



# Going to the Country

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[45](#) [2]

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## 'Book Cover UK'

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## 'Book Cover UK'

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Five weeks after we launched 'Book Cover UK', I seriously began to wonder if there was anyone out there. True, there had been a great deal of interest in the competition to design the ultimate in week-long book events. An article in the *Guardian* had resulted in hundreds of calls. (A pity the *Guardian* got the telephone number wrong but nice of the local dentist to forward them all.) But was it just too tough a consignment for busy teachers, librarians and booksellers'? Above all, where were the proposals, the plans, the ideas'?

We needn't have worried. By the closing date on 30th March nearly 80 of them, bewildering in their variety, had found their way to Book House. And most of them were good. One or two weren't and they ranged from the very flimsy to the extremely silly. But, in the end, our seven judges had to sift their way painstakingly through a great deal of reading ranging from pop-up proposals to plans which looked like telephone directories.

Judging day was a nightmare. Seven judges. lots of argument and I couldn't say a word. Not only did I have to watch some of any favourites get the thumbs down (momentary doubts about whether it was such a good idea to have only one winner per region) but we also had to produce and send out about 800 press releases - a different one for each of the 12 winners - in three hours.

In the relative calm that has followed, I've come to appreciate what a good job the secretive seven did and grown much more confident that the campaign will work. One of the main criteria of the competition was that the week's events should reach a minimum of 2,000 children. Our 12 winners estimate an average audience of 5,000 each: 60,000 in total. If you then just stop to think that each of these will be merely the flagship in their area - the focus of hundreds of other

Children's Book Week events - then the scale of the whole campaign becomes apparent. Last year, we estimated that about a million children came into contact with an event during Children's Book Week: this year, I think it's within our scope to double that figure.

Never mind the quantity though. look at the quality. There's so much detail in each of the 12 Book Weeks that it could easily fill this entire edition of **Books for Keeps**. I hope you will be reading a lot more about them all in the coming weeks. Looking at them as a whole, you're first struck by the variety of geographical coverage. The Stirling Book Week will cover an area of some 650 square miles; The Bookboat will use the *Cutty Sark* and Greenwich as a focus to lure in the numbers.

The theme of 'Myths and Magic will bring books and authors to the children of Clwyd in a programme with a grand finale on the Llangollen Steam Railway. Sheffield will see the 'biggest book in the world'. Northern Ireland will get three major bookfairs, in Belfast. Armagh and Londonderry, and visits from Mike Rosen, Ruth Brown and Chris Powling. The Birmingham programme, 'Birmingham, an Adventure', will create a different adventure each day through books and authors. Adventure from storytelling, music, illustration, drama, and the media. And... I'm running out of space.

Then there'll be a launch for the Week on the Circle Line of the London Underground and following that we'll be putting a live show on the road to visit all the regional centres. But more of that, perhaps, in a couple of months' time.

NB The judges made no award for N. & E. Scotland and East Anglia because they felt no entry was of a sufficiently high standard. The Roadshow will still visit Inverness and Aberdeen.

#### Area Winning Entry Contact

Northern Ireland	Youth Libraries Group	Desmond Preston, 0365-22886
Central Scotland	Stirling District	Liz Robinson, 0786-79000
Borders	Millom Group, Cumbria	Carole Files. 0657-4307
N.E. England	Northumberland Libraries	Chris Baker, 0670-714371
N.W. England	Blackburn EAger ReaderS	Pat Fowler, 0254-52108
Yorkshire	Sheffield Libraries	Gayner Eyre, 0742-29191
Wales	Clwyd Libraries	Gwyn Williams, 0352-2121
Midlands	Birmingham Book Group	Anne Wood, 021-454-5453
West Country	Booksamazing, Avon	Sue Stops, 0272-277157/424454
S. W. England	Exmouth Academic Council	Heather Somerwill, 0395-75968

S. England	Eastbourne Children's Book Group	Wendy Dash, 0323-761276
London/Home	Bookboat, Greenwich	Ann Keely, 01-853-4383

For more details or to enquire about adding your event to the winning flagship, contact the area winners at the above numbers.

Page Number:

10

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