

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

July 1981 No.9
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**SCIENCE
FACT &
FICTION**



Cover illustration provided by Longman from 'The World of Tomorrow.'

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Apology

We are very sorry that information about a Colin McNaughton book **Walk Rabbit Walk** (Heinemann) inadvertently found its way into the David McKee booklist in Authorgraph No. 8 (**Books for Keeps** — May issue). It should of course have appeared in the Picture Book People feature with Colin McNaughton's other books. Our apologies to both artists.

Please note

In **BOOKS FOR KEEPS 8** we mentioned a poetry retrieval service offered by the Education Resource Centre at Edge Hill College of Higher Education. Mrs Agnes Parry, the present tutor-librarian, has written to say that Mrs Eason, the librarian who originally offered the service, has retired. Mrs Parry is hoping to keep the index up to date and to put sections of it onto computer. However, although willing to help with individual enquiries, she does not have the staff to offer a wide-scale service.

Looking Ahead

In September, among other things, we offer a guide to the world of children's books and launch a new series of articles in search of an answer to 'Who decides what children read?'

Reviewers

in this issue.



Jill Bennett

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



Steve Bowles

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



Colin Mills

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



Space Competitions

When the kids have done the Piccolo competition in this issue's insert, remind them there's still time to win a Space Invaders game and lots more prizes in Macdonald's Whizz Kids contest. Get entry forms for them from your school bookshop supplier, or your local bookshop.

Science, fact and fiction, is the theme for this issue of **Books for Keeps**. In our first feature Margery Fisher, whom we are especially pleased to have writing for us, focusses on the science of natural history and in particular on books to get young naturalists off on the right foot. Margery Fisher once wrote, 'An information book is a teacher, and the role of the teacher is to lead his pupils towards a considered independence of thought and action.' How many of the heaps of non-fiction books we looked at for this issue could be called *good* teachers? Most were professionally put together, slick jobs with lots of pictures, but sadly lacking in personality. Too many looked what they were: books assembled by a committee, and a committee who for the most part believed that readers can absorb information only in two page gobbits. The double spread rules. What is missing is the voice and character of an individual offering to engage in an exploration of ideas with the reader. It's all too neat, too confined, predigested.

A book written by an enthusiast who is good at getting it across leaps out from the surrounding colourful mediocrity. David Attenborough is such an enthusiast (see page 16), so is Isaac Asimov. After reading his **About Black Holes** (Piccolo 0 330 26099 5, 75p) a paperback without a coloured picture in sight, I and the twelve year olds I was sharing it with began to grasp some of the mysteries of astronomy. In a different way Michael Collins' autobiographical account, **Flying to the Moon** (Piccolo, 0 330 26212 2, £1.25) gave us a real sense of what it is like to be in space.

Another star communicator is Carl Sagan whose 13 part series **Cosmos** is currently on BBC television. There's a book of the series, **Cosmos**, Macdonald, 0 354 04531 8, £12.50. It was conceived and written in much the same way as **Life on Earth**, and it's interesting that the comments Sagan makes about turning a TV series into a book in the introduction are very similar to David Attenborough's. You really need the book to reflect on all the ideas that bombard you in the programmes which together amount to a scientific Civilisation.

A Package Deal

Most of the information books jostling for a place in our libraries and classrooms are 'packaged'; that is put together for a publisher by an outside agency. That doesn't necessarily make them inferior — good writers like Robin Kerrod or Ian Ridpath (their specialities are science and space) can rise above the limitations of the format — in fact the books are rarely less than competent. But if you look at several on one subject from the same packaging outfit you're likely to see the same pictures over and over again. The space shuttle drawing on our cover this issue, for instance appears in **Secrets of Space** (Piccolo Explorer), **Space Flight** (Piccolo Factbooks) and **The World of Tomorrow** (Longmans) all packaged by Grisewood and Dempsey Ltd. It's a good dramatic picture — that's why it's on our cover. But a young reader or buyer might well feel a little cheated at the same illustration appearing too often in his collection of

EDITOR'S PAGE

books. A sharp-eyed twelve year old has already spotted lots of similarities between his Explorers and the new Piccolo Factbooks.

The designer of that series is David Jefferis who is also credited for 'Art and Editorial Direction' on **The Usborne Book of the Future** (0 86020 290 9, £3.50, a hardback combined volume of three titles: Robots, Future Cities and Star Travel. £1.25 each in paperback). I had difficulty prising this one away from the SBA's director, Richard Hill.

It uses the 'one double spread on each topic' convention but in this case it's not limiting. The lively design and busy look beloved of Peter Usborne (see page 24) are very evident. It's certainly a formula which creates brand loyalty among young book buyers, especially boys, in my experience.

If you are interested in speculation about the future look out for a series of books coming soon from Franklin Watts under the general title **World of Tomorrow**. Each book is on a different aspect of life after 2000. So far we've only seen the page proofs but Richard thinks the pictures are 'fantastic' — and not just literally. For Sandie Oram's views on looks into the future see page 20.

Twenty-first Century Fashion?

To judge from the illustrations in books making a guess at what life will be like in the next century, the future will find us all dressed for the ski slopes or the athletics track. Is this fondness for close-fitting all-in-ones an educated guess, I wonder. Or is it a case of life imitating art? If so the costume designers of Star Trek, Blake's Seven and the like will have a lot to answer for. It wasn't always like that, though. Colonel Dan Dare went adventuring with the Spacefleet dressed like a British Officer, gold braid, collar and tie and all. It was only those troublesome aliens who went in for stretch nylon and sock boots. For those who think things have never been the same since the **Eagle** disappeared, or who would like to know what all the fuss is over a comic strip, two volumes of Dan Dare adventures in full colour are now in print. Volume two, **Rogue Planet** finds Dan helping the Crypts against the Phants, the Kruels, the robot brain Orak, and Gogol, the dreaded High Priest. (Dragon's Dream 90 6332 541 X, £4.95)

We have lift off — maybe

For years Douglas Hill has been pressing the cause of SF for kids with publishers. In the end he sat down and wrote some himself. But why is he so keen to get kids reading SF, I wondered. 'Because it's splendidly mind-stretching, an antidote to mental blinkers and the narrowing of awareness', he says. 'And it's a way of making kids more interested in books. It shows them that their appetites, stimulated by TV, films and comics, can also be fed — often better fed — by books. But they are going to want to see books fairly akin to what they are used to.' That's why his



Pat

three book sequence about Keill Randor (written before Star Wars) is, he says, 'slam-bang, action-packed space adventure; intended to be — brace yourself — FUN.'

In **Books for Keeps 5** Steve Bowles called Douglas Hill's books 'the best kids SF of the last decade.' Steve is a SF enthusiast so we asked him for his ideas on how to follow up the Star Wars fever. You can see what he came up with in our special SF feature. (Pages 10-12)

Winners All the Way

Aside from Science, fact or fiction. Congratulations to Quentin Blake on being given the Kate Greenaway award from **Mr Magnolia**. In the May issue we reported that Mr Magnolia had won the first Children's Book Award, given by the Federation of Children's Book Groups. How very nice to see children and librarians in agreement about this super book.

Congratulations too to Anne Harvey, who wrote about Eleanor Farjeon in the May issue. Anne, who is a writer, broadcaster and teacher of drama has been given a Leverhulme Trust Fund research award which will enable her to concentrate for the next year on a biography of Eleanor Farjeon. She is working on it at the moment with Annabel Farjeon, Eleanor's niece, whose selection of Farjeon poems **Invitation to a Mouse** (Pelham 0 7207 1322 6, £4.95) has just come out. The illustrations for the poems by Antony Maitland are a delight.

Be Our Guest

More congratulations to Beaver Books who were five years old in May. To mark the occasion we invited Sally Floyer, editor of the Beaver list to make her selection of holiday books for this issue. Non-fiction is Sally's special interest and she decided to concentrate on books for getting out and about and doing things. (See page 18. We said she could include some Beaver titles!)

One she didn't include is the **Beaver Book of Lists**, compiled by Hunter Davies to celebrate the birthday. It's a ragbag of totally useless information that's kept my family and their friends amused for some time. (Royalties go to the Inter-Action Trust.) Sally should be making some lists of her own about now. Just as the birthday celebrations were getting going she discovered that her third baby, due later this year, is twins. 'That's nothing' I told her, 'we've just had quins in our family: our two 'female' gerbils have just produced a healthy litter'. What we need is a better book on gerbil sexing. Any suggestions? Have a happy holiday. ●

MATTERS OF NATURAL FACT

What makes a good book for children on natural history? Margery Fisher answers the question by selecting some that offer
A Good Start for Young Naturalists

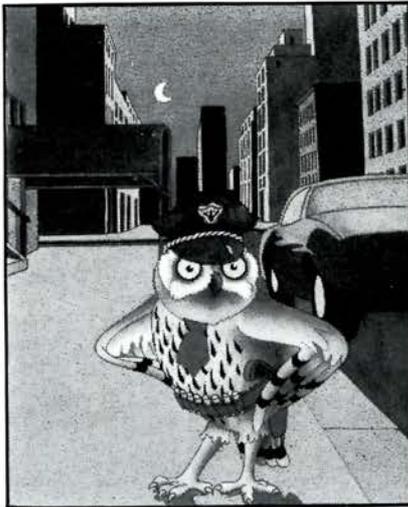
Small children, quick to see and hear, find their way into the world of nature by collecting an infinite number of random facts, whether from the reality of the mouse in the larder and the elephant on the television or in the contrived shapes of animals or plants on letter bricks, curtains or pull-along toys. Where do books come in?

First, they help in their own slow, private way the process of identification. The extraordinary variety of images which a small child accumulates in its mind sort themselves out gradually with the help of books. They soon notice the difference between Peter Rabbit's mother with her shopping basket and a rabbit dressed in its own fur. I don't belong to the school of thought that says animals must never wear jackets, but I am sure that it is essential that stories about humanised animals do not actually distort the facts or set up false ideas that may be hard to get rid of later. Peter Rabbit's mother is true to nature: rabbits do look after their young. It is a different matter when you come to butterflies, frogs or fish, and the author or artist who offers children anecdotes about Mrs Bullfrog pushing a pram has a lot to answer for.



'Owl screeched, screech screech, and woke everyone up' from Pat Hutchins' 'Goodnight Owl'

Stories, and pictures, in which animals are humanised can take small children beyond the first stage of identification to the stage of learning something about animal habitats or behaviour. The fact that owls are nocturnal must have filtered through to countless children by way of non-didactic picture books like Pat Hutchins' *Good-night, Owl!* (Bodley Head/Picture Puffin). Recently the transition from fiction to fact has been pushed back, with many straight information series for the very young. Owl behaviour could be learned now, by a pre-school child, from a picture of startling eccentricity in a book from Spain, *Funny Facts about the Owl* by Nella Bosnia (Evans), ostensibly non-fiction, which shows a nightcapped bird poised to get out of bed, with gun and alarm clock close at hand. On the opposite page the text reads, 'The owl is a bird which hunts for its food at night.' Perhaps the joke is a little too sophisticated, and the



'The owl has good hearing, and can see very well in the dark,' from 'Funny Facts about the Owl'

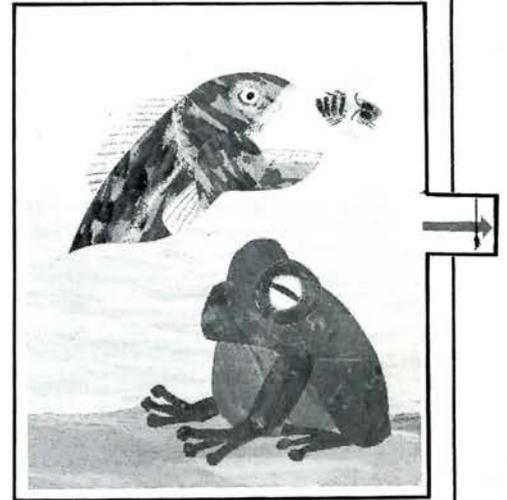
juxtaposition of fact and fancy too abrupt, for the very young; certainly the biological fact seems too elementary for boys and girls old enough to feel flattered by such adult humour. This is an extreme example of the trend towards learning through fun which often seems directed more to grown-ups than to children.

Slapstick doesn't suit everyone. All the same, it is heartening to see so many artists using the resources of graphic art in a light-hearted way to bring basic biological information to small children in unusual and arresting pictures. Accuracy is essential always, however young the reader, but it is no use offering accurate information if it is too dull or obscure to hold the attention of a child of three or four. The recent wave of experiment with graphic techniques is especially notable in books designed to introduce young readers to the invertebrates. The illustrations in Peter Curry's *The Caterpillar* (World's Work) could be described as 'funny' but they are also properly informative, showing a caterpillar feeding on leaves, shedding skins, finally spinning a cocoon and emerging 'many days later' as a butterfly. The fact that the caterpillar/butterfly is allowed an expressive eye and is shown in boldly mannered shapes and colours does not alter the accuracy of the elementary lesson.

There is an attractive and properly controlled element of fancy in a new series from France, of which *The Caterpillar and three other stories* (Moonlight Publishing) is one example. Anne van der Essen and her husband, the artist Etienne Delessert, have devised elegant, miniature books in which a quaint little Tom Thumb creature wanders through various country scenes; each encounter ends with one or two facts simply stated (for instance, that caterpillars turn into butterflies).

Eric Carle has chosen paper-engineering to give a lift to the facts in *The Honeybee and the Robber* (Julia MacRae Books). Pull a tab and you can watch a bee gathering nectar, another communicating details of a find in the bee-dance. The pictures are bold

and fanciful but, again, perfectly accurate in the concepts they demonstrate, and at the back of the book a summary of biological fact should help parents to take the book beyond the popular pop-up technique.



Eric Carle's 'The Honeybee and the Robber'

Simplifying for the very young need not mean lapsing into dreary monosyllables. Althea's *Animals at your Feet* (Dinosaur) has slightly romanticised pictures of earwig, millipede, earthworm, ladybird and other subjects, but they are described in easy, sensible words which show an appreciation of what pre-school children are willing and able to understand. It is clearly stated that 'the animals in the pictures are larger than life so that you can see them better' and scale is defined by a picture of an ant and a child's shoe side by side. Books like this help children to associate animals with a particular environment and special characteristics, giving them a sound foundation on which they can build later through more specialised (but still simple) books like Michael Chinery's reliable *Guide to Insects* (Piccolo) or John Paull's *The Story of the Ant* (Ladybird).

A keen naturalist, however young, needs to get close to his subjects. One of the liveliest of recent series encourages children to catch insects in order to observe them properly. A title like *It's Easy to have a Caterpillar to Stay* may sound whimsical, but Caroline O'Hagan in this entertaining book (Chatto and Windus; 3 books so far, more to come this year) is not implying that the guest arrives carrying matching luggage. The important point stressed in these gay, authoritative books is that there are right and wrong reasons for keeping ants, beetles and the like, and the right way is to observe them for a while and return them to their natural environment before captivity can harm them.

As children collect facts about natural history, they need advice on how to sort these facts out. It is not enough to be able to recognise sparrows, beetles or badgers. They have to be related to particular places and life cycles, and even the simplest books are valuable if they give at least some indication of habitat, in words or pictures or both.

Meet Margery Fisher

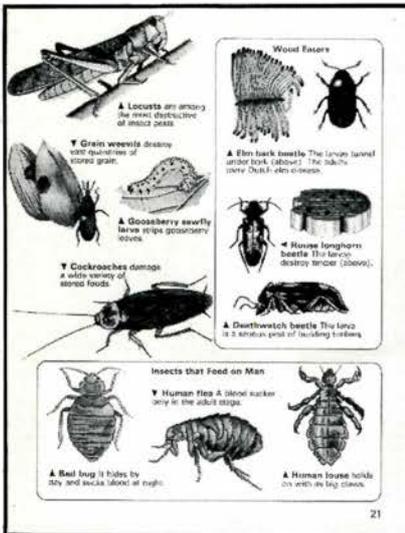
According to Margery Fisher there have been only two brief periods in her life when she was not reading some books for children — the first eighteen months and her four years at Oxford which 'had to be kept for other kinds of reading'. The first to benefit from her enthusiasm were her six children. Later through magazines, books, newspapers and her own reviewing journal, *Growing Point*, started in May 1962, she shared and continues to share her pleasure and discriminating response with a much wider audience. Her approach to reviewing is serious but not solemn. 'The real motive for criticism,' she says, 'should be the exchange of favourites: "Try this, it's good."' Keeping in touch with the likes and dislikes of the young she sees as essential for any critic of their

literature and she has certainly done that not least through her own children and grandchildren. *Intent Upon Reading* (Brockhampton), although not revised since 1964, is still an excellent introduction to modern children's fiction and *Matters of Fact* (Brockhampton, 1972) is essential reading for anyone concerned with making judgements about non-fiction; its sense and intelligence make it an invaluable guide in an area where few have cared (or dared) to venture. In 1966 she was the first to receive the Eleanor Farjeon Award.

Growing Point appears six times a year and is available from Margery Fisher, Ashton Manor, Northampton NN7 2JL. £3.00 for six issues or 60p for a single copy.

interest. *Fin-Paw-Hand* by Edi and Ruth Lanners (A & C Black) originated in a class of children ten or eleven years old, who tackled the subject of evolution in a most original way, comparing the shapes of their hands with the paws of certain animals, looking at bones, making models of primate skulls and so on. The cheerful, brief reports on each project come from the children themselves and make the whole enterprise seem happy as well as stimulating.

Natural structures are discussed and illustrated in *Small Worlds Close Up* by Lisa Grillone and Joseph Gennaro (Julia MacRae Books). Photographs taken by a scanning electron microscope show the diversity of natural forms — a bird's feather, a peppercorn, a bee sting, for instance. The text provides clear explanations of scientific principles for older children, while their juniors can absorb information from the photographs.

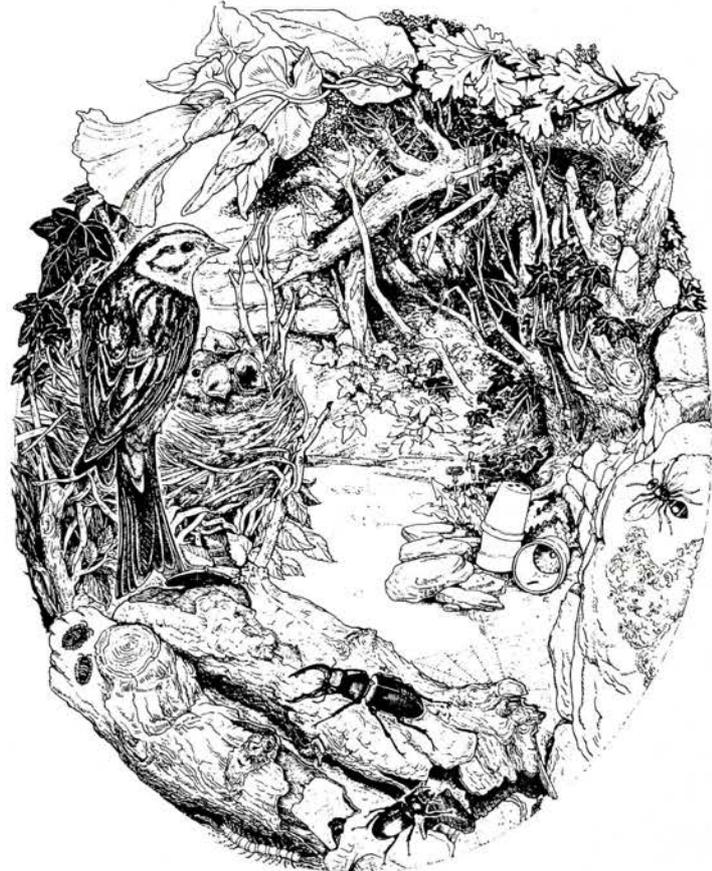


Insect pests, from 'Guide to Insects'

Parents who want to help their children to make intelligent use of the facts they have accumulated will do well to look at books that offer rather wider views of particular kinds of wild life environments, whether in town or country. One of the most recent books offering a simple view of a familiar setting has no text at all. The pictures in *In My Garden* by Ermanno Cristini and Luigi Puricelli (Neugebauer Press) certainly need no supporting words, for they are as clear and explanatory as they are fascinating to study. The effect of the dramatic, boldly coloured pictures in this Austrian picture-fact book is to give one the illusion of being insect size, almost of identifying with a caterpillar on a lettuce leaf, a fly on a horse's hoof, a mantis crawling up a spinach plant.

The general concept of habitat and territory which underlies simple books like this one will be understood in a different way by older children when they come to take a more active interest in natural studies. One reliable and encouraging handbook for children from seven or so upwards, Jean Mellanby's *Wonder Why Book of Nature Fun* (Carousel), gives advice on making plaster casts of animal tracks, collecting feathers, making a nature trail in the garden, and an even wider range of activities is allowed for in *The Nature Trail Book of Garden Wild Life*, edited by Su Swallow (Usborne). This book has that reassuring if crowded look of the ubiquitous compendium, with boxed pictures, tables and diagrams linked with captions and small patches of text. The general atmosphere of fun and ease does not hide the fact that pages on 'The Lawn', 'Snails', 'Night', 'Visitors' and so on are full of useful and practical information.

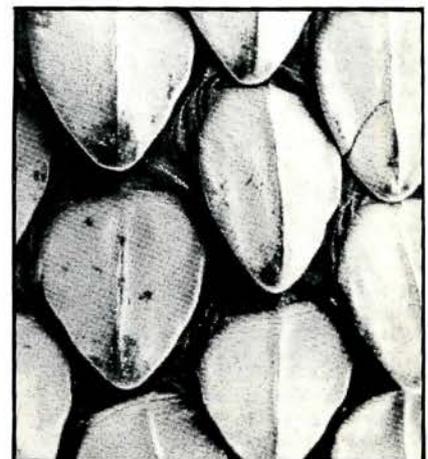
The more recent *Back Garden Wild Life*



Line drawing from 'The Back Garden Wildlife Sanctuary Book'

Sanctuary Book by Ron Wilson (Penguin) has a format that might be daunting to the young at first sight but this would be in fact an ideal book for a family (or class) wanting to explore the endless possibilities of amateur nature-watching together. Parents and teachers should certainly appreciate the way diagrams and lists alternate with pleasing drawings, Victorian-style nursery pictures and Bewick-type cuts, making a book of quiet elegance which is also precise in its aid to quick identification of birds, mammals, plants and so on, and clear in its advice on making hides, constructing and stocking a pond or choosing plants to attract butterflies.

Once children can read fluently, they often forge ahead surprisingly fast in pursuit of a special interest, and one of the virtues of Ron Wilson's book is the useful book lists at the end of each section. Any intelligent child studying wild life will soon begin to ask questions that go beyond simple observation. He will want books that attach facts to particular scientific principles. For such children, a book from Switzerland could be the starting point for a serious scientific

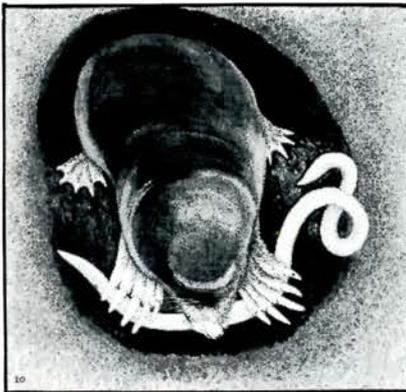


Snake skin, enlarged, from 'Small Worlds Close Up'

Gale Cooper's *Inside Animals* (Hodder and Stoughton) similarly leads readers to particular principles of structure and animal



Inside a bird's egg, from Gale Cooper's 'Inside Animals'



A feeding mole from 'Animals that Store Food,' drawn by Joyce Bee

adaptation through paintings showing sex organs, digestive systems, bones and muscles and illustrating a few specialised objects like a giraffe's backbone, a whale's mouth and a butterfly's tongue. The text is carefully related to the pictures so that a child of nine or ten could follow the conclusions without any misunderstanding.

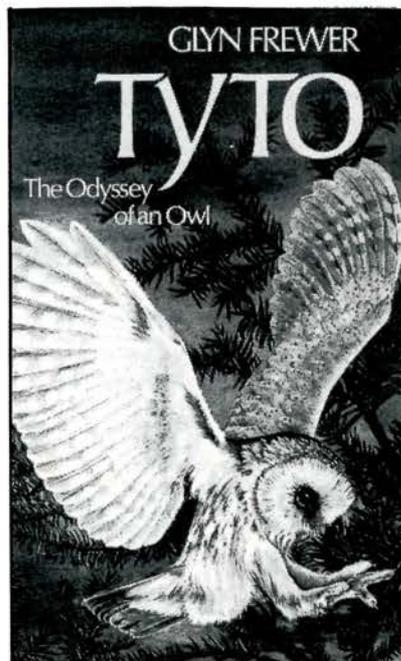
I must mention here one admirable series which has been with us for several years, the Bodley Head Young Naturalist books. This series caters for readers from eight or so, who can later move to the more advanced Bodley Head Biologies. The junior series offers examples of various aspects of animal behaviour in simple sentences matched with very fine, accurate and attractive coloured pictures. The two latest volumes in the series, *Animals that Store Food* and *Animals of the Dark*, both by Gwynne Vevers, are models of their kind in offering accessible and accurate facts for the young to build on later with more detailed books.

This article began with a defence of a degree of anthropomorphism in children's books. To write 'biographies' of animals inevitably involves a certain humanising, if only that we have to expect words associated with humans (fear, protection, care, for instance) to be used in connection with the instincts and biological drives in an animal's life. There has to be a biographical shape, too, to guide the young readers, and yet there must be as little suggestion as possible that this is anything like the conscious structures of a human 'life'. One series that can be confidently given to children from eight or nine shows specialists using narrative-form to set squirrel, mole and deer in appropriate scenes. Philip Wayre's *Lutra: The Story of an Otter* (Collins), is based on the author's experience in the wild and with his own wildlife sanctuary in Norfolk; reading the book, you have the impression of an

individual animal while learning a great deal about the species in a pleasurable way; the author's enthusiasm is as evident in the way he writes as his first-hand knowledge. John Andrews' *Year of the Barn Owl* (Dent) also has a narrative pattern, through which facts about breeding behaviour and territory are inserted. I still prefer Glyn Frewer's *Tyto: The Odyssey of an Owl* (Dent) for its well-knit story and its beautifully observed country background. Books like this can wake an enthusiasm for the mysteries and beauties of wild life while by their special qualities of accuracy and personal alertness they can convey to children in an indirect way that it is better to be precise than sloppy, consistent than wayward, if their interest in nature is to give them the best kind of pleasure and satisfaction. Start-Rite is a slogan as suitable for books as it is for shoes. ●



From Terry Riley's 'Year of the Barn Owl'



Cover of Glen Frewer's 'Tyto, the Odyssey of an Owl'

Details of books mentioned

Good-night, Owl!

Pat Hutchins, Bodley Head, 0 370 02016 2, £3.50, 1973;
Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.121 5, 80p, 1975

Funny Facts about the Owl,

Nella Bosnia, Evans, 0 237 45565 X, £2.95, 1981

The Caterpillar,

Peter Curry, World's Work, 0 437 32934 8, £2.50, 1979

The Caterpillar and three other stories,

Anne van der Essen and Etienne Delessert, Moonlight Publishing, 0 907144 20 9, 99p, 1981

The Honeybee and the Robber,

Eric Carle, Julia MacRae Books, 0 86203 013 7, £4.95, 1981

Animals at your Feet,

Althea, Dinosaur, 0 85122 230 7, £1.85 hb, 0 85122 223 4, 70p pb, 1980

Guide to Insects,

Michael Chinery, Piccolo, 0 330 26002 2, 75p, 1980

The Story of the Ant,

John Paull, Ladybird, 0 7214 0630 0, 50p, 1980

It's Easy to have a Caterpillar to Stay,

Caroline O'Hagan, Chatto and Windus, 0 7011 2501 2, £1.50, 1980

In My Garden,

Ermanno Cristini and Luigi Puricelli, Neugebauer Press, distributed by A & C Black, 0 907234 05 4, £3.50, 1981

Wonder Why Book of Nature Fun,

Jean Mellanby, Carousel, 0 552 98086 2, £1.75 hb, 0 552 57028 1, 75p pb, 1978

The Nature Trail Book of Garden Wild Life,

ed. Su Swallow, Usborne, 0 860 20259 3, £1.50, 1980

Back Garden Wild Life Sanctuary Book,

Ron Wilson, Penguin, 0 14 046.915 X, £2.95, 1981

Fin-Paw-Hand,

Edi and Ruth Lanners, A & C Black, 0 7136 1922 8, £2.95, 1980

Small Worlds Close Up,

Lisa Grillone and Joseph Gennaro, Julia MacRae Books, 0 86203 003 X, £4.25, 1980

Inside Animals,

Gale Cooper, Hodder and Stoughton, 0 340 25872 1, £3.95, 1981

Animals that Store Food,

Gwynne Vevers, Bodley Head, 0 370 30330 X, £2.75, 1980

Animals of the Dark,

Gwynne Vevers, Bodley Head, 0 370 30331 8, £2.75, 1980

Lutra: The Story of an Otter,

Philip Wayre, Collins, 0 00 195611 6, 1979 (out of print)

Year of the Barn Owl,

John Andrews, Dent, 0 460 06958 6, £3.95, 1981

Tyto: The Odyssey of an Owl,

Glyn Frewer, Dent, 0 460 06865 2, £3.50, 1978

reviews

PAPERBACKS NURSERY/INFANT



Lucy and Tom go to School

0 552 52145 0

Lucy and Tom at the Seaside

0 552 52144 2

Shirley Hughes, Carousel, 95p each

At last! Lucy and Tom in paperback, and what marvellous value: these are high quality, full-size reproductions. Like most small children, Lucy finds starting school an exciting and slightly frightening experience, but she settles in quickly and happily. Tom on the other hand is less happy, until he joins a playgroup, that is; then he too finds new friends and new interests.

A family outing to the seaside is beautifully realised in the second book which, like the first, is illustrated in alternate spreads of full colour, and sepia. Get them both! JB

Happy Birthday, Sam

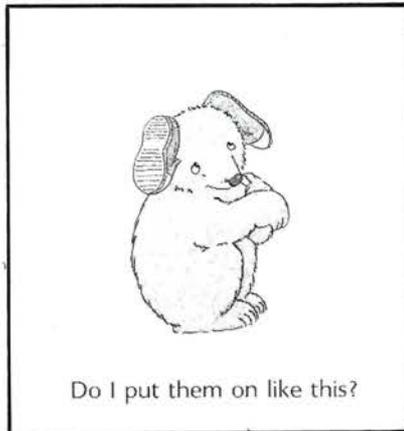
Pat Hutchins, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.339 0, 90p

Sam was a whole year older: he *ought* to be able to reach the light switch, turn on the taps and do all the other things he hadn't quite been able to manage; but no. Not until the postman comes bringing a special birthday present from Grandpa, that is. Then by putting his new chair to unorthodox use, Sam solves his problems. Simply perfect! JB

How Do I Put It On?

Shigeo Watanabe, illustrated by Yasuo Ohtomo, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.360 9, 90p

A beautifully simple, funny picture book with a very brief,



Do I put them on like this?

predictable text about a lovable bear who — to every infant's delight — puts his clothes on all the wrong places. Yes, it is a smashing book for beginner readers, if they can get a look in: my experience with the hardcover was that the older, fluent readers tended to monopolise it. So my advice is, buy more than one copy for your classroom. JB

Gregory, the Terrible Eater

Mitchell Sharmat, illustrated by Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey, Hippo Books, 0 590 72086 4, 70p

We all know children who are fussy eaters, but in this story it is Gregory's parents who eat junk food (literally) and are worried by their son's insistence on fruit, veg., eggs, fish . . . 'Good stuff like that'. Gradually they tempt him away from such fare, but are too successful: essential household articles start to disappear, and something has to be done . . .



There is a sense of fun in Aruego and Dewey's distinctive illustrations which children immediately recognise: they will bring to this book expectations of visual humour which will not be disappointed; the poor quality paper means that some of the sparkle is lost though. JB

Morris tells Boris Mother Moose Stories and Rhymes

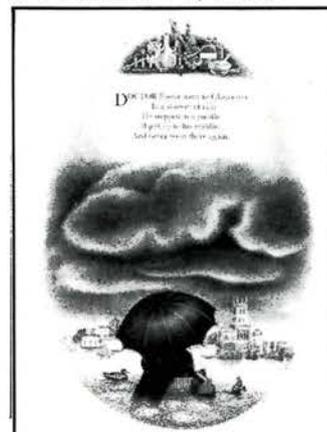
Bernard Wiseman, Scholastic Publications, 0 590 30999 4, 50p

My immediate reaction to this book was 'yuk': it is printed on awful paper and the artwork is, to say the least, crude. But the reaction I got from most of the five and six-year-olds who read it was quite different: they thought it was great fun; partly I think, because of a feeling of one-upmanship — they know what ought to happen in 'The Three Bears' and the other story and rhymes which Morris 'mis-tells' — and partly because the two animals shout at one another.

The format of the book is similar to the *I Can Read* series: properly phrased text and clear well-spaced print, but it does not come anywhere near the high quality production of the World's Work paperbacks. JB

Nicola Bayley's Book of Nursery Rhymes

Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.371 4, £1.25



Nicola Bayley's first picture book has received such acclaim since it was published that little needs to be said now, other than that it is available in paperback. I'm all for offering children lots of different artistic interpretations of nursery rhymes: this one would make an interesting contrast with, say, *Mother Goose Comes to Cable Street* (1970's East End setting). JB

The Twelve Dancing Princesses

The Brothers Grimm, illustrated by Errol Le Cain, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.322 6, 90p

Errol Le Cain's illustrations for this Grimm favourite are full of drama, extremely detailed, sophisticated and witty. The text, which has been padded slightly — presumably to give additional scope to the artist — is framed with beautiful borders, each page having a different design. A visual delight for all ages. JB

The Tiger Skin Rug

Gerald Rose, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.323 4, 90p

A crazy tale of a tiger who, by substituting himself for the Rajah's rug, samples 'the good life', and finally earns his keep by chasing off three robbers. Rose's lively, humorous pictures bring out the essential qualities of the characters and their Indian setting. JB

Let's Read ABC

0 00 196035 0

Let's Read 123

0 00 196034 2

Let's Read The Pet Show

0 00 196036 9

Let's Read The Toy Cupboard

0 00 196037 7

Jane Fior, pictures by Gill Chapman, Collins Colour Cubs, 50p each

Let's Read is the collective title of four new Cubs, but I cannot see young children being motivated to do so by any of these, though 123 does have one or two rhymes and is passable as a counting book. Beginners deserve better. JB

INFANT/JUNIOR

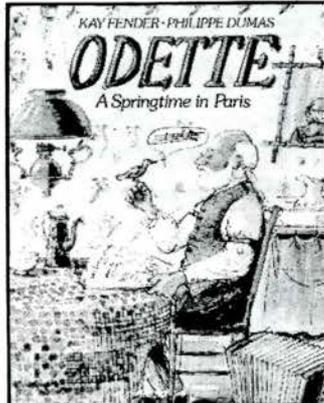
Not now Bernard

David McKee, Sparrow Books, 0 09 924050 5, £1.25

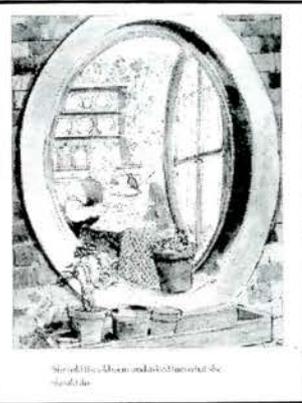
'Not now Bernard' is the response a small boy gets from his busy parents, even when he tells them of the monster who is going to eat him up. And, what is more, Bernard does get eaten, a fact that, in my experience, children seem to relish. O.K. so their interpretation of what is really a transformation tale will be different from an adult's, but they undoubtedly get a lot of fun out of the story. It was one of the most read books in my infant class last year, but I have found it equally successful with eleven and twelve-year-olds who don't find reading easy. JB

Odette: A Springtime in Paris

Kay Fender, illustrated by Philippe Dumas, Eel Pie Publishing, 0 906008 34 4, £1.95



A gentle story of a friendship between an old man — an accordion player in the Paris Metro — and a little bird, Odette, whom he adopts. When autumn comes, the bird migrates: she returns in the spring with her mate but all that remains of the old man is his hat — in a tree: the ideal place for new life to begin. Dumas' illustrations create a strong Parisian atmosphere, but I do feel that the book is rather overpriced and this



could well deter potential buyers. JB

Maggie Gumption
Margaret Stuart Barry,
Fontana Lions,
0 00 67178 6, 85p

Maggie Gumption is a characterful, mischievous doll who lives in the attic of a very old house with her prim friend, Pinky Dars. There is some delightful fantasy in this group

of stories based upon their friendship and adventures with the other toys; but the rather cosy predictability puts this book below the high standard of others in this excellent series 'for younger readers'. That said, there's a sure storyteller's touch and some quaint evocative illustrations by Gunvor Edwards. CM

The Dial-A-Story Book

H. E. Todd, Puffin, 0 14 03.1332 X, 75p

Fifteen read-aloud stories by a master of the art. All have been included on British Telecom's nationwide Bedtime Story Service and each lasts around three minutes. They all feature Bobby and Barbara Brewster. The six to nine I shared the collection with liked the zany wordplay of *Zwartz of Beez*; the Python-type humour of *The Bookmark Bookworm*, about a worm which read the books, and the light fantastic of *Two Magic Pianos*. A boon for instant storytimes — and the stories are just the right length for new readers to take on for themselves in one reading. CM

JUNIOR/MIDDLE

Paddington Takes the Test

Michael Bond, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671876 0, 90p

A new Paddington in paperback and Michael Bond shows no sagging in the inventiveness in these seven stories involving, amongst other escapades, a panto visit, a skirmish in a stately home and (my favourite) Bob-a-Job week.

There's a new band of readers coming to the cheery bear for the first time: we should test his appeal anew. My own favourite is still the very first, *A Bear Called Paddington* — don't forget to introduce this to the seven-year-olds who may not know the mischievous Peruvian's origins! CM

story while the humans were subsidiary figures. A good addition to the classroom collection. CM

Elmer the Rat
Patrick Cook, Puffin,
0 14 03.1394 X, 75p



An Australian writer-cartoonist, new to children's books, who shows that he can spin a funny, appealing narrative, enhanced by some super illustrations.

Elmer lives on the Sydney waterfront and longs to sail on one of the ships to the 'Other Place', where, he is told, there is always plenty to eat. When he does stow away, he finds that life on board is no fun (the rats are used as bait to catch fishes). What's more, life in the 'Other Place' is not as it's promised.

The point of the 'grass always being greener' is made without

any stern moralism, and there's witty, unpatronising humour and a sure style. A good read-aloud for 7 ups. CM

The Worst Witch Strikes Again

Jill Murphy, Puffin, 0 14 03.1348 6, 85p

We are back in Miss Cackle's Academy for Witches with Mildred Hubble, Miss Hardbroom and a new girl called Enid Nightshade. Many children enjoyed the first story (*The Worst Witch*); and nothing is lost in terms of sure-fire humour, fast plot and some irresistible characterisation.

Mildred finds it equally hard to stay out of trouble, much to the anguish of her mentors: Enid seems a placid 'goody' at first but soon lands herself, and Mildred, in zany scrapes.

The illustrations, by the author, add a lot to the fun in a welcome second visit to a group of characters who'll become real favourites. CM

Hound in the Highlands
0 600 20360 3

Hound and the Witching Affair
0 600 20361 1
Brenda Silvers, Beaver,
75p each

Sherlock Hound and his companion Dr Winston star in these witty, pacy, engaging yarns which are a gloriously irreverent spoof on the Conan Doyle original.

In *Hound in the Highlands*,

the life of Bogle, a very noble dog, is threatened by a mysterious curse. Ghoulish bagpipe playing, some dotty 'bit players' (including the eccentric Mac Sporrans) all make up an enjoyable read for 9-ups.

Hound and the Witching Affair has the canine sleuths involved in witchcraft in Tolpuddle and here we meet Sherlock's Aunt Ethel, a real character in her own right. This writer has a fine ear tuned to the linguistic fun which is the stuff of life to most 9 to 11 year olds. CM



Oggy and the Holiday

Ann Lawrence, illustrated by Hans Helweg, Piccolo, 0 330 26353 6, 90p

An enjoyable follow-up to *Travels of Oggy and Oggy at Home*. In this one, Oggy the hedgehog and Tiggy the kitten stow away with the family on a seaside holiday. There's a strong story-line, some splendid jokes and sure characterisation. I do like this writer's style and the class of 7-8 year olds I read this to enjoyed the fact that the animals were central to the

MIDDLE/SECONDARY

Echoes of Louisa
Gail Renard, Beaver,
0 600 20433 2, 85p

Smuggler
Richard Carpenter,
Armada,
0 00 691949 9, 85p

Judging from these novelisations, **Smuggler** and **Echoes of Louisa** seem to be typically awful kids' TV serials. As a book, **Louisa** isn't worth considering. It's an extremely inept attempt at transposing the scripts of another time-slip fantasy. **Smuggler** is much better despite off-the-peg characters — 'Saturnine' ex-Navy officer turned maritime Robin Hood, middle-class wench with a 'wild spirit', cheeky, light-fingered urchin. 'Chapters' suggest a novel but it's more a series of extended stories. Big **Smuggler** fans might enjoy re-living it through print — but my guess is that there won't be many of them. SB

Knock and Wait
Gwen Grant, Lions,
0 00 671762 4, 95p

Sequel to **Private — Keep Out!** (0 00 671652 0, 80p, BFK4) so obviously worth having. It stands alone, too, since our Nottinghamshire lass details all the family again before she's whisked off for a year in a Kent hospital/school

because she's anaemic. This makes a slowish start but, thereafter, it's the mischief as before. Interesting 49/50 social details — why not give the Romans and Vikings a rest and do some real history? 9+. SB

The Indian in the Cupboard
Lynne Reid Banks,
Granada,
0 583 30461 3, 85p

Could be too solid for many of the juniors who'd enjoy it most but, once you've got over the contrived opening and accepted the plot, Omri's adventures with the medicine cupboard that brings plastic figures to life become surprisingly palatable. Omri soon realises that bossy Little Bull must be treated as a person in his own right but friend Patrick has a less acute moral sense and, once he animates Boone the cowboy, problems multiply. Try a copy with experienced readers favouring mini-people fantasies; even early secondary kids who've not yet outgrown Action Man. SB

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

Runner-up in Collins' multi-ethnic books competition but **Playing It Right** lives on —

helped by Puffin ditching Collins' ludicrous jacket — while **There Ain't No Angels No More** has deservedly died. A naive young teacher starts a cricket team in a run-down middle school; an over-extended sub-plot follows the familiar break-in theme. Low-key rather than sledgehammer touches on aspects of racism and social deprivation have led to neglect although it's an important book that you shouldn't miss. Improvable — what isn't? — but at least as recognisable as any **Grange Hill** and, for once, the reading level suits the audience. SB

The Love Genie
Joanne Webster, Hippo,
0 590 70073 1, 80p

A blend of Leeson's **Third Class Genie** (Lions) and Mary Hooper's **Jodie** (Nelson Getaway). The dialogue is shaky ('Crumbs', 'Cripes') and we open with Jennie and Samantha discussing boys. Then come problems establishing Jennie's genie (rub ammonite, whistle **Lily the Pink!**) and the love interest. Things must improve... They do, with some chuckles and a teenage view of teachers ('Would you like me to recommend a deodorant, sir?'). It's Jackie in book form; unfair to expect more than a quick, frivolous read — though, on those terms, the style's patchy: 'They engaged in a lot

of eager speculation about the disco... They danced desultorily... Early secondary. Try it. SB

Boy Trouble at Trebizon
Anne Digby, Granada,
0 583 30430 3, 85p

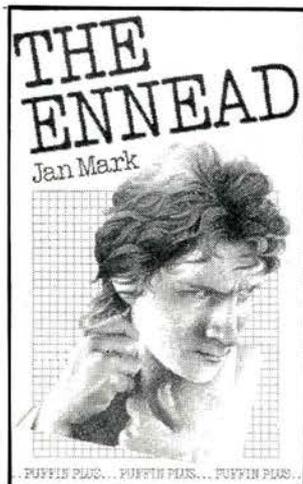
Fourth in this very popular girls' boarding school series. Central issues — will Rebecca make the D squad of the junior county tennis team and who stole the posh sports car? Don't expect too much love interest on account of the title. The longer **More Trouble at Trebizon**, no. 5, is in hardback (Granada, 0 246 11425 8, £3.95). SB

When the City Stopped

Joan Phipson, Piccolo,
0 330 26032 4, 90p

Macmillan's hardback **Keep Calm** re-titled. Unions strike over plans for nuclear power and Sydney stops. Nick (13½) and Binkie (11) are alone — Dad's away and an accident puts Mum in hospital, unconscious and unidentified. Potential, yes, but Joan Phipson just keeps adding characters instead of incident so things crawl along for at least the first half. There's also a lot of '[The ships] lay softly on the water, gleaming particles of other lands, aloof from the emotional turmoil in the city that now enclosed them.' Flashes of inspiration but, all in all, it's fortunate that the cover won't sell it. SB

OLDER READERS



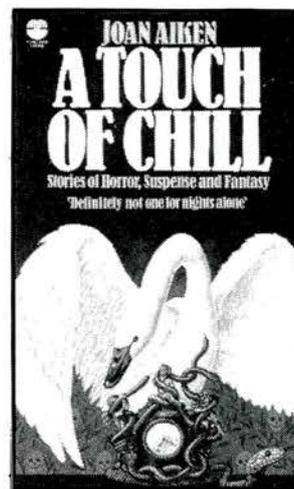
The Ennead
Jan Mark, Puffin Plus,
0 14 03.1354 0, £1.35

A tragi-comic SF love story built to a grand plan — covering several years and 200+ pages despite losing 10,000 words twixt manuscript and publication — essentially an adult work. On Erato, scheming and swindling is all. But Isaac's plans sour when he 'imports' Eleanor, a sculptor who won't conform. Her love inspires Moshe the gardener to

rebel — with disastrous consequences. It's easy to accept and enjoy it on its own terms (thereby missing the difficulties presented to inexperienced readers) although, at this critical level, one notes several flaws in construction. I'd tout round a library copy before buying any on spec. SB

Survival
Russell Evans, Puffin Plus,
0 14 03.1284 6,
£1.10

Get this if you find books about battling the elements going well; of its kind, it's good. Ivanov escapes from a Siberian prison camp and beats the taiga to rejoin his family. An effective start — escapes begging readmittance — precedes the usual episodic narrative: pursuit, finding food/shelter, natural dangers. The last third deals with establishing cover so the KGB won't discover his identity. Umpteen coincidences and stock situations matter less than the central section's uniform style dictated by Ivanov's solitude but apparent authenticity, short chapters and stress on action rather than landscape help a lot. Useful bridge to 'higher' things? SB



A Touch of Chill
Joan Aiken, Lions,
0 00 671764 0, 95p

Fifteen macabre stories. At its best (**Jugged Hare**) Joan Aiken's work in this field is spectacularly good. At other times, one feels she's relied on reputation to sell stories or merely fulfilled commissions prestige has brought; disparate elements don't gel, endings aren't quite right. One or two here don't suit kids — most were originally for adults (middle-aged/elderly characters predominate) and I can't spot any editing. The order of stories, too, could be improved.

Nevertheless, much better than her out-of-print Peacock **A Bundle of Nerves** — less whimsical. One you should certainly read yourself and try with older kids. SB

Tulku
Peter Dickinson, Puffin Plus,
0 14 03.1357 5,
£1.50

Winner of both Whitbread Award and Carnegie Medal. Starting quite well as a historical (Boxer Uprising) with Theodore (13), only survivor of his father's missionary settlement, meeting a brassy English actress turned botanist and her Chinese poet-guide, later her lover, it rambles into mysticism as they flee into Tibet and become involved in monastery politics. Not a patch on Dickinson's **Blue Hawk** (though even longer) and quite unreadable for 99% in schools, it seems to me a monumental waste of talent. Find his new **Seventh Raven** instead (Gollancz, 0 575 02960 9, £4.95) — that's much more like it. SB

After Star Wars...

The success of **Star Wars**, **Blake's 7**, **Star Trek** and the like suggest there's an appetite for SF. Can it be fed with reading? Have we got the books to satisfy it?

Steve Bowles looks at what's currently available.

It may seem strange to compare science fiction with historical novels and yet they share an apparent stylistic necessity which does much to limit the range of their appeal. Since readers won't automatically conjure up appropriate mental images as with contemporary realism, there is pressure on the writer to create a clear picture of time, place and social structure while simultaneously establishing characters and storyline. All too easily, this can result in chunks of description which destroy the pace, unfamiliar details/vocabulary to disturb the flow, and dialogue which rings strangely on the ear, hindering the books' immediacy. Often, good science fiction is nearly as impenetrable — for most kids — as a substantial slab of Sutcliffe, Garfield or Barbara Willard. (It's not altogether surprising to find a notable historical novelist like Ann Schlee receiving acclaim when switching over to SF — although personally, unlike **BFK's** editor and the judges for '79's Guardian Award, I found **The Vandal** boringly flat and uneventful.) Of course, SF commands a much wider audience than the historicals — and its unfulfilled potential justifies publishers' continued backing. (Whereas there are 30 years' worth of barely-dated, quality historical novels in the libraries — easily sufficient for their almost negligible audience.) However, the parallel is worth making, if only to suggest that SF subject matter does not, in itself, guarantee success.

Equating high sales with popularity can be misleading (as many publishers' claims show) and some slow-sellers *do* work exceptionally well. Nevertheless, editors with a taste for SF must be bothered that the Puffin catalogue shows Peter Dickinson's three **Changes** novels at 30p, 40p and 50p, indicating that they've not been reprinted recently, despite a (for once) effective TV adaptation. Moreover, Puffins by Ben Bova, Harry Harrison, Heinlein, Sheekley, Sylvia Engdahl and Andre Norton are all gone from the current list while Beaver seem to have shelved plans to expand the **Space** series and have dropped John Christopher's **Wild Jack**. One wonders, therefore, how well founded is the apparent belief that the **Star Wars** bandwagon will create a big new demand for SF, a belief which surely explains recent upsurges in kids' SF publication. Action-packed films don't necessarily come across vividly in print and, with the notable exception of Douglas Hill's **Last Legionary** sequence, the new books show hardly any modifications to styles, structures or themes now mouldering on library shelves as part of the Great Unread. Tinkering with content alone won't do; the whole approach to kids' books must change. John Christopher's **Empty World** and Jan Mark's **Ennead** no more satisfy the need for readable SF than Virginia Hamilton provides accessible books about Black kids.

Even with a clearly-defined genre, therefore, teachers must know individual books in order to put them in the way of appropriate

readers. It's pointless expecting everyone interested in SF to read everything with rockets or bug-eyed monsters on the front. **Dr Who** fiends aren't likely to switch straight to Helen Hoover, nor Hugh Walters fans to Monica Hughes. However, with older kids at least, it's easier with SF than with other types of fiction for teachers to nurture interest or counter prejudice because of the many SF short stories available for classroom use. (Promoting SF, of course, would be secondary to promulgating new awareness of techniques in short story writing.) If only half a dozen anthologies covered All Teachers Need To Know About SF... Unfortunately, the usual procedure applies again — Read Around. I don't know one outstanding SF anthology in a kids' paperback imprint although educational publishers' (non-net!) offerings — a mixed bag, with many overlaps, usually aimed at older teenagers — contain a fair number of classics. Perhaps, one day, someone will collect them into a few readily-available volumes and make future anthologies cast around more widely. Currently, occasional nuggets nestle among dross, collections often relying more on promising connecting themes than on the merits of individual stories. Limited outlets for short stories written especially for kids have made most authors steer clear of them while, since the late sixties, new SF stories for adults have generally been too difficult — hence the continual reshuffling of Names from the simpler forties and fifties (Bradbury, Clarke, Wyndham . . .) which depresses most anthology-watchers.

A complementary problem exists with novels. Low grade series are not hard to find: Faber have Hugh Walters, Magnet have the **Dragonfall 5** books (Brian Earnshaw), in Piccolo there's Capt. W.E. Johns and the Tomorrow People, Armada have Patrick Moore, Dr Who battles on in Target. Knight's **Starstormers** (Nicholas Fisk) might have more potential but, so far, I've not been impressed. Useful though they are with some kids, these series tend to justify old criticisms — that SF equals Westerns on the Moon, and, in these cases, rather poor Westerns at that. This wouldn't worry anybody if there were a way of channelling interest towards the more accomplished writers but I can't agree with Bill Boyle's comment in **BFK 7** that there 'is already sufficient imaginative and entertaining sci-fi on the market', especially for junior/early secondary kids. If SF is going to take off, there must be more good quality Adventures like **The Last Legionary** to bridge the gap to excellent but more demanding writers like Hoover, Hughes and Norton.

While we wait for writers to write them and publishers to publish them we have to make the most of what there is. Here are the results of my personal Read Around SF. We've separated novels from short story collections; books for younger readers occur first in each list.

Novels

Ghost Ship to Ganymede, Robert Swindells, Wheaton, 0 08 025007 6, £2.95

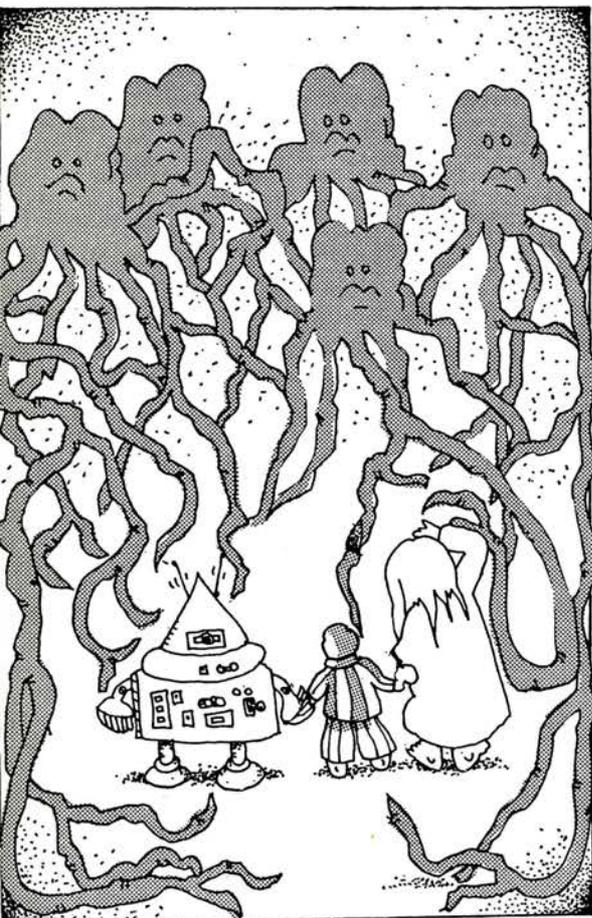
Ganymede comes from a new series 'for 8/11 year olds' called Readalongs — short, lots of pictures, easy reading. Three young stowaways find themselves on a Jovian moon instead of a space station in Earth orbit and get involved in the racial warfare there before being rescued in the nick of time. 'Lunar cops and robbers' it may be; but it's foolish to overlook the vital importance of setting

for some readers. Not special, but in paperback this would be preferable to many of the pulp series around at the moment. See if your local Schools Library Service has a copy to lend you. Another SF Readalong is **The Space Waifs** (Tom Tully). This is pretty desperate stuff — makes you appreciate Swindells — but, hackneyed though it is, kids will probably read it. One can only hope that Wheaton won't underwrite the series that it has obviously been designed to grow into. On the junior paperback front, Diana Carter's highly individual **Zozu the Robot** (Puffin, 0 14 03.0767 2, 50p) should attract attention; it has the makings of a mini-cult for some schools. Don't be tempted, however, by **School on the**

Moon, Hugh Walters' third attempt in red Grasshoppers to give new depth of meaning to words like 'banal'. And Abelard reckon 6-8 year olds could read it — nice to know someone still thinks Education can achieve miracles.

Pentag, Anita Jackson, Hutchinson Educational, 0 09 131011 3, 65p (non net)

Don't ignore the Spirals series because it's produced for 'remedial' kids. This is one of the most difficult and one of the best too — a tense SF spy thriller. Attempts to stimulate interest among 'slow learners' with space-y material have mostly been disasters — look at



'The place was crowded with the strangest creatures Rufus could imagine' — illustration by Mike Rose from 'Zozu the Robot.'

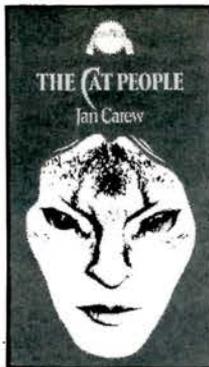
Edward Arnold's **Vardo** books — and series like Scholastic's Action Books and John Murray's Bestsellers are at their weakest with SF. Spirals also offer SF — not as good as **Pentag** — in Anita Jackson's Dahlsh **Dr Maxwell** and, for those who like that sort of thing, the spoof **Jimmy Rocket** (David Walke).

The Cat People,
Jan Carew, Longmans,
0 582 21176 X, 70p (non net)

Jan Carew is the best writer in the Knockouts series for 'reluctant readers' and this is a good piece of SF horror about using chemicals to change the environment without first making exhaustive tests to monitor side-effects. Look out this author's other books too if you don't already know them. By comparison with Jan Carew, the SF titles in Macmillan's feeble **Rockets** series — about the same reading level — have the luminosity of a black hole.

Galactic Warlord,
Douglas Hill, Piccolo,
0 330 26186 X, 80p

First part of a splendid tetralogy. **Deathwing Over Veynaa** in Piccolo soon, hardbacks from Gollancz (**Day of the Starwind** and, in the Autumn, **Planet of the Warlord**). Just about the only whole-hearted attempt to find a new kids' SF, blending Adventure with a convincing picture of a colonized universe. See **BFK 5** for longer account.



Grinny,
Nicholas Fisk, Puffin,
0 14 03.0745 1, 65p

Alien robot, on reconnaissance mission prior to invasion, visits a (very middle-class) family as Great Aunt Emma — and only the kids realise. A very popular book — though the style makes me sceptical about junior school use as some advocate; I think 2nd/3rd year secondary. The diary form adds a dimension and, for once, Fisk bothered to take his characters beyond Blyton (cf. the Puffin **Trillions** and Kestrel's **Antigrav**). It deserves a better cover and stronger glue than Puffin have given it; surprising that M Books or Windmills haven't picked it up. Blending SF with a recognisable domestic set-up is an approach Fisk has often used and it's possible that it holds more potential for generally popular books than the Space Opera extravaganzas which, so far, only Douglas Hill seems to be tackling successfully.

Catseye,
Andre Norton, Puffin,
0 14 03.0315 4, 60p

The best paperback Norton for kids to taste now that Beaver have dropped **The Zero Stone**. The few who like her work have got a feast down at the local library; how about **Breed to Come** (Longman Young Books) next? Teachers looking for easy SF might read her uncharacteristically simple **Outside** (Blackie).



USBORNE BOOKS

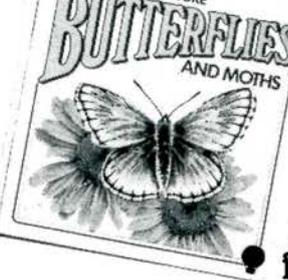
make finding out fun!



THINGS AT HOME



THINGS OUTDOORS



USBORNE FIRST NATURE
BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS



USBORNE FIRST NATURE
FLOWERS

For catalogues and further information, contact: **WHS Distributors, St Johns House, East Street, Leicester.**

If you would like a longer list of SF suggestions, send a sae (15½p stamp) to Steve Bowles, 45 Hawkweed House, Gosfield Road, Dagenham, Essex. The lists will be sent out in September.

The Time of the Kraken,
Jay Williams, Topliner Redstar,
0 333 26180 1, 70p (non net)

Worth a look if you want to see whether your kids are likely to take to the fantasy varieties of adult SF — Ursula Le Guin, Vonda McIntyre, Anne McCaffrey, Tanith Lee. Life on a planet of feuding village communities is threatened by the Kraken, a vast creature which appears once in an age and can only be killed with the technology of an ancient space-craft. In so doing, the hero learns the truth about the planet's history and the God-like ancestors who live in tribal legends — and thereby sacrifices his own future, too. Other possible ways into this field are through short stories eg. **Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand** (McIntyre, in **Constellations**, ed. Malcolm Edwards, Gollancz) or Anne McCaffrey's **The Smallest Dragonboy** (in **Space 6**, ed. Davis, Hutchinson).

The Guardian of Isis,
Monica Hughes, Hamish
Hamilton, 0 241 10597 8, £5.50

Hughes' most recent is a sequel to her best novel, **The Keeper of the Isis Light** (Magnet, 0 416 21030 9, 95p). Try the paperback before committing yourself to **Guardian**; the new one can't stand alone but the emotional charge of **Keeper** is sufficiently strong to carry over and bolster it so that it's never less than interesting. Monica Hughes vies with Helen Hoover for first place among current 'middlebrow' SF novelists for kids — think of Peter Dickinson's teenage thrillers or Robert Westall's

fantasies and you won't be far off the reading level. Compared to Douglas Hill, their emphasis is more on character, emotion, mood and morality, though this isn't to deny either writer's ability to create drama or excitement. All Hughes' books deserve attention except **The Tomorrow City. Crisis on Conshelf Ten** and **Earthdark** are Magnet paperbacks but don't overlook **Beyond the Dark River** (Hamish Hamilton).

Return to Earth,

H.M. Hoover, Methuen,
0 416 20810 X, £4.95

If only the good guys could win this easily . . . Never mind; it's another very entertaining Hoover novel (despite the misprints) and, if it's just a *little* short on climax like one or two of her others, that doesn't prevent me from looking forward to each new book with great anticipation. I particularly enjoyed **The Lost Star** (Methuen), an unusually warm and hopeful story infused by a subtle tension. Beaver have cut **Children of Morrow** from their list but look out the newer hardbacks from the library — they seem good bets for future paperbacking. Like Monica Hughes, Hoover is particularly valuable in that she gives prominent roles to women. Both should be especially useful if Louise Lawrence's **Andra** (Topliner Redstar) or Robert O'Brien's classic **Z for Zachariah** (Lions) have gone well.

King Creature, Come,

John Rowe Townsend, Oxford,
0 19 271441 4, £3.25

King Creature, Come is a well-wrought account of an alien colony's last days on Earth, reminiscent of Hoover's **The Delikon** (Magnet, 0 416 87690 0, 65p). JRT's quality yo-yos so don't ignore this merely on the basis of a nasty experience with his first foray into SF, the tedious **Xanadu Manuscript**. ('First' because, although I've no wish to get embroiled in definitions, I'd call **Noah's Castle** (Puffin) something like 'future fiction' and put it with books like Roy Brown's **The Cage** (Abelard) and William Corlett's Topliner Redstar **Return to the Gate**.)

Tower of the Stars,

Rosemary Harris, Faber
0 571 11607 8, £5.95

The second part of a 500 pager about Europe under neo-Stalinist rule; part one, **A Quest for Orion**, is scheduled for Puffin Plus later this year. (Pray for a better cover than Faber gave it.) This is 'future fiction' which tips over into SF. Ms Harris isn't entirely at home with her material but all such broad canvas novels can catch real bookworms in the flow of events and the interweaving of different strands. To get involved, however, one has to overlook clumsy dialogue and an elaborately contrived plot (incorporating a spastic boy with strange psychic powers, any number of coincidences and, finally, a rescuing mystical force sweeping in from Space, channelled through Charlemagne's crown and a piece of the True Cross). The political background is unconvincing — especially if judged by critical standards commensurate with

the reading level — but, in an ideal world, there'd be a place for such books.

Short Story Collections

The Fight of Neither Century,

Robin Chambers, Granada,
0 583 30338 2, 85p

Defining the difference between SF and fantasy gets impossible near the join and there's not much point to attempting it, anyway. For me, only **Copycat** in this set is SF — as **Time Out** is the only example in Chambers' **Ice Warrior** (Puffin, 0 14 03.1013 4, 60p). Your concept may be different and none the worse for that. Robin Chambers' great virtue is simplicity, a refusal to be Literary. **The Fight of Neither Century** doesn't even reach the standard of his first collection but the genesis of each story is so obvious that they provide useful examples for showing kids how to contrive their own.

Space 7,

ed. Richard Davis, Hutchinson,
0 09 144350 4, £5.50

The latest in a series which mixes original stories and older work by SF stalwarts; 1–4 were published by Abelard, 5 and 6 by Hutchinson. You can also get 1 and 2 in **Beaver** (65p/85p 0 600 38406 3 / 0 600 20186 4). No. 7 maintains, even improves, the standard of the earlier volumes, notably by making the average story-length shorter; there are 13 here as compared to 8 in no. 1. Moreover, apart from the obligatory Bradbury and Clarke, the older stories here aren't that well-known. In general, the **Space** books are more difficult than Davis' four **Armada SF** collections and his **Jon Pertwee Book of Monsters** (Magnet). By and large, these are relatively easy reading but the quality isn't spectacular — though Elizabeth Fancett's clever but overlong **Star Boy** in **Armada SF 2** warrants a look. So, too, does Tim Stout's **Christmas with Frankenstein** (**Space 4**; also in **Hollow Laughter**, Tim Stout, Abelard). All Davis anthologies are worth knowing for secondary kids just starting on SF; the easier ones could suit some top juniors.

Unearthly Beasts,

Jay Williams, Topliner,
0 333 26070 8, 70p (non net)

The easiest of several SF Topliners — others are useful but unremarkable collections of familiar names, though **Future Love** is worth noting for its 'different' theme and greater potential for luring girls (ed. Victoria Williams, 0 333 21859 0, 70p). Jay Williams' stories were written for kids, which makes them more widely suitable for early secondary and up. There's a nice variety of tone and idea, though the opener could have been better. Suggest **Trial by Combat**, **Happy Pill** or **Beast of Prey** if anyone's asking.

Of Time and Stars,

Arthur C. Clarke, Puffin,
0 14 03.0703 6, 70p

Has to be mentioned though I'm no great Clarke lover myself — too often ideas dominate story or there's an anti-climax.

Lots here, however, including some of his best, though you'll need **Space 5** (ed. Davis) or **Alien Worlds** (ed. Douglas Hill, Heinemann) for the tense **Summertime on Icarus**. Another good one — but more sophisticated, dependent on mood — is **The Wind from the Sun** (**Sunjammer**) in **Constellations** (ed. Malcolm Edwards, Gollancz) or **Strange Planets** (ed. A. Williams-Ellis/M. Pearson, Blackie).

Science Fiction,

ed. James Gibson, John Murray
Short Story Series, 0 7195 3502 6,
95p (non net)

For real beginners to senior SF, this has probably got more of the hardy perennials than any other collection, but the print is small and cramped.

Science Fiction Stories,

ed. Tom Boardman, Octopus,
0 7064 0999 X, £1.99

An unlikely source for a good collection but great value — you'd pay this much for 23 stories in paperback. Well-known standards rub shoulders with the equally good or even better. Two quarrels. Firstly, the opening story — Murray Leinster's **First Contact** — is long and slow; when will house editors stop their compilers making this all-too-common blunder? Secondly, the jacket is a lasers-blazing, clean-cut hero, here-be-weird-monsters come-on — par for a series selling in chain stores. The stories, however, are relatively sophisticated, often thoughtful, adult stuff. For those hoping to re-visit **Star Wars**, this jacket is a con but, nearly as bad, it could deter the serious 14+ SF fan who *would* enjoy the stories. Once again, our efforts to keep kids reading are undercut by the publisher's handiwork.

100 Great Science Fiction Short Stories,

ed. Asimov, Greenberg and
Olander, Robson Books,
0 86051 035 2

Unfortunately, now out of print — so try the library or inter-library loan. Published for adults and consequently wearing a drab jacket, it's a gold mine for teachers and SF fans — I admit plundering it shamelessly when putting together **Twisters** (Collins/Lions). With 100 stories, obviously the quality fluctuates but overall it's amazingly high and, since the stories don't exceed four sides, small disappointments can't spoil the general pleasure. Like the Octopus set, it's a nice mix of humour, pathos, horror and ideas though with a slightly broader range as some selections are straightforward fantasy and all are so short.

Adam's Ark,

Harold Hodgson, Macmillan
Education Dramascripts,
0 333 18344 8, 95p (non net)

For those into scripted drama, I'm told this large-cast example about a school party stuck in a fall-out shelter after the Bomb destroys homes and families works well at 2nd/3rd year secondary level. For younger kids, Nicholas Fisk's **Space Hostages** is available in Ward Lock's Take Part series (0 7062 3625 4, 90p (non net)) while, moving back up the age range, David Campton's **Mutatis Mutandis** for three characters in his collection of one-acters **Laughter and Fear** (Blackie Student Drama, 0 216 89077 2, £2.95 (non net)) is worth tracking down. ●

STRAIGHT-TO-THE-POINT NON-FICTION FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE 1980s

PICCOLO FACTBOOKS



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This information has pointed to three main observations: that by the age of 9 or 10 children are predominantly interested in non-fiction; that they prefer the standard paperback format; and that they are great collectors of a series once it has met with their approval.

Piccolo Factbooks are ideal for primary and middle school use, providing a thorough basis for work on themes, following the subject through from start to finish. They take into account the present and foreseeable economic climate, offering a satisfying, durable non-fiction package which, at £1.25, is exceptional value. We are launching them with a fact-finding competition presented by the diminutively dynamic Piccolo Power Man! Details from your bookshop.

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PICCOLO FACTBOOKS — A MAJOR NEW VENTURE DESIGNED TO SPAN THE 1980s.

Authorgraph No.9

John Christopher

You'd think that publishers would be more than happy with a successful author who was producing four books a year. But alas, some people are never happy, and Sam Youd found that being prolific worried his publishers, to the extent that they asked him to use different names for some of his books. It's because of this that children have been able to read a number of books by an author called John Christopher, who is that same Sam Youd.

The original Sam Youd was born in Knowsley, Lancashire, in 1922, but moved south to Hampshire when he was ten. He was educated at Peter Symonds' School, Winchester (a city which was to form the centre of several of his books for children), which he left at the age of 16 to work in local government. But it was too late by then — he had already been bitten by one of the most virulent strains of the writing bug.

'I was messing about with writing when I was in my teens, and I was absolutely passionately devoted to science fiction from the time I was about 11 to the time I was 16 or 17. I published an amateur magazine which was tied up with the science fiction scene of the '30s. SF fans these days tend to be sort of intense, and at that time we were even more so because it was only just starting. We kept in touch by letter, through our magazines and even then at conventions.'

He was called up into the army in 1941, where he stayed in the Signals until 1946. Back in civvy street he was lucky enough to get a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation which enabled him to concentrate on his writing for a year. 'They gave me £250, which was quite a lot of money at the time, and all you had to do was promise to spend a year writing. You didn't have to produce anything, you just weren't allowed to take a job. I did one novel in that time, and started another.'

But all good things come to an end, and with a wife and growing family (he has one son and four daughters), he was forced to take a job. 'Meanwhile I kept writing in my spare time, trying to keep writing novels. At one period I was writing four books a year in my spare time from the office. I used to come home every night and work, although I did give myself Thursday evenings off.'

'I don't think it made me write any worse than I would otherwise have done. In fact I did once say that every writer ought to get married young and start raising a large family. There's nothing like that sort of incentive to make you work.'

It paid off for Sam Youd, at any rate, for one of the books he wrote in those 'hectic' years was **The Death of Grass**, which is probably his most successful adult book and which was made into an MGM film in the '60s. It was that book which enabled him to devote himself full-time to writing, the profession which he pursued in Guernsey in the Channel Islands for over 20 years before he came back to live in Sussex.

Other successful adult books followed, so it was as an established writer that he was approached by Hamish Hamilton to write a science fiction novel for children. He at first turned down the idea, mainly because he didn't like the idea of being commissioned to write a novel. Another problem was that his teenage passion for science fiction had

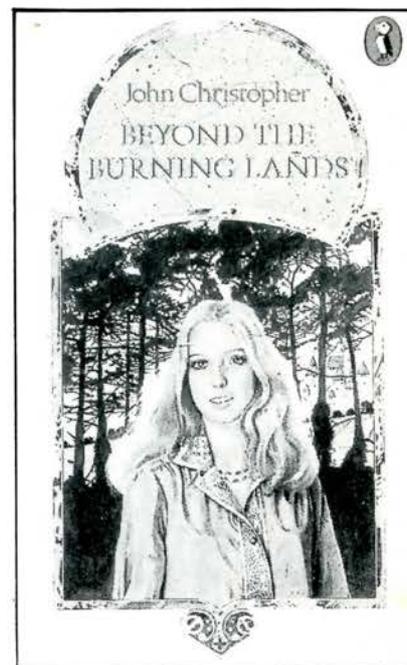
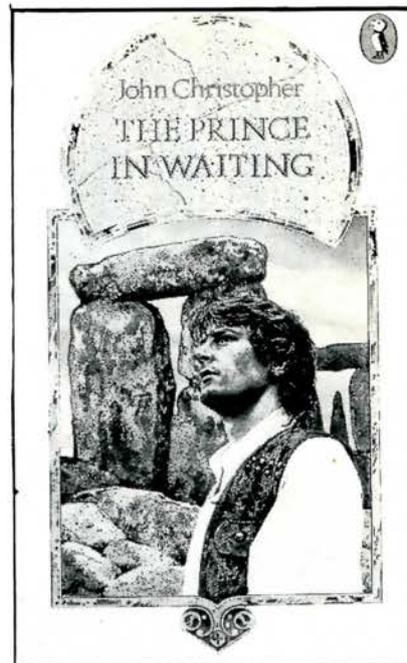
cooled. He found the past by now more stimulating than the future as an incentive to imagination. 'In the old days, I — and many others who felt the same way — thought that science fiction was all wonderful stuff, but stuff which actually could happen. You could believe there was enough air on Mars to support life and so on, because we knew relatively little about the solar system. But by the time it actually began to start happening we knew so much more. That sort of science fiction seems to me more like fairy stories, now.'

'I suppose I like things to be a bit more practically based, so when I was writing adult science fiction I had found myself coming closer and closer to the present and just going maybe a year or two ahead. By the time I was asked to do a children's novel I'd totally lost interest in science fiction. But I think I got round that a bit neatly by writing a book which was set theoretically in the future, but which was much more about medieval England — the past in the future.'

That's a thing which he's continued to do in other books. His first children's novel, **The White Mountains**, is set in a future where mankind is dominated by a race of aliens who control the world from their huge, strange cities and all-powerful tripods. At puberty, everyone has a 'cap' placed on their heads which effectively reduces them to a state of contented slavery. A small band of freedom fighters struggle to save the world, and the struggle is depicted in two further books, **The City of Gold and Lead** and **The Pool of Fire**. The point is that mankind has been reduced to the level of the middle ages, something which worldwide volcanic activity achieves in **The Prince in Waiting** trilogy and the squandering of mineral fuels in **Wild Jack**.

His central theme is probably best described as the responsibility of freedom, and this is in a very strong sense linked to his approach to writing for children. 'I worked out some years ago, or at least I think I did to my own satisfaction, why **The White Mountains** had been one of my most successful books. I think the successful children's books are those which appeal to something at a deeper level which the child doesn't really quite work out. Now in **The White Mountains**, the whole thing is that at puberty people are brainwashed. The whole future of mankind rests in the hands of the young, the age group for which I'm writing.'

'I think that kids at that age — around 12 or 13 — probably do look at the adults around them resentfully and think of them as hidebound and prejudiced. It's important for children to have stories which put them in the driving seat.' But the young hero of the book — Will, whose name itself is indicative — has to cope with the responsibilities of freedom, for the lives of most of the 'capped' adults are portrayed as enormously attractive, while the lives of the freedom fighters are arduous and weighed down with decision. It's these sorts of problems — of learning to make your own decisions and take the consequences — which he's writing about, and which children have to learn to face as they grow up. Perhaps the most concise expression of this theme comes in **The Guardians** which won the Guardian Award in 1971.



'I've been thinking about it recently, trying to work out why I became attracted to science fiction in the first place. I remember one book my mother read to me before I could read was **Swiss Family Robinson**, and I remember reading myself at a fairly early stage Ballantyne's **Coral Island**. The point is that they're about strange and wonderful happenings, and although in **Swiss Family Robinson** Wyss cheats like mad by having all sorts of things on the island you couldn't possibly have, you believe it all until you know better, it's something you believe could happen. And I was attracted by the **Coral Island** theme of three boys in a strange and dangerous situation having to learn how to cope.

'That crops up in **Empty World** (in which a plague wipes out all but the young, and most of them). 'When I first thought of the idea I remembered that when I was a kid — and I imagine everyone goes through the same thing — I had moments of thinking, wouldn't it be nice if there were no adults around? You could feel free to do anything without any harassment. What I was doing was to paint the blacker side of that. It really wouldn't be as good as it seems to have that sort of freedom.'



He feels that his own personal future now lies firmly with children's books, and his first novel after a gap of several years has just been published by Victor Gollancz. **Fireball** is his first 'alternative world' book, in which two boys plunge through a 'dimensional overlap' to find themselves in a Britain where it is 1981, but where the Roman Empire never fell. 'When I was living in the Channel Islands I was beginning to think with over 50 books behind me I'd over-written a bit, and that it was reasonable to take a year off. It turned out to be three years, but it wasn't too difficult to get back into writing. It was good to have a book within three months of sitting down to write.'

He used the three-year lay-off to 'try and get in touch with my audience' and started to go out and meet the kids who read his books. They sell much better in the United States than they do here (which he finds hard to understand) and his American publishers were happy to help him meet his American readers. His visits to the States he has found fascinating, and he believes that 'the Americans are far better organised when it comes to kids and reading' than we are. Meeting his audience is something that he enjoys and which he intends to carry on doing.

He has been accused of pessimism in his books, and agrees that it's something which does run through many of them. **The Prince in Waiting** trilogy he thinks is 'particularly sombre', although they're his favourite books — perhaps even because of that. 'One thing which runs through those books — and others — is the destruction of the good things of the past by technology. Although they're fighting to restore science, it's not a good thing really, because the life they've got is better than the one they will have when they've got science. It could be just growing old, but there's always this lost world thing, looking back to a golden era. In my teens I was looking to science and the future. It was all going to be wonderful, but it didn't turn out like that. I do feel very strongly that children's books should have an upbeat to them, but there is this basic pessimism in me and it surfaces at some point.'

Pessimism apart, now he's started again he intends to keep writing. But he won't say much about what's coming. 'It's sheer superstition; I have a rooted objection to making statements about future projects or work in hand.' We'll just have to wait and see what the future brings. ●

The books

The Lotus Caves, Hamish Hamilton,
0 241 01729 7, £3.25;
Puffin, 0 14 03.0503 3, 75p

The Guardians, Hamish Hamilton,
0 241 01795 5, £3.50;
Puffin, 0 14 03.0579 3, 95p

The Prince in Waiting, Hamish Hamilton,
0 241 01937 0, £2.95;
Puffin, 0 14 03.0617 X, Reissue Summer
1981, 85p

Beyond the Burning Lands, Puffin,
0 14 03.0625 0, Reissue Summer 1981,
85p

The Sword of the Spirits, Puffin,
0 14 03.0630 7, Reissue Summer 1981, 85p

The White Mountains, Beaver,
0 600 39367 4, 90p

The City of Gold and Lead, Hamish Hamilton,
0 241 91312 8, £3.95;
Beaver, 0 600 31931 8, 90p

The Pool of Fire, Beaver, 0 600 37134 4,
90p

Empty World, Hamish Hamilton,
0 241 89751 3, £3.95;
Puffin Plus, 0 14 03.1305 2, December 1981

Fireball, Gollancz, 0 575 02974 9, £4.95



DISCOVERING LIFE ON EARTH

Who would have predicted that a book about the evolution of the natural world would in two years run into three editions and never be out of the bestseller lists?

Life on Earth — the book that did just that — owes its success largely to David Attenborough's remarkable ability to communicate ideas and information.

He has put that talent to work again on a fourth edition — this time for children. **Pat Triggs** went to see if she could find how he does it.

You don't have to be with David Attenborough for long to discover that part of the answer lies in the sort of person he is. After twenty-five years at the BBC, including eight years as a top executive (Controller of BBC 2 and Director of TV Programmes), he is clearly still absorbed and excited by television. He talks with an enthusiasm that compels your interest. As if, far from having said it all before (as inevitably he must) this is the first chance he's had to articulate his ideas.

He's sharp and incisive and he knows what he thinks, which must have made him a formidable figure at the Beeb. Of the decision to make *Civilisation*, Kenneth Clark's mammoth series, he said, 'The general feeling was that no-one would sustain attention during that period of time. I thought otherwise.'

After *Civilisation* came Bronowski's *Ascent of Man* and suddenly taking a major segment of man's experience and treating it cumulatively and consecutively in long episodes over many weeks had become an established BBC 2 tradition.

'Anyone in the TV business with half an eye could see that the natural world was an obvious candidate. The Mona Lisa doesn't jump out of the frame and dance — birds do. So you have a huge advantage.' The problem was how to treat it.

'As a programme-maker I have always believed that narrative, the story, is the most powerful way of communicating — always has been. Right from the beginning of time, from Homer, from Genesis, you translate things into stories which have identifiable characters who have problems and who get resolutions, but the resolutions only lead to new problems and so . . . The biological development of life can be seen very much in those terms. It seemed gratuitous to throw that away. A 55-minute television programme needs more than colour and movement to hold the attention. It has to have narrative thrust. (They tease me about that phrase in the business. It's my cliché.) If you are doing a good programme, you want people to say, "All right, so what happens next? Tell me, tell me."'

As the storyteller, how does he see his audience? 'Well, I always say I don't. And that's true in the sense that I don't think of, say, a one-legged coalminer in Northallerton. But really it's me. Supposing I didn't happen to know the facts, how would I like this explained? How would I find it interesting?'

Is the answer to that different for film and book? 'Well obviously the two are not the same. With film you can spend time with a whole galaxy of visually exciting illustrations to make your point. It's less good at painting in the precise logic behind it. In a book twenty examples in words becomes a tedious catalogue of description. It is good at taking argument. So in the book the ideas are more thoroughly put down and there are fewer examples.'



David Attenborough with gorillas, photo John Sparks

But the basic idea was conceived in film terms. Each programme became a chapter of the book and was written more or less as the series went along. And they have fundamental things in common. 'I don't think in a 50-minute television programme any more than in a chapter of a book you can get over more than two or three fundamental concepts. Therefore you have to distil, be very clear what it is you are telling them.'

And yet the first six pages of the book cover Darwin, fossilization, radioactive dating, DNA. 'The first programme — and the first chapter of the book — was an appalling problem. Some people used it as an argument for not doing the series

historically. "It's about green slime," they said. "How are you going to get green slime to grab ten million people by the throat?" I knew in my bones that I had to get over a major number of concepts fairly quickly to get into things people were going to find comprehensible visually. The first half of the first programme was a fearful gallop. I sweated blood over it. I still sweat blood.

'The first script I wrote didn't go into genetics. I didn't want to put Darwinism in. I did so against my better judgement. I still slightly regret it. Darwinism and evolution are two quite separate propositions. Lots of people think the book is about Darwinism. It isn't at all. It's a chronicle of life as it

develops. The mechanisms which actually drove that — to which Darwin provided an explanation — is something else altogether. I was rather sorry anyone wanted me to go into mechanisms. I'm a Darwinist in the sense that I don't have any doubts that natural selection works; but I certainly don't think we know everything to be known about the way in which it works and there may be principles about which we are so far ignorant.'

That tone of proper academic tentativeness can be found in the book. And it's deliberate. To popularise you don't need to over-simplify. 'You have to strike a difficult line between the pat arrogance — very off-putting to adults and children — of we know everything, we know exactly the way it works, and the baffling vagueness of the due modesty in the face of the facts. So you can say, "We've got a pretty good idea of the way it works; but we don't know the precise connections everywhere."

What are the rules for communicating ideas? 'One. Don't use long words for the sake of effect. Two. Be absolutely clear as to why you introduce an unfamiliar term whether it's a scientific name of an animal or a technical name for a process. There's no reason at all if you're only going to use it once. The only reason to use it is that it becomes a tool in your vocabulary and you can use it again and again. All over the place people just throw in these words to give an aura of scholarship which is bogus; it's a misunderstanding of the function of technical terms.

'Three. Don't try to cram too many concepts into too short a space. Stick to your brief. There's a million things you could say about birds, for example. No group in the animal kingdom has a bigger literature. For the programme the question was, "What can we say in 55 minutes about birds that is worth saying?" Funnily enough the answer is quite a lot. Not a lot of people have said, let's have the essence, the distillation of birdiness in 55 minutes, or fourteen pages. If you are forced to do that, as I was, what are you going to do? I thought for a bit. The answer was perfectly clear. *The* thing about birds is a feather. Once you've grasped that then you see about insulation, then you see the light aerofoil. But because of that you have to say I won't go into how birds change when they get on islands; I won't go into how birds navigate. I will stick to what this is about.'

The book lacks the physical presence of the author but it does, significantly, capture the tone of his voice. Did he try consciously for this effect?

'No. It must just be the way I put words together. I write very painfully — books and scripts. But scripts are less final than books. You can always tell yourself you'll change it in front of the camera. If you start a chapter in a certain way, that's the way it has to be. I write everything at least three or four times, by hand. The fundamental thing is whether it's clear.'

Apparently for young readers it wasn't all that clear. How did he react when Collins suggested a simplified version? 'My first reaction was let it be. We'd had three editions. I think I was superstitiously afraid of milking it. And also I wasn't sure I could do it. But Collins produced evidence from teachers that children were enthusiastic but the book was too long, too formidable, the language was too adult.'

To convince him it was possible Ingrid Selberg, children's editor, did a chapter. 'I was impressed by what she did. From then on we worked together. She didn't know the subject and that helped enormously. We cut it by about half, reduced the examples, reduced the sub-clauses in the argument, distilled it a bit further.' There are also 550 pictures. 'It's a new set. We had as an aim not to duplicate pictures from the other editions. And we've chosen ones children will find it easy to read.'

Has he tried to make animal behaviour easier to understand by describing it in human terms, like Walt Disney for instance? 'No. I'm not convinced children do find it easier to understand. I think perhaps parents impose that on their children. "Here's mummy spider coming to look for her little ones." A child might well see it differently, might respond just as well simply to looking.'

But there are touches of anthropomorphism in the book. Marmosets described as patient, for instance. 'If you watch a marmoset with two kids of his own and four of some others, clambering all over him, putting their feet on his eyes, I don't know what he's being if he isn't being patient. It seems a perfectly appropriate use of the word. If you said he's got a good sense of humour that would be improper. But it's distorting to remove totally the idea that an animal has subjective feelings of any kind. At the other end of the



Koala, photo Nature-Ferrero



Blue-tailed skink, photo Sean McKeown/Tom Stacks & Associates; Chameleon, photo Stephen Dalton/Oxford Scientific Films

scale it would be absurd and improper to suggest that a frog who lays a million eggs and abandons them all was an affectionate mother.'

Some people claim that animals are described in this way to encourage a degree of respect in children for animal life. 'I think children have a deep respect for animal life built into them. There are teachers no doubt who could prove me wrong, especially those in urban schools. But I'm not sure that sort of child is going to be affected by "mummy frog looking after her baby tadpoles".'

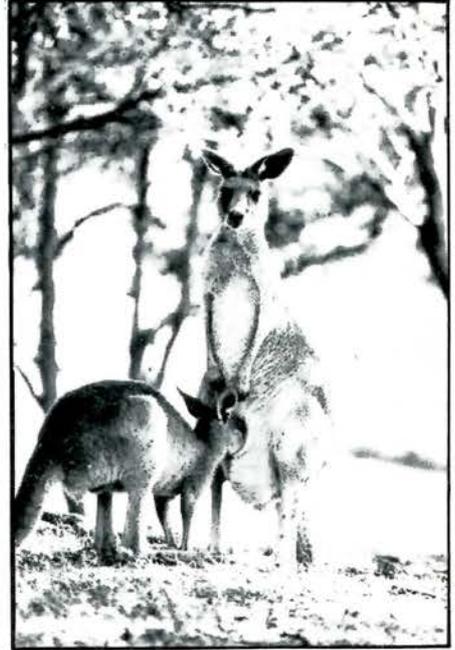
By this stage you've discovered the rest of the secret. Not only is David Attenborough a natural enthusiast; he's also a professional. But more than that he's an individual.

When the idea of the *Life on Earth* book was raised, he knew he didn't want just another encyclopaedia with ten illustrations per page. He told Collins, 'What I would like

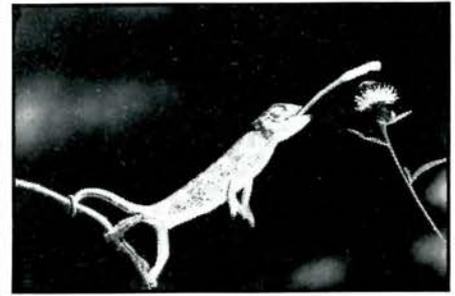
to produce is a book which looks like a book, is supposed to be read as a book, has a continuous narrative. So instead of putting in twenty illustrations we'll very deliberately only have six or eight per chapter. Each will be an emblem, will summarise an aspect of what we are talking about. It will be the very best picture we can get, we'll reproduce it full page and that will be it.' And so it was.

He wasn't sure it would sell. Even now he can't really account for its phenomenal success. I think it's got something to do with the appeal of one man's distinctive voice in an area dominated by glossy packaged information. Earlier in our conversation he said this about television programmes; but it's equally true for books:

'In the end worthwhile things don't come out of committees; they come out of the marrow of your bones and what you believe is the right way to do it.' ●



Kangaroo, photo Jacana



Discovering Life on Earth, Collins
0 00 195147 5, £6.95 (hardback)
0 00 195148 3, £4.95 (paperback)
Both to be published in November

Also by David Attenborough

The Zoo Quest Expeditions, Lutterworth
0 7188 2465 2, £8.95

More Zoo Quest Expeditions to be published later this year.



Honeybee, photo J.H. Robinson/National Audubon Society Collection/Photo Researchers

BE OUR GUEST... OUT AND ABOUT

Sally Floyer chooses books for getting

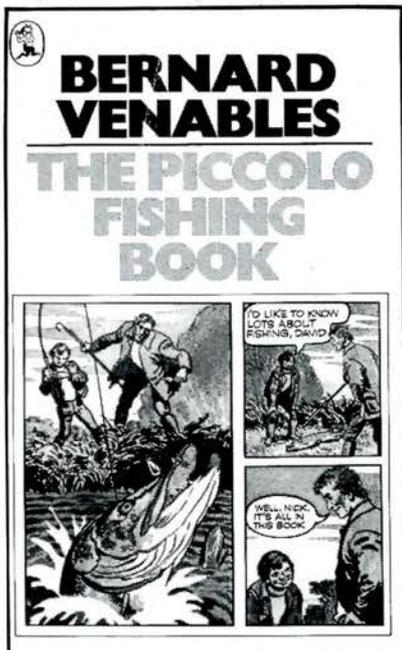
The summer holidays, whatever the weather, are the time for getting out and about, going on expeditions, pursuing outdoor hobbies, camping and exploring, and, perhaps, going to the seaside. Here is a round-up of paperback books, mostly published this spring and summer but one or two older ones which have still not been bettered, which give lots of ideas, advice and information on a variety of outdoor activities.

Fishing

Fishing is an immensely popular sport as anyone who has taken a stroll along the banks of a river or canal and fallen over a rod or a green umbrella every fifty metres knows. Here are two new books which approach the subject rather differently and should provide the beginner or enthusiast with everything he needs to know about the subject.

The Piccolo Fishing Book Bernard Venables, Piccolo, 0 330 26385 4, 95p

A guide to fishing in fresh water. The information is presented in a series of picture strip stories which show a boy learning from an experienced angler. Tackle, baits, methods and habitat are covered for the particular fish in each story, the text below the cartoon strip amplifying points when necessary. At the end of the book, a picture glossary shows tackle not covered by the situation strips. The book covers the most important freshwater fish and methods, and the picture strip format is attractive and easy to follow. The story approach makes it more difficult to get an overall impression of the sport, but for the beginner, especially one actually in action on the river bank or towpath, this is a very useful guide.



The Beaver Book of Fishing Alan Wrangles, Beaver, 0 600 20207 0, 95p

A comprehensive introduction to fishing, which has sections written by specialist

contributors and is broadly divided into coarse, trout and sea angling, with separate chapters on tackle, bait and methods for each speciality. General chapters include fish distribution, useful knots, a glossary of terms, and rules and regulations including addresses of regional water authorities — an important feature as fishing is subject to all sorts of local laws and you need a licence for most kinds. The main introduction covers basic fish biology, how to kill a fish humanely and how to unhook it and keep it without damaging it if it is to be returned to the water, and the cost of the hobby. The diagrams and pictures are clear and the book is meaty enough for teenagers and adult beginners as well as younger enthusiasts.

Other fishing books worth looking at are:

Fishing Roy Marsden, Macdonald Whizzkids, 0 356 06323 2, 95p

A full-colour book which packs lots of ideas for projects as well as information on fishing itself into its 64 pages and makes a lively and readable introduction.

The Puffin Book of Freshwater Fishing Roger Pierce, Puffin, 0 14 03.0873 3, 60p

First published in 1976 but a useful guide and the chapter on casting is specially helpful.

Exploring, Camping, etc.

Walking, back-packing and cycling expeditions, whether by the day or taking camping gear, are an essential feature of many people's summer holidays. There are several very useful and entertaining books about which will help expedition planners to organise their trip safely and enjoyably.

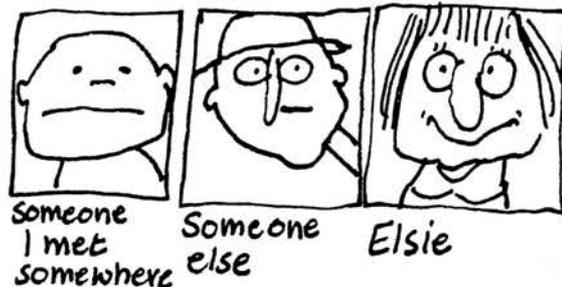
Adventure Trail Eve Harlow and Peter Foxwell, Granada, 0 583 30330 7, 85p

This is a handbook which tells you how to organise an expedition, whether just for a day outing or one which involves camping out overnight. From the planning stage right through to activities to do in camp, it is a complete guide to looking after yourself — and others — in the countryside. It's recommended by the Outward Bound Trust, and includes walking, cycling, map-reading and route-planning, weather, first aid, camping, activities, nature watching, and a useful bibliography and addresses section. Safety and care for other people's property are emphasised and this would be a useful book for older children who want to try

more ambitious expeditions on their own with friends, as well as for family outings.

The Explorer's Handbook Peter Eldin, Armada, 0 00 691709 7, 75p

Sub-titled 'or how to come back alive' this is primarily a fun book, but sandwiched between all sorts of entertaining but useless information about the habits of cannibals, jokes, puzzles and funny anecdotes are various practical and interesting tips on camping and expeditions. These include hints on planning, food and cooking, safety, survival, first aid, map-reading, signalling, knots and ideas for making equipment such as camp furniture, a stick compass or emergency shelter. Like *The Whizzkid's Handbook* by the same author it has funny cartoons, and it's a book which will provide lots of fun for holidays and weekends.



Part of an expedition scrapbook? From 'The Explorer's Handbook' by Peter Eldin.

Reviewed last year but also very useful are:

Camping for Young People Anthony Greenbank, Piccolo, 0 330 25745 5, 80p

A handbook for young campers who want to do it by themselves with the minimum of equipment.

The Usborne Outdoor Book David Watkins and others, Usborne, 0 86020 210 4, £1.99

A fat colourful book on all kinds of outdoor activities including cycling, orienteering and camping.

Riding

The summer is the time when pony enthusiasts can really take advantage of their hobby either for expeditions or for preparing for and entering shows and gymkhanas. There are plenty of paperback books on riding, pony care and every other aspect of horsemanship; here are two good ones which between them cover most of the pony activities.

The Young Rider
Robert Owen and John
Bullock, Beaver,
0 600 20303 4, 95p

A complete guide to ponies and riding from buying a horse or pony to training for competitions, this makes a good bedside and practical book for keen riders. The type size is rather small but there are lots of illustrations and the book covers breeds of pony, stable management, feeding and health care, tack and equipment, and basic riding and jumping.

Riding for Fun
Christine Pullein-Thompson,
Armada, 0 00 691080 7, 65p

This isn't a new book but is very good value for suggesting ideas for different activities with ponies. Among other things it tells you how to run your own gymkhana or show, make your own jumps, help disabled riders, teach your pony tricks, and prepare for competitions. It talks about the Pony Club, games to play and pony trekking, and in fact tells you how to do all the activities done by the children in this author's immensely popular pony stories. The style is chatty and informal and the book should appeal to keen readers of pony fiction. Also by this author are *Good Riding*, 0 00 690922 1, and *Improve Your Riding*, 0 00 691570 1, both 65p

Going to the Seaside

Carousel have a new seashore book by Malcolm Saville to help identify many of the fascinating things to be seen and found on the shore.

The Seashore Quiz
Malcolm Saville, Carousel,
0 552 54176 1, 75p

Illustrated with 200 drawings by wildlife artist Robert Micklewright, this book, although set out as a quiz, will help children recognise all the common seaside plants, flowers, animals, shells, fish and birds. The answers appear at the end of each section so they can be readily referred to if you don't know what the picture is, and the pictures are good enough to use for identifying finds on the spot. It makes a painless and entertaining way of teaching children more about the myriad of strange and collectable things to be found at the seaside and is a very good seaside holiday handbook which will give lots of fun to families.

Nature

Expeditions to the countryside or the zoo are a part of many families' summer plans. This new book, just out, could add a new dimension to zoo visits.

Secrets of Nature
Alan C. Jenkins, Knight,
0 340 26526 4, 85p

Hundreds of fascinating facts about all kinds of animals, some of them common or garden British creatures — did you know that owls rely a great deal on their hearing to catch their prey even though the sensitivity of their retinas is a hundred times greater than that of humans? — and others the more exotic creatures you may see in the zoo — if you've wondered how the toucan can possibly support the weight of its massive bill you will be fascinated to find out that the beak is really made up of a fine

lattice-work of bony fibres inside, which makes it very light and strong. This could make an interesting follow-up or advanced-reading book for zoo visits.

Hunting History

Last, two books which are equally interesting to people on holiday and at home, whether in the town or the country, and which will suggest lots of ideas for holiday projects.

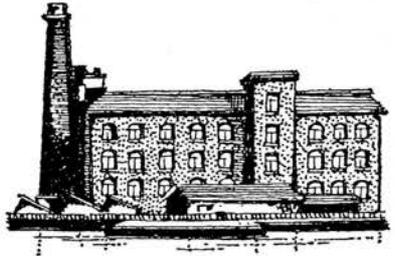
Treasure Hunting
Ian Elliott Shircore,
Macdonald Whizzkids,
0 356 06334 8, 95p

Like the other books in this lively series *Treasure Hunting* is a full-colour guide which combines practical advice with projects, descriptions of equipment, rules and useful addresses. Treasure hunting is a fascinating hobby: you can turn up all kinds of objects on river shores, in rubbish dumps and so on and make splendid collections of things like old bottles, coins, clay pipes, buckles and old tools. Then there is the chance of helping out on archaeological sites, and the ever present though unlikely hope of finding a real treasure — Roman hoard, sword hilt or bit of Spanish galleon. With or without a metal detector, treasure hunting is an ideal holiday activity as you can do it (practically) anywhere. A stimulating book to interest children in an unusual hobby.

Castles, Churches and Houses
Alan Jamieson, Puffin,
0 14 03.1315 X, 80p

Another book which teaches and informs by

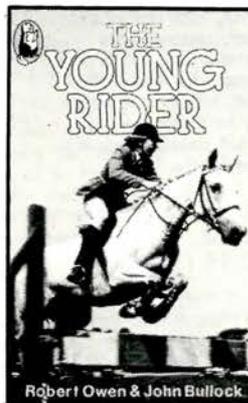
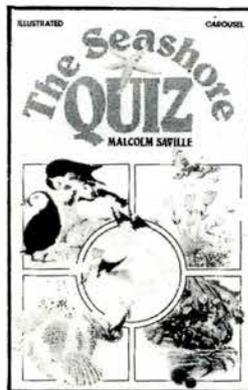
means of a quiz approach, this book will encourage children to look more closely at the things they see around them every day and enable them to identify different architectural styles in buildings, find out what some of the odder pieces of street and village furniture were for, and see the interesting aspects of, say, industrial architecture which are so often simply dismissed as eyesores. It covers the history behind names such as Blackfriars, Glebe Street, Cowgate, helps you to find your way round the different bits of a castle, church or monastery, and shows inn signs and traditional shop signs; it starts with prehistoric sites and goes right up to the industrial era. Again, a book to stimulate interest in a subject which is often dismissed as 'just history' and open readers' eyes to all sorts of fascinating things to be seen anywhere. ●



3 Near Manchester, this was built in the nineteenth century. It has a wharf where barges carrying the bales could tie up.

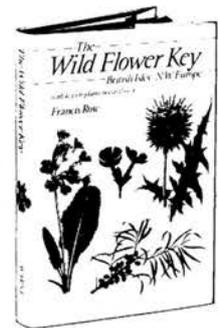
Identify this building from 'Castles, Churches and Houses' by Alan Jamieson.

Sally Floyer is editor for Hamlyn's Beaver books.



The
Wild Flower Key
British Isles - N.W. Europe

Francis Rose



This new work is a much-needed, comprehensive guide to the flowering plants of the British Isles and lowland areas of north-west Europe. All flowering plant species that are either native, or long established introductions, in the British Isles are described with the exception of a few groups whose study is largely the province of specialists. In all, nearly 1,400 species are described in detail and of these about 1,000 are illustrated in colour. *The unique feature of this book is the series of keys to plants not in flower.* These are fully illustrated with line drawings and arranged by habitat. The book is devised and written by an eminent botanist and plant ecologist of many years experience both of plants in the field and of teaching students of all ages and abilities. **THE WILD FLOWER KEY** will undoubtedly become THE standard work on the subject and should have a place on the bookshelves of every household and in the pocket of every nature-loving rambler. Available in two editions: **cased at £8.95 net and limp at £5.95 net.**

For a colour leaflet giving further details, write to:
Frederick Warne (Publishers) Ltd

Warne House Vincent Lane Dorking Surrey RH4 3FW

Fantasies of the Future —non-fiction style

Sandie Oram looks at some predictions of the shape of things to come.

Fantasies of the future are becoming more of a reasoned guess given our knowledge of current technological development. It doesn't seem unreasonable for Robin Kerrod to speculate in **The World of Tomorrow** what the probable shape of a city in space will be and how it will be powered, because we could virtually build it now given the finance. Mr Kerrod's is a sophisticated, stimulating armchair adventure into cities in space and cities on the sea, and would appeal to a suitably sophisticated teenager. He makes many aspects of progress sound fun, but he doesn't shirk all of the less agreeable aspects of that progress, even if he can't provide solutions: the chip's potential in automation is discussed in the light of what people will then be doing to fill out their time. He admits that we still don't *really* know if we're damaging the ozone layer. He confesses that although massive-scale tower building of complete cities seems inevitable, it won't necessarily be considered desirable by everyone. He raises the question of whether there is a 'machine intelligence' or whether we will always be able to control computers. He is fairly encouraging about the prospects of keeping mankind fed: for example, increasing fish-farming instead of over-fishing the current stock, or developing hovering weather blankets to create rain and reclaim the desert for agriculture. It's a relief to see vitally important issues raised and dealt with in a responsible way, even if the solutions aren't yet there; it's all too easy with a lavishly-illustrated book like this for publishers to feel that they have to appeal to an international market in order to get co-productions to keep the price down — and then opt for a bland approach so that no-one can take offence.

With **Living in the Future**, done by Macdonald in conjunction with ITV (it's the book of the series), there can be no excuse of foreign productions, because English words appear in colour in the pictures, which makes it virtually impossible to sell to foreigners. The captions to the illustrations, which are usually supposed to make a topic easier to understand, are higher in comprehension level than the actual text, and some of the illustrations are so confusing as to be almost misleading, apart from looking like a badly-organised Fifties advertising campaign. In the house of the

future there is one armchair per room — and Mum's always left standing. The book promotes the virtues of the micro-chip, which will mean shopping by TV from home, having a teaching computer at home instead of going to school, even being diagnosed by the doctor by TV — so you never really have to leave home, although 'You will have time to travel to countries all over the world, such as *China, India and probably Russia*' (my italics). What have their spies told them? And in the picture of a modern kitchen, with fridge and TV, Mum's still mixing the cake with a wooden spoon! About the only admission of the nitty-gritty is in one caption about super new home technology: 'for those who can afford these, life will become more comfortable'. In saying that this is a project which should never have rolled off the presses, I also feel the need to declare that I once worked for this particular publisher, did not leave under a cloud, am still a great admirer of most of their books but don't feel they should be allowed to get away with this one! There, that's off my chest!

Fortunately, there *is* one new publication which is ideal for the younger reader on this subject. **Earthship** is thought-provoking, with a strongly-worded foreword on conservation, and with emphasis on the things we need to think hard about: transport pollution, animal conservation, damage to ecosystems, the urgent need to research alternative energy sources, and even the dangers nuclear power. Plenty here to prompt classroom or tea table discussion that will carry on and on into that future under discussion. ●

The World of Tomorrow, Robin Kerrod, Longman, 0 582 39102 4, £5.95
Living in the Future, Alan Radnor, ITV Books/Macdonald, 0 356 07542 7, £3.50
Earthship, Longman, 0 582 39092 3, £3.25

Sandie Oram is Deputy Literary Editor on the **Sunday Telegraph**.

Fiction becomes Fact

What adults used to read about in science fiction, children now find on the non-fiction shelves. The recent space shuttle flight, as well as bringing us another step nearer to the realisation of the imaginings of Arthur C. Clarke and the like, has revived interest in space flight. What can we offer?

Space Flight, Stewart Cowley, Piccolo Fact Book, 0 330 26359 5, £1.25 (96pp)

A more or less chronological trot through the major space events from Sputnik 1 in October 1957 to space probes and the shuttle. There's a nod towards rocket theory and astronomy, a look at the future and a handy time chart and index. Lots of coloured photographs and diagrams, clear layout and a readable, not-too-technical text make this good value for money for new 10+ enthusiasts who are good readers.

The Story of the Space Shuttle, Tim Furniss, Hodder and Stoughton, 0 340 24585 9, £5.95 (104pp)

Now that its space test programme is finally underway, the Shuttle is likely to generate quite a lot of interest and curiosity in the

coming months. This book came out late in 1979 (anticipating a 1980 start) so it's not right-up-to-date. Nevertheless it's an exhaustive account of the whole project: design, testing, problems, personnel, links with the European Spacelab project, and future uses.

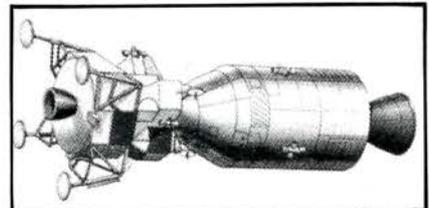
With 650 flights planned for the next twenty years (including 113 with 'military payloads') involving satellite launching, space probes, astronomical research, experiments in processing, with talk of space factories and solar power stations, with universities and commercial companies queuing up to pay for space for research, it's obviously a talking point. Useful talk needs information. Written by an informed enthusiast (in chapters not chunks) this is a good starting place. One for the library.

Space Satellites, Tim Furniss, Hodder and Stoughton, 0 340 25278 2, £2.95 (32pp)

If the Shuttle has got you interested in satellites, this is a good clear round-up of all the different types and their uses (communication and spying come top of the list). Clear explanations under headings (no index), large print, mainly black and white illustrations.

Space Age, Reginald Turnill, Warne, 0 7232 2408 0, £5.95 (128pp)

Published last year, this has comprehensive coverage of all aspects of Space: the story so



Drawing from Piccolo's 'Space Flight'

far, the future, the Shuttle, satellites (including a whole chapter on spy satellites and space war), the solar system, other worlds. More important, it's far and away the most readable of all the books I've looked at. It packs in just as much information as all the others but you never feel drowned in statistics or swamped by technicalities. Reginald Turnill's style, as you might expect of an experienced broadcaster, is clear and relaxed. He allows his personal reactions to come through and his point of reference is always human rather than scientific. There are nine chapters but each is broken up into sections (47 in all) and by headings so information is easy to digest. There is also an excellent index. Lots of illustrations, not much colour but effective when it appears. If your library needs a book that makes Space seem like something to do with Us rather than Them — this is it.

Rockets and Space Travel, Kenneth Gatland, Macmillan Fact Finders, 0 333 261 59 3, 50p (23pp)

An admirably clear and simple coverage of all the major events and topics. Ideal for top infants/lower juniors. Good glossary and index. ●

BOOKS FOR YOUNG SCIENTISTS

Few primary schools have effective programmes for the teaching of science.

Many classes have science reference books. Few use them to support first-hand observation and experiment.

(Observation from the HMI's 1978 Survey of Primary Education in England.)

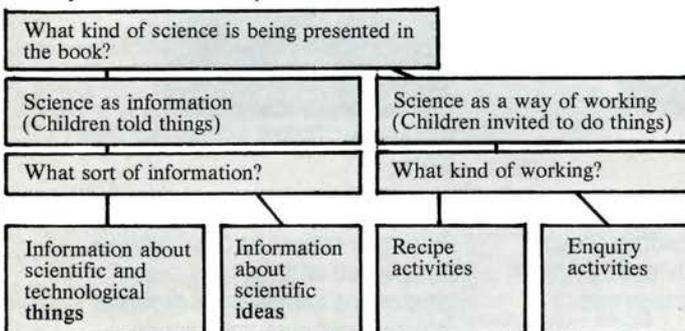
What part can books play in educating young scientists? What are the right books? Sheila Parker considers the issues.

Books are clearly important for young children learning science, but books of what kind? A primary classroom needs science information books and science activity books. Information books help children build up a general knowledge of science and its applications: activity books help them develop real scientific understanding. Books that present science solely as information cannot form the basis of 'an effective programme for science' because they do not provide young children with the first-hand experience that is essential for developing scientific skills and concepts. These skills and concepts are best fostered through active enquiry which, ideally, is most productively stimulated by discussion between teacher and children. Understandably, many teachers find it difficult to develop science along these lines without the support of books and herein lies the value of science activity books.

What sort of books to choose must be determined by the science experience within the classroom. For children, and teachers, for whom science 'as a way of working' is a new venture good 'recipe' books have an important function. They help children carry out purposeful investigations that are sufficiently 'closed' to prevent organisational problems but at the same time they provide useful experience of handling, observing and thinking about the behaviour of the materials used. In many ways 'recipe' activities are a transition from information-based science to open-ended enquiry and should be regarded as such. In this sense 'recipe' books are management tools for teachers but they are limited in the way in which they help children develop scientific understanding. In particular they do not permit a creative approach to scientific problem solving which involves trial and error working and the devising and redesigning of equipment. These skills are embodied only in good enquiry activity books. That said, the problem remains of how to select from the many science books (net and non-net) being produced.

Are there ways of appraising science books in order to judge their value for children that are additional to ways of making judgements about such things as appeal, design, layout and reading levels? I think there are. Try this as a framework for action.

Ask yourself a series of questions.



I am not suggesting that in any one book the treatment of science will be necessarily restricted to any one of the boxed categories but I do suggest that the categories are helpful ones for identifying what kind of science is being presented in a particular book. Such an identification is helpful for two reasons. It enables us to pinpoint more clearly what is good/poor science presentation within each category and this, in turn, provides a means by which we can assess how much the book can contribute to 'an effective programme of science for young children'.

What should we look out for in each box?

● **Information about scientific and technological things**

Good presentation, in general, will

1. Emphasise *how* things work rather than *why* they work as they do.
2. Attempt to relate specific factual information to wider knowledge.
3. Include clear three-dimensional diagrams which indicate the relationships between one thing and another and indicate also the scale used.

● **Information about scientific ideas**

Good presentation, in general will

1. Emphasise the uncertainty of science and the activities of scientists rather than building up a picture of science as 'right answers' and stereotyped procedures.
2. Explain technical terms in simple language and use appropriate analogies within children's experience.
3. Include everyday examples of ways in which the ideas are applied or have significance for non-scientists.

● **Recipe activities**

Good presentation, in general, will

1. Emphasise a sequence of activities that enable children to handle materials and ideas unaided. It follows that the presentation will:
2. Make use of everyday materials and not require those that are too difficult to obtain or too specialised for use without the acquisition of particular techniques.

3. Focus on activities that acknowledge the limited interest span of young children. As such they should normally be of short duration and involve a clearly observable 'happening'.
4. Provide a clear structure in which children have to think about what they observe and, where appropriate, apply their findings to everyday experience.

● **Enquiry activities**

Good presentation, in general, will

1. Present the activity as a problem to be solved.
2. Offer guidance, but not a recipe, for tackling the problem including the devising of equipment rather than the use of 'set-piece' equipment.
3. Make suggestions that help children appreciate the variables involved and ways of interpreting their findings.

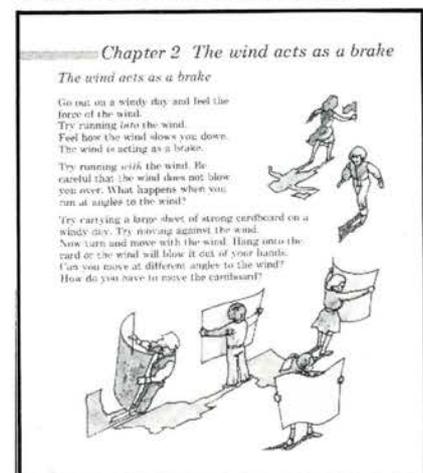
How do some recent science titles stand up to this sort of appraisal?

Wayland's Young Scientist series

Solar Power, Ed Catherall, 0 85340 819 X, £2.95 (net)

Wind Power, Ed Catherall, 0 85340 820 3, £2.95 (net)

The science is presented predominantly through the recipe approach. There is some information related to scientific ideas and a little invitation to enquiry. **Wind Power** has largely 'old chestnut' activities served up in a new menu. If you have lots of science activity books already in the classroom you won't find much that is new here. **Solar Power** is more original but some of the activities involve long time lapses with nothing of immediate interest to involve young children. Both books encourage manipulative skills and make use of readily available materials; the application of science to everyday life is also good. There is an attempt to involve children in response to questions. Those requiring direct



observation are good but there are too many of the 'What do tyres do?', 'Which suntan oil do you use?' type. Some of the instructions are difficult to follow: 'Holding the cotton vertical, move the wing rapidly forward so that the wind travels in the same direction as you blew,' for instance. Equally the books assume children can 'read' sectional drawings and cutaways. Activities like carving polystyrene tiles and making a solar cooker are potentially hazardous but, with supervision and if the child has not met the idea before, the books could be useful.

Usborne's Finding Out About series

Things at Home, Eliot Humberstone, 0 86020 493 6, 99p (net)

Things that Go, Eliot Humberstone, 0 86020 501 0, 99p (net)

These deal exclusively in information about scientific things. The choice of subjects is good: vacuum cleaner, light bulb, bicycle — but in **Things at Home** the level at which each is treated is not consistent. The technology of the telephone and television set is well explained for good junior readers; in comparison the treatment of how bread is made is superficial and 'unscientific', more appropriate for infants. Cutaway diagrams are very effective, but readers have to be flexible to adapt to the ever-changing conventions for presenting numbered sequences.

The Berenstain Bears' Science Fair, Stan and Jan Berenstain, Collins, 0 00 195313 3, £3.95

Published in 1978 but included here as a book for infants/lower juniors which presents science as something *interesting*. It's predominantly concerned with information about the things of science and the ideas of science but there is some suggestion for

activity. The cartoony style of illustration grabs attention and doesn't impair factual accuracy. Full marks for science presented in manageable, related chunks within an everyday context.

Oxford's The Young Scientist Investigates

Small Garden Animals, Terry Jennings, 0 19 917048 7, £2.50 (net)

Seeds and Seedlings, Terry Jennings, 0 19 917049 5, £2.50 (net)

Flowers, Terry Jennings, 0 19 917045 2, £2.50 (net)

This series presents information about the things of science with activities largely of a recipe kind. The format is the same for each book: two sections each containing information followed by a short Do You Remember? test and Things to Do (two pages). And at the end four pages of Experiments to Try and a Glossary. The information (about top junior level) is, in general, well explained, although technical terms are left unexplained except by the glossary. The illustrations are very patchily handled; lots are just pretty page-fillers. The level of the diagrams varies wildly in **Flowers** from simple drawings to complex sections of stem and leaf. In general there is little explicit linking between text and illustration in any of the books. In the experiments and things to do sections opportunities for cross-referencing between information and activities are ignored. The science activities are pretty heavily derivative, some lack immediacy and some are not sufficiently 'closed' to be manageable without supervision except by the very able to whom they would present no challenge. In general though they are well thought out and if you haven't met these ideas before you could usefully pick and choose. ●

If you want to develop enquiry science with your children:

Books for teachers

Science 5/13, Macdonald Educational, 1973 et seq., is a series of units sponsored by the Schools Council, the Nuffield Foundation and the Scottish Education Council.

Teaching Primary Science, Macdonald Educational, 1976, covers a more structured approach to enquiry method. The material was developed at Chelsea College for students in teacher training in a curriculum project with Nuffield and the SSRC.

Books for Children

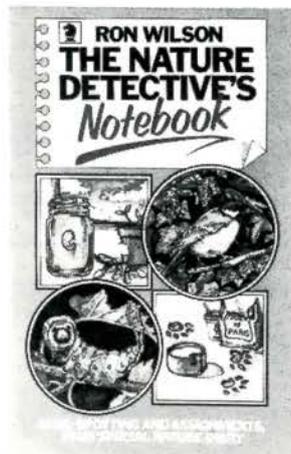
Science in a Topic, Kincaid and Coles, Hulton Education, 1973-77

Sciencewise, Books 1-6, Sheila Parker and Alan Ward, Nelson, 1977-79 (Teacher's books available)

Active Science, Books 1-4, Albert James, Schofield and Sims Ltd, 1977-78 (Teacher's notes available)

Science Happenings, Books 1-6, Michael Holt, Ginn, 1969-70, Fifth impression 1979 (Teacher's resource book, 1980, has a very useful bibliography of books for teachers and children.)

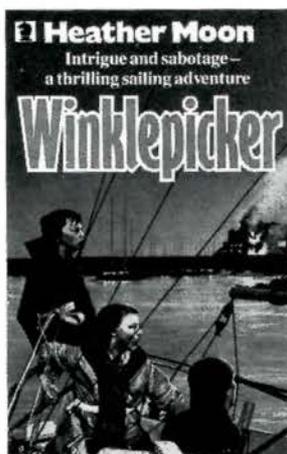
Sheila Parker teaches in the Faculty of Education at Bristol Polytechnic. She was a member of the Science 5/13 project and is much in demand in this country and abroad as a consultant on primary science and in-service training.



THE NATURE DETECTIVE'S
NOTEBOOK
Ron Wilson

A month by month guide to the world around us, with special assignments and diary sections. Chosen as a Children's Book of the Year.
Illustrated Age: 8 plus

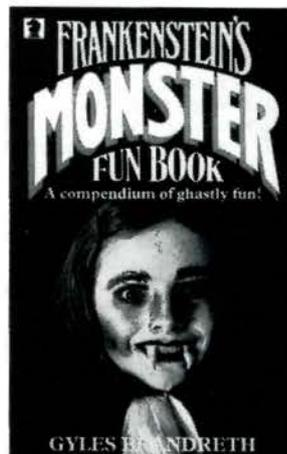
65p



WINKLEPICKER
Heather Moon

The first in a series of exciting sailing adventures; three children acquire their own boat, which leads them on a thrilling trail of sabotage and intrigue.
Illustrated Age: 10 plus

95p



FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER
FUN BOOK
Gyles Brandreth

A bumper collection of monstrous fun, packed with facts, ghoulish giggles and games and a practical make-up and costume section.
Illustrated Age: 9-12 years

85p

SOUND AND VISION

News about book programmes this autumn on radio and television.

At Thames Television, *Middle English* is replacing *Writer's Workshop* and *About Books*, though the producer, Peter Tabern, promises that the strong points of those programmes will be kept. (Some of them in fact are being included in the new series as repeats.) Commitment to encouraging reading is a major part of *Middle English* — it hopes to persuade children to take risks with their reading, try titles they might have ignored. Extracts from books will be dramatised and even animated. Elaine Moss is still the programme's adviser on books.

The first of the new book programmes, *Middle Pages*, goes out on 13th October at 9.53 a.m. and again on 15th October at 11.39 a.m., fully networked. The programme will be presented by Willie Rushton and features the following titles:

Tig's Crime, T. R. Burch (Heinemann/Fontana Lions)
The Midnight Fox, Betsy Byars (Puffin)

Ramona and her Father, Beverly Cleary (Hamish Hamilton/Puffin)
Break in the Sun, Bernard Ashley (Oxford/Puffin)

The programme in the *About Books* series on *British Folktales and Legends* is being repeated. This goes out on 1st December at 9.53 a.m. and on 3rd December at 11.59 a.m., and features:

Robin Hood: His Life and Legend, Bernard Miles (Hamlyn)
Welsh Legends and Folk Tales, ed. Gwyn Jones (Puffin)
Abbey Lubbers, Banshees and Boggarts, Katharine Briggs (Kestrel)

Teachers' notes and pupils' worksheet are available for the autumn term. Comments and suggestions are welcome. Contact Peter Tabern, *Middle Pages*, Thames Television Ltd, 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9LL.

Inside Pages, the series about books for 10 to 12 year olds on BBC Schools Radio (Radio 4 VHF, Thursdays at 9.30 a.m.), has some changes this

year. First of all it is expanding to two terms, Autumn and Spring. The programmes will still be broadcast fortnightly (to allow adequate reading time) so there will be ten programmes in all. The second change is that the final programme at the end of each term will be a *New Books* programme which will look at the very latest books hot from the publishers. The third change is that due to economies the accompanying *Teacher's Notes* for the series has had to shrink in size but still contains as extensive annotated booklists as before and it should be easier this year to pin the booklists on the wall or photocopy them.

The programmes are:
Autumn 1981

1. School Days
2. Spine Chilling
3. Down Under (Australia)
4. Christmas
5. New Books

Spring 1982

1. Dragons
2. Changing Place
3. At Sea
4. Animals at Risk
5. New Books

Books that have extracts in the programme include Gene Kemp's hilarious *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tyler*, an excellent new ghost story by Vivian Alcock *The Haunting of Cassie Palmer*, Paul Theroux's beautifully descriptive *London Snow*, Jenny Overton's witty *The Thirteen Days of Christmas* and an exciting and historical thriller *Come Danger, Come Darkness* set on Australia's penal colony Norfolk Island.

The booklist is available from BBC Publications, 144 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3TH, or Janet Whitaker, BBC Schools Radio, Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA. ●

New Children's Non-Fiction

A Calf is Born JANE MILLER

Illustrated with black-and-white photographs throughout

The internationally famous animal photographer Jane Miller follows her enormously successful *Birth of a Foal* and *Lambing Time* with a vivid and detailed photographic account of the birth and early life of a Jersey calf. Ages 5-8 **£3.50**

Farm Alphabet Book JANE MILLER

Jane Miller draws on her unique photographic skills to create an inventive ABC with a difference. *Farm Alphabet Book* makes learning fun by introducing each letter of the alphabet through a superb, full-colour photograph taken on the farm, explained in a simple caption.

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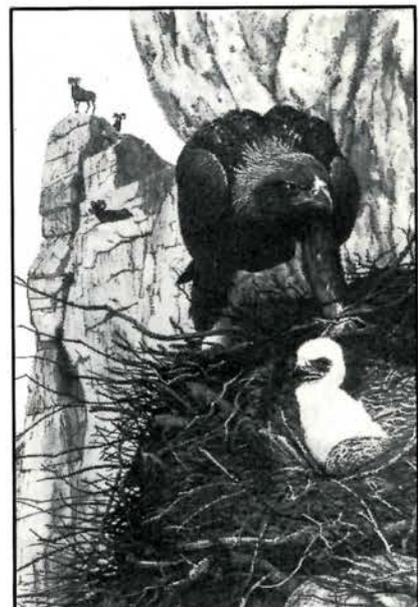
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'very high quality . . . highly recommended to everyone. Excellent both for school use and at home.' *BOOK WINDOW*

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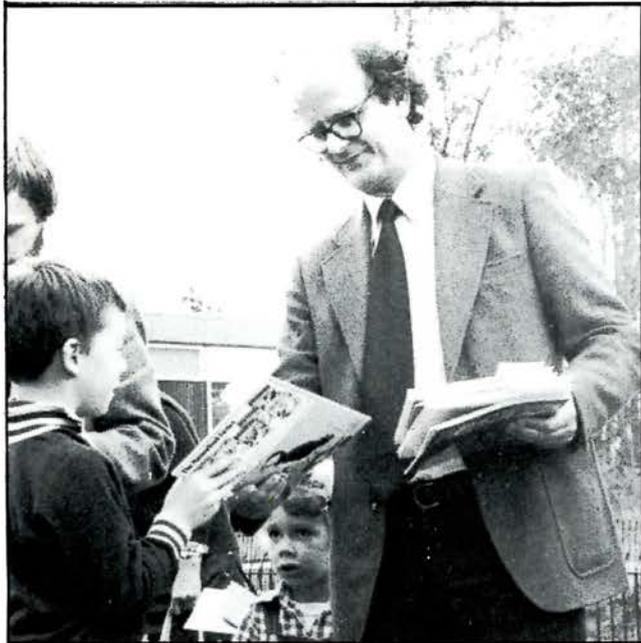


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GETTING IT RIGHT

Dinosaur and Usborne are two publishers who enjoy a remarkable success with non-fiction. How did it all start? What's the secret?



Peter Usborne

Peter Usborne says he can speak German, French, Spanish and Swahili 'well' and another twenty languages 'badly'. He also says he reads grammars of foreign languages 'like other people read thrillers'.

About seven years ago, with his first child on the way, it seemed a time for decisions, so he left a prestigious job in a large publishing group (he was heavily involved in launching **Starters** for Macdonald Educational) to start his own publishing company. The languages came into their own, because his other obsession is colour pictures. And the only way to publish full colour books at reasonable prices is to have big print runs. For that you need lots of customers.

When Peter Usborne started, co-editions (books published simultaneously in different countries using the same pictures) were almost unknown in children's publishing. 'In art books they'd been doing it for years. I thought there must be a way to apply it to kids' books, so I went off and did it.'

With the business side straight, he spent the first year of his new company's existence 'doing nothing but thinking of a new style. I felt that no-one was doing books which combined outright popularity with a sense of quality, and there was a gap in the market to be filled.'

The new style he came up with owed a lot to his own childhood, and especially comics. 'You can spot an Usborne book 100 yards away. They're very densely visual, very humorous. I believed - and I still do - that kids love very tightly packed material.'

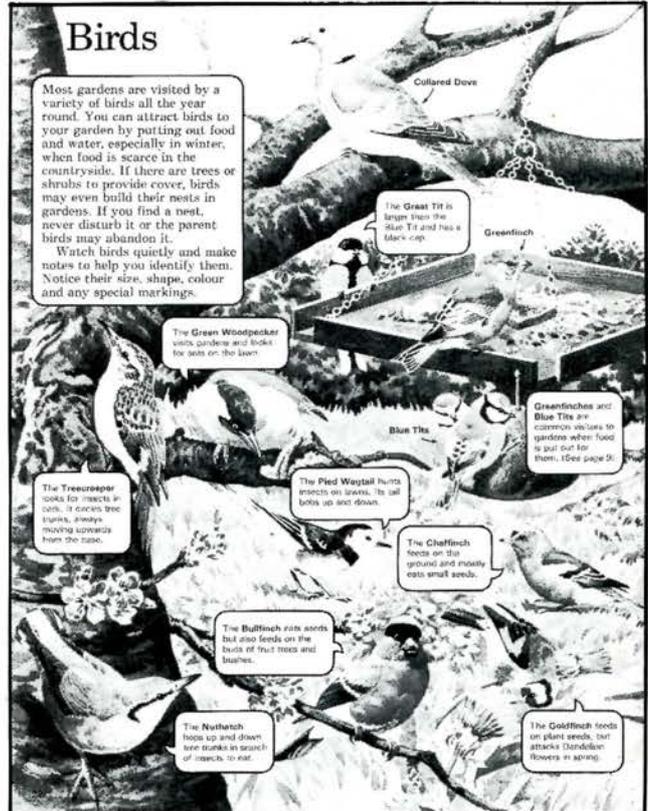
'That's what the British comic tradition is all about, being tightly packed. I hate "creative use of white space", and using very large pictures of not very much. I feel cheated if I read something like that, and I think kids do too. I set out with a commitment to be child-orientated in this visual sense, and do books on subjects which kids want to read about.'

'My publishing model is **The Eagle**. A lot of people in children's books seem to feel that to be popular means being "commercial" and therefore bad. We're here to prove them wrong. **The Eagle** was popular, but it was totally marvellous and successful. We want to be popular *and* good. In children's books being good and unpopular is quite common.'

Once they've got an idea, they 'sell' the book first to distributors and foreign countries, and then set about putting it together. 'It's a team job, and very often the chief creator of a book is the person who had the idea first, but the most important controlling hand is that of the editor.'

'Sometimes there's an outside author or expert who works with the editor or designer, but we always commission all our books. I've never published any book which has just been sent in.'

Design and the visuals come first, and the team works very hard at planning the book from the point of view of what they think children in

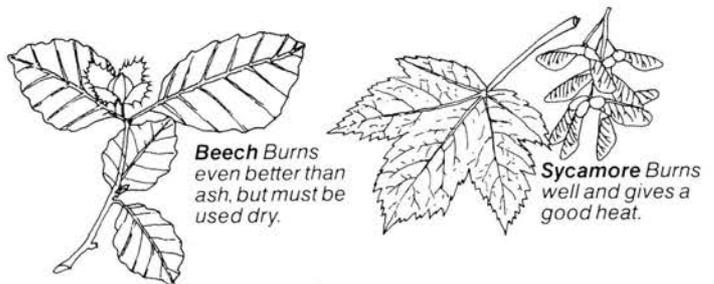


A page from Usborne's 'The Nature Trail Book of Garden Wildlife'

their age range (about 8 to 12) want, and rigorous checking is a vital part of the process. 'We believe in a philosophy of "nothing but the best", and we're all perfectionists in the production of our books. This means we're terrible from the point of view of our schedules. Books are continually being held up while we check a fact and then find we've got to change something. We all go through a lot of agony and tears for each book.' One large-format, 32-page book can take anything up to a year to produce.

There is a definite continuity of style and tone in Usborne books. 'Subconsciously we are more like people working on a magazine, and each new book is like a new issue of the Usborne magazine. I suppose it's because I do like the idea of getting a lot of people to read our books, and I also feel absolutely no affinity with the small circle of prizewinning children's fiction.'

And what about the future? 'We can't go on churning out information books for ever, so we're going into the classics - fiction, and probably adult books too. We're doing the *Odyssey* in 32 pages; it's called **The Amazing Adventures of Ulysses**. I think it's a triumph of compression. It's not *Asterix*, but it's in the same vein, and we do the story in a very popular way. I think we're going to turn a few thousand kids onto *Ulysses* and the Greek gods, anyway.' ●



Two drawings from 'The Usborne Outdoor Book'

You might be forgiven for thinking that nothing much happens in the Cambridgeshire village of Over, until you discover Beechcroft House, home of **Dinosaur Publications**.

In 1967, Althea Braithwaite and Mike Graham-Cameron were running a design, advertising and printing business, and Althea made some books from paper offcuts 'just for fun'. Mike encouraged her, and they decided to publish them properly. Althea made all the plates, Mike printed them on their own press, and cut and bound them. The original print runs of **Desmond the Dinosaur** and **Cuthbert and Bimbo** were 500 of each, and Althea went off to London to sell them to 'all the posh shops'. They went very well, although at 2/6d (old money) Fortnum and Mason weren't having any because they were 'too cheap'.



Althea



Mike Graham-Cameron

Dinosaur hasn't really looked back since. The 'Althea series' of books, aimed at children from '0 upwards' has gone from strength to strength, and as well as stories now includes non-fiction titles like **Making a Road** and **Visiting the Dentist**.

They moved into non-fiction publishing because they felt that there was a gap in the market to be filled. 'Young kids are fascinated by facts, and

they're always asking questions about things we take for granted, wanting to know why, when, where.'

Making a Road, for example, came from Duncan, Althea's son, then three years old. As they drove past a huge road-making machine, he asked 'What does that do?'. Nobody really knew. For the 'thousands of kids who want to know about things like that', Althea created that book, **Making Television Programmes**, **Making a Book** — and many others. 'Lots of books are suggested to me,' said Althea, 'by kids or teachers.'

In non-fiction, she does two sorts of books: those that explain and those that are designed to be reassuring, like **Visiting the Dentist**, which she feels strongly about. 'There's a big need for them because kids need to have situations explained to them. If they're prepared on a subject like going into hospital, it helps them cope better. But if you're going to tackle a problem, you've got to tackle it. If you're talking about having your tonsils out, you've got to say that it's going to be pretty nasty at times. I believe that kids can take it if they know what's going to happen, and so if it's going to hurt, you should tell them.'

A lot goes into an Althea book. She believes firmly in on the spot research, so with **Making a Road** she went to a construction company and watched them doing it, as well as talking to everyone from the PR department to the technical experts. She gathered huge quantities of notes, literature and photos, ending up with a file of material several inches thick. Out of this, in a process which involved 'much shunting between artist, author, designer, sub-editors and experts', and at least five drafts, a book of 24 pages (which takes less than five minutes to read) was distilled. 'Accuracy is vital,' said Mike. 'We always use experts to check the books. That way we can try and make sure errors don't creep in.'

For the past two years Althea has been working on a non-fiction book about death, and has compiled 'heaps' of material. Eventually this will take its place beside the other titles, the most adventurous of which was the recent **What is a Union?**. Althea's going to follow this one up with a book on the stock exchange. She doesn't think Dinosaur will make a radical change of direction in the future.

'We're going to keep moving in the same direction. I think there's still an enormous amount to do for young children.'



Drawing by Chris Evans from 'What is a Union?'

Books from other worlds - the fact and the fiction

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GRANADA

A BOOK FOR ALL SEASONS

Pat Triggs talks to Toni Arthur

July 25th is St James' Day. The emblem of St James is a scallop shell, though no-one really knows why. Some say it's because of this strange tale.

St James had died and his body was being taken by boat to Spain where he was to be buried. A horseman was waiting on the shore for the boat to arrive. As the boat got close to the shore, the horse bolted into the sea, carrying its rider with him.

Miraculously, neither the rider nor the horse was drowned. It was said that the power of Saint James saved them but when the man and horse came out of the sea, both were covered with scallop shells. So, scallop shells have been the emblem of St James ever since.

You'll find that story in Toni Arthur's new book **All the Year Round** (Puffin, 0 14 03.1320 6, £1) published this month.

On July 25th next year you may come across miniature grottoes and caves decorated with sea shells, displayed outside houses by children chanting

Please remember the Grotto.

It's only once a year.

Father's gone to sea.

Mother's gone to bring him back,

So please remember me.

This summertime version of 'Penny for the Guy' is one of the customs associated with St James' Day, known once as Grotto Day. It's in the book too. If this and other rituals reappear Toni Arthur will be delighted. 'I love the old customs. I wanted to have a go at trying to get children to revive them.'

All the Year Round is a collection of traditional customs, superstitions, games and stories. It's arranged month by month and is full of instructions and ideas for things to make and do from a January wassail cup — a spicy drink to warm you after you've wassailed the apple trees to ensure a good crop — through a St James' grotto in July, to a December Mummer's Play.

Toni Arthur didn't have to look far for the book. 'It was all there in my head.' And, if she needed to check anything, there are 6,500 books on folk lore at home. In fact she wrote it at tremendous speed. She set aside four weeks to write it before setting off for Africa and lost two of them. Tony Lacey, at Puffin, couldn't wait for it until she came back so, 'I wrote day and night for ten days. It was as if I'd talked my way through the whole year.' The book retains that immediacy and it's a bonus.

There was time, though, for a little market research. 'Every time I finished a chapter I bunged it off to the boys and said, "Read it."' The boys are her two sons, Timothy, 10, and Jonathan, 16, for whom many of the things in the book are part of family life — annual clear outs, egg painting, April Fools.

Another influence on the book was Toni's work on TV, in radio and live with children. Jokes and riddles in the **Play Away** style pop up regularly throughout. 'I've found through working with children that they can hold concentration for a certain amount of time. If you break that to make them laugh and relax then they can hold concentration again.' The jokes are also used in the manner of a radio technique, as links to get from one section to the next.

The same impulse that prompted the book lies behind **Toni Arthur's Music Box**, the show with which she and her husband Dave are currently touring the country in schools and theatres. It's for anyone who's ever been between 5 and 10. It's got traditional music and stories and an eight-minute Mummer's



Toni Arthur, photo courtesy of Penguin Books

Play — all with the emphasis on joining in. Dave and Toni invent and make all the costumes. 'They are all very easy, just as it's described in the book. Mostly we use stuff from jumble sales and things we've hoarded. In schools we encourage kids to do their own version of the play, make it personal and local, rewrite the rhymes to fit the community. In one school we even wrote a part for the donkey.'

It sounds fun. But isn't all this attempt at folk revival a bit out of place in the nineteen eighties? They don't see it that way. For one thing, although Dave is a member of the English Folk Dance and Song Society and edits their magazine and he and Toni have just finished a radio series on storytelling called **Folk Tales**, they don't like the word 'Folk'.

'Labelling things "folk" has made them museum pieces, cut them off from the community as if they had nothing to do with everyday life. It's fossilized them instead of letting people see that really they change with the needs and moods of the singer, dancer or storyteller,' says Dave. Toni avoided using the word in the book. 'It has all the wrong associations for people. We just want to give traditions back to the children. It's up to them what they do with them. The only real difference between now and two hundred years ago is the physical setting. We've swapped the village green for a housing estate. What we want to try to recapture is the idea of community. Festivals, annual rituals can be a reason for getting together and a way of keeping the rhythm of the changing seasons which is easy to miss in towns and cities.'

For schools or families **All the Year Round** is a good first step to that. ●

Toni Arthur's Music Box is on the road again in the autumn. In September it will be in Wimbledon; in October in Frome (Somerset), Swindon, Basingstoke, Farnham, London (Queen Elizabeth Hall), Macclesfield, Accrington, Poynton, Harrow, Yeovil, Norwich; in November in Birmingham, Horsham, Coventry, Harrogate and Bury St Edmunds.

All the Year Round events are being planned to co-incide with the tour. Details from Puffin, Children's Marketing, 536 Kings Road, London SW10 0UH. Tel. 01 351 2393.

TV GOES TRADITIONAL TOO

Traditional songs of highwaymen and smugglers, poachers and ploughmen, fishers and weavers were featured in **The Song and the Story**, a recent BBC series for children. A book of the same name written by Isla St Clair, who appeared in the series, and David Turnbull, the producer, is available from Pelham. It contains the words and music of 36 traditional songs, and background stories and pictures to the songs and the series.

The Song and the Story, Isla St Clair, Pelham, 0 7207 1324 2, £5.95.

Storybook International, a 24 part film series of classic tales from around the world starts this month. Made by HTV it will be networked throughout the country. A book based on the series containing adaptations of the stories by Veronica Kruger, line drawings by Patricia Drew and colour plates of stills from the series will be published in August.

Storybook International, Gollancz, 0 575 03051 8 £5.95.



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Opinion



When it comes to reviewing children's books
Frances Ball asks

WHO'S AN EXPERT?

Recently, while I was flipping through a magazine offering reviews of children's books, I found an alarming letter. The writer complained that recent reviews had not been written by 'real experts'. Instead, by some horrible accident, the books had fallen into the hands of children before the right people had graded, sorted and approved them. Innocent children had read these books, even enjoyed them.

Obviously some people are more skilled reviewers than others, and some groups such as teachers and librarians can offer a wider knowledge of children's books than non-professionals. But we are talking about children's books. We need more space devoted to children's opinions. We need a few junior consultants advising publishers and bookshops too.

Discussion of children's books tends to follow the pattern set by discussion of adult books. We have reviews, articles, papers, collections of papers. Could we be more imaginative? Are we heading in the same direction as much adult book criticism where the experts have become so fascinated by their own activities, and the opinions of their colleagues, that the books they review are almost irrelevant? These issues got a sudden airing earlier this year when Cambridge University found its English Faculty in less than perfect condition. In the *Observer* Richard Webster attacked the structuralist school of literary criticism, commenting: 'The problem with structuralist writing is not that it is impenetrable to the layman. The problem is that a great deal of it is impenetrable to the specialist.' It would be a great pity if similar problems spread to children's books. Fun would die, irreverence would be studied out of existence.

Who *are* the experts anyway? My dictionary tells me that an expert is someone 'having special skill or knowledge'. Who has the special skill or knowledge to review children's books? What is it we need to know? There are the ordinary things like price, appearance, length of text, fact or fiction. Then there are the bigger questions that involve the relationship of the child to the book and the book to the child. How does the adult reviewer respond to a book intended for a child? Is it possible to peel away the layers of experience gained in the years since childhood? Some adults obviously have the gift of illuminating the world of childhood with literary skills gained in later years. Some do not.

Of course, there is one group which always has special up-to-date knowledge of childhood — *children*. Earlier this year the Federation of Children's Book Groups gave a Children's Book Award. With help from children they chose *Mister Magnolia* by Quentin Blake. They commented that the adults alone would not have reached the same decision but it taught them something.

One of the delights of working with children and books is the range of honest and unpredictable reactions. Does it matter to a child who has just discovered that other children are lonely too that the book revealing this fact got bad reviews last week? No. Reviews are useful. With over 3,000 new titles a year becoming available they are essential. But the form they take, and the purpose they serve should give more power to the consumers — *children*. ●

Frances Ball who sent us this opinion is an ex-teacher, now mum and part-time writer. She lives in Devon and has been a community bookseller.

News

For the second year running the Carnegie Medal has gone to Peter Dickinson. This year the winning title is *City of Gold* (Gollancz, 0 575 02883 1, £5.95) a collection of stories retold from the Old Testament. Last year it was *Tulku*, also from Gollancz and out this month in paperback as a Puffin Plus.

Runners up were: Jan Mark's *Nothing to be Afraid of* (Kestrel), Jan Needle's *A Sense of Shame* (Deutsch) and John Branfield's *The Fox in Winter* (Gollancz).

The Kate Greenaway Medal, for illustration, went to Quentin Blake's *Mr Magnolia* (Cape). Runners up were: Michael Foreman for *City of Gold*, Jill Murphy for *Peace at Last* (Macmillan), Beryl Cook for *Seven Years and a Day* (Collins).

CBY in Space

Books for Keeps isn't the only booky thing in Space this month. The Eleventh Children's Books of the Year exhibition which opens at the National Book League on July 22nd has a moon landscape setting.

The 300 plus books which make up this annual collection were chosen this year by Barbara Sherrard-Smith who, having worked with Elaine Moss on the tenth selection, has now taken over. Barbara is a librarian, teacher, reviewer and parent; she works in a secondary school in Welwyn Garden City.

The exhibition is open until August 8th. Monday to Saturday, 10.00 am – 6.00 pm. Admission free.

Storytelling: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 3.00.

Artist/illustrators: Wednesdays and Fridays at 3.00.

Stories and Activities every Saturday afternoon.

Those appearing include Michael Foreman, Shirley Hughes, Eileen Colwell, Grace Hallworth, Alike, Jill Bennett.

Details from Barbara Buckley, NBL, Book House, 45 East Hill, Wandsworth London.

The fully annotated list *Children's Books of the Year 1980* is published in July by Julia MacRae, £3.95 (£3.00 to NBL members). As usual a touring exhibition of the books will be available from the NBL. Hire charge £24 (£20 to NBL members). ●

WHAT SELLS NANCY DREW?

In *Books for Keeps* 6, mainly about children's books and television, we reported that sales of *Nancy Drew* books had shot up with the TV series and stayed up, whereas *The Hardy Boys*, after a brief boost, had settled back to the previous level. No-one at Armada could explain why.

Jane Little, a librarian in London, was intrigued and wrote to us with what she thinks is the answer.

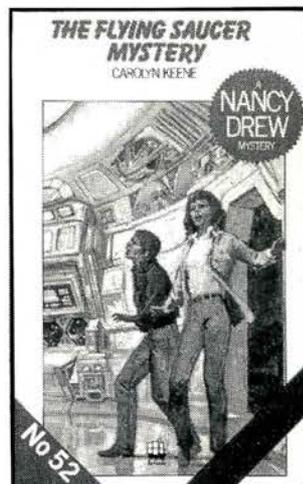
'I suggest that this is because the *Nancy Drew* books, although as formula-written as *The Hardy Boys* ones, feature *girls* doing all the exciting things.

In my experience as a librarian there are still too few books featuring girls as the main characters. Although the plots in the *Nancy Drew* books are very far-fetched, Nancy and her friends solve mysteries, zoom around with only minimal parental control, overcome villains with judo, speak better

Spanish than their boyfriends and generally win through! The boys are kept firmly in the background always, as is Nancy's lawyer father, and it is with the *girls* that the skills and strength lie.

Girls who like a fairly predictable story but with strong *female* characters often relate well to the *Nancy Drew* books. And why not: there's certainly not much for them to identify with in *The Hardy Boys* stories, the *William* books, *Jennings* — or *Enid Blyton*! ●

And right on cue for our SF issue comes *Nancy Drew* No. 52, *The Flying Saucer Mystery*, Carolyn Keene, Armada, 0 00 691839 5, 80p. The intrepid girls (and boys) are camping on Shawnee Mountain investigating some UFO sightings and, by the by, solving old Joe's mystery for him. The plot is totally preposterous and falls apart as soon as you look at it. (If you work it out, you have to believe in an 85-year-old man camping with his 60-year-old son and going off alone to bury the secret his son is still looking for ten years later.)



Whole episodes, including large scale hallucinations, are left completely unexplained. Creating positive female characters is certainly appealing to girls; it's no excuse for writing a story with your mind on something else and insulting faithful readers with such a shoddy product. ●