



Editor's Page ? July 1985

By *admin*

Created *Oct '09*

Article Author:

[Pat Triggs](#) [1]

[33](#) [2]

Article Category:

Editorial

Byline:

News and comment from the Editor.

There's a lot packed into this issue of **Books for Keeps**, enough we hope to keep you busy through the summer. Certainly the Avon Fiction Survey got us thinking and talking; so much so that we wanted to share it with all our readers (page 4). How correct I wonder is Terry Downie's feeling that surveys held in other parts of the country would come up with similar results? Does the Avon experience reflect your own? There can never be too much talk about books. The end of a school year means perhaps a little more time to stand back and consider what we do. If you have any thoughts let us know.

<!--break-->

There's also a neat - and unplanned - connection between our lead article and the Authorgraph. Nina Bawden, the Avon computer tells us, was the third most frequently mentioned writer in the survey, following Roald Dahl and Betsy Byars.

Special Needs

For some time we have been planning to feature books for and about children with special needs. Integration of special children into ordinary classrooms and the developing awareness of the value of book experience to even severely handicapped children means that teachers more than ever need information about suitable books and how to make use of them. Now, thanks to the Enid Blyton Trust, they can find that information and much more in the National Library for the Handicapped Child. Margaret Marshall, acknowledged expert on libraries and the handicapped, was a powerful moving force behind the setting up of the National Library and will act as a consultant as it develops. For this issue Margaret has made a special selection of story and information books about children with different kinds of handicap (see page 7 and 8).

Included in the list are several from the Dinosaur **Talk it Over** series including **I Can't hear Like You**, one of six titles which relaunch Dinosaur as part of Fontana. Rosemary Sandberg, editor of Fontana Lions, and now also managing editor of Dinosaur Publications, talked to us about the list.

'The original Dinosaurs have an informality and a directness that appeals very strongly and the honest, home-grown feel about the books makes them attractive even to people who don't habitually buy books. That all came from Althea's approach and we want to maintain that philosophy. But the design of the books needs developing for the 80s; I'm using artists with a looser more attractive style. As well as new titles we are re-illustrating several popular titles, like **Starting School** and **Going to the Doctor**, and updating the text.'

The new list has three main strands: the **Talk it Over** series, simple natural history and stories for the very young and

for beginner readers.. Althea Braithwaite, who created *Dinosaur* eighteen years ago, is now a consultant. Her current project is a book about premature babies in Special Care Units. Meanwhile Rosemary is commissioning stories. 'I want to inject more humour into the series; we need more funny books for sharing and beginning reading. The stories will be short, (24 pages), simple, direct and with no frills.' *Dinosaurs* will appear mainly in paperback (£1.25) but there will be a limited supply of hardback editions (£2.95) with librarians in mind.

Who's Won?

What children's librarians themselves had in mind recently were the annual Carnegie and Greenaway Awards. This year the identity of the winners was a close-kept secret until the official announcement. Not even the publishers of the winning books knew which of the short listed titles would come out on top (see page 22).

One person particularly delighted at the librarians' choice of Errol le Cain as the Greenaway winner was Penny Sibson, in charge of Children's publicity at Faber. But her pleasure was not just at having another award-winning book to promote; this particular book, **Hiawatha's Childhood**, is dedicated by Errol le Cain to Penny Sibson.

In a world where publicity people are often on the move, Penny is a remarkably constant figure. Nice to see her hard work recognised in this way.

Margaret Mahy, Carnegie winner, heard the news from her publisher, Dent, by telephone at 3 am New Zealand time. She is only the fourth writer to win the medal twice. Her previous award two years ago was for **The Haunting**. She hopes to be able to come to England to receive the award at the YLG conference in September.

A New Partnership

Runner-up for the 1983 Mother Goose Award for Bodley Head's **Your Body** series, was Sarah Pooley. This lively, talented young artist has a new collaborator, Tom Johnston, head of Lower School Science in a comprehensive school. Together with Rona Selby, their editor at Bodley Head, they have been working on a six book series on science, **Let's Imagine**. The first two titles **Water** (see page 21) and **Colour** (see page 20) have the mark of a good team working closely together; a welcome feature when so many information books look as if they have been assembled by a badly programmed robot, or a committee that never met. This impression was confirmed when I spoke to Tom Johnston whose first venture into writing this is. 'I wanted the books to have a proper integrated science approach - physics, chemistry and biology all in together - to mix fact and experiment and to be as open ended as possible. When I first started I wrote it thinking about how I would teach rather than the way it would read.

Rona Selby was good at making suggestions about how what I wanted could be done in book form. She read my text and passed it to Sarah who worked out ideas for illustrations, did sketches and then passed it back to me.

We talked a lot over the phone and sometimes we managed to sit down together to work at it. It would have been much quicker to have collaborated more like that; but with Sarah in London and me teaching it was difficult. Sarah is responsible for all the jokes, it's very much her sense of humour that appears in the bubbles. It was my job to check the science content!'

The series title is from an Einstein quotation. *Budding Einsteins* (7-14) should find the books interesting and accessible and teachers, too, will find ideas for primary/ middle science.

Not Such a Wizard

From science to fantasy (there's everything in this issue) and the new Walt Disney production film based on L. Frank Baum's stories of *Oz*' (see page 24).

All the trappings of late twentieth century hype often prompt thoughts of the original authors 'turning in their graves'. Though born in 1856, it is unlikely that Lyman Frank Baum would feel at all put out by film version, tie-ins or spin-offs.

He got involved in projects in the theatre, in newspapers, and had a go at selling and marketing the family's axle grease - all before he had his first children's book published when he was past 40. The only problem was all his projects ended in financial disaster. Even after the super success of the Oz stories he faced bankruptcy as he put Oz on stage, made film versions in his own studio in the infant Hollywood, engaged in disastrous business deals and tried unsuccessfully to get recognition for his other works.

After his death, in 1919, other writers produced Oz stories but none with the particular quality of the fourteen by L. Frank Baum.

Book News

What else to note as the holidays approach? After my comments on their small size in May **BfK**, it's good to hear that Magnet will have bigger picture paperbacks this year. Their first could hardly be more starry - Anthony Browne's **Gorilla**. Tony Bradman, who writes regularly for **BfK** has just had his first book published. **So You Want to Have a Baby?** (Julia MacRae, 0 86203 212 1, £3.95 pbk) should find a place in Secondary Schools libraries and on many social science and life skills courses. It's a very open, human and readable book written from the heart and from first hand experience!

Anyone striving to fulfil Sir Keith's directive about ensuring children understand the economic basis of a free society might be interested in two books just out. **Summer Business** by Charles E. Martin (Julia MacRae, 0 86203 210 5, £5.25) was first published in the USA and is dedicated to 'small business persons (under twelve) wherever they may be.' It shows a gang of small entrepreneurs making money from (ripping off?) the summer tourists who visit their island. In contrast **Union Farm**, published by the Labour Research Department (0 900 508 779, £1.95) and apparently written by a committee shows how the animals of Glowmore Farm unite against evil, exploitative Mr Moneybags, and by striking win better pay and conditions. Take your pick. I wouldn't take either of them. Instead I'd urge you to read **Booktalk** a collection of occasional writing on literature and children by Aidan Chambers (Bodley Head, 0 370 30858 1, £5.95). Some previously published work but much of it new and as ever thoughtful and thought provoking. Book talk is good talk. Which is where we came in.

Happy Holidays.

Pat

Page Number:

3

Source URL (retrieved on Mar '21): <http://ww.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/33/childrens-books/articles/editorial/editors-page-%E2%80%93-july-1985>

Links:

[1] <http://ww.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/pat-triggs>

[2] <http://ww.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/33>