-831 7079.

Information leaflet giving lists of book collections and bibliographies and brief selection of books about Travellers.

Arthur Ivatts

HMI with special responsibility for Traveller children.

NATT (National Association of Teachers of Travellers)

c/o Educational Service for Travelling Children, Broad Lanes, Bilston, Nr Wolverhampton. Tel: Bilston 405091/2.

List of specially designed resources for Traveller children: 'Guide to Information and Resources'.

Nathan Lee

President NGE, London Strategic Policy Unit, Room 603, Middlesex House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1

Information re. hire of video cassettes: 'Travellers: Moving On' Middle English programme, and 'Here to Stay', etc.

East Herts School Library Service

Churchfields, Hertford SG13 8AE.
Tel: 0992 556647

A Traveller Education collection of 300 books, periodicals, pamphlets, reports and some audio-visual items. Largely the idea of Mary Waterson - one-time Adviser for Traveller Education in Hertfordshire, now Field Officer for ACERT. New listing of holdings in preparation. Phone for details of how to visit.

Museum of Gypsy Caravans, Romany Crafts and Lore

Commons Road, Pembroke.
Tel: 0646 681308.

Robert Pullin

Dept. of Education, Sheffield University
A member of the Showman's Guild, author of *Swings & Roundabouts*, the education of travelling fairground children in a survey (1982).

Romany Folklore Museum and Workshop

Selborne, Hampshire. ●

José Patterson is the Regional Advisory Teacher for Traveller Education in Berkshire and Oxfordshire. She can be contacted at Advisory Centre for Multi-cultural Education, Union Street, Oxford OX4 1JP. Tel: 0865 770451.

Book selection from the Collection of Traveller books compiled by Liz Wilson, Senior Assistant Librarian, Oxfordshire School Library Service, and Sue Dearing, Secondary Schools Support Librarian, Berkshire Education Library Service.

Annotations by Liz Wilson.

How the medal was won

Gill Johnson reveals the thinking behind the award of this year's Carnegie Medal.

What is the definition of a children's book? When the Carnegie Medal was originally established it was thought to be 'a book for a child somewhere between the ages of nine to twelve' – although it was stressed that books considered need not to be absolutely between these age limits. As society has changed so librarianship has moved to accommodate these changes and librarians involved with work with young people now cover an age range from 0 to 16 or 18. The creation by the advertising media of 'the teenager' has led to special publishing and library provision for this age group. Certainly there has been a tendency over the last twenty years for the Carnegie Medal to go to books which many would, by reason of their style and plot, consider more suitable for the 12+ age group. Those connected with the Medal would like to think that it has had some influence on the standard of publishing for those readers.

Alongside this trend there has been a plea for a similar improvement in standards of writing and publishing for the younger age group. Librarians are always looking for books which give the young reader who has recently achieved technical competence a real, imaginative reading experience which will demonstrate to them a good reason for having gone to the trouble of mastering the skills. However this poses difficulties for the selection panel. How can one assess such a book alongside one written for teenagers with the consequent increase in plot complexity, characterisation and stylistic devices. As adults a book more closely approximating adult literature is bound to make more of an impression and it is difficult to lay aside such subjective feelings.

The only analogy I can draw which might explain the thinking of this year's panel is that of a judge at Crufts Dog Show. How do they assess a Pekingese against a Great Dane? The answer is that they don't. Each is assessed against a breed standard and the dog which comes highest against that assessment is the winner. So the panel considering the 1985 shortlist had before them two books for teenagers; Janni Howker's *The Nature of the Beast* (Julia MacRae, 0 86203 194 X, 6.95) and Louise Lawrence's *Children of the Dust* (Bodley Head, 0 370 30679 1, £3.95). Then there were three for the 11+ age group; Betsy Byars' *Cracker Jackson* (Bodley Head, 0 370 30859 X, £4.95), David Line's *Screaming High* (Cape, 0 224 02313 6, £7.95) and William Mayne's *Drift* (Cape 0 224 02244 X, £6.95). Finally there was one book for the 7-9 age group: Kevin Crossley-Holland's *Storm* (Heinemann, 0 434 93032 6, £2.50). There is not space here to list the panel's thinking on each of these titles so perhaps I can confine my comments to the winner and the highly commended.

Gill Johnson is the current chairperson of the Youth Libraries Group of the Library Association and chaired the panel of children's librarians who chose the winners of this year's Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Medals. She is Principal Librarian, Schools' and Children's Services, with Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Library Service.

WINNER OF THE 1985 CARNEGIE MEDAL: Kevin Crossley-Holland *Storm* (Heinemann)



The horse's hooves clattered on the tarmac and Annie saw that several times they struck sparks from pieces of chert and flint. Illustrations from *Storm* (Heinemann) by Alan Marks.

Turning to *Storm* the panel was faced with a very short book of only some 3000 words in the Banana Books Series aimed at young readers of approximately 7-9 years. The panel judged this to be an excellent book for its intended purpose. Perhaps because of the author's poetry experience it was thought that every word counted in his outstanding use of language. The description conveyed a strong sense of place and atmosphere; drama and suspense. In Annie there was a strong, female character who is naturally apprehensive about the task in front of her which only she can perform, but who overcomes her fears when it is needed. The book is part of a series which is recognised to be of outstanding value for money with hardback covers, colour illustration and sewn binding. At first consideration doubts were expressed about whether the book was sufficiently memorable and some thought the surprise element might be lacking, but

questioning young readers some of the panel members found that this was not the case. Children, it was true, did predict the ending but this did not distract from their enjoyment of the book, rather it gave them a feeling of confidence and superiority that they guessed, and guessed correctly, what was going to happen. Neither did it seem to detract from the drama of the story and children who had since read many other books could still remember the ghostly shiver down the spine on reading the last page.

So a decision was made to award the Medal to a book which was considered to be an outstanding piece of miniature writing, comparable to a miniature painting in its attention to fine detail and lasting impressions.

HIGHLY COMMENDED: Janni Howker's *The Nature of the Beast* (Julia MacRae Books)

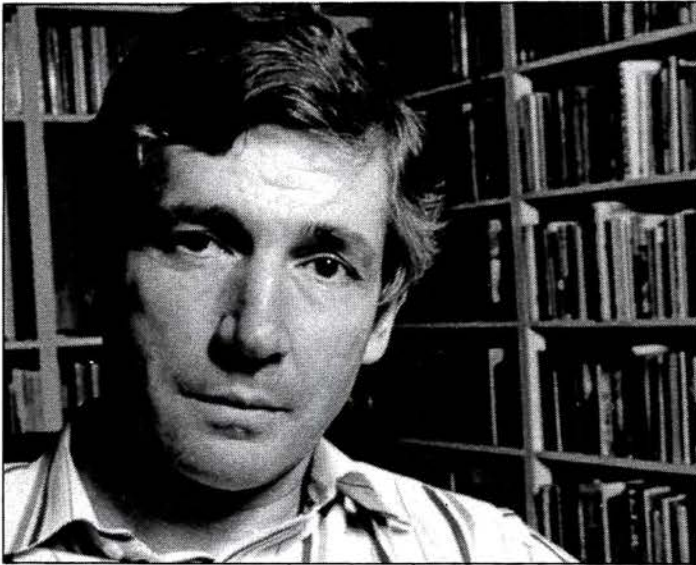
Janni Howker's first collection of short stories *Badger on the Barge* was shortlisted for the 1984 Carnegie Medal and received much critical acclaim, marking her as an author to watch for the future. This, her first full-length novel, was thought by the panel to be a powerful and at times disturbing book for teenagers dealing with the realities of unemployment in a Pennine mill town. There was a strong sense of place and atmosphere and it was not too difficult to empathise with the main characters. The panel thought that the book benefited from more than one reading but accepted that it needed introducing and promoting to its intended audience. However some of the minor characters came over as rather stereotyped, for example, the portrayal of the social worker at the end of the book. On a second reading some of the author's obviously deeply held convictions seemed to sound a little didactic and there were some minor plot anomalies and stylistic devices which the panel thought could not be discounted. In the final analysis it was also agreed that the book jacket, very important in library terms, was less than totally successful.

That there is informed discussion and criticism of the panel's work is healthy and to be welcomed. It adds interest to the debate and hopefully produces more publicity for the Medals. It encourages more people to recognise the importance of children's books. This is a particular cause of concern at the moment as economic stringencies impose cuts in school and public library budgets and as children's editorial teams come under increasing pressure to consider the profit motive. A good children's book survives the fleeting popularity of newness and time will be the final arbiter of whether this year's panel have made wise decisions. Naturally we think we have and hope that this article in *Books for Keeps* will encourage discussion amongst readers of this journal.



Meet the winners

Chris Powling has been reading the winning and commended books and talking to the writers.



The Carnegie medal? To a book most eight-year-olds could finish in twenty minutes? And a Banana Book at that? For some, the Library Association's 1986 award (in their Golden Jubilee year, no less) will represent at best an astonishing slip-up and at worst the betrayal of those exacting literary standards which in 1966 lead to no award being offered at all – we had to make do with winning the World Cup, you may recall. Kevin Crossley-Holland's *Storm* (Heinemann) is bound to dismay those Kid Literateurs for whom a prize-winning children's book is a book which, as a member of this year's Booker panel put it, 'is insulted by its inclusion on a children's list'. No adult reader will ever pick up *Storm* by mistake. I mean, it's got *pictures*. In full *colour*. And the text, if read aloud, would be perfectly intelligible to a *top infant*. Whatever next?

One person completely free from this chronological snobbery is Kevin Crossley-Holland himself. *Storm*, he concedes, is 'a miniature ... a cameo' but nevertheless is still 'part of the same inward thrust I bring to all of my literary activities – poetry, re-tellings, anthologies, broadcasting or whatever.' The story's setting is Waterslain, the name he gives to the village on the north coast of Norfolk which he calls 'my imaginative heartland'. It's also the title of his latest, just-published, collection of poems for adults and draws not simply on the same order of inspiration but also on the same stringent technique thereby bringing a musical quality to the words, and to the 'silences between them', that's as potent as their more overt meaning. He mobilises these resources, what's more, in a manner which always implies a child reader. There's no hint of the confusion of voice identified by Philippa Pearce, herself a distinguished Carnegie winner, when she wrote of another equally distinguished Carnegie winner that her objection to his work 'is not that young readers (and adults, too, for that matter) may understand too much, but that they are likely to understand too little'.

Storm brings no such problem. The tale itself is straightforward enough: a young girl whose sister is having a baby fetches the local doctor with the help of a phantom rider who turns out to be as fair as the weather is foul. What counts is the telling. When, at the end of the book, Annie closes her eyes 'as tight as cockleshells' it's not because she's seen a ghost, but lived a legend. Of course, there's a canny literary intelligence at work. Better than anyone Kevin Crossley-Holland recognises the paradox that flights of imagination are best sustained when feet – or in this case hooves – are kept firmly on the ground:

'The horses hoove's clattered on the tarmac and Annie saw that several times they struck sparks from pieces of chert and flint.'

This is all-of-a-piece with a sense of location so exact you feel the only omission is a map-reference. Annie rejects the notion that her home and the great marsh are 'miles from anywhere' because to her 'they were everywhere, everywhere that really mattered'. From the start, this is the reader's feeling too. My own daughter, much smitten, insisted on hearing the whole tale at a sitting and declared it to be 'very very very very very good'. Since this is as neat a way as any to calibrate the quality of a myth I can only say I very very very very very much agree.

The Carnegie's Panel's Special Commendation – Janni Howker's *The Nature of the Beast* (Julia MacRae) – follows a similar pattern. Again, though this time for an older age-group, we're presented with a leap of imagination so bold we'd be left stranded were it not for the precise delineation of a place. Haverston is a community doubly devastated: by the closure of the local mill and by a marauding beast on the moors surrounding the town. The fusing of the two into the same predatory image could easily have seemed far-fetched but for the gorse-and-concrete, flesh-and-blood reality of the writing. This brings the action seerily close to home. The progress of Billy Coward from victim to vigilante is like a prolonged scream of agony – as indeed it was. 'I hadn't realised when I started writing just how much anger and pain I felt about unemployment which in many ways had destroyed my marriage and is destroying my town,' said Janni Howker in a recent interview. 'It was a strange experience writing it – I almost can't remember doing it because I was getting up very early and working very late at night and just doing nothing else. And out it came. Like that.' Well, almost like that. There was a conscious shaping, too, by a writer who despite the acclaim she's received for this and her earlier book *Badger on the Barge* still regards herself as, 'an apprentice to my craft'. Some apprentice. It's hard to envisage a more eloquent protest on behalf of the Billy Cowards of our society. Or a more gripping narrative for them (and the rest of us) to read. In most other years we'd have looked no further for the Carnegie winner.

Not this year, though. This year belongs to *Storm* and to a Carnegie selection panel capable of its own leaps of imagination. Who would have guessed two years ago that Judith Elliott, inspired editor as she clearly is, would count a Carnegie medal-winner amongst her Banana Books? And who would have predicted such a come-uppance for critics like me who have long complained that the medal goes to books which assume readers rather than books which create them? Carnegie winners have always been worthy, dammit. Also, with few exceptions, they've been highly predictable. But after 1986 who knows?



All that glisters . . .

Keith Barker surveys 50 years of the Carnegie Medal



1936 was a significant year for British children's books. H. J. B. Woodfield began **Junior Bookshelf**, the first British journal devoted exclusively to the reviewing of children's books, both Dent and Oxford University Press appointed children's book editors for the first time and the Library Association's Carnegie Medal was born. Not that there was not a great deal of room for improvement at this time. Robert Leeson, in his book **Reading and Righting**, has called the thirties 'the age of brass' and the Library Association acknowledged the lack of quality of children's books at that period when it introduced the award. 'Quite frankly', it said, 'many of the books that are written for children are very poor; the field, however, is immense and so, too, should be its opportunities for good authors to distinguish themselves.'

Apart from highlighting new authors (such as Eve Garnett who won the second Carnegie Medal for **The Family from One End Street**, fighting off competition from **The Hobbit**), the medal's selection committee honoured previously eminent writers of children's books such as Walter de la Mare, Eleanor Farjeon and C. S. Lewis, although not always for their best work. This was a particular aspect of those books which were winners in the early years of the Carnegie Medal. However, although the Library Association felt these writers were worth honouring, the Association itself did little to promote the award. During the war years, Eleanor Graham complained bitterly of the parochialism surrounding the medal while Arthur Ransome, the first recipient for **Pigeon Post**, grumbled that 'it would have been better to send the blessed thing by post'.

Children's librarians, an expanding group at this time, were also upset that the selection committees which made the choices at the beginning of the Carnegie Medal's life were neither in the main conversant with children's libraries nor with children's books. At some of the selection meetings, few members bothered to turn up to make any selection, such as at the meeting where Noel Streatfeild's **The Circus is Coming** was chosen as the 1938 winner when only two members attended. The Library Association conceded to some of the requests of the children's librarians and in 1940 Eileen Colwell became a member of the committee, a position she was to hold for over twenty-five years. Other changes were made such as the introduction of criteria (albeit brief ones) for the first time.

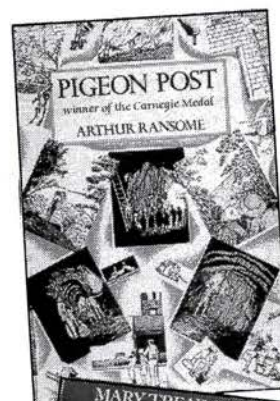
The 1950s and early 1960s saw a pattern of award winning books which had distinctive literary features. Distinguished winners of this period include **Tom's Midnight Garden** and **The Borrowers** although the list also includes books largely unknown to today's children such as Sheena Porter's **Nordy Bank**. It was also an era dominated by a particular publishing house, Oxford University Press, which invariably had a

large number of its titles either in the commended list or as winner. However, this became an increasing grumble against the Carnegie Medal, particularly at a time when authors of the calibre of Alan Garner were exciting the children's book world. The second British children's fiction award, the **Guardian Award**, was introduced in 1966, while Aidan Chambers' **The Reluctant Reader**, an innovative critical work, strongly criticised the selection of Philip Turner's **The Grange at High Force**, an O.U.P. book, as a Carnegie Medal winner. After a particularly virulent exchange in the correspondence columns of the **Times Literary Supplement** between Library Association worthies and Brian Alderson, children's book editor of **The Times**, it was decided that changes should be made to the method of selection of the award.

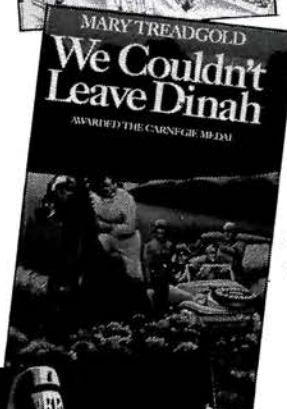
These changes meant that the selection became almost totally in the hands of members of the Youth Libraries Group which represents children's librarians throughout Great Britain. This is the system still in use at the present moment. Thirteen members of the Youth Libraries Group sit on the selection committee, the majority, apart from a few officers, being elected from each of the YLG's branches throughout the country.

In recent years, there has been criticism that the books which win the Carnegie Medal are not those that are of enormous appeal to children. 'The great unread' one librarian dubbed the winners and, writing of **Watership Down** (which also won the **Guardian Award**), one county librarian said 'what has now become quite obvious is that the chosen book need appeal only to more intelligent children and adults'. This meant that, particularly in the 1970s, selection committees often selected books which they felt had more appeal to children, such as **The Machine Gunners** and **The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler**. Although it has always been possible for an author to be given the medal more than once, it was only in 1980 that the Carnegie Medal was awarded to an author who had won one before but of the five winning authors of the 1980s four of them, Peter Dickinson, Robert Westall, Jan Mark and Margaret Mahy, have been previous winners. Does this denote a lack of imagination on the part of successive selection committees or a limited number of excellent children's writers during this decade? Foreign authors are also eligible for the award as long as the gap between publication in the country of origin and that in the United Kingdom is no more than three months. This ruling also affects British authors: for example, Jill Paton Walsh's **Gaffer Samson's Luck**, which was the winner of the first Smarties Prize and was a likely contender for this year's Carnegie Medal, was not eligible as it had been published in America five months before it was published in this country.

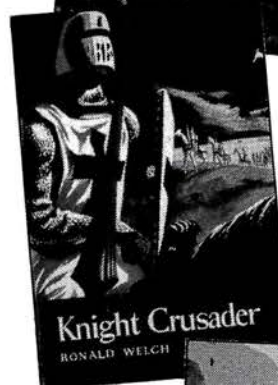
What sort of books are likely to win the Carnegie Medal? For Janet Hill, who sat on the selection committee once, the selectors were 'bowing to the fashionable, the safe and the tasteful', while Lance Salway has described most winners as 'conventional, solemn, worthy and safe', and, more



1936
Cape

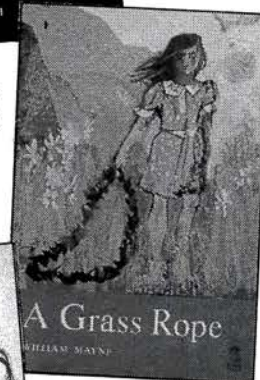


1941
Cape

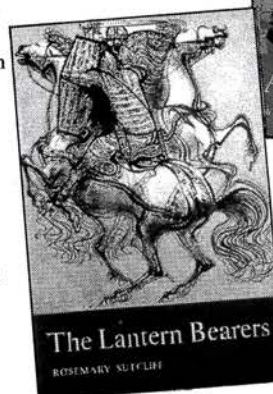


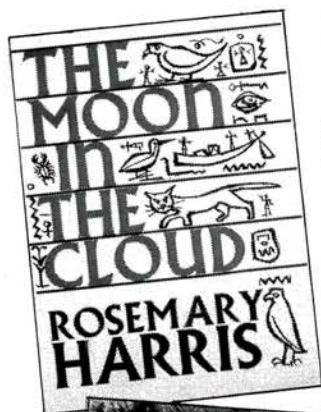
1954
OUP

1957
OUP

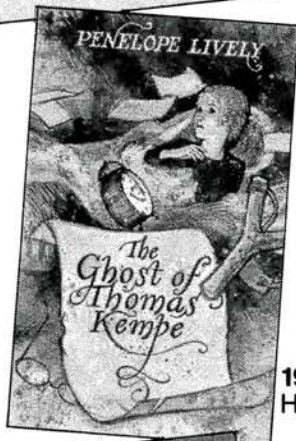


1959
OUP

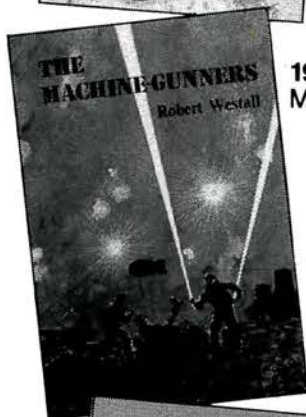




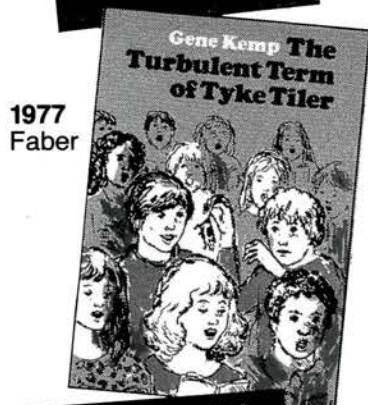
1968
Faber



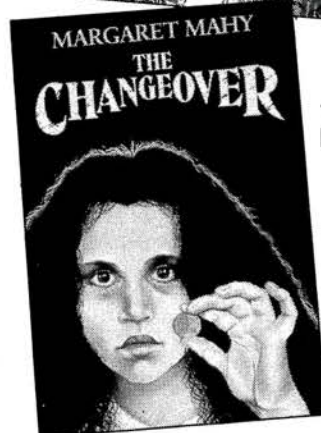
1973
Heinemann



1975
Macmillan



1977
Faber



1984
Dent



Keith Barker is Deputy Librarian at Westhill College, Birmingham. He has a special interest in children's literature and his most recent work *In the Realms of Gold: the story of the Carnegie Medal* is a history of the

medal to mark its 50th anniversary. *In the Realms of Gold* (0 86203 260 1, £4.95) is published by Julia MacRae in association with the Youth Libraries Group of the Library Association.

recently, Neil Philip has spoken of the 'sedate inoffensiveness' of the medal. It would be fair to say that, particularly in recent years, innovative children's books have been more likely to appear in the commended list rather than as medal winners. It should be remembered, however, that some outstanding books (and the purpose of the award is to honour an outstanding book not the best book of the year) have been Carnegie Medal winners, not the least among them *Tom's Midnight Garden* and *The Owl Service*. All children's book award lists contain some duds, books to which no child would give a second glance. It is a good party game to readjust any of these lists. However, as John Rowe Townsend has pointed out when speaking of the American Newbery Medal, even if it were possible to reshape the list by bringing in books that were somehow overlooked and removing weaker titles, 'no two people would agree on what books should be discarded or introduced'.

One of the most distinctive aspects of the Carnegie Medal is that any member of the Library Association can suggest up to three titles to the selection committee for consideration. This means that, theoretically at least, any of the several thousand titles published each year could be considered. This is in contrast to most children's book awards where the selectors rely on publishers to make submissions to them. In the event, each member of the selection committee will receive a list of around fifty titles (although a number of these are likely to have been strong contenders throughout the year). The committee members have to obtain (no free publisher's copies here!), read and assess these fifty titles in a couple of months, as well as the thirty or so titles on the list for the Kate Greenaway Medal, the Library Association's other children's book award, for illustration.

However, amid all this selection, how much are children involved or even considered? Children can be involved in the very early sifting of titles to be sent to the selection committee, either through individuals or through local authority librarians. The members of this committee are librarians who have daily contact with children and who are knowledgeable about children's books. Nevertheless, it has to be said that the criteria of the award, as stated each year in the Library Association's Year Book, are specifically literary and nowhere is popularity with children mentioned as being important. The guidelines, which the members of the selection committee are given each year, are based on a *Signal* article by Peter Hunt, the central argument of

which states that any type of critical theory produced for children's literature will have little or nothing to do with children. Perhaps the administrators of the Carnegie Medal should take note of the changes made to the criteria of the Other Award in recent years. These were altered from their original, rather grim form so that the first of them became that any winning book would 'be accessible, in form and content, to children and young people and will give pleasure and enjoyment'. And, indeed, is it possible to devise a children's book award which does not involve adults in some way, even if only in the administration and initial selection?

One aspect of the Carnegie Medal which has always been problematic has been publicity given to the award. Even today, fifty years after its first presentation, there are still large numbers of people knowledgeable about children's books who are unaware of the medal's existence. In some ways it will perhaps never make a big splash. For one thing, the award carries no monetary value and so is unlikely to be able to compete with big money spinners like the Booker McConnell prize. The type of book the Carnegie Medal generally recognises, hardback children's fiction, is not a large seller in ordinary bookshops and, apparently, according to the *Bookseller*, even the prize money given by Smarties to Gaffer Sampson's Luck made little difference to bookshop sales of that title in hardback. However, it would surely be possible to raise the awareness of teachers and librarians at least to the medal: the golden jubilee celebrations this year would seem an ideal way of doing this. Brian Alderson once described the Library Association's approach to publicity as primitive. Some might say this is a charitable way to describe the situation.

It has to be said in fairness to the Carnegie Medal that the criticisms described in this article are applicable to the majority of British children's book awards. The administrators of the medal have at least made attempts over the years to introduce new ideas, to alter the selection committee structure, to adapt the criteria. What are the criteria of the *Guardian*, *Whitbread* or *Smarties* awards? Do awards where publishers submit their own selection of books miss some masterpieces? Are the children's writers who make up the selection committees of a number of awards the most impartial judges of their peers' work? And is the Federation of Children's Book Groups Award chosen solely by children? Battered and bruised the Carnegie Medal may be but it is still, in its fiftieth year, relatively healthy. ●

Authorgraph No. 39

'I can remember sitting at a table peeling potatoes with one hand and writing a story with the other. I had an agent who said you could always elbow yourself out a pocket of time if you had to, and I do believe the more time you have the less you do with it.'

Joan Aiken was remembering – amazingly with pleasure – that period in her life when she was running a guest house in Cornwall, caring for two small children and a desperately ill husband, and writing to augment a precarious income. So her present lifestyle is not so surprising: she spends autumn to spring in New York, where her second husband is a professor of art at the City University, nipping back for Christmas, and the summer in their renovated 18th-century house, tucked into the edge of the ancient little town (familiar to Dido Twite) of Petworth in Sussex. It's not every grandmother's idea of gracefully easing up, but Joan Aiken, as long as she has an Adler typewriter waiting for her on either side of the Atlantic, is both stimulated and content.

And in many senses she has not moved far from her roots, neither literary nor geographical. Her father, the Pulitzer-winning poet and writer, Conrad Aiken, came to England in 1920 with her elder brother and sister, and Joan was born in Rye four years later, 'six houses down from where Henry James had lived ten years before'. Her parents divorced when she was about three, and her mother married the English writer Martin Armstrong; Aiken, who married twice more, was himself always crossing the Atlantic while Joan grew up in Armstrong's cottage in Sutton, a village close to Petworth. He was, she says, a nice stepfather and a civilised man, who never tried to supplant the children's real father – and who gave her a literary start by allowing her to draw on the backs of his royalty statements. It is also significant that both Armstrong and Aiken not only collected ghost stories but themselves wrote several classics that have been repeatedly anthologised throughout Joan's life.

Her Canadian mother had lost her money in the slump, so while Joan's brother and sister were at school and university, she, an MA graduate of McGill and Radcliffe, herself taught Joan until she was 12, when she went away to school in Oxford.

'My sister chose the school when she was at Somerville – she had been wretched at hers, sneered at for her American accent, and she resolved I shouldn't suffer – but of course I had never learnt to mix and it was a shock suddenly to go to boarding school. Indeed, I stopped growing, probably from the trauma of it.' (She is certainly

Joan Aiken



today a tiny soul, with the friendly, comfortable look of a slightly slimmer Mrs Pepperpot.) 'But Wychwood was a small quiet school, "self-governing" with a lot of committee meetings – very progressive for those days, except that the three things not covered by self-government were health, curriculum and deportment, which pretty well spanned the whole of life!'

Then, at 17, 'I disgraced my family by

not going to university, more or less deliberately failing my Oxford entrance.' World War Two had started, she had friends who had jobs in London, and university seemed threateningly like an extension of school. Ironically, her first job, with an evacuated branch of the BBC housed in a mansion in Goring Heath, outside Reading, 'built by the man who'd made HP sauce, very bizarre and weird, with a minstrel's gallery', was indeed just like boarding school all over again, and

consisted of going to the post on a bicycle and ruling lines on the back of index cards.

She clearly needed more skills, so went to a secretarial college (also evacuated) in Bucks, and on to a job with the United Nations, at that time setting up a London Information Office. 'It began as an offshoot of the Ministry of Information, but branched out on its own in a little house on the corner of Russell Square, about a dozen of us in a small office. It was a lovely job, great fun, dealing with all the exiled governments in London - de Gaulle, the Greeks, the Poles - and their press releases.'

Of course it was fun - she met and married the press officer. He was 'a very nice guy', 14 years older, but, looking back, she thinks not going to university and plunging into marriage at 20 made her 'miss having a little longer to grow up, time to look about'. Ten years later she was a young widow with a boy of three and a girl of five.

'My husband had been a journalist with Reuters and then Associated Press, so, thanks to the hard work of the NUJ, after he first fell ill he got severance pay, and we started running a guest house in Cornwall. He was thought to have had TB, and to be recovering, but after a couple of years his condition got worse and it was plain he had lung cancer.' He died in his mid 40s.

The magazine **Argosy** had taken some adult short stories she had written in Cornwall 'to get a bit of cash', so she wrote asking if they had a vacancy. They didn't but 'sort of made one', and she moved back to London and a full-time job. 'Luckily my brother's wife was running a little school for the children of divorced parents or whatever, so my children lived with her during the week and I had them at weekends, but of course I missed them horribly and we had a miserable time for about three years. The **Argosy** pay was low, but I wrote stories for magazines like **Everywoman** and **John Bull** - the short story market was stronger in those days - and so made some sort of living.'

When relatives offered rent-free accommodation in Sussex, **Argosy** generously agreed to her working a three-day week, but this also meant that when the relatives later wanted to move she and her family were out on a limb. It was then she found White Hart House, an old pub in Petworth's High Street, and an incredible bargain at £1800.

With a £300 loan from her mother as a deposit, and a £50 job lot of furniture, 'we were in clover, because the children could go to a lovely school in Midhurst just by getting on a bus, while I continued to go to London.' By this time, beginning to think that the short story was uneconomic, she was writing five-part serial thrillers for **Argosy**'s sister magazine, **Suspense**, and for **Everywoman**.

She left **Argosy** to write advertising copy for Campbell's soups at J. Walter

Thompson. 'Almost everyone I've met has worked there at some time! The girl I shared a room with invented "When a mother cares, it shows" and Brillo Soap Pads, which must have made a fortune for someone.' But though the money was better it meant a daily 13 hours away from home, 'and my daughter was beginning to show signs of deprivation - they had had a tough childhood.'

So the breath-holding decision was taken to write full-time. '**The Wolves of Willoughby Chase** was the first book to make money for me. I'd actually done two chapters just before my husband was ill but had put it away. Abelard Schuman, who'd published some short stories in America, accepted it (called "Bonnie Green" then) but said it was too scary - could I prune it, take out the wolves? I said Never! My agent literally forgot it for a year, then apologised and sent it to Cape. It did quite well here, but after a lovely, whole-page review in **Time** it sold like mad in America, and so confirmed me in my mad resolution to freelance.

'Doubleday, who published **Wolves**, asked me (amazingly conveniently) about crime novels, so I interspersed children's books with thrillers. My adult books have never done fantastically well, but they make a nice alternative, an opportunity to change gear.' Even while she says this, that famous little head of the Mystery Writers' Association Award, with its black hair and floppy bow-tie, is sitting in the next room.

Her unflagging creative energy has not only made her prolific but communicates a boundless sense of pleasure. She starts to say that it's different now it's a serious profession, but then remembers how important it has always been that she sold. 'When writing for **Argosy** I eyed their requirements with the utmost intensity, producing exactly what I thought they would take - good training!

'Margery Allingham spoke of left- and right-hand writing, what you do for yourself and what you do to satisfy others: I suppose **Wolves** was for myself, and the **Dido** books - in fact, they're probably too self-indulgent, full of dialect and adult word-play. But children's books should be written on different levels, or there will be nothing for them if they read it again at a later

age.'

Her **Dido** books, with their blackly farcical Hanoverian plots and exuberantly invented language, are a headache for translators - 'I have a lovely Japanese translator who writes immense letters seeking exact meanings of, for instance, the Nantucket whaling terms' - and this time her German publishers have turned down **Dido and Pa** perhaps for being just a little *too* anti-German? But she brushes aside the current pressures other writers feel - to provide teenage novels, or a positive female image (**Dido**'s simply a natural), or tough social realism - maintaining that such demands would drive her to react perversely.

Her own favourites are her ghost stories and 'frivolous fantasies', and her fairy tales with a twist. Her new collection, **Past Eight O'Clock**, illustrated with Jan Piñkowski's silhouettes, this time chunkier cut-outs, is based on lullabies and dedicated to her baby granddaughter, Arabel (yes, after the Jackanory stories). Arabel is the child of the little girl who had **Black Hearts in Battersea** read to her every day after school, and whose criticisms were taken most seriously.

Seven years ago, after 20 years in White Hart House, she moved to a then-dilapidated, dark old house, several hundred yards and a whole world away - so secluded she had never realised it was there. Like Julius Goldstein, whom she married ten years ago and whom she had met through a chain of inter-connections that stretched back to Cornwall, it had been waiting for her, unknown. Julius found it, but it was she who knew they had to have it.

Now it's bright with white paint and polished wood, the walls covered in Julius's water-colours and the first steps in Joan's career in pastels. The lawn, bounded by an ancient, overgrown, low wall, hangs on the very edge of a steep little valley, and her attic study looks out on three sides to a green southern landscape that stretches to the far distant Hog's Back. This is her world. New York, with its old friends, its fine libraries and all its excitement, is only the place she goes to: Petworth is where she comes home. ●

Joan Aiken was interviewed by Stephanie Nettell. Photograph by Susan Witney.

Some of Joan Aiken's many books

(published by Cape in hardback and by Puffin in paperback)

Past Eight O'Clock, 0 224 02856 1, £7.50 (September 1986)

Black Hearts in Battersea, 0 224 60705 7, £4.95; 0 14 03.0345 9, £1.75 pbk

The Cuckoo Tree, 0 224 00514 6, £4.95; 0 14 03.0616 1, £2.25 pbk

Dido and Pa, 0 224 02364 0, £7.95

Night Birds on Nantucket, 0 224 60687 5, £5.95; 0 14 03.0346 4, £1.95 pbk

The Whispering Mountain, 0 224 61574 2, £5.95; 0 14 03.0460 6, £1.75 pbk

The Wolves of Willoughby Chase, 0 224 60004 4, £4.95; 0 14 03.0310 3, £1.75 pbk

Bridle the Wind, 0 224 02137 0, £6.95; 0 14 03.1896 8, £2.50 pbk (paperback reissued September 1986)

Go Saddle the Sea, 0 224 01546 X, £6.95; 0 14 03.1155 6, £1.50 pbk

Midnight is a Place, 0 224 00968 0, £6.95; 0 14 03.0836 9, 2.25 pbk

The Shadow Guests, 0 224 01797 7, £5.95; 0 14 03.1388 5, £1.95 pbk

The Kingdom Under the Sea, 0 224 61882 2, £6.95; 0 14 03.0641 2, £1.95 pbk

A Necklace of Raindrops, 0 224 61462 2, £6.95; 0 14 03.0754 0, £1.95 pbk

Tale of a One-way Street, 0 224 01158 8, £6.95; 0 14 03.1700 7, £1.95 pbk

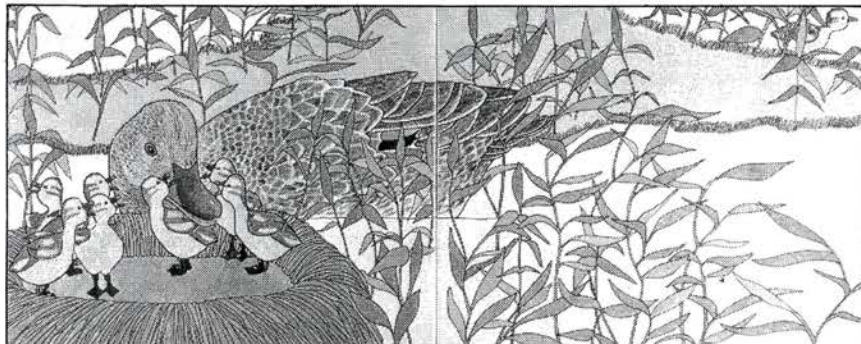
Arabel and Mortimer, 0 224 01765 9, £5.95

Tales of Arabel's Raven, 0 224 01059 X, £5.95

REVIEWS

Nursery/Infant

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.



Have You Seen My Duckling?

Nancy Tafuri, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.532 6, £1.95

'Have you seen my duckling?' an anxious mother duck asks a series of waterside creatures (and incidentally the reader) in turn, the words of this title question making up almost all the text. Much of the fun of this book is that if readers look closely they can see what the mallard cannot: her 'missing' baby is close by, enjoying exploring the lake. What is not said in the words reinforces the idea that here, pictures and text are an interdependent part of the storymaking. Further delights are added by the close-up illustrations of the animals. JB

Are you there, Bear?

Ron Maris, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.524 5, £1.75

A small boy's nocturnal exploration of the darkness of his bedroom with the aid of a torch, and his accompanying monologue, turn the mysteries of the gloom into a game of hide-and-seek and at the same time make a highly enjoyable story for beginning readers and for bedtime sharing with the very young. JB

Postman's Pat's Breezy Day

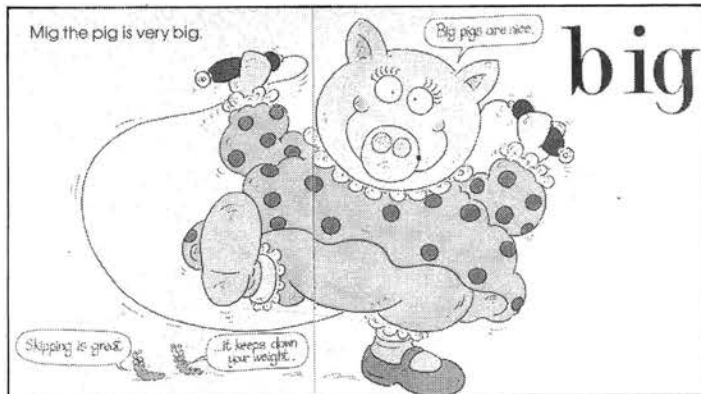
John Cuncliffe, ill. Celia Berridge, Hippo, 0 590 70537 7, £1.50

A strong wind blows down a tree which causes problems for Postman Pat on his delivery round. Thanks to Peter Fogg's assistance the road is finally cleared but that is only the start of Pat's troubles. No doubt all fans will delight in this latest paperback adventure of the ever popular TV star. JB

Mig the Pig

Colin and Jacqui Hawkins, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.491 5, £1.75

The flap page device is here used as an aid to a phonic game revolving around a zanily clad pig presented in cartoon style: each page changes the beginning of Mig's name to another word ending in 'ig' and two small green caterpillars provide a rhyming running commentary on the action and add to the fun. JB



'AHHH!' said Stork

Gerald Rose, Picturemacs, 0 333 41276 1, £2.25

A most welcome full-size paperback of a favourite story wherein a small white egg frustrates the efforts of a stork and his many jungle friends to break it. When it finally hatches itself, out pops - a crocodile! Brief, easy-to-read text and splendid bright vigorous story-telling pictures to delight learner readers. JB

What's the time, Mr Wolf?

Colin Hawkins, Picture Lions, 0 00 662571 1, £1.75

The question posed in the favourite playground game is the basis for this easy-to-read

and enjoyable book. A large comical wolf goes about his domestic chores by the clock but at mealtimes he seems to be leaping from the page to gobble up the reader. Plenty of scope for dramatic interpretation and audience participation and the huge print and bubble talk make it particularly suitable for beginner readers. JB

Teddybears and the Cold Cure

Susanna Gretz, Hippo, 0 590 70469 9, £1.50

In the latest adventure of Susanna Gretz's bears and the dalmatian, William catches a cold and his friends are not easily persuaded that he is really ill. But his loss of appetite and lack of interest in playing games convinces them and soon they are all ministering to him as he lies in bed. But the patient makes a rapid recovery when he realises that it is more fun to be well than ill. JB

Geraldine's Blanket

Holly Keller, Hippo, 0 590 70434 6, £1.50

Geraldine was firmly attached to the blanket her Auntie Bessie had given her when she



The doll's name was Rosa, and Geraldine loved her. "But I still want my blanket," she said.

was a baby. But when her mum and dad decided that it was time for Geraldine to give up her much-loved comforter, young Geraldine had rather different ideas and finally found a solution to which her parents had no answer. A beguilingly simple picture book which uses limited colour to great effect. JB

Grug at the Zoo

0 340 37609 0

Grug at the Snow

0 340 37608 2

Ted Prior, Hodder & Stoughton 95p each

The latest titles in a series of small square books which features a little conical hairy creature, Grug. In these two he dons his hat and skis and visits a snow-covered mountain, and gets to know the animals at the zoo. Brief texts accompany a series of well executed pictures providing an undemanding if somewhat unremarkable read. JB

Mark the Drummer-Boy

Dorothy Edwards, Magnet, 0 416 61860 X, £1.50

A companion volume to *The Old Man Who Sneezed*, this collection contains a dozen of Dorothy Edwards's short stories for the under-fives. Familiar things such as teddybears, ice-cream and toy trains are featured and the author's sure touch makes this a useful addition to the bookshelves of all involved with the very young. JB

Forget-Me-Not

Paul Rogers, ill. Celia Berridge, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.395 1, £1.75

A forgetful lion's trip to the seaside to visit his cousin provides an entertaining game

of hunt the missing items which Sidney mislays throughout his travels despite his 'list of everything'. The four lines of rhyming text per double page spread invite the reader to seek out the lost

articles in Celia Berridge's detailed and interestingly framed illustrations.

JB

Who Sank the Boat?

Pamela Allen, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11802 6, £2.95

Another variation on a familiar theme, this time **Mr Gumpy's Outing**. Here a succession of creatures take to the water till

the smallest and lightest proves one too many. Fetching pictures by Pamela Allen whose lighthearted line is perfect for the animals in the foreground and works surprisingly well with the back ground, too. CP

Infant/Junior

101 Things to do with a Baby

Jan Ormerod, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.447 8, £1.75

A baby catalogue with a difference portraying in a series of sequences of freeze frames of varied shapes and sizes the joys and pains of having a new baby in the family. In the acutely observed illustrations moments of playfulness, hilarity, frustration, jealousy and quiet domesticity involving mum and dad and older sister are beautifully captured. JB



'The burglar was so frightened at being chased by a baby that he dropped his bag and ran out of the house.' From **Avocado Baby**.

Avocado Baby

John Burningham, Picture Lions, 0 00 662591 6, £1.75

A long-awaited paperback of the much-loved tale of the anorexic infant who, when fed on a diet of avocado pears, becomes a super-baby performing such strong-man feats as bump starting the family car and moving the grand piano, not to mention tossing a pair of bullies into the pond. A delicious tall tale especially for all who love to indulge in their own private fantasies. JB

Libby, Oscar & Me

Bob Graham, Picture Lions, 0 00 662642 4, £1.75

Bob Graham has a special talent for showing what it is like to be a child: he writes about ordinary things with perception, affection and humour, qualities which he underlines and expands in his charming illustrations, here of Emily who has a passion for dressing up, and her pets Libby, the cat and Oscar, the dachshund. A first person, present tense narrative accompanies the pictures – great fun. JB

Special Care Babies

Althea, Dinosaur, 0 85122 543 8, £1.50

A little boy tells a story in the first person about his premature baby sister and the care she receives. Details about ventilators, tubes and nursing care are sensitively explained. Sharper issues like the baby in the next incubator who didn't survive aren't evaded. The humdrum implications of hospitalisation for the rest of the family aren't glossed over either ('It gets a bit boring').

Attention to text and pictures is characteristically careful. The book is sponsored by BLISS, the national charity for the newborn and should have a place in infant/first school classroom collections. CM

I'm Coming to Get You

Tony Ross, Puffin, 0 14 050.488 5, £1.75

The Bump in the Night

Anne Rockwell, Hippo Solos, 0 590 70455 9, £1.75

Two picture books which tantalise readers with glimpses of what's *nearly* very scary. Ross's superbly imaginative picture story uses kaleidoscopic and visual impact to show a frightening monster descending to earth. I've rarely seen perspective used so effectively in a book for the young. When the monster finally arrives, it's miniscule compared to a little boy's shoe! This is the continuation in visual form of the joke that children first encounter in 'Peek a Boo' games; it builds on the literary competences the lucky ones learned reading



He tinkered this and tinkered that and put the head on the body.

From **The Bump in the Night**.

Where's Spot? A must for sixes up.

Rockwell's story is slower in pace, and will appeal to sixes and sevens ready for their first extended independent text. Toby the Tinker is unafraid of all the rumours about the ghost in the castle. He braves it out, befriending the super-annuated ghoulie, with some moving results. Good, short, snappy chapters, usually two or three pages long. Excellent pictures, startling in their simplicity. Brisk, accessible text, with good attention to page and line breaks. CM



The Bear's Water Picnic

John Yeoman and Quentin Blake, Picturemacs, 0 333 41310 5, £2.25

The White Cat

Errol Le Cain, Picturemacs, 0 333 40833 0, £1.95

Two welcome paperback issues of picture books from

the seventies. When the pig, the squirrel, the hedgehog and the hen all set out for a picnic, they're irritated by the frogs who annoy them. But, in the end, these same frogs save the day. As in **Mr Gumpy's Outing**, the young enjoy the cumulative nature of the tale, and the way in which a clever author makes the unexpected happen. Blake's pictures are at their vintage best. Each creature is cleverly characterised and the illustrations give the tale its flow.

Le Cain's stunning pictures complement his own retelling of the classic tale of the White Cat, the ingenious creature who wheedles her way into a King's favour. This is one of the tales with a handsome third son, who wins his riches by stealth. Le Cain's pictures show simultaneous events in an imaginative way. A splendid production. CM

Alistair's Elephant

Marilyn Sadler, ill. Roger Bollen, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11727 5, £2.95

Alistair, again, now trying to shake off several tons of tusker determined to be his pet. In the end he succeeds – only to find a giraffe has replaced it. Amiable, deadpan text by Marilyn Sadler and clear, bright pictures by Roger Bollen. Good stuff, but too close to Stephen Kellogg's **The Boy Who Was Followed Home** for comfort. Don't picture-book people read other picture books? CP

The Jumping Boy

Anna Robinson and Wendy Lewis, Punjabi translation by Nancy Sandhu, Mantra, 0 947679 03 0, £3.50

Fire Across the Street

Manju Gregory, Bengali translation by Taleya Rehman, Mantra, 0 947679 05 7, £3.50

A welcome initiative in the growing range of dual language texts. **The Jumping Boy**, though, would have benefited from some sparkier writing. Some good use of pictures and perspective in the telling of the tale of a little boy who won't be still. Both texts are clear and well paced.

More exciting is **Fire Across the Street**, about a child who saves the day. I like the way in which the bustle of a lively multi-cultural community is caught in pictures and text. The two texts on one page often make the book look 'cramped'. My colleague Sabitha Chanda tells me that some (not all) of the points in the story lose impact by too literal translation into Bengali.

They are both sturdily produced and also available in English-only editions. CM



Scruff

Gerald Rose, Magnet, 0 416 53170 9, £1.75

Scruff the puppy dog, and everybody around him, smells a strange smell. . . . It seems to follow Scruff around. The young reader will enjoy getting the joke before any of the characters in this lively and cleverly shaped tale. As in all Rose's work, the play between text and pictures is witty. My co-readers (sixes and rising sevens) read it first to get the story; then again to see how the pictures, with their wealth of detail, made it work. CM

Scruff shaking himself dry.

The Bedspread

Sylvia Fair, Macmillan, 0 333 41851 4, £2.25

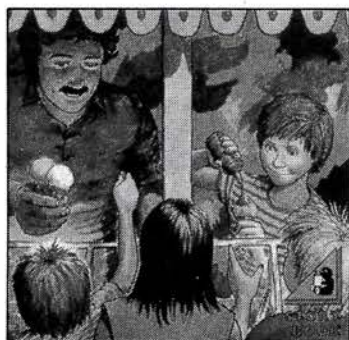
A genuine original – distinctive, fresh and full of charm. Two old ladies tackle the blankness of a bedspread they view from either end of the same bed and from either end of opposing temperaments. The bedspread ends up as a museum piece – a fate that's a long way off for this book with its combination of delicate wash, bold stitchery and leisurely, beguiling storyline. A minor classic. CP

Junior/Middle

Mr. Berry's Ice Cream Parlour

Jennifer Zabel, ill. Patricia MacCarthy, Puffin, 0 14 03.1792 9, £1.50

Carl's rather prosaic life changes when Mr. Berry first lets him help in the ice cream parlour – then becomes his stepfather. A gifted writer shows the excitement of changing lives through such artless techniques as dialogue and the interplay of chapters. Like Jan Mark, she can show children and grown ups edging



up to one another, slowly making relationships. Eights to elevens will hear all that from the voices on the page. A good addition to classroom collections. CM

The Hare and the Tortoise

Caroline Castle, ill. Peter Weevers, Piccolo Picture Classics, 0 330 29179 3, £1.50

An understated and finely controlled retelling of the classic tale which shows us that 'slow and steady wins the

race'. It's distinguished by the close attention to text layout which characterises this series and by the exceptionally delicate pictures. Pastel blues, violets and crimsons, giving a pastoral but never fey tincture to the tale. Sevens to tens, if given time, will linger long over such episodes as the artist's evocation of Hare's dream: lovely. CM

Middle/Secondary

The Boy from Sula

Lavinia Derwent, Canongate Kelpie, 0 86241 111 4, £1.80

This is an inoffensive sequitur to earlier classics, such as *Sula* and *Return to Sula*, featuring the motley crew of Magnus Macduff, Duke, Gran and Jinty. Household names doubtless to followers of the earlier adventures, to newcomers precis as follows. Magnus has a rare talent as an artist, which needs to be nurtured by freedom on the wild island of Sula. This episode has the topical theme of London property shark arriving to threaten the peace and isolation of the place by erecting a Butlin-style fun palace. Unfortunately he fails, so it doesn't look as if the next one in the series will be any livelier either. BB

The Smartest Man in Ireland

Mollie Hunter, Magnet, 0 416 52890 2, £1.50

If you can bear to penetrate the migraine-inducing print size and overcome your disgust at the shoddy grade of rough paper used in producing this Magnet paperback –



Illustration by Charles Keeping, from *The Smartest Man in Ireland*.

shame, surely! – then you, like me, might find the effort worthwhile. The story is light, amusing and very readable, with some exquisitely relaxed lines which paint our Irish hero in words that an instant polaroid couldn't match. 'Every bone in his body was lazy and he never did a stroke of work if he could help it, but all the same, he had a great opinion of himself.' Naturally, there's trouble with the leprechauns as Patrick Kentigern Keenan (the title when this was first

paperbacked in Puffin) tries to prove his boast that 'I'm the smartest man in all Ireland'. BB

Madame Guillotine

0 583 30914 3

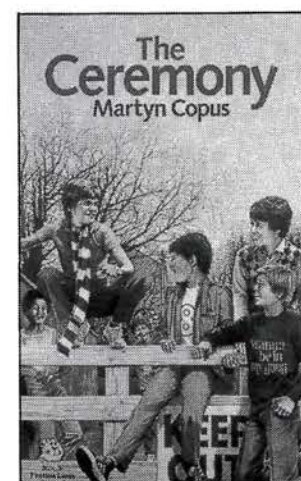
The Last Invasion

0 583 30915 1

Simon Farrell and Jon Sutherland, Dragon Grafton, £1.95 each

These two titles are part of a clever new series from Dragon Grafton, which, depending upon response, seems likely to expand rapidly. In fact, the joint authors make an active request for youngsters to submit their own favourite periods of history as subjects for future 'gamebooks'. The idea has much to commend it – it demands a response and an involvement from the young reader (top junior/early secondary); the 'playing a game' aspect has an inevitable appeal and, in a very simplified way, the child does learn some background to specific periods of history. I feel that anything that encourages children to become involved in real historical evidence, even in this basic, secondhand manner, can only foster their

ability in later life to weigh facts and become capable in any form of analysis and decision-making. BB



The Ceremony

Martyn Copus, Fontana, 0 00 672598 8, £1.75

Seven short 'school' stories in this collection written by Martyn Copus, a name, I must admit, that I haven't come across before. The initial tale, 'The Ceremony' is a clever exposition of the peer group pressures encountered by

impressionable youngsters at every stage of their school life. 'Everyone wanted to be in their year gang – it was the best thing that could happen to you.' The lure of the secret initiation ceremony is the simple thread on which the story is hung, building up the tension nicely, with a little bit left for a 'twist' at the end. The other stories are well up to this standard, milking the comic opportunities offered by the classroom to produce a superior set of adolescent adventures. BB

The Computer Nut

Betsy Byars, Puffin,
0 14 03.1876 3, £1.50

Middle-class consumption from the prolific Betsy Byars, dialogue suspended in some mid-Atlantic time vacuum, and action set in the world of summer 'computer camps' and 'your dad's going to be on TV after this commercial' sequences. Not exactly 'relevant' to the average British reader. The story trots on at a nice pace, ideal for classroom reading aloud. The two-year gap, from hardback (Viking Kestrel) to paper, may have dated the material; in my experience the edge has gone from the child-centred computer boom (rip-off?) and neglected hardware is threatening to become as extinct as the skateboard or the dinosaur. BB

The Runaway

Gillian Cross, Magnet,
0 416 52100 2, £1.75

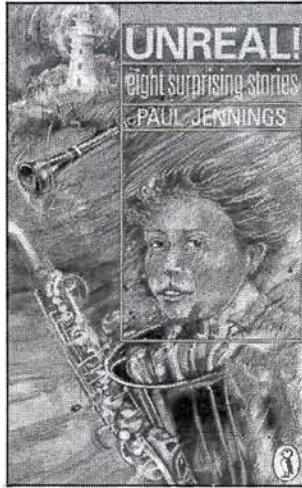
Denny has lost his parents in an accident and lives with Gran, under somewhat neglected circumstances, in a council flat. When Gran is taken ill and has to go into hospital, the immediate prospects for Denny aren't appealing. When the suited 'lady from the Council' arrives, obviously to place Denny in the local children's home, the time for action has arrived. Armed with Gran's £5 rent money and haunted by the apparition of Bouncer Bradley, the area's resident bully, Denny goes 'on the run'. Nachtar Singh, from a totally different environment, proves to be an unlikely ally and friend in his adventures. Contrived and unbelievable in any social realism sense, but taken purely as one-level fiction, it makes a very readable and enjoyable story. BB

Fray

T. R. Burch, Knight,
0 340 39012 3, £1.50

Fray has had a row with the Warden of the local Home, punched him in the face and absconded, because 'he was fed up with being treated like a thing that didn't matter, didn't think, didn't feel...'. Where to go? Well, Aunt Elsie had once given him a bag of sweets, when he was four... Honest, that's what it says.

The discovery of a murder victim and the boy's fear that the murderer will pursue and kill him, is a combination usually guaranteed to give a story some life. Here, unfortunately, it only leads into a meandering pretentiousness as though the young reader is being dropped pearls of fiction, to be polished not eaten. BB



Unreal

Paul Jennings, Puffin,
0 14 03.1965 1, £1.50

Any story collection with titles like 'Without a Shirt', 'Lucky Lips', 'Cow Dung Custard' and 'Wunderpants' is sure to attract some attention. There are eight 'surprising stories' in this first book by an Australian writer and they are certainly very bizarre and jokey. They ought to appeal to most tastes in the upper junior/lower secondary range and read aloud well.

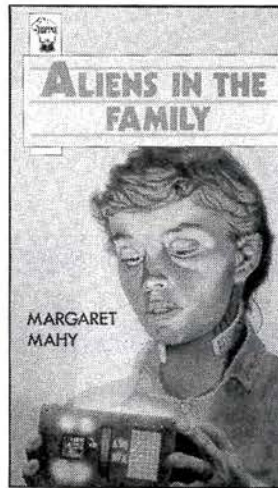
The custard in question is a fatal manure mixture created by Greg's dad, which brings horrific consequences to the whole neighbourhood, but in the end it's an ill-wind that proves lucrative! As for the wunderpants, they're a home-spun creation fabricated out of a scrap of material printed with a fairy design. They don't half make a pet mouse run through...! DB

The Three Detectives and the Missing Superstar

Simon Brett, Hippo,
0 590 70503 X, £1.50

Old hands might sense a whiff of formula writing in this first children's book by a well-known writer for adults. The missing megastar and the pop-music scene background adds teenage interest to an otherwise familiar storyline.

Dazzleman, already noted for his eccentricity and secrecy, disappears in odd circumstances. Emma, Stevie and Marcus unearth facts about his past, of course, and Dazzleman's gloss loses a lot of its lustre – really he's a boring, fraudulent old has-been! A copy in the library shouldn't do too much harm. I bet more 'Three Detectives' adventures follow. DB

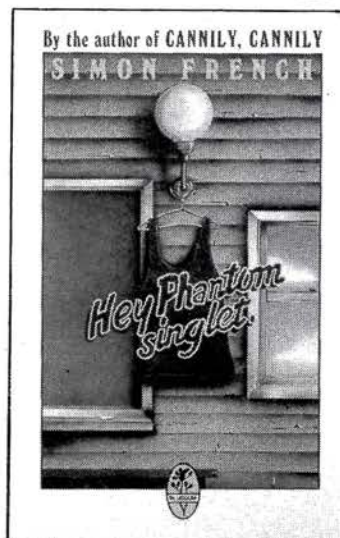


Aliens in the Family

Margaret Mahy, Hippo,
0 590 70557 1, £1.50

There's a good deal of familiar Mahy territory here, in a book which is certainly intellectually stimulating and philosophically wise. But, be warned, experienced readers might be the only ones to assault the rather bewildering introduction without assistance.

The 'patchwork family' of a man and wife and their three children from previous marriages are together as an uneasy unit for the first time – alien to each other. When Bond, a real alien, part of their past as well as of their future, blunders into this fragile situation he brings trouble. However, there is also something positive; finally the family are able to 'see one another very clearly and talk together like friends straight away, with no worry about the past'. They have reached the 'beginning place' the father dreamed of. I liked it. DB



Hey Phantom Singlet

Simon French,
Bluegum, 0 207 15175 X,
£1.95

Love the cover; more please. The author was still at school when he wrote this. I haven't read his second novel *Cannily*, mentioned in the 1982 *Guardian* Award. I quite

liked this book and its five illustrations. It's easy reading, deftly suggests the concerns of a few adults and presents 13-year-old Math's experience with a light touch. He's temporarily fatherless – so a scrap, losing an adult friend and running away from camp are in the context of his uncertainty about what everything means. You might persuade non-reading boys to pick this up. It could be a starting-point for discussing families and friendship. TD

Time Rope

0 582 25092 7

Three Against the World

0 582 25093 5

At War with Tomorrow

0 582 25094 3

The Metro Gangs Attack

0 582 25095 1

Robert Leeson,
Longman Knockouts,
£1.40 each pbk

A science fiction series, presumably aiming to keep less avid readers going. I hope it works. There's plenty of scope for involvement: three main characters of our time (one female – white, two males – one black, one white) swept up by a time experiment of the future, which sends them back to Regency England, the Spanish Civil War, Cimarron rebellions – and forwards to the political and technological battlegrounds of 2034, where further characters have their own relationships and tensions. If that sounds complicated, it is. Will the cliffhangers and the individual stories within the serial hold readers? Does their viewing experience enable them to cope with rapid inter-cutting? Can they be encouraged to skip – as I did? Less interested in *The Time Annexe* and its researchers than in *Fee*, *Tod* and *Roller*, I followed *them* closely for two books and merely skimmed the rest. Four strong covers and the usual Knockouts spines; it's so important sometimes to display books face out. TD

A Stitch in Time

Penelope Lively, Puffin,
0 14 03.1975 0, £1.75

Is one time superimposed upon another? Does time leak away? Is it possible for a person to change in the time of just on holiday by the sea? Maria, an only child, settles herself for a quiet and uneventful holiday with her exceptionally conventional parents. They approve wholeheartedly of the Regency holiday house, comfortably furnished with Victoriana. Maria approves also and does not expect excitement. She has developed a habit of talking to things, a far more

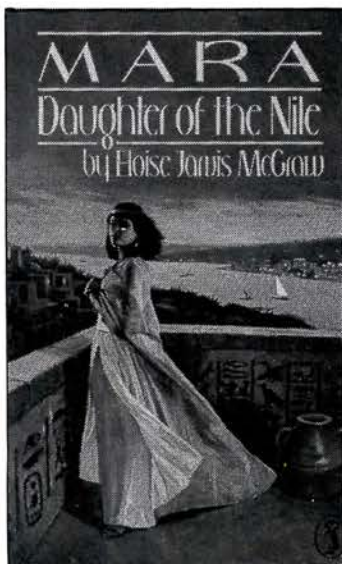
productive kind of conversation than any she attempts to conduct with her parents. Her chief conversational companion becomes the holiday house cat. 'Challenged' by the cat she makes friends with the boy in the hotel next door and together they discover the

ancient world of Lyme Regis and its ammonites. Maria also discovers a child of her own age who lived just a hundred years before, who embroidered a sampler and collected fossils. The child, Harriet, is not a ghost but a haunting idea that pursues Maria throughout the holiday.

Harriet's gentle haunting matches the tone of the book. Although there are noisy children and sea-side adventures there is a control in all that is told as it slips gently past. There is also a delightfully subtle sense of humour, accessible only to the more sophisticated young

readers, ("No children or dogs' say a notice. 'You might as well say No Rain or Earthquakes' thinks Maria.") or those who can be objective about the way children are treated as pawns by adults. CL

Older Readers



Mara, Daughter of the Nile

Eloise Jarvis McGraw, Puffin, 0 14 03.1929 8, £1.95

The New York Times said: 'The vigor of their thoughts, emotions and actions lends an

appeal beyond that of historical fiction.' That puts a few authors in their place. This author dedicated *Mara* to someone 'who is my idea of all an editor should be'. Uh-huh. Who didn't edit Chapter 1? The cover has an appeal new to Puffin (heroine breathes the wind, terrace over the Nile, stormy sunset). Why resurrect this 1953 romance? Scraping the barrel for resourceful female characters? Teen-appeal? Bridging a gap between Kemp/Kaye/Blume and Virago/Women's Press?

I'm a sucker for books, including historical, but I had trouble with *Nekonkh*, sighing explosively while chewing his lip. Also with the formula for sense of period. The following which illustrate the combination all appear on page 9: 'So there you are, Miss Blue-Eyed Good-for-Nothing!' – twentieth-century colloquial punch; 'Aye, aye, so wish we all.' – archaism; 'Hai-ai!' – it's ancient Egypt, see. I finished it. Maybe it fills a gap. Between Scotland losing and me falling asleep, I recall. TD

The House in Norham Gardens

Penelope Lively, Puffin, 0 14 03.1976 X, £1.95

Do you know that feeling of gratitude to an author – when you're so glad to have read a book and to have it as part of you? Why didn't I read this years ago? How can I share it with teenagers? The writing is rich – and accessible. I think it reads aloud very well. In one sense, the pace is slow but you're swept along by technique – intercutting, episodes, changes of focus. I shan't attempt to give you the story (please read it) but here are some of the qualities: strength and wisdom in old age; space for people to grow; valuing the past as a context for our presence and, somehow, for its own needs; alertness to the present, with discrimination about its demands; and, especially, the intelligence, naturalness and generosity of Clare (14) whose perspective we have on events and people. A warm book, intriguing, questioning, funny, reassuring. Private? Perhaps, but it's not a fragile book.

Read it with 30 people – there'll be a group experience and 31 individual gains. TD

Just Good Friends

Jane O'Connor, Puffin Plus, 0 14 03.1822 4, £1.95

Joss says 'I think I like boundaries'; but with a father seemingly having an affair with one of his students, an anxious mother, a crush on a local Adonis and a sexually fixated (formerly platonic) male friend, the fences and boundaries that she likes so much appear to be collapsing. The book's elder statesman character, Weezie Trilling, puts her finger on the button – 'People can have many different kinds of attachments, you know. And they don't always fall into neat categories.'

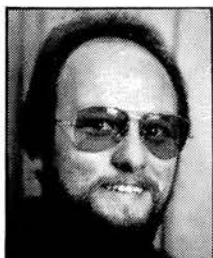
So, there we are, problems solved! It was very readable even though not much happened. Recommended for mid-secondary, especially girls. ●

DB

Reviewers in this issue



Jill Bennett is currently teaching in a Junior class in Middlesex. She is the compiler of *Learning to Read with Picture Books*.



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



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



Terry Downie is the English Editor at the Resources for Learning Development Unit in Avon.



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



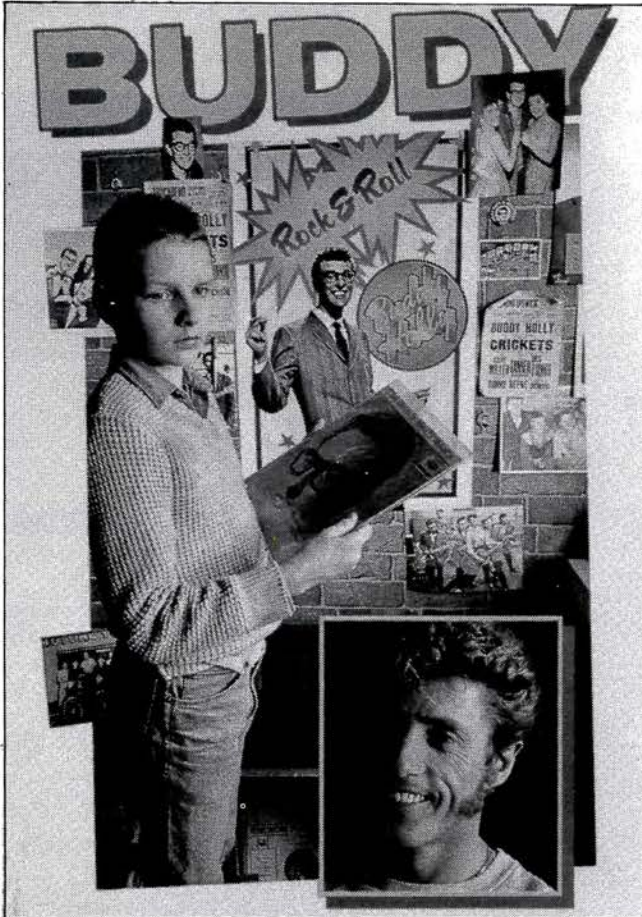
Colin Mills is in the Division of Teaching Studies at Worcester College where he helps run a Diploma in Children's Literature.



Chris Powling, until recently a Primary Head, is now Senior Lecturer at King Alfred's College, Winchester, and a well-known author of children's books.

SOUND & VISION

Buddy makes it to primetime



Hinton's own version of his teenage novel was so well received when it was shown on BBC Schools TV earlier this year that it will now be shown in 'kids primetime'. The first of five 20-minute episodes starts on Tuesday, 9th September at 6.50 pm. Nigel Hinton says that Roger Daltrey enjoyed playing Buddy's dad so much (he prepared for the part by reading the novel backstage at last year's Live Aid concert!) that he'd like to do a sequel. Puffin Plus have a special tie-in edition ready in good time.

COMING THIS AUTUMN —

The Antelope Company returns

The Lilliputian ship's company first seen last winter in *Return of the Antelope* will be back on our screens in October/December. The Willis Hall screenplay will again be adapted by him as a book; *The Antelope Company Ashore* will be published by Bodley Head (0 370 30775 5, £5.50) in September.

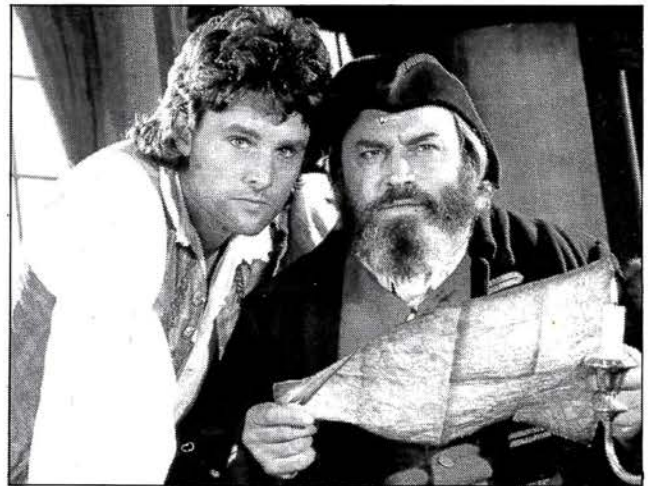
The Cuckoo Sister

Vivien Alcock's story of Kate who, until she was five believed she was an only child and then discovered she had

an older sister, is being filmed this summer in Hampstead and should be transmitted in the autumn. The Producer is Paul Stone of *Box of Delights* and *Running Scared* and many other successful TV versions of children's books.

The Worst Witch

Also currently filming is a one-hour film for independent television based on Jill Murphy's popular series. Diana Rigg stars as Miss Hardbroom and Fairuza Balk (from *Return to Oz*) plays Mildred Hubble. The plan is to make this an ITV Hallowe'en Special this October.



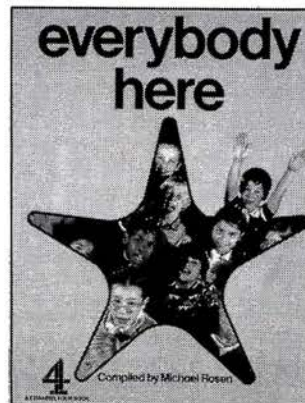
Christopher Guard and Brian Blessed.

A classic revisited

Treasure Island has held a peculiar fascination for many writers. The latest variation/extension of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic tale is *Return to Treasure Island*, ten hours of early Saturday evening television time (the Robin Hood slot) starting on 5th July (ITV) with a two-hour episode. Six one-hour episodes will follow and on 23rd August comes the grand two-hour conclusion.

The story, according to John Goldsmith, has Jim Hawkins, now 22 and just down from Oxford, embarking on another voyage (to the West Indies) with Squire Trelawney, Long John Silver and all his old shipmates from the *Hispaniola*. Brian Blessed has the wooden leg and the parrot; Christopher Guard is Jim.

The novel version of *Return to Treasure Island* is also written by John Goldsmith and published by Pan on the adult list — treasure-hunting is for grown-ups these days it seems. The mutiny, treachery, danger and romance (watch out for the beautiful Isabella Zorillo) we are promised must be strong stuff. You have been warned.



Everybody Here — Again!

Nine episodes selected from the two previous series of this lively multi-cultural programme. Mike Rosen appears — so do lots of children. The Bodley Head 'book of the series' *Everybody Here* also by Mike Rosen, (0 370 30944 8, £3.95) is available: stories, songs, rhymes, games, jokes, things to do. The first episode goes out on Channel Four on Sunday, August 10th at 2.00 pm.

Books on Schools TV

Middle English (Thames) feature a dramatisation of Betsy Byars' *The Night Swimmers* starting on Tuesday, 30th September at 11.44 am with a repeat on Thursday at 11.03 am. *The Night Swimmers* will be followed by a book programme on Betsy Byars later in the term.

Also promised — two dramas by Roger McGough and an original series by Gene Kemp.

Time for a Story

The Spring term series of this entertaining programme introduced by Bill Oddie will be repeated this Autumn starting on Monday, 15th September with a repeat on Thursdays. Stories by Hiawyn Oram, Tony Ross, Hazel Townson and Naomi Lewis.

Teacher's booklets available soon. Pupils' books and sound cassettes from Mercury Music Ltd, Time for a Story, P O Box 194, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 8TZ, tel: 0732 883261. ●



eureka

It's science for infants

In May over 3,000 children, all between four and seven, attended an event designed to show how first-hand experience and information books can and must go hand in hand from the earliest years.

Pat Triggs reports.

The event lasted for two weeks. The children came from 26 schools in Avon – in many cases teachers and parents accompanied the whole school or infant department – and were invited to have hands-on experience of a variety of science-based activities devised around a number of themes: mirrors, air, the skeleton, taste, smell, bees, eggs. Each activity had its own area and its own associated books. Illustrations, in some cases whole pages or spreads from some books, were enlarged (with permission) to provide explanation, demonstration or suggestions for what to do or look at. The emphasis was on everyday things, and activities involved only materials which are easily available.

The children came in groups and stayed for about 75 minutes. Their visit began with a story; everyone gathered together for a lively telling – with demonstration – of a version of the Archimedes story. This was followed by a brief introduction to two sorts of books: 'Story books' and 'True books about real things'. Then, before their own exploration of the activities, adults and children joined together in some prediction and problem solving which involved bonking a very original percussion frame and discovering that we don't all mean the same thing when we use the same words. At the end of every session everyone came together again for a puppet show, 'Sky High', with a storyline which included the kind of subjects that could be included in a topic on Air. It also posed a problem for the children: sorting out which of the puppet characters could only appear in a story book (Superman, the Snowman) and which could be found in a 'true book about real things'.

Response to the event has been enthusiastic from teachers and children. Although children were involved, **Eureka** was also designed as an in-service activity for teachers.



Infants enjoying bonking the percussion frame at Eureka. Photo, Sue Stops.

I talked to Sue Stops and Chris Ollerenshaw, the two teachers who devised, created and presented **Eureka**, about how they went about choosing the books to accompany the events. They were unanimous that it had not been easy. 'There are very few books which are really excellent; far too many either under- or over-estimate the ability of children in this age range.' And the availability of titles over the topics they had chosen to highlight varied enormously. 'There's quite a lot on the senses and plants, animals, insects – in fact all the natural history, stuff; but we could find very little on things like mirrors and light. Books on physical science are practically non-existent – there are enormous gaps to be filled by enterprising publishers.'

Science for infants is about active enquiry. Many books were rejected for being 'too recipe-based'; they told the children what to do to find answers, told them what answers they should find. A 'good' book is one which suggests starting points but doesn't give all the answers, one which has a problem-solving approach. If this is so, why are so many books prescriptive rather than open-ended? The clue to this seems to lie in the assumptions authors and publishers

make about *who* a book is for and *how* it will be used. Are books for teachers or children? What role does the teacher play?

If you assume that children will be using these books with no support from an adult then the 'recipe' approach is inevitable. For the organisers of **Eureka** books are a support for the teaching process. Teachers must have read the books, and know what they have to offer. The teachers builds a framework within which successful enquiry can happen, ensures that appropriate materials are available to be 'discovered', creates an atmosphere in which failure is greeted positively. There is no expectation that the books will do the job alone.

As well as starting things off (and this can happen through picture books as well as non-fiction) books are needed to support observations and assist identification. For all these purposes the quality of illustration is crucial. Pictures for infants should be easy to 'read', should tell children who have a less than complete mastery of text what they need to know.

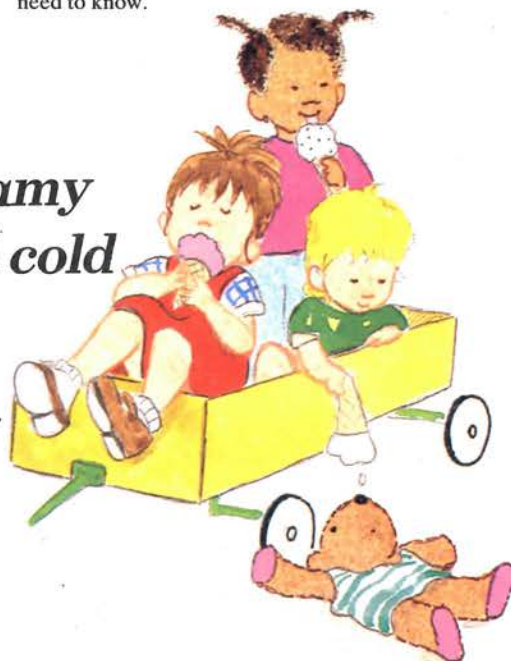
Illustrations by Lisa Kopper from *What's That Taste?* (Franklin Watts).

fresh



*creamy
and cold*

*crisp
and juicy*



From the many books considered, these are some which were chosen for Eureka.

STARTING POINTS

What's That series

Kate Petty and Lisa Kopper, Franklin Watts, £2.95 each

Colour?, 0 86313 386 X

Taste?, 0 86313 384 3

Noise?, 0 86313 383 5

A series for the youngest which deals in familiar experiences. The emphasis is on the language we use to describe and define events – good for investigating and checking what we mean when we say something. The text is excellently complemented by Lisa Kopper's expressive illustrations. **Taste?** is packed with starting points for going into concepts like sweet, sour, salty, bitter, savoury, hot (meaning peppery) and so on. Five more titles in series.

Thinkabout series

Henry Pluckrose, photography Chris Fairclough, Franklin Watts, £4.95 each

Tasting, 0 86313 277 4

Touching, 0 86313 276 6

Smelling, 0 86313 278 2

Excellent photographs and a text which covers similar ground to the **What's That** series. Here though, children are more directly engaged by being encouraged to answer questions, make choices, even project into unknown experience. 'Can you imagine what it would be like to touch the trunk of an elephant?' **What's That Taste?** states 'A drink of water has no taste at all' while **Thinkabout Tasting** asks 'Does water have a taste?' A neat illustration of two different approaches to the reader – the second of which leaves room for more speculation. Two more titles in series.

Littlebody Books

Susan Baker, ill. Joanna Stubbs, Macdonald 345, £2.50 each

huff puff blow, 0 356 09957 1

eat drink grow, 0 356 09958 X

eyes, 0 356 07831 0

This series, which seems to have been designed for pre-school children and their parents, is useful for the classroom. The books start firmly with the child's own everyday experience, and deal with (quite advanced) scientific concepts in a way which, while not underestimating children's capabilities, uses familiar accessible language. **huff puff blow** is particularly successful in dealing with air and breathing; it finishes with some things to try – blowing bubbles, whirling windmills, cooling hot drinks, warming cold fingers – which could lead to more enquiry. Three more titles in the series.

DOING THINGS

Starters Science series

Albert James, different illustrators, Macdonald, 95p each pbk

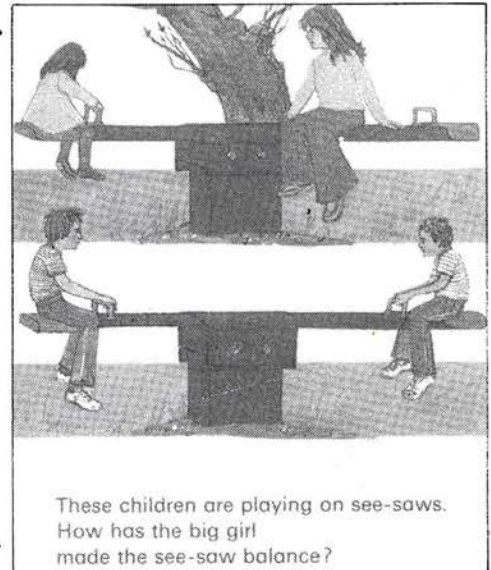
Balancing Things, 0 356 09284 4

Strong and Weak, 0 356 09277 1

Wheels, 0 356 09276 3

Wet and Dry, 0 356 09285 2

Published first in 1973, this is a series that is still to be recommended for getting it more right than many more recent titles. The illustrations, never the series' strongest point, have aged a little in 13 years – mini-skirts, flared trousers and platform shoes are all visible – but the steps in developing understanding are taken at the right speed for infants. The approach is 'almost recipe but not quite'; activities are suggested but followed by open-ended questions and no answers. Teachers following a problem-solving approach find this a useful support for children experiencing failure or running out of ideas. With detailed knowledge of the books, it's possible to say with confidence, 'Didn't that work? See if you can find some ideas in one of our books.' In this way book search becomes a natural adjunct to scientific enquiry. Lots of fun activities using familiar materials; doing things, handling materials, trying things out, observing, collecting, are all encouraged. A simple index. Notes for parents and teachers. Ten titles in the series and, of course, terrific value at the price.



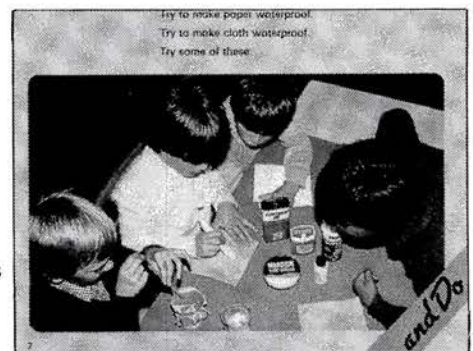
These children are playing on see-saws. How has the big girl made the see-saw balance?

From **Balancing Things**.



This tent keeps out the rain.

The cloth has been made waterproof.



From **Wet and Dry**.

Read and Do series

Doug Kincaid and Peter Coles, Arnold-Wheaton, £1.65 each pbk

Eyes and Looking, 0 08 026411 5

Touch and Feel, 0 08 026408 5

Ears and Hearing, 0 08 026409 3

Taste and Smell, 0 08 026410 7

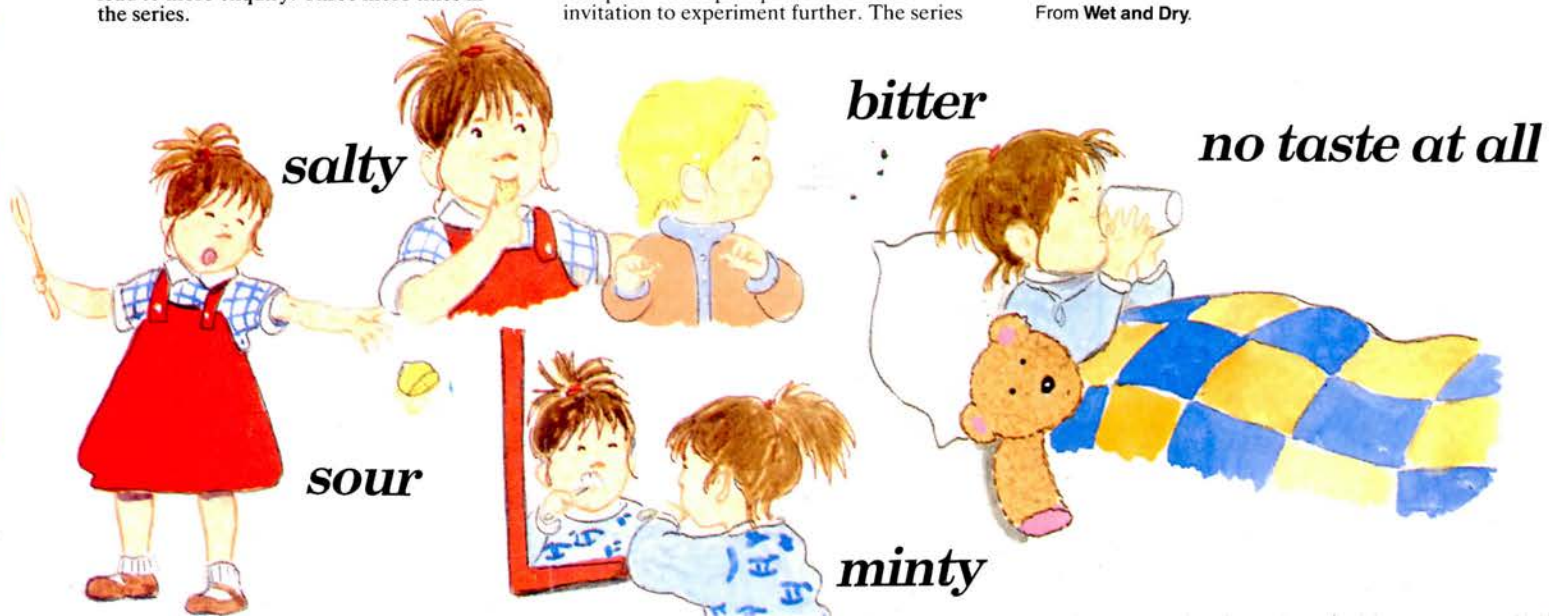
Light and Dark, 0 08 030586 5

Wet and Dry, 0 08 030590 3

Hot and Cold, 0 08 030584 9

Quiet and Loud, 0 08 030588 1

A simple design formula (left-hand page offers information, right-hand page suggests things to do) with excellent, readable photographs makes this a very good series indeed. Again the approach is 'recipe but not quite' with open questions and an invitation to experiment further. The series



is very attractive visually with a text designed for beginner readers. The photographs are particularly well-chosen to reflect our multi-cultural society – a welcome bonus.

Science Spirals

Julie Fitzpatrick, ill. Sara Silcock, Hamish Hamilton, £4.50 each

In the Air, 0 241 11205 2

Mirrors, 0 241 11207 9

This wasn't a first-choice series for **Eureka** – it's too recipe-based for an open-ended problem-solving approach. An investigation of air starts not with 'Let's catch some air. How could we do it?', but with 'Make a bag-on-a-stick like this.' Making kites and parachutes is similarly prescriptive and narrow. That said, it was included because it covered topics like air and mirrors not well served in other books and because it contained good ideas for teachers about where to begin and what might be done. Children might consult it to check on or extend their own experimentation *after* they have got started.

Usborne First Science

Science Surprises, Gaby Waters, ill. Graham Round, 0 86020 914 8, £1.75

Usborne's usual crowded, lively pages. All recipe-based experiments but lots of fun. Designed with home in mind but useful for school. 'Further explanations' provides additional scientific information for supporting adults. Good index.

What happens when you series

Eat?, Joy Richardson, ill. Colin and Moira Maclean, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10969 8, £2.95

There are some things you can't discover by experimenting; that's when books really come into their own. This series is very accessible with very clear drawings and everyday vocabulary. 'Inside the intestines the walls are very wrinkled.' Suggestions for experiments to illustrate some of the digestive processes.

MIRROR BOOKS

Annette, ill. Navah Haber-Schaim, 0 233 96339 1

Make a Bigger Puddle, Make a Smaller Worm, 0 233 96337 5

Another, Another, Another and More, 0 233 96644 7

Marion Walter, Deutsch, £3.95 each

(In paperback, **The Magic Mirror Book**, **The Second Magic Mirror Book**, Scholastic, £1.50 each.)



Some of the shapes you make may be six-pointed stars and look like snowflakes

From **Another, Another, Another and More**.

It's amazing that these remarkable books aren't better known, especially since the first one appeared in 1971. With the help of the small (unbreakable) mirror which comes with the book, you are invited to explore, make and change the pictures in the book (**Another, Another**... has two mirrors). An

exciting way of using books – not just to consult but to do things with the pages. There should be more authors like Marion Walter who can exploit the book itself so children make discoveries by doing. Pop-ups haven't been fully exploited yet for information books.

NATURAL HISTORY

Life-Cycle Books

Snails, Althea, ill. Helen Herbert, Longman, 0 582 39165 2, £2.95

This is a good example of a book (and series) which does *one* job rather well. It presents a life-cycle clearly; the sentences are simply structured and the text can be read right through with page-turning impetus. It is probably not a book to use for close and accurate identification – the illustrations are designed to be attractive and to support the text rather than be very detailed and accurate. Seven other titles in the series.

First Nature Books

The Spider, Gunilla Ingves, A & C Black, 0 7136 26500 X, £2.95

Clear unambiguous drawings are linked with a text which manages to make specialised terminology understandable and natural. A very good series for the early years with lots of child appeal. Eight more titles in the series.

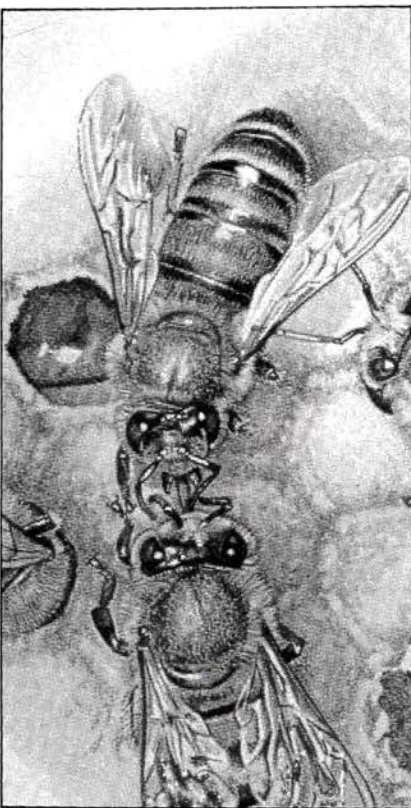
It's easy to have a... to stay series

Caroline O'Hagen, ill. Judith Allan, Chatto, o/p

A straightforward narrative addressed directly to the child reader tells how to invite minibeasts into home or classroom for a brief visit and a chance for close observation. Caterpillar, ant, ladybird, snail, worm, woodlouse accommodated.

Small World series

Bees and Wasps, Henry Pluckrose, ill. Tony Swift and Norman Weaver, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10540 4, £3.75



From **Bees and Wasps**.

Very high quality illustrations make this a book to go back to after observation or experiment. Use it to clarify, ratify, make new discoveries. The text includes specialised vocabulary and has a good index which makes it a good series to encourage learning how to look things up. 14 titles in the series.

Stopwatch books

Chicken and Egg, Christine Back and Jens Olesen, 0 7136 2425 6

Tadpole and Frog, Christine Back and Barrie Watts, 0 7136 2426 4

Snail, Christine Back and Barrie Watts, 0 7136 2708 5

A & C Black, £3.95 each

Three titles from a remarkable series that we have recommended before. Photographs which are beautiful as well as informative (compare those in **Snail** with the drawings in the Longman Life-Cycle series). Text at two levels, supplementary drawings, a consolidating sequence of photographs at the end and good index all combine to create a model information book. Some children were concerned about how the photographs of the chick inside the egg had been taken – what had happened to it? Was it still alive? Teachers, the **Eureka** staff and the series editor also confessed to some ambivalent feelings on this score while still admiring the book. Eight books in the series.

REFERENCE BOOKS

You and Your Body series, Dorothy Baldwin and Claire Lister, Wayland, £3.95 each

The Clue Book series, Gwen Allen and Joan Denslow, Oxford, £2.95-£3.95 each

Nature series, Althea, Dinosaur Fontana, £2.95 each hbk; £1.25 each pbk

A First Book of Birds, Peter Holden and J T R Sharrock, Macmillan, 0 333 36935 1, £1.25

These books were chosen because although they were in the main more suitable for older children they contained picture material of a very high standard. The question 'Can you find out more about...?' is the start of training in using information books (all these have a good index) and reading pictures. Not all the information contained here will be relevant to infant enquiry but with informative pictures and diagrams specific search or general browsing are rewarding activities and a basis for generating new questions.

PICTURE BOOKS

Mabel's Story, Jenny Koralek, ill. John Lawrence, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.518 0, £1.75

Home Sweet Home, Maureen Roffey, Piccolo, 0 330 28454 1, £1.50

A House Is a House for Me, Mary Ann Hoberman, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.394 3, £1.75

The Bad-tempered Ladybird, Eric Carle, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.398 6, £1.95

Busy Wheels, Peter Lippman, Picture Lion, 0 00 660674 1, £1.25

Fiction can also provide good starting points for scientific enquiry with infants. **Mabel's Story** really got them thinking about air and flight; **Home Sweet Home** and **A House Is a House for Me** are essentially about recognising that all living things have an appropriate habitat; **The Bad-tempered Ladybird** makes a marvellous start to discussing relative size of different animals and insects (as well as being informative about the ladybird diet); and **Busy Wheels** contains a marvellous collection of working wheels of all sizes and designs. ●

Videos for Schools sponsored by



Lloyds Bank

BALLET RAMBERT'S 'DIFFERENT STEPS' - THREE APPROACHES TO CHOREOGRAPHY

This 40-minute video was made with the aim of assisting teachers and young people involved in CSE, GCE 'O' and 'A' level examinations, Further and Higher Education students and those individuals wishing to gain an insight into the creative workings of Ballet Rambert.

It takes the form of highlighting and contrasting the work of the company and its three principal choreographers, Robert North, Richard Alston and Christopher Bruce. The choreographers are seen at work with the dancers in rehearsal and in conversation about their methods and approaches to choreography, music and design.

Three ballets are shown in rehearsal and with excerpts from full performances: Robert North's *DEATH AND THE MAIDEN*, Richard Alston's *WILDLIFE* and Christopher Bruce's *SERGEANT EARLY'S DREAM*. Dancers are also seen displaying techniques from classical and contemporary classes.

To accompany the video, also available are a cassette tape and teachers' notes. The tape consists of complete interviews with the choreographers and was made separately to avoid overcrowding the visual effect of the video with too much 'voice-over'.



Robert North and Diane Walker in 'DEATH AND THE MAIDEN'

Available in VHS or Betamax formats from:

Ballet Rambert,
94 Chiswick High Road,
London W4 1SH.

Video tape only: £29 (including VAT, postage & packing)

Video tape, cassette tape and teachers' notes:
£35 (including VAT, postage & packing)

In addition to the above, Lloyds Bank has also sponsored other schools videos—one describing the work of the Young National Trust Theatre, and a series of three Shakespearean workshops dealing with the Tragedies, Comedies and Roman Tragedies.

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

Judith Elkin wins the Eleanor Farjeon Award

For her tireless efforts to promote the importance of children's books over the past twenty years, Judith Elkin has won the prestigious Eleanor Farjeon Award, presented annually by the Children's Book Circle for an outstanding contribution to children's books.

Announcing the award, the CBC said of the winner:

'Judith Elkin is probably best known for her pioneering work in the field of multi-cultural children's books. As Publications Officer for the Youth Libraries Group (1967-71) she compiled four editions of **Multi-Racial Books for the Classroom**, and she is also the selector for the **Books for Keeps Guides to Children's Books for a Multi-Cultural Society**. The first of these, for the 8-12 age-group, sold 9000 copies when it was published last year and the guide for the 0-7 year-olds has just been published. Judith Elkin's impact on the provision of multi-cultural children's books has been so great because not only was she one of the first to recognise their importance, but also she has always directed her attention at a practical level, working alongside classroom teachers and librarians.

In addition, Judith Elkin is the adviser to **Books for Students** for their selection of multi-cultural and pre-school books, and she was the British representative for the UNESCO and IFLA International Conference held in Spain last year - **The Library: a centre for the promotion of international understanding**.

In 1971 Judith Elkin was appointed as Head of the Central Children's Library in Birmingham, where she was responsible for setting up a new children's library. From 1975 to 1978 she was Head of Services for Children and Young People with Birmingham Libraries. Since



Judith Elkin.

1983 Judith has been the Senior Lecturer in the Department of Librarianship and Information Studies at Birmingham Polytechnic. She lectures in Children's and Schools Librarianship, and Children's Literature.

Judith Elkin has been a member of the Executive Committee of **The International Board on Books for Young People** for eight years. For the last seven years she has organized the annual **IBBY** seminar, which has been instrumental in getting different sectors of the children's book world together to discuss aspects of children's literature.

As a reviewer of children's books Judith Elkin is greatly respected. She has been the Literary Editor of **Junior Education** since 1983 and also contributes to **The Times Literary Supplement**, **British Book News** and the **Birmingham Post**.

It is Judith Elkin's total dedication to children through books and the gentle, persuasive way in which she has influenced teachers, librarians and publishers, which make her such a deserving recipient of the highly prestigious Eleanor Farjeon Award.

The Eleanor Farjeon Award is sponsored by **Books for Children**.

More Award Winners

Kate Greenaway Medal

The winner of this year's Library Association award for illustration is Juan Wijngaard for **Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady** by Selina Hastings (Walker Books, 0 7445 0295 0, £4.95).

The award is an encouraging vindication for the Mother Goose jury which gave him that award in 1981 for his first book **Greenfinger House** by Rosemary Harris. Juan Wijngaard was born in South America of Dutch parents. He came to London in 1970 and studied graphic design and illustration.

The panel said of the winning book: 'This artist has captured the feel of medieval illuminated manuscripts in the rich glowing illustrations to this tale of knightly chivalry. Page design and layout is varied and the illustrations complement and extend the text to produce a beautiful book.'

Commended equally were two artists:

Michael Foreman for **Seasons of Splendour**

(Madhur Jaffrey, Pavilion Books, 0 9075 16 548 0, £7.95)

and Gillian McClure for **Tog the Ribber**

(P. Coltman, (André Deutsch, 0 233 97711 2, £5.95).

Also shortlisted:

A Child's Garden of Verses, Stevenson's poems illustrated by Michael Foreman (Gollancz, 0 575 03727 X, £6.95)

It's Your Turn, Roger!, Susanna Gretz (Bodley Head, 0 370 30621 X, £5.95)

The Magic Horse, Sally Scott (Julia McRae, 0 86203 214 8, £5.25).

The Signal Poetry Award

Song of the City by Gareth Owen, a Fontana Young Lions Original (0 00 672410 8, £1.25) has been given the Signal Poetry Award for 1985. Two anthologies, **Messages** compiled by Naomi Lewis (Faber, 0 571 13647 8, £2.95) and **Golden Apples** chosen by Fiona Waters (Heinemann, 0 434 97163 4, £7.95) were 'jointly highly commended'.

Writing of the winning book in **Signal 50**, Brian Morse, one of the two judges (the other was Anthea Bell), says: 'The poems are self-consciously contemporary in theme without taking on an attention-seeking cartoon quality, solidly constructed and traditional in value. They assume our attention and merit it.'

Hans Andersen Awards

The IBBY international award had gone to two people from the same country - Australia. Patricia Wrightson has won the award for the most distinguished author and Robert Ingpen for the artist. Both are published in this country.

Youth Library Review

A new publication was launched in May. **Youth Library Review** is the official journal of the Youth Libraries Group and its primary purpose is to report on current trends in children's librarianship. The Review will be published twice a year, in Spring and Autumn, and will be available on subscription (£5 pa) to interested people outside the YLG membership. The first issue focuses on the Carnegie and Greenaway Awards and includes the acceptance speeches of last year's winners, Errol le Cain and Margaret Mahy. Material from events organised by YLG Branches (like the recent One Day School: Under Fives like Libraries - Do Libraries like Under Fives?, held in London) will appear in future issues.

Subscription: Philip Marshall, Schools and Children's Library Service, Langley High School Annexe, Popes Lane, Oldbury, Warley, West Midlands, tel: 021 552 1966.

Children Parents and Reading

Saturday 13th September
9.30-4.00

Newland Park Campus,
Bucks

The fifth annual conference organised by the Hillingdon branch of the National Association for Primary Education (NAPE) is raising a lot of questions about reading. How can parents be most effectively involved? DO

reading schemes still matter? What kind of books best teach children to read?

Speakers include Bernard Ashley, Liz Waterland and Sheila McCullagh. Conference fee £3. Lunch (sit down meal and wine) £7.

Bookings - with SAE please - to Roger Pinkerton, Yeading Junior School, Carlyon Road, Hayes, UB4 0NR. Early application is advised!

CBY Takes Off

The Children's Books of the Year Exhibition at the NBL in Wandsworth from July 25th to August 2nd has a flying theme. Aeroplanes, rockets, saucers, kites, balloons and flying mice will all feature in events linked to the exhibition of books selected by Julia Eccleshare for CBY 1986.

Glenys Kinnock will officially open the exhibition on July 24th and from July 25th it

will open to the public six days a week from 10.00 to 6.00 (4.00 on Saturdays).

The CBY annotated book list of the 274 books selected this year is published on July 24th at £3.50 post free from the NBL.

After August 2nd the Exhibition is available for hire at £32 per fortnight plus VAT. For details contact Annie Garthwaite at the NBL (01-870 9055). ●

BOOKS FOR KEEPS
NEWS