

# Nutwood Newsletter



*Number 80: Winter 2011*

## Christmas cards

Don't forget to buy your Rupert Christmas cards. There are three different ones to those released earlier and they come in packs with envelopes. So help the Followers and impress your friends by sending them a Rupert card for Christmas. Please see the Sales List for ordering details.



## Rupert Website



Thanks to the kindness of Shirley, the widow of our late member Andy Coleman, the website [rupertbear.co.uk](http://rupertbear.co.uk) has been transferred to the Followers in accordance with his wishes. We are keen to set it up as the main website for the society but need a Webmaster who understands these things to undertake this task and keep the site maintained. It will offer us opportunities to support the advertising of Rupert products and provide interactive links and forums as well as archive access for members. If you have experience in these matters and are interested in undertaking the project please contact me on 01273 477555.

**John Beck (Secretary)**

*I really need some help to get  
My information on the 'net.*

## Chairman's Christmas Message

Well, here we are again with another Christmas message and I'm writing at a time when there's been some excellent publicity for our Nutwood chums through the very positive Radio 4 programme on Rupert presented by Mark Radcliffe.

Let's hope that the programme will have a positive effect on interest in Rupert as I'm afraid that this is urgently needed at the moment, for despite a Newsletter of the very highest standard and a hugely enjoyable AGM week-end, membership continues to fall.

Obviously, the worst case scenario is that we could reach a membership level where we would cease to be viable, at least in our present form, and what a shame that would be now that we are nudging towards Rupert's centenary.

We have therefore launched two initiatives. First, there is the special Gift Form included with this Newsletter, to facilitate you giving membership as a Christmas gift - and you will receive a gift too. Of course, please feel free to use the form for birthday gifts as well! Secondly, we will be amending the regular membership form to facilitate the making of a small additional donation. We are hopeful that these measures will be of some assistance to the Society's finances and help to ensure that we continue to thrive.

Oh dear, this message doesn't seem very Christmassy so far, so I've cheered myself up by turning to a Rupert Christmas story to get me in the mood. I've chosen *Rupert and the New Boat* from the 1961 Annual. I'm sure you'll remember that the crux of the plot is that Rupert's Christmas present is delayed because Santa thinks he's ordered an Ice Boat rather than a nice boat. However, Rupert is fairly unfazed, for, as we all know, he is well accustomed to eccentric forms of transport. The mix-up leads to a personal visit by Santa (more usually seen in his workshop) who is hugely amused by what's happened. It's difficult to single out a panel from this lovely story so maybe The Wise Old Goat will allow two; first Bingo showing his delight at receiving a chess set earlier in the story, (shown above) and later on Santa roaring with laughter as he realises the mistake about the boat (in the Editorial opposite).

Well, I feel better after that, so may I close by wishing you and yours the very best for the forthcoming festive season.



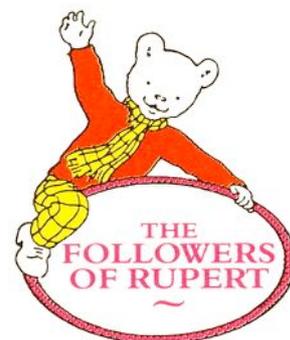
**John Swan**

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## The 2011 AGM

Just to record that at the meeting held in Warwick on 27<sup>th</sup> August, the accounts were agreed and there were no changes to rules or subscriptions. All Committee members were re-elected and Tony Griffin was confirmed as Membership and Sales Officer. Contact details for all officers are noted on the calendar included with this issue.



## Rupert on Radio 4

The Chairman makes reference to this airing for Rupert in his Christmas address. We hope to carry some comments and observations about the programme in our next issue.

*Wise Old Goat*

## Editorial

Not a lot has happened commercially on the Classic Rupert front in the last year and I wonder if this could signal the beginning of the end for Rupert. I would certainly hope not but the owners do not seem very active in producing and promoting new products for Classic Rupert. Also, with the facsimiles now reaching year 1970 how much longer will they continue to be produced? The traditional Rupert Annual, the flagship of all collectors' interest, is also fast becoming a shadow of previous editions, with fewer pages and mainly containing reprinted stories. Print runs are now down to 40,000, a considerable drop from the 150,000 produced in 1995 and the heady days of the 1940's and 1950's when print runs sometimes exceeded 1 million.



Rupert's popularity is definitely waning and it is difficult to see what can be done to rekindle interest. Initially, I would suggest a return of the TV series that featured Bestall stories as it would help bring Classic Rupert back into the junior public eye, plus a major effort being made on the quality of future Rupert Annual production. This will mean Egmont seriously investing in quality new stories and giving Stuart Trotter the time to produce pictures in the traditional Bestall/Harrod style, something he is well able to do as his picture for our raffle featured in Alan Murray's excellent "Opinion" article on page 18, shows. Even if this does mean a small increase in the cost of the book it will be well worthwhile.

Meanwhile, at least we can dip back into the past and be grateful that there is a such a heritage of excellent stories and artwork thanks to the sterling efforts of all those who understood their responsibilities and looked after Rupert's interests in the past.

A Happy Christmas to all Nutwood fans from the Editor and Lily Duckling, his indispensable assistant, and let us hope 2012 is a good one for everyone, and particularly Rupert.

*John Beck (Editor)*

# Annual Meeting, Warwick 2011

## A follower's journal

A rather dull day in late August was immediately dissipated if one attended the Followers' AGM and Annual at Warwick. The twin lines of Rupert and his chums on meet and greet duty were merely a prelude to a wonderfully colourful display as each Follower entered the hall and was welcomed by a most attractive banner that was supported by red and yellow poles.



*Meet and Greet at reception*



*The Followers' stall and a couple of likely characters*

one based on Rupert and the Banjo (B53). These were carefully positioned on felt and fabric of Rupert red and yellow which was a rather nice touch.

This 28th AGM and Annual Meeting, or Orchid Anniversary using Wedding Anniversary parlance, was a sheer joy from the moment one arrived at Warwick School to the time when the final morsel was consumed at the evening meal. The theme of Gillian's artwork which adorned the reception area

and also the badge, programme and evening meal menu, which are collectors' items in their own right, was an adaption of the 1964 Annual 'Follow Rupert' page and the imposing Followers' Stall banner, evening meal place mat, place card and meal ticket were based on the 1964 Annual front cover.

Although there were fewer Followers in attendance than in previous years, there were more dealers displaying their wares and the range of goods and esoteric items such as Rupert Bear sweet tins (Bentley's Confectionery of London) - although



*Figurines*

the contents of an unopened one I saw stated that its contents were 'best before end September 2002' - and

programmes of Annual Meetings in the 90's was as varied as ever and would have put Nutchester's finest department store to shame.



*A few Ruperty items - some fresher than others!*

Items at the connoisseur and luxury end of the market, I noticed, included Rupert and the Princess (£1000), Rupert and the Magic Toy Man (£980) and Rupert and the Old Miser (£700). These are all

by Mary Tourtel, of course, but her successors have produced books that are now extremely expensive to purchase as well.

The 1936 Annual was spotted on one stall retailing at £1950. A John Harrold annual with Bill's meline



*The dealers' bourse*

features appearing in the form of a small head on the front endpaper could be bought for £85. As I have an annual of a similar vintage in which John has drawn Dr Lion's leonine head I decided I had better not read it with sticky food such as crumpets with butter anywhere in its presence!

A combination of Bestall and Harrold could be bought for £220 as they had both signed one annual and four framed Gina Hart pictures were available for £250 each. The latest Rupert book available was Rupert's Who's Who, the recently available magnum opus by Phil Toze and a bargain in hardback at £25 with over 200 coloured pages. Hopefully, Phil will produce a new edition in the future, which includes all the Adventure Series and Sunday Express characters which only appeared in this book if they also cropped up in the daily newspaper or the Annual.



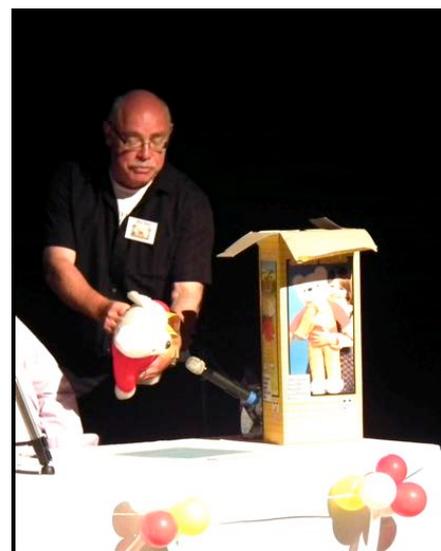
*Stuart busy signing*

There were more Rupert Bear comics around than I had seen for

some years, including a comparatively rare set of four Rupert poster comics published by Jeenaroy Ltd in 1976. One wonders what Rupert merchandise will be available in 35 years' time? The increase in dealers meant a wider range of items to peruse and I noticed children's comics such as Victor and Judy, tea and cigarette cards and a plentiful supply of children's literature. I spotted boxed sets of 'The Railway Series' books by the Rev. W Awdry and also 'The Wind in the Willows' (each chapter published as an individual hardback), as well as a plethora of Enid Blyton volumes.

One new initiative was a coffee corner in the hall where one could sit and chat with members of the North West Group and admire Shirley Green's astonishing library of matching yellow files, each on a theme such as Royal Mail, AGM's and Newspaper/Magazine Articles which not only gave an insight into the vast range of Rupert merchandise that can be collected, much of it for pence rather than pounds, but also suggested a way of displaying such material. The files can be easily rearranged or updated and are far more versatile and 'feature friendly' than scrapbooks. Shirley's files were a true Aladdin's Cave and are probably just one example of the range of items that Followers have collected over the years and I am certain that displays at the Annual or articles in the Newsletter about such collections would be of great interest to fellow Followers.

The AGM lasted just under half an hour and we were informed that the financial position had stabilised. Membership has unfortunately declined to around 800 members but Tony Griffin, who has taken on two more roles with the support of his family since last year when he was 'only' Annual Meeting Organiser, has various ideas and initiatives to arrest this downward trend.



*The Chairman and his talking Rupert*



*Three's company – so the Chairman is keeping out of the spotlight!*



*Rupert in a basket*

stories between Bestall and Harrold will continue to appear as there is now only one new story appearing each year, which is the Stuart Trotter story in the Annual. Birthday greetings were extended to Tony Griffin and Doreen James and we heard that the 2012 AGM and Annual Meeting will be held at Warwick on Saturday 25 August.

After lunch was the return after many years of the Rupert Road Show. Due to a link-up between camera and screen everyone could see what John Beck, the Followers' answer to Paul Martin or Tim Wonnacott, was displaying. Items were discussed and often valued such as an original Bestall picture, a strip of four Cubie original frames from Rupert on the Farm which was never published and a small solid silver Rupert. Other items included a talking Rupert cuddly toy which could utter five different sound bites, a Rupert and the Firebird placemat and a Rupert cutlery set made of stainless steel.

John then produced his Tesco bag which did not contain items that he had purchased from a superstore or charity shop at lunchtime but a range of interesting objects which displayed many facets of Rupert ephemera. Some of these were unique such as a Tourtel sketch with writing on its side by either Mary or Herbert Tourtel. Other pieces of interest were original artwork for a Rupert jigsaw by



*Origami*

We were informed that there have been four more pages in the last twelve months of Newsletter content even though there are now only three issues a year.

Even more positive news was that the popular Rupert story supplements reprinting the

Walt Howarth (1928 – 2008), a Portuguese Rupert comic entitled *Rukas em Férias* (Rupert on Holiday), some Bruintje Bear items, Rupert League badges and proof copies of Rupert annuals. It was a fascinating and extremely scarce display of Rupert material and revealed the wide range of merchandise that has been available over the years.

Mary Cadogan then took the stage with her talk entitled "Rupert's Flights of Fancy". As I had previously written about Rupert's aquatic adventures, I was looking forward to what Mary had to say about Rupert's avian, aerial and aeronautical escapades. Mary began her talk by giving examples of flight in a range of myths and stories over the years including Icarus, Peter Pan, Mary Poppins, The Snowman, Bedknobs and Broomsticks and Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. Additional examples were The Wishing-Chair

by Enid Blyton, The Magician's Nephew by C S Lewis, Biggles by W E Johns and the giant moth that takes Doctor Dolittle to the Moon in one of the twelve stories about the Doctor who can talk to animals by Hugh Lofting (1886-1947).



*Enthralled audience in the theatre*

In her fascinating address, Mary explained that although man could control the earth, water and fire, he could not master the air. He aspired to be godlike and to control the environment. She stated that Rupert was airborne in nearly two hundred adventures due to such literary devices as a laundry basket, a pogo-stick, a hot air balloon, spring-heeled boots, a travel cloud and Jack Frost's wind whistle. She mentioned that Mary Tourtel's flying adventures for Rupert widened the readers' imaginative horizons and that Mary, herself, was an enthusiastic flyer. She speculated on the fact that Mary's husband, Herbert Tourtel, had the middle name of Bird. Alfred Bestall included flying machines in many adventures and Rupert featured in various vehicles of flight in the endpapers. John Harrold continued Rupert's flying adventures with such stories as Rupert's Birthday Adventure.

Rupert has appeared with a wide range of flying creatures including mythical (dragons), wooden (cuckoo from clock), topiary (peacock) and woodland (owls). Mary ended her talk by saying a favourite story of hers was Rupert's Fairy Cycle and that the film ET contains a scene that is reminiscent of this adventure.

Gill and I watched the second performance of "Rupert and the Nutwood Quest" which was of the usual high standard. It involved the missing wand of the Fairy Queen which put Nutwood in peril. There was an appearance by Clara the Cat, a relative newcomer in Rupert's adventures and two delightful wood fairies named Eithne and Aislin.

For the first time for some years there was an auction but only two of the five lots sold. These were

two Rupert collection boxes which each went under the hammer for £110. The wonderful models of Rupert and Beppo on a polar bear, a separate model of Beppo and a full-size Rupert costume failed to reach a realistic reserve. Discussion over dinner seemed to concur that the continuing recession and the collecting habits of Followers who seem to prefer books and artwork to other forms of memorabilia were responsible for the disappointing auction total.

The afternoon programme was concluded by the raffle and the draw meant that the Raffle Elves will be posting rather a lot of prizes out to postal purchasers of tickets. The star prize was a framed and coloured panel of Rupert with some friends by Stuart Trotter.

The Annual Dinner in the evening was a wonderful occasion and on my table it was felt that the braised shank of lamb was absolutely superb. It would probably not be too fanciful to say that the dessert of apple and blackberry crumble could only have been bettered if it had come with an invitation to eat it in

company with Rupert himself on Nutwood Common.

There were excellent 'interventions' between the courses. The first suggested that the newest Rupert area of collectabilia was the various types of staples and threads of the Rupert Annuals. These could be displayed on a CCC (Cylindrical Collecting Container) which can be found in the smallest room of a house! As Rupert product barcodes have previously been suggested as a collecting theme, one wonders what area is left to study and accumulate; perhaps an in-depth investigation of the various types of glue and adhesive used in Annual production?

We were then treated to a Scottish singing section which had the communal element of the repetition of the word 'cholesterol' at the end of each verse. Great fun!



*The Saturday evening meal .....*



*.....and again*

Our final address contained metaphysical musings about the End of the Beginning or was it the Beginning of the End? (In fact it was both!) There was abstruse ambivalency about the unknown humans in the bus queue and the train carriage whenever Mrs Bear leaves Nutwood to attend the sales. It was felt that a demographic study was necessary to establish why virtually every shop assistant and shopper in Nutchester was human. Tony and his team had triumphed once again and the memories of yet another joyous Annual Meeting will sustain Gill and I during the inevitable grey days now that summer has ended for another year.

***Report by Mike Williams  
Photos by Gill Williams and  
Caroline and Christine Dobbin***

## More News from Warwick

### Junior Club

Both Eddie and I were disappointed with the response to the Painting Competition which was down on previous years.

This year's winners, chosen by judge Stuart Trotter, were:-

Group 1 – Charlotte Webster

Group 2 - Luke Storey

Group 3 - Megan Tarbuck



Winning entries can be viewed on Stella Books website [www.stellabooks.com](http://www.stellabooks.com)

We are grateful to Stella Books and Nick Ladbrooke of the Rupert Bear Shop for their support with the prizes.

Just to remind you that junior membership fees are now due and are £3 per member.

Cheques to be made payable to The Followers of Rupert. Please send payment to me at 7 Nineacres, Kegworth, Derbyshire DE74 2TA. Any fees not received by the 16<sup>th</sup> December will mean your child will cease to be a member and not receive a Christmas card.

*Valerie Tarbuck*

### Rupert Raffle

We are very pleased to report that this year's raffle made £45.00 more than last year. Thank you to all Followers who bought tickets. Raffle prizes have now been sent on to winners.

The forms, tickets and envelopes have been carefully composted and the stamps will be taken to Peak Rail, Derbyshire's steam railway, for their funds.

We look forward to hearing from and seeing you next year.

*The Raffle Elves*



### Christmas Cards

Thank you to Pat, Val, Rita and Garth for their help in packing almost 4,000 Rupert Christmas Cards. We would encourage all Followers to buy some for this Christmas and help the Followers' funds.

*Roger and Christine*

**We have just been advised of the passing of Valerie Tarbuck (Aunty Val) who has run the Junior Club since it started. Our sympathy goes to husband Eddie who has promised to keep the Junior Club going.**

## The 2011 Rupert Annual: No. 76 ..... a review

Following the pattern established in recent years this is another slim volume of 68 pages, still retailing at £7.99. The only new material consists of the cover and the story “*Rupert and Robo*”, written and drawn by Stuart Trotter. It is an attractive cover, with a close-up of Rupert and the new character Robo flying over a Nutwood Common landscape and close to the Professor’s tower, from where the Professor, Bodkin, Bill Badger, Mr Mole and the Fox twins are watching.

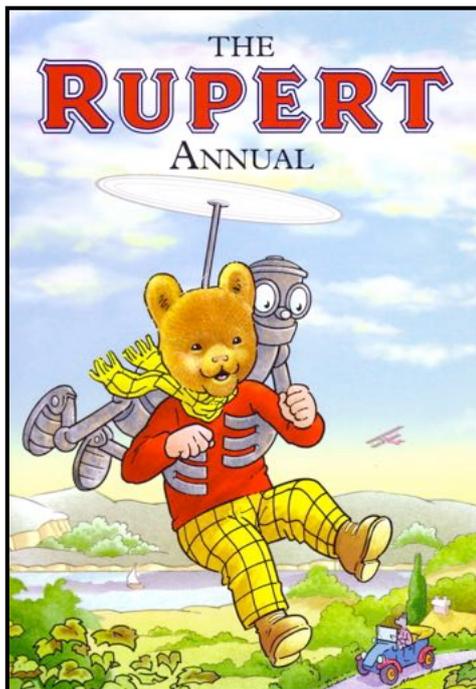
The endpapers are taken from the 1967 Annual. Three of the four stories are reprints:

The first story is “*Rupert and the Little Plane*” (B59) which first appeared in 1941, then in the 1942 Annual and Adventure Series Number 7. It is complete here in 32 frames. The second story, “*Rupert and Ozzie*” (B144), featured in the Queen’s Coronation year of 1953 and subsequently in the 1960 Annual. It is the longest story of this quartet, with 88 frames. We move from Alfred Bestall to John Harrold for the third story which is “*Rupert and the Mail Train*” (JH78) which appeared first in the daily paper in 1994, then in the 1996 Annual, and had a reprint in 2003.

The final story is Stuart Trotter’s contribution, “*Rupert and Robo*”, which is quite short at 40 frames.

The title pages and most puzzle pages are composed of images from the stories, and “*Rupert and the Wonder Machine*” is a craft task and puzzle taken from the 1977 Annual.

Overall this annual is rather a disappointment, with only one new story. It is true that most of the preceding 75 annuals have contained stories that had previously been in the daily paper, but these colour appearances



in annuals were special and unique. Certainly last year’s annual also contained three reprints from annuals, but that was acceptable as a celebration of a double Rupert anniversary, especially with the rare inclusion of a Mary Tourtel story. I don’t think that Egmont can justify it this year, except perhaps to their accountants as a cost-cutting exercise. Stuart Trotter is the official Rupert artist, but he is sadly under-used, particularly as his work does not appear in the Express. He told me at Warwick that he would have loved to have done the endpapers and indeed more stories this year. As it was he wasn’t allowed enough time for what he was commissioned to do, leading to the rather sketchy results in the story which a number of Followers have commented on. People who know Stuart’s other work tell me that he is capable of delivering the detailed drawings which Followers admire so much, particularly in the work of Alfred Bestall and John Harrold, but he has to work fast to meet the short deadline he is given for Rupert.

This is a great pity. With the Express seemingly committed to a reprint policy and having no interest in Rupert as a continuing character with an unrivalled cultural legacy in children’s literature and newspaper publishing, we were assured by Egmont a few years ago that they did have that commitment and that the annual would be the vehicle for new Rupert stories. However, now that the annual contains between 75 and 80 per cent reprinted material we have cause for concern, and I heard this concern expressed over and over again at Warwick in August.

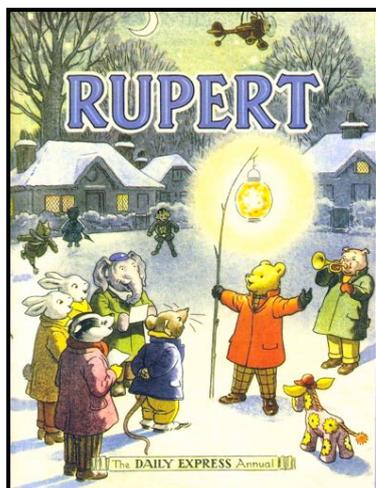
It is also astonishing and regrettable that Stuart does not receive full recognition from Egmont for his contribution. At the foot of the contents page credit is given to Stuart for the artwork and Beth Harwood is credited for the text and couplets for “*Rupert and Robo*”. This is misleading because Stuart wrote the story as well as illustrating and colouring it. Beth edited it and wrote the rhyming couplets. It is easy to see how miffed Stuart must be that he has not received his due credit.

Come on Egmont, stop producing the annual on the cheap. Invest more money, and importantly time, for Stuart to produce a first rate volume and you should see your investment rewarded with better sales. You could start by looking across at what D.C. Thompson does with “*The Broons*” and “*Oor Wullie*”!

*Roger Coombes*

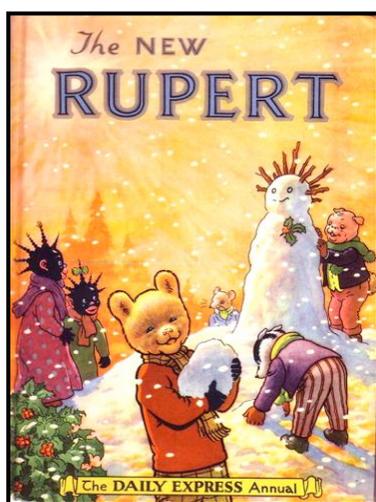
# Rupert's Annual Snowcover

The “big winter storm” of February 2009 brought snow back into the public’s consciousness with a bang. Of course, the Scots and “upland northerners”, more used to white winters took a more phlegmatic view. However, for some older people “down south”, it must have been like a taste of the “good old days” with good “old-fashioned” winters.



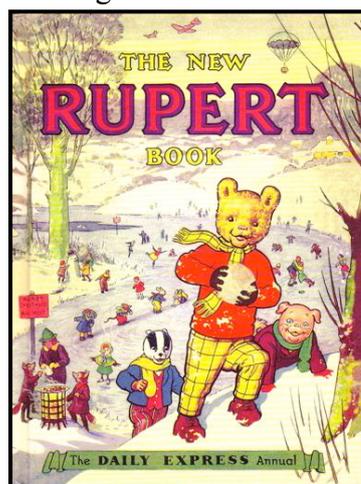
an almost carnival atmosphere.

No-one incidentally was better at communicating this atmosphere than Alfred Bestall and, of course, he did this intermittently on the covers of Rupert annuals. As mentioned in an earlier analysis of Bestall’s cover work, Rupert and his chums were seen in a variety of seasonal activities.

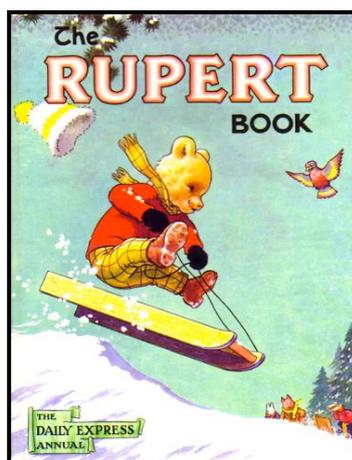


the ultimate Christmas Eve fantasy, so much so that

it must have been like a taste of the “good old days” with good “old-fashioned” winters. Whilst many people might have cursed the arctic spell, as evidenced via the news bulletins, many children and some adults took to their sledges or started building snowmen in



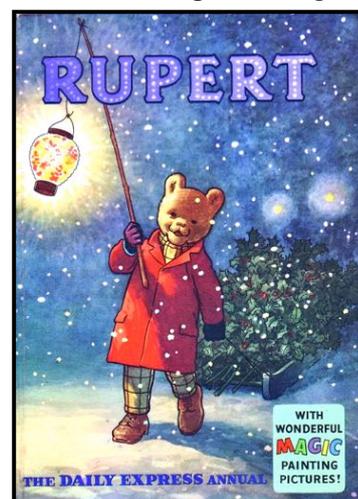
Curiously, Bestall did not use a snow scene on an annual cover for Rupert until 1949; his fourteenth! In spite of this late start, the 1949 annual turned out to be not only his first “wintry” cover but arguably the best. That evening carol service, blazing lantern and chums on a snow-covered Nutwood common must still be



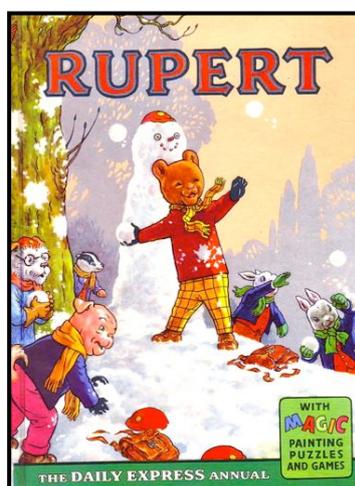
the scene has been endlessly reproduced via porcelain and posters.

As if making up for lost time, Bestall produced another superb Rupert snow scene in 1951. This annual cover showed Rupert clasping a snowball, climbing a slope with chums and a huge, white snowscape behind him – once again magical.

Little wonder the 1951 Rupert annual rocked up sales well in excess of one million, representing the peak of Rupert sales. Never before or since has a Rupert annual made such a snowy impact – almost as if Nutwood had been transferred to Switzerland!



It now seemed that as the 1950’s progressed winter was increasing its grip. 1954 had an annual cover showing Rupert by a snowman and snow falling down from an orange sky. The overall effect was that of the cosy glow of a snowy sunburst. By now Bestall had achieved an intermittent “hat-trick” of three magical winter wonderland annual covers.

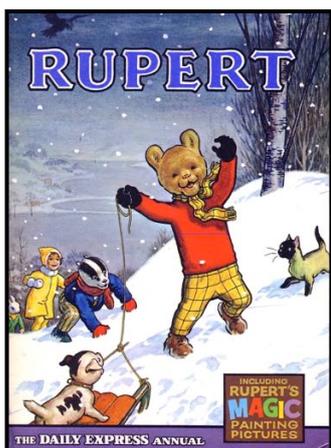


In addition the whole effect was enhanced by the newly introduced laminated boards, giving a very glossy effect, so would this continue?

Sure enough in 1956 another splendid annual cover greeted the eye. Rupert was to be seen sledging down a steep snowy slope, this time to a backdrop of a turquoise sky. Already the 1950’s

had yielded a record-breaking three snow-covered Rupert annuals in just seven years. However, the rest of the 1950's annuals present paradoxically the rest of the seasons with the decade ending on a very summery note; strangely enough matched by a hot summer.

As if by magic, winter returned with a vengeance for the 1960 annual: a wonderful illustration of Rupert holding a lantern and walking in a night time snowstorm from a dark blue sky. If you look closely you will observe the same lantern Rupert had been holding just eleven years earlier. Bang on cue, two years later the 1962 edition had Rupert playing snowballs with his pals, the obligatory snowman and all under a pink sky, suggesting late afternoon.



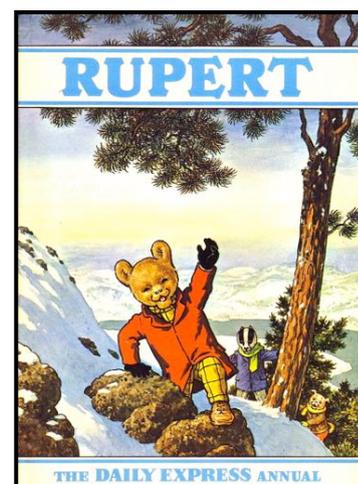
As if by instinct, Bestall snow scenes seemed to coincide with a cluster of colder winters. In fact the 1962 Christmas annual, as mentioned, presaged the coldest winter for three hundred years in the UK. Early 1963 still remains on the record books as the coldest winter in recent history, giving a three-month deep-freeze. Did Bestall know something we didn't?

The winter wonderland of the snowy sixties was again reflected in two more annuals, namely 1965 and 1967. In the former Rupert is carrying a Christmas tree through a ferocious blizzard coming from a dark, leaden grey sky. This very dramatic weather is actually being appreciated by that marvellous little dog, Snuffy, who like Rupert looks very happy. The later annual shows Rupert with a sledge under somewhat calmer conditions, again with Snuffy.

Well, if the 1950's had notched up three snowy covers, and the sixties four, what would the 1970's produce? Rather fewer as it happened. The 1970's started well enough, for on the 1970 annual cover itself, Rupert waves triumphantly part way up a steep

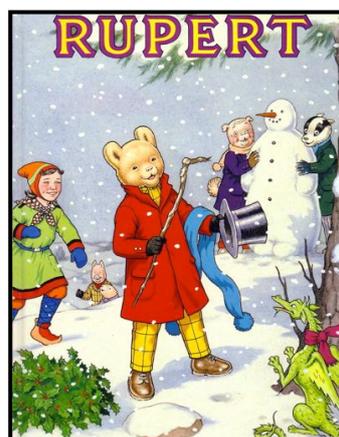
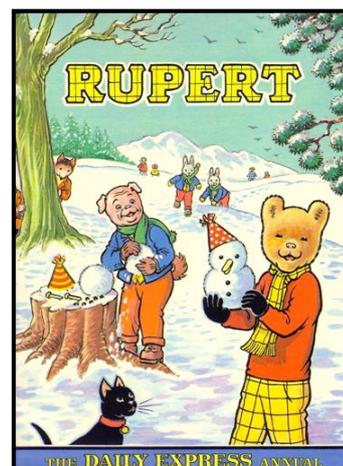
snow covered slope backed by alpine scenery and for once it's not snowing – in fact it looks to be a fine, crisp winter's day.

Unfortunately this was to be Alfred Bestall's annual "snow-cover" swansong. His last cover work was for the 1973 annual and after that even "winter" took a backseat! Cubie's 1974 annual cover was at the best an adequate depiction of



a Ruperty winter scene, but after this, just a big thaw. A further change in artist to John Harrold was welcomed but for a while yielded no "snow-cover". In fact it wasn't until 1989 that the annual sported a snow scene and three years later a creditable Christmas cover appeared.

Somehow, winters were just not the same anymore. Maybe Nutwood was suffering from global warming since with the exception of 2002 and 2005 the annual covers were looking decidedly warmer! The question now remains whether that golden period of dramatic winter covers will ever return? Perhaps in an effort to redress the meteorological balance and to resonate with the arctic period of last February, Rupert and his chums could



be seen enjoying the traditional winter fun of sledging, snowballing, snowman building, skating etc under those intense, dramatic skies so beloved of Alfred Bestall. After all, as both Alfred and Rupert might well have reiterated "there's no business like snow business!"

**Gordon Bramham**

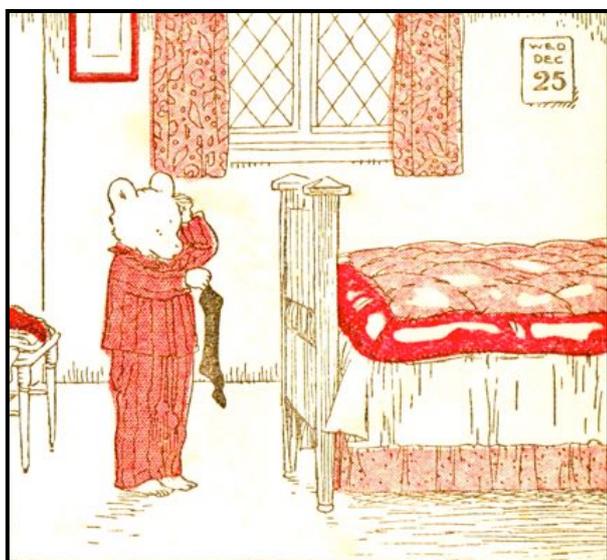
# Rupert's Christmas Presents

I bet many of you received a Rupert Annual as a Christmas present when you were children. And what did Rupert receive for Christmas? Many Rupert Annuals contained a Christmas story concerning Rupert's Christmas presents. So what does a benevolent old gentleman, attired in a red coat and adorned with a white beard, give to an only child from a comfortable, but not wealthy, background? Let's find out!

## **Rupert's Christmas Adventure (B4)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** this is not disclosed in the story.

**What Rupert gets:** an empty stocking on Christmas morning. And when Rupert arrives with presents for himself and his chums in the final frame, we are not informed what the little bear received.



*He eyed the stocking in dismay,  
"No prezzies here for me today".*

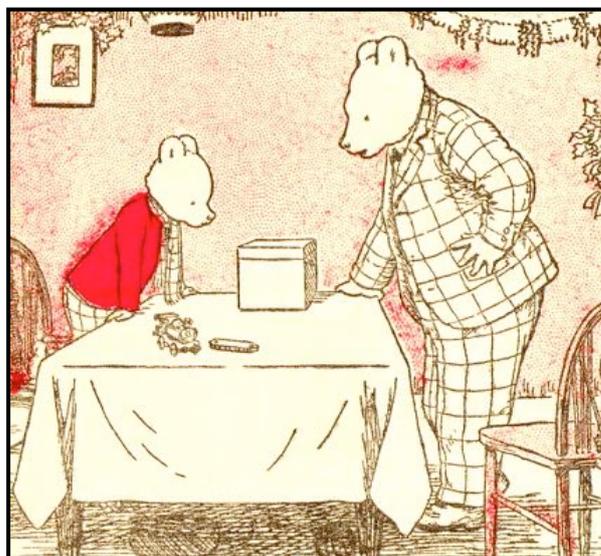
Rupert and his pals are disappointed that they didn't receive Christmas presents from Santa Claus and they gaze forlornly at their empty stockings on the big Day. But a smartly dressed Gollywog – sporting spats, a bow-tie and dress-coat with tails – takes Rupert to Santa, who is ill. The patient asks Rupert to deliver toys to Nutwood. The little bear can't believe his eyes when he's taken to a huge cellar that reaches under a forest floor; it's crammed with thousands of

toys that are typical of what a child in the 1930s would want: kites, model aircraft, toy boats, teddy-bears, dolls, toy houses, balls, cricket-bats, trains, books and boxes of games. Aren't the youngsters of Nutwood happy when Rupert arrives home with some of those goodies!

## **Rupert and the Jack-in-the-Box (B37)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** once again, this is not disclosed in the story.

**What Rupert gets:** we are told: *Rupert has a fine time opening all his parcels, examining his presents*



*Said Mr Bear "This parcel's neat,  
Does it hold something I could eat?"*

and showing them to his mother and father. Rupert (and Mr Bear who looks like he ate too much over the festive season) gaze at the last present to be opened, a square box from Uncle Bruno, which contains a Jack-in-the-box. Rupert gives the springy toy a chocolate. The Jack is ill and Rupert exclaims,

'I hope he isn't going to die.' But after an adventure involving a Toy Doctor and an ancient gentleman with a gun, the Jack recovers and goes home with Rupert.

## **Rupert and the Wrong Presents (B47)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** a speedboat (we assume a toy one).

**What Rupert gets:** a pair of black boots with wings attached. Rupert is disappointed with the boots. This is understandable because we know he wanted a boat. Mrs Bear suggests that because her son's writing was poor when he wrote his Christmas wish list to Santa, who read his request as 'speedboot' instead of 'speedboat'. But never mind, Rupert is soon running speedily through the air: *Now Rupert in his boots can fly, both over land and over sky.* He wants to visit Santa and tell him about the mistake. He reaches Santa's abode, a strange habitation of towers, turrets and battlements. Creeping through corridors in those natty black boots, he finds a door marked, *Keep out, terribly private.* This is Santa's bedroom, and the great man himself is asleep in bed ... and is not too happy about being wakened. At the story's end, Rupert returns his boots to a storekeeper in charge of Santa's toys in exchange for a splendid toy speedboat.



*Creeping in at dead of night,  
They gave poor Santa such a fright!*

### **Rupert and Golly (B64)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** not known.

**What Rupert gets:** a Spitfire model aeroplane; Bill gets a Hurricane. But there's no mention of World War Two in the story which involves an authoritarian Gollywog who is a servant of Santa Claus. But in the last frame we are informed that it's Golly who chose the planes for the chums, so he isn't such an unlikable Golly after all.

### **Rupert and the Dutch Doll (B56)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** not known.

**What Rupert gets:** a toy aeroplane. Here is the same gollywog as in *Rupert and Golly*, but here the little servant is jolly and cheerful. On the last page we see

Rupert falling down the chimney of his house, and the Dutch doll, featured in the tale, winking at the little bear ..... well, well!

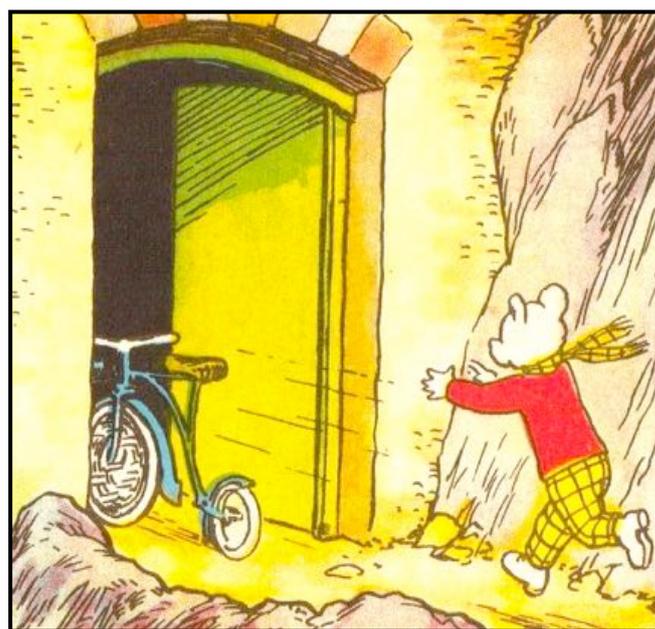


*Whatever would their parents think?  
A naughty doll, nudge nudge, wink.*

### **Rupert's Fairy Cycle (B78)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** a fairy cycle.

**What Rupert gets:** a magic fairy cycle, with wings and a mind of its own from China (courtesy of Pong-Ping). But the cycle is a Chinese mandarin's wish-cycle and whatever Rupert wishes, the machine obeys ... after a whirlwind flight around the planet, the story ends with the cycle disappearing – and that's goodbye to Rupert's Christmas present.



*It went off through the open door:  
The Fairy Cycle was no more!*

### **Rupert and the Reindeer (B71)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** not known.

**What Rupert gets:** a model glider. That's after an adventure concerning Santa's broken sledge and a skittish reindeer.



*The reindeers all were rather sick,  
But Rupert's potion did the trick.*

### **Rupert and the Silver Trumpet (B104)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** a trumpet.

**What Rupert gets:** a trumpet, with the help of Golly who is again cheerful in this story (his clothing is different but he still wears spats). But Golly has made a mistake and given Rupert a trumpet that belongs to Santa; the instrument is only used to summon his toy soldiers. In the end Santa gives Rupert an ordinary trumpet, and the bear and his chums form a band and march in musical discord through the streets.

### **Rupert and Miranda (B118)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** not known.

**What Rupert gets:** a football. The story involves a doll named Miranda that's fussy about where she lives, a princess that gets bored with her and a nice girl named Jennifer who adores her.

### **Rupert and the Cough Drop (B125)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** not known.

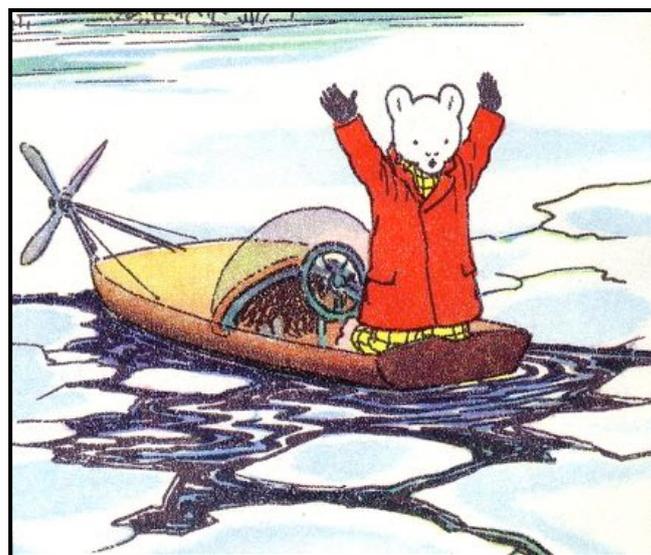
**What Rupert gets:** a wooden dog on wheels. This Christmas the Nutwood youngsters receive a note: *Santa Claus regrets that owing to circumstances over which he has no control, presents will be delayed this*

*year.* Santa's reindeer have colds and Rupert cures them, thanks to cough-sweets he and Podgy made. Santa's snuffle-hound helps in this adventure, and for Christmas Rupert receives a wooden dog which looks the same as the snuffle-hound.

### **Rupert and the New Boat (B156)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** a nice (toy) boat.

**What Rupert gets:** an ice-boat. Santa's messengers, a toy cowboy and a toy policeman, are taking verbal orders for presents one year because Santa is getting tired of reading letters. Rupert asks for a nice boat but his request causes consternation to the



*Because of Santa's daft mistake,  
Rupert was stranded in a lake.*

messengers; eventually a puzzled Rupert is hoisted into an airship to be measured for his boat. On Christmas Eve he puts an empty pillow-case at the foot of his bed instead of a stocking, in anticipation of a boat. On Christmas morning there's no boat but Rupert is summoned by Santa to a frozen lake where he finds his present – an ice-boat! As we know, Rupert wanted a *nice boat*. Santa is amused by the mistake, and instead of suggesting the little bear takes elocution lessons, he encourages Rupert to drive the boat on the lake ... the bear and the boat fall through the ice. 'Help, help!' shouts Rupert. He's soon rescued but the incident causes one to wonder about health and safety standards of Santa.

### **Rupert and the Magic Ball (B149)**

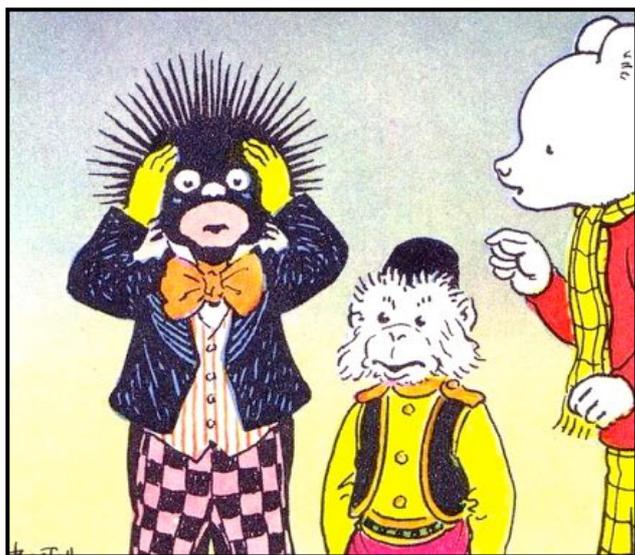
**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** a ball.

**What Rupert gets:** a magic ball, not from Santa but one that Tigerlily has lost; why it should bounce onto Rupert's bed on Christmas morning is anyone's guess.

### **Rupert and the Lost List (B176)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** a toy boat.

**What Rupert gets:** a toy boat. Santa receives so many letters without addresses that he decides upon a new scheme; he orders Gollywog to eavesdrop in children's houses and find out what they want for Christmas. The kiddie's wishes are then written on a piece of paper by Golly who has to rely on the toy cowboy and reindeer to transport him to and from Santa's HQ. It doesn't occur to Santa and his little dark servant that the idea is, to put it politely, a silly one; imagine the logistics of the operation and there's a law about breaking into houses and listening to conversations. Oh dear.



*Poor Golly cried "oh me, oh my, Santa wants me to be a spy!"*

### **Rupert and the Truant (B183)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** not known.

**What Rupert gets:** a stocking full of presents including a toy soldier; and a large parcel, the contents of which are not revealed.

### **Rupert and the Old Chimney (B163)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** not known

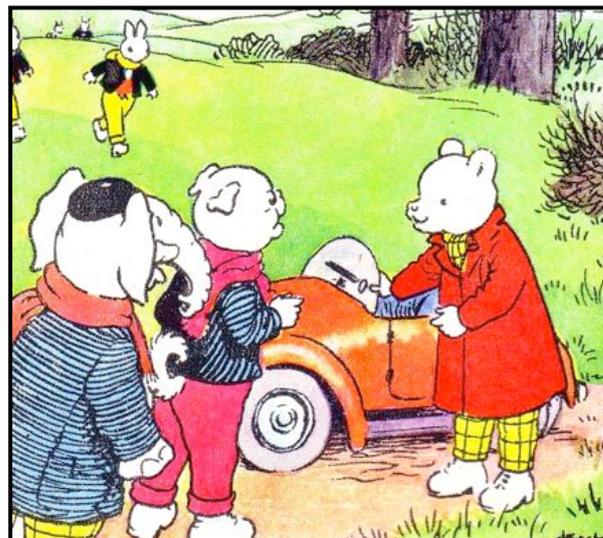
**What Rupert gets:** Rupert's stocking is empty on Christmas morning but there are several presents for him, hanging on the Christmas tree. Among the gifts are a model plane and a toy train.

### **Rupert and the Paper-fall (B196)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** a big toy car.

**What Rupert gets:** a very big toy car with a personal number plate: *RB 1*. This story features a jester, but not a jester full of fun and jokes, but who is angry. He takes Rupert to Santa's warehouse where there's a

large notice: *No fuming, no fussing, no grouching, no pottering, no dozing – get on with your work.*



*The only one to get a gift,  
He can't give all his chums a lift*

### **Rupert and the Windlings (B189)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** not known.

**What Rupert gets:** a stocking full of presents that includes a doll. Later, he receives a toy plane with a control box from Golly. That's after a breathless adventure featuring Windlings (small flying creatures with television aerials sticking from their heads).

### **Rupert and the Bouncers (B202)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** not known but he wrote a long list for Santa.

**What Rupert gets:** a stocking full of small presents and a superb model crane.

### **Rupert and the Little Bells (B208)**

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** it's a rather complicated reason why Rupert wants a toy scarecrow as a Christmas present from Santa. Our little hero feels sorry for Odmedod the scarecrow. This creature tells Rupert that children usually have toy bears, toy horses, dogs, monkeys and rabbits – but never toy scarecrows. So Rupert decides that Santa should deliver one to the Bear household on Christmas Eve, then Rupert will set the trend with toy scarecrows and all the Nutwood kiddies will want one, and then Odmedod will be content.

**What Rupert gets:** on Christmas morning Rupert, dressed in his striped pyjamas, examines his stocking and says, 'It's full, Santa Claus has been!' But there is a disappointment – a toy scarecrow isn't in the stocking. However, the toy is discovered behind the curtain. The toy doesn't scare birds but attracts them.

Rupert finds himself in Santa's headquarters and behind a door is the philanthropist sitting at his office desk. On the door is a notice: *Terribly private, keep out* (note the same wording, arranged differently, on the door of Santa's bedroom in *Rupert and the Wrong Presents*). At the conclusion of the story Odmedod takes the toy in hand to train it in the art of scaring birds.



*"Oh my" thought Rupert, "that fell flat,  
This scarecrow wouldn't scare a gnat".*

### ***Rupert and the Thinking Cap (B170)***

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** he can't decide.

**What Rupert gets:** a stocking full of presents and a ball.

### ***Rupert and the Ice Skates (P4)***

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** a pair of ice skates.



*Poor Rupert hadn't got the knack,  
He hit the ice with such a thwack.*

**What Rupert gets:** a pair of ice skates, a ball, a toy lorry and a book.

### ***Rupert and the Blizzard (P11)***

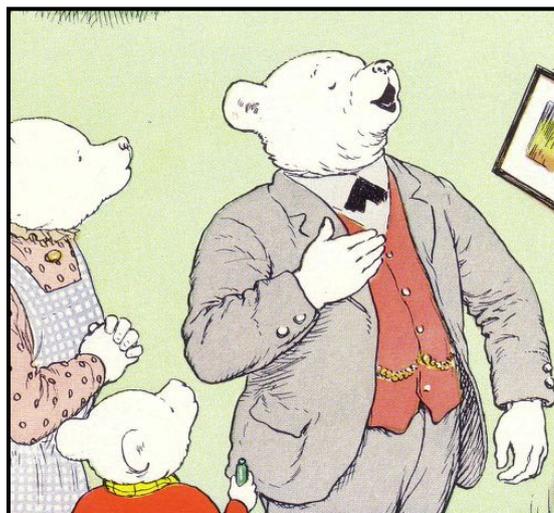
**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** not known.

**What Rupert gets:** he ties an empty pillow case to his bed on Christmas Eve, and in the morning it's full of presents including a toy train and a jigsaw puzzle. The story that follows has nothing to do with Christmas presents, but features Jack Frost and Tommy Thaw, and their unpleasant relation, Billy Blizzard.

### ***Rupert and the Cuckoo Clock (B25)***

**What Rupert wants for Christmas:** not known

**What Rupert gets:** a cuckoo-clock. This story involves Widow Goat's cuckoo-clock and the cuckoo, who lives inside, who is ill. There is an amusing scene where Mr Bear takes a sip of medicine supplied by a chemist. Unfortunately the medicine is only for cuckoos; Rupert's dad starts to sing 'Cuckoo!' so loudly that a picture falls from the wall and crashes to the ground.



*When daddy sang and gave his all,  
The picture dropped right off the wall!*

The stories described above were published in the Rupert Annuals between 1936 and 1986. Are there any descriptions of Christmas presents that Rupert wanted, and/or received between 1920 and 1935 (Mary Tourtell era)? And from 1987 to the present time? If so, will one of you Followers volunteer to let us know what they were? Surely not more toy aeroplanes or balls ...

*Merry Christmas everyone!*

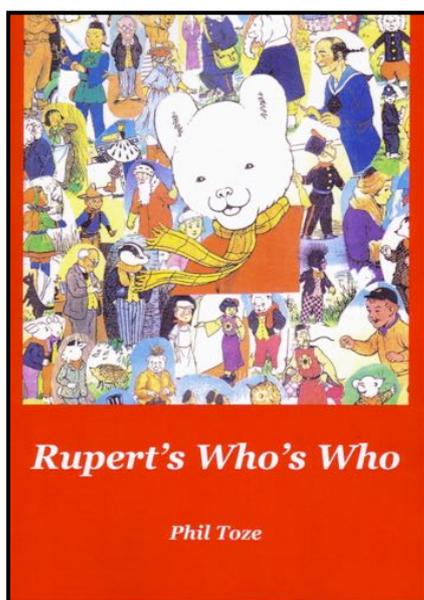
**Ruth Sear**

## *Rupert's Who's Who* by Phil Toze ..... a review

This is a substantial softback book consisting of 219 pages, plus title page and Introduction, listing in alphabetical order every character which has appeared in the Daily Express and/or Rupert Annuals. There are over 1,400 entries, each giving a brief description, the year and story title of the first appearance, the total number of adventures and the artists who have drawn them. Not all the adventures that each character was involved in have been listed as this would have made the book too long and, according to Phil, have detracted from the format. Illustrations are in black and white or colour, depending on the era.

The idea for the book first came to Phil about 15 years ago. He has used his own archive which he has been building for 20 years, obtaining copies of all Daily and Sunday Express adventures by numerous visits to the newspaper library at Colindale, and he acknowledges the help of fellow Follower Ivan Tammis in providing copies of missing stories. Phil's archive of cuttings and hand-written notes detailing dates, titles and repeats in alphabetical order, is now housed in over 80 files.

Phil produced the first draft of the book on an old typewriter and then re-did it on a computer. In selecting the pictures, which were scanned and then the text wrapped around, he chose colour where possible but he was also guided by size and the separation from other characters or objects within the scene. Obviously some regular characters gave him a huge choice, whereas he was quite restricted with others.



Phil has had to publish the book himself as Egmont were approached and sent a draft but they were unable to accept it for publication, perhaps judging that it was not commercially viable. In approving it, Classic Media have stipulated that it can only be sold to Followers, who had their first opportunity to order it in an advertisement in NN 79. It was also available at the Annual Meeting at Warwick in August. A hardback edition limited to 20 copies sold out. Sales and comments so far have been encouraging. Softback copies are still available and when these have sold Phil will be able to print more to order, with a processing time of three weeks.

This is essentially a reference book, of enormous potential to me and others when writing articles for Nutwood Newsletter. It should also be of interest to other Followers who, when re-reading a story, want to learn more about a particular character. To give an example, I have looked up any characters with my name, and I found that four different characters called Roger (two of them scouts) appeared in four separate stories between 1967 and 1978, all drawn by 'Other' artists, which of course included Alex Cubie, Jenny Kisler and Lucy Matthews.

- Rupert and the Cub Scout
- Rupert and the New Pence
- Rupert and the Cake Race
- Rupert, Simon and Roger

The book will be a good companion to the Rupert Index. It could also be useful to someone wanting to devise a Rupert quiz at a gathering of Followers.

*Roger Coombes*

### **Newsletter Binders are Back**

Our popular binders for Newsletters and Adventure Series are now available again. Originally these were sold by John Holt but are now the responsibility of Tony Griffin the Sales Officer and details of how to order them are included in the enclosed Sales List.

Please get your order in early to avoid disappointment, as although we currently have them in stock, when these are sold we will only re-order when there is sufficient demand as we can only order a minimum quantity.

*Followers' Committee*

## Opinion: Where Now, Rupert?

Note – this article expresses the author’s personal opinions and does not necessarily represent the official views of *The Followers of Rupert*. It suggests a way forward for Rupert as a character, product (etc) that would allow him to develop in the way that he has done in the past, while remaining “authentically Rupert” and, vitally, making his owners some money. I make no apologies for this final point. A character that cannot be profitable is a dead character.

### Rupert’s History

This topic has been covered many times. In this article, I will simply look at the watersheds in Rupert’s history, to look for lessons that might tell us something about what would be best for Rupert now.

#### 1920: Mary Tourtel creates Rupert.



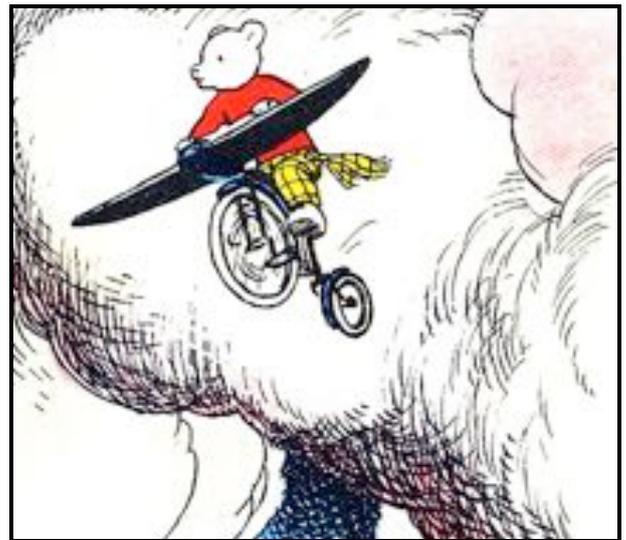
*Rupert and the Fairy Child (Mary Tourtel)*

By all accounts, Rupert was developed as a rival to Teddy Tail of the Daily Mail. It seems that the Express trusted Mary, as an experienced children’s book illustrator, simply to invent a character, to write stories and to illustrate them, with little or no interference from the newspaper’s management. As a result, she created an iconic figure in children’s literature, who has changed in detail since then, but remains very recognisable.

#### 1935: Alfred Bestall takes over

It is now well-documented that Alfred took on more than he realised in 1935! Although he was, apparently, instructed to refrain from gratuitous magic and overly

dark-and-scary stories, he was firmly in charge of every aspect of Rupert’s adventures. Once again, an outstanding artist, and as it turned out an extraordinarily inventive storyteller, was allowed to take the character in new directions and to change his look subtly (Alfred decided to mimic Mary’s Rupert initially and made the change to the Rupert that we know and love gradually). The effect was, as we now know, spectacular. Rupert’s iconic status expanded and he became one of the most fascinating, versatile and loved characters ever.



*Rupert and the Fairy Cycle (Alfred Bestall)*

#### 1973: Alfred begins to retire

This is an interesting fork in the road. At this stage, Rupert was drawn and stories written by a fluid team of artists and writers including Lucy Matthews, Alex Cubie and our chum Jenny Kisler. The result was that Rupert simply became inconsistent. Some stories were delightful, others less impressive. The character did not develop as, while he had talented artists and writers on his side, there was no single, consistent artistic and stylistic direction. As a result, Rupert rather drifted in the mid 1970s.

#### 1985: Enter John Harrold / James Henderson / Ian Robinson

This period illustrates that it is possible for Rupert to develop and to grow while created by a small team of two. John’s first Rupert images appeared in a Rupert Cookery book in 1974, after which he began to illustrate stories and established a subtly new look for Rupert, while writers James Henderson and then Ian Robinson created new characters and new styles of story. John Harrold’s artwork is easily distinguishable

from that of Bestall, is of an extremely high standard and both stories and images maintained the “quality” feel that has always characterised the primary Rupert book output (ignoring, for example, some of the nastier examples of badly-redrawn Tourtel stories).

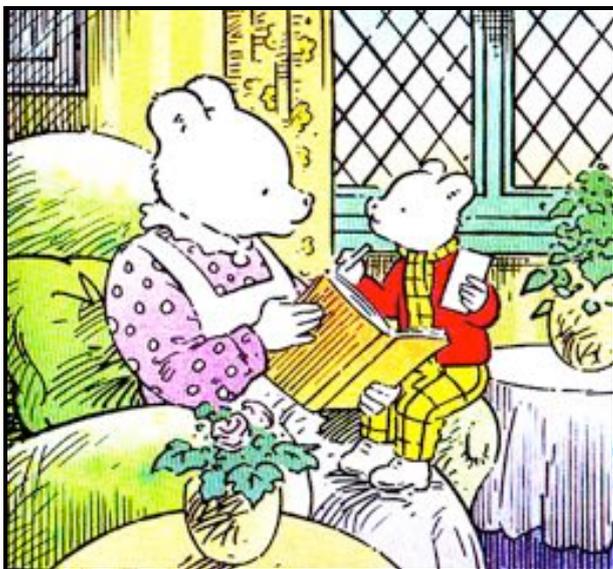


*Rupert and the Magic chalk (John Harrold)*

### **2002: Exit John Harrold**

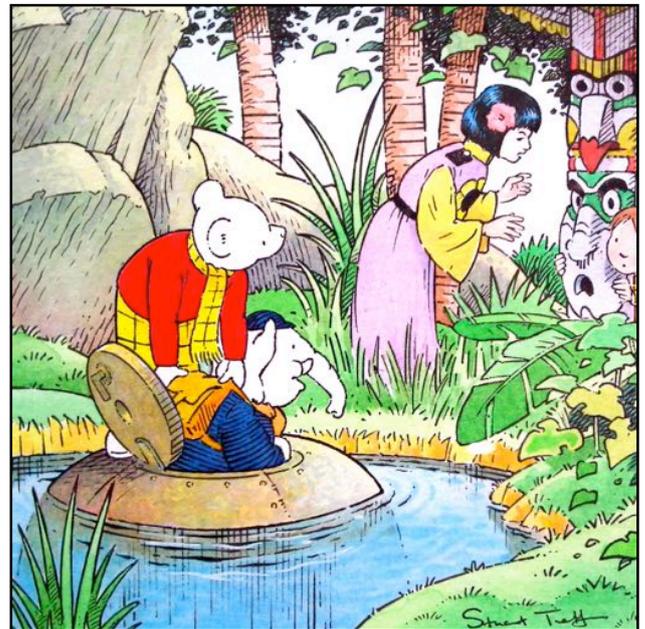
Now we have another period of drift, as Rupert has no official artist. New stories dry up and, while some pleasant Annuals are produced, there is no direction and interest begins to fade. There is some worrying tinkering with the look and feel of the Annual (pink pages!?) to try to make it “cool and groovy”. This fails.

### **2008: Enter Stuart Trotter**



*Rupert and the Snow Bird (Stuart Trotter)*

Great excitement – we now have a new Rupert artist and storyteller in Stuart, who is a committed Rupertophile and *Follower*, clearly a highly-talented illustrator and also an experienced children’s book illustrator/publisher himself. *Followers’* excitement is tempered by something approaching horror as “New Rupert” makes his first appearance, minus two fingers and, far worse, devoid of any form of facial expression and individuality. We suspect a cloning experiment with some of Super Ted’s genes. Nonetheless, the publishers’ commitment to Classic Rupert is stated loudly and clearly and Followers are fairly appeased. Perhaps New Rupert would even sow the seeds of some new Classic Rupert interest?



*“Rupert and Little Feathers”  
Stuart’s raffle prize in the style of Alfred Bestall*

Meanwhile - back at Classic Rupert - my understanding is that Stuart was unable to spend the time that he wished to on his Rupert work and that this continues to be the case. He has produced some stunning Rupert images, particularly on the Annual covers where he can spread his artistic wings and showcase his skills properly. Now (2011) he is tasked only with producing the Annual cover and one Rupert story per annum. Rupert is therefore not a full-time job, much as Stuart would like him to be. He needs other work to survive and his time is not Rupert’s own. We are now a long way from the heady days of a fully-resourced Rupert artist and storyteller. We have Stuart Trotter’s devotion, skills, commitment and love of Rupert. We just don’t have access to enough of them. I will pick up this theme later.

## Rupert's "Audience"

Let's try to be slightly hard-nosed, realistic and honest about this. While we *Followers* are potentially a great source of information and advice to Rupert's owners, we are essentially irrelevant in terms of book sales. Rupert is a children's character who could and should appeal to a wide age range via different book and TV/film formats. We are mostly adults, split between those interested in the more literary/historical/cultural side of Rupert and those who simply like to collect things. Some do both. In any event, our views do not represent those of Rupert's intended audience and we need to understand and accept that.

So – who is the audience? My view is that they are children with an imaginative bent – and the in-school survey that Glynis and I conducted a few years ago confirmed that. Without wishing to be unnecessarily judgemental, they are probably not the truly dedicated computer-games players. They are probably not the devout David Beckham fans (or Victoria Beckham fans). Most importantly, even the most imaginative children are probably not going to buy a Rupert book from their pocket money. The book will be bought for them by their similarly imaginative parents (or grandparents).



*Rupert and the Runaways – with a nice (National Trust?) English castle in the background! Alfred Bestall*

Let's turn our attention to the real purchasers then. Who are they likely to be? A very small number will be paid-up *Followers* like us. The remainder, if Rupert remains authentic, will be those who value outdoor adventures and would encourage their children to spend time out of doors. They are likely to be those who

recognise, like and share the respect for nature and for its wildlife that is shown in Nutwood. They are likely to be the people who enjoy holidays in tents, in caravans, in narrowboats and climbing mountains. They are, even when their own working lives are full of technology, science, economics, politics etc, likely to value the traditional ethos of Nutwood and its slightly nostalgic, escapist, "hippie" (for want of a better word) feel. They are the parents who read *Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter* and *Philip Pullman*. They are the bedtime-story readers. Is the picture emerging? It's easy to fall back on "middle class" as a label, but that's now largely redundant. Sensitive, caring and imaginative parents have always come from all sectors of society and now, as a result of societal economic change, many more have the resources to devote toward developing their children's imaginative lives.

If Rupert is to have a future, he needs to be taken in a direction that draws on and builds on his past, while avoiding a straightforward "heritage" image that locks him into a fixed-in-time past that will inevitably slip away as time passes.

If, for example, he had been developed in, and locked into, Victorian England, he would not enjoy helicopter rides, submarines and various forms of funny-little-aircraft! He would be consigned to the pages of an excellent Opie book reminiscing about bygone bears. This inevitably poses the awkward question - should Rupert have an iPod and/or an iPhone? I would argue not ... yet. The time may come when we all have our music collections implanted in our brains directly and we look back nostalgically at the innocent days of the dear old iPod. It may then be appropriate for Rupert to have one. One of the key features of Rupert is that he does not rely on details of the here-and-now for his appeal. Rather he takes his readers to a world of intriguing possibilities and it is better that he uses technologies that do not really exist, rather than those that do. A through-the-earth lift is a far more intriguing way to get to China than is a Boeing 747 and a magic mattress is much more fun than an East Coast train

Now I'm beginning to ramble. I hope that this section has made my opinionated view clear. Rupert's audience was, in the 1970s, the children of the Laura Ashley generation who bought *Oz* magazine, wore cheesecloth and listened to Pink Floyd and *Tyrannosaurus Rex* (take it from one who knows!). Rupert's owners now need to target the 2011 equivalent of that generation – the hill-walking, cycling and recycling, conservation-minded sensitive souls who read to their tiddlers at bedtime.

## Some Suggestions

**Number 1** – hand Classic Rupert over to a skilled artist and storyteller, resource (ie PAY) him/her to do the job properly and wait for a year or three to see what happens. Don't interfere with the creative process – just take a calculated risk on the inherent qualities of Rupert and the artist's skills. As I have argued above, that is what worked in the past. Interventionist (and cheapskate) strategies seem to have failed. Personally, I would put my trust in Stuart Trotter, as I think he has the skill and love of Rupert that would allow him to develop his Bestallesque style properly if given time, space and resource to do so – which he currently does not have.

**Number 2** - Print the Annual on nice paper (remember the nature of the parents who are likely to buy these Annuals for their children). If this makes it a little more expensive, it's probably worth it to produce what can be marketed as a "quality" product.



*Rupert, Beppo and the Caravan- Alfred Bestall*

**Number 3** – Concentrate on stories that are likely to resonate with and appeal to the children and their parents described above. "Rupert's Lottery Win" and "Rupert and the Phone Hackers" are unlikely to work as storylines, but "Rupert's Narrowboat Adventure" probably would, as would "Rupert and the Magic Wind Farm".

**Number 4** - Include elements of recognisable English cultural heritage – the odd castle, Morris dancer, (Gypsy) caravan, Green Man ... then perhaps the book will sell to National Trust members, or English Folk



*Rupert and Ting Ling (Alfred Bestall)*

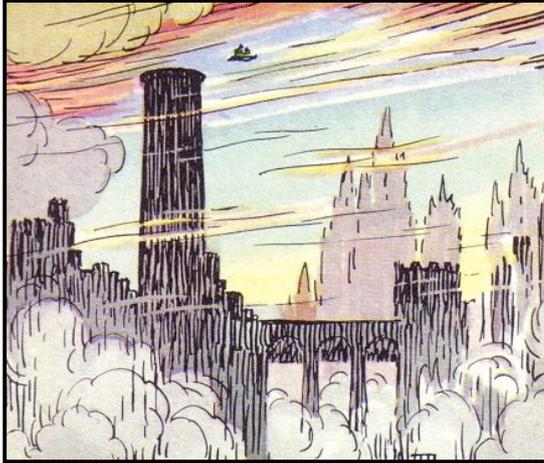
Dance and Song Society members, the Caravan Club and the Green Man Appreciation Society (I made that one up!). Aim for the ethnic, the fantastical, the sensitive-to-nature and the "things-I-do-on-holiday". Children are far more likely to enjoy a visit to a historic castle if they can imagine that it is the one that Rupert visited. In every sense, the real castle becomes more real as a result of the imaginary one. That could get the Rupert Annual into the National Trust shops (as opposed to remaindered at Sainsbury's)!

To conclude - where does my benignly-opinionated set of suggestions take Rupert? If they were to be followed, Rupert's publishers would have to spend some money in the short term and take a risk on the skills and creativity of the chosen artist and storyteller (who may be one and the same person). This strategy says nothing about "New Rupert", as that character, if still extant, is so disconnected from Classic Rupert as to be irrelevant to this article. There is no reason why an (animated or otherwise) Classic Rupert could not have simpler adventures for a younger audience. If my view has any merit, Classic Rupert will change – probably subtly and slowly. This will not bring the Great Bestall back to life, but will give a well-chosen, skilled artistic and dedicated creative person (with great respect, not a businessperson) the chance to make something of cultural, artistic and financial value out of Classic Rupert. Our great hope must be that this new caretaker of Rupert retains his essence and authenticity without simply doing the literary equivalent of arresting his development and handing him to the taxidermist for preservation.

*Alan Murray*

## Rupert has some frosty friends – but their friendship is warm Phil Toze explains:

# Jenny Frost



Jenny lives with her father King Frost and brother, Jack, in the Ice castle, far away in the sky, in the realms of snow and ice.

Rupert first encounters Jenny Frost in 1963 in the Daily Express, when she visits Nutwood to bring snow and ice (B209)

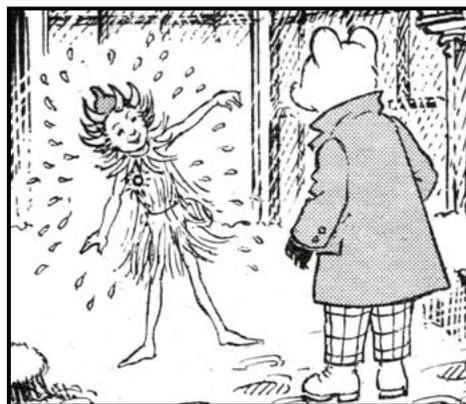
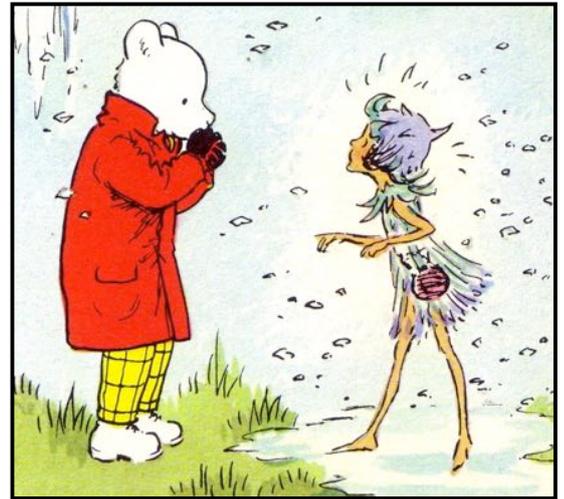


Snow appears wherever she goes and snowflakes fall

around her. The impish little girl mischievously covers only part of the village, causing mixed weather and much confusion! “I’m not very good at it yet” Jenny explains, “but it’s been such fun”.

“We didn’t know you were a Princess” says Rupert. “Oh, I never bother about that, I’m just Jenny and I love playing tricks”.

*Rupert and the Icicles* is Jenny’s only appearance in an Alfred Bestall adventure, but the frisky Princess gains prominence when the title is changed for the 1974 annual to *Rupert and Jenny Frost*.



Jenny again visits Nutwood in *Rupert and the Secret Snow* (P77) bringing snow with her.



In *Rupert and the Joke Icicles* (P92), Jenny Frost displays her wonderful powers by causing upside-down icicles to appear that enable Rupert to climb to safety.



## Jill Frost

Like Jenny, Jill is Jack Frost's sister and appears in *Rupert and the Snow Puzzle* (P40)

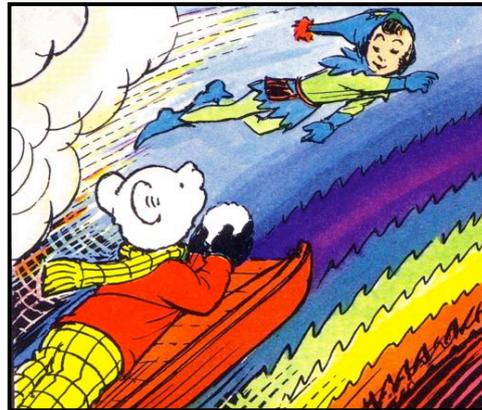
This 1971 Daily Express adventure also appeared in the 1982 annual.

Jill, seen only in this story, comes to Nutwood to do work for her brother, Jack.



She explains that no snow is due for the village.

That is clearly not an ideal situation, so Jill takes Rupert to visit the Clerk of the Weather. The problem is solved – and, of course, snow is sent to Nutwood!

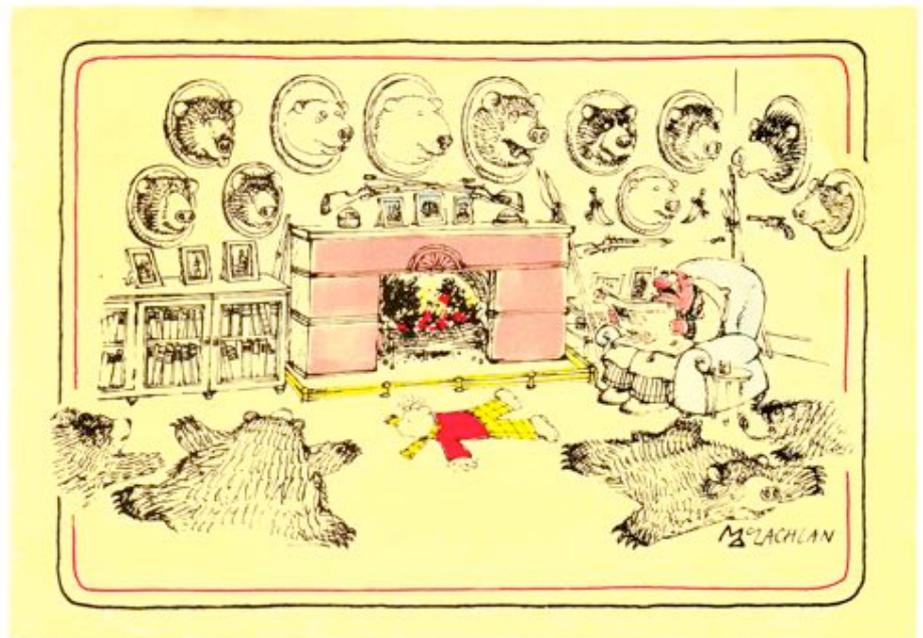


*Phil Toze*

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# Rupert in Punch

We all know that Bestall's non-Rupert work made many appearances in *Punch* but we think this is the only time that Rupert himself was featured, and then he was not drawn by AEB. This example is on a blank greetings card published by the Bcentre Gallery Ltd in 1986 and is of an original cartoon by McLachlan that had earlier appeared in the magazine.



# Rupert, Bingo and Black Bob

There is a remarkable similarity between a black and white Border collie featured in a Rupert Bear story, and Black Bob, known as ‘The Dandy Wonder Dog’.

The two dogs are (almost) identical.

Mary Tourtel’s story *Rupert and Bingo* was published in the *Daily Express* in 1924/25. Bingo the collie is lost and frightened until befriended by the kind and sympathetic Rupert. Bingo saves Rupert’s life and at the end of the story the collie returns to his mistress, who is a nice lady in a fur coat. (This Bingo is, of course, not Alfred Bestall’s ‘brainy pup’ of later years.)

D C Thomson’s Black Bob first appeared as a weekly adventure series in *The Dandy* on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1944.

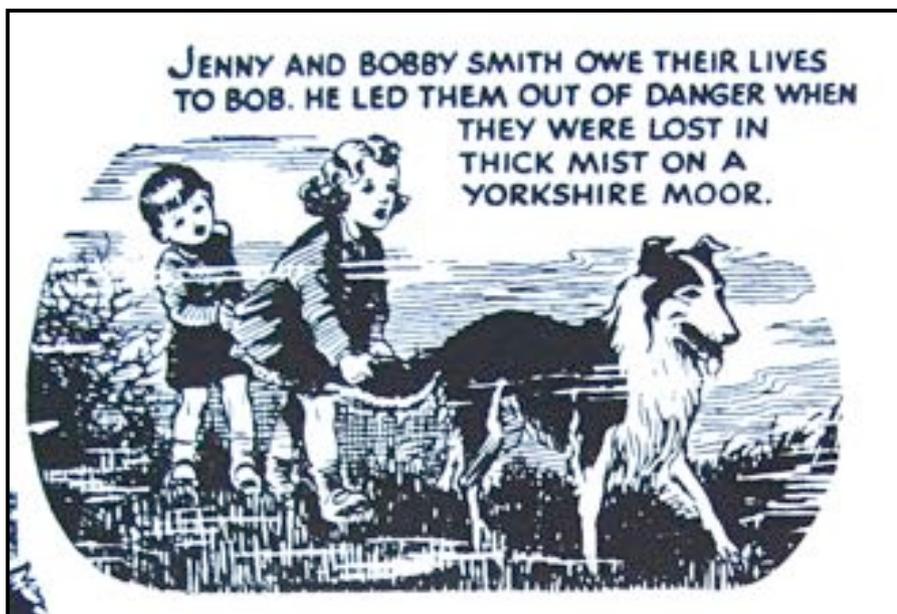


The popular and successful series of Bob’s thrilling adventures were published in the comic for over thirty-seven years. The stories also appeared in *The Weekly News* from October 1946 until September 1967. Like the stories of many other famous characters the text of Bob’s stories appeared under the frames, which were always black and white, and never coloured. Usually there were nine frames published each week in *The Weekly News* and eight frames each week in *The Dandy*.

Eight hardback books entitled *BLACK BOB THE DANDY WONDER DOG* were published between 1950 and 1965. They contained picture stories and some original prose stories. Some of Bob’s adventures were also published in *The Dandy Monster Comic*, *The Dandy Book*, *The Dandy/Beano Summer Special*, and *The Dandy Summer Special*.

Black Bob was a fictitious black and white Border collie and lived with his master, the shepherd Andrew Glenn, in a farm cottage near Selkirk. Clever Bob could do anything (well, almost anything). He was kind, courteous, and





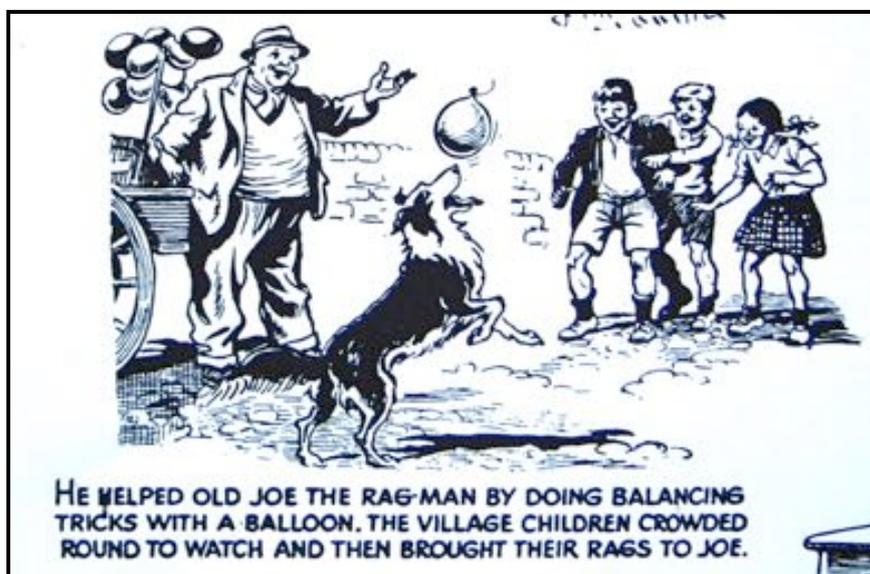
helpful especially to children, old people, and animals. When danger threatened he was there, and was awarded medals for his bravery.

As a champion sheepdog he won numerous silver cups which were proudly displayed on the sideboard in Andrew's cottage.

Open any page of a Black Bob story, and the wonderful illustrations immediately convey a sense of adventure and excitement. The entertaining tales, set in the era between the two World Wars, also

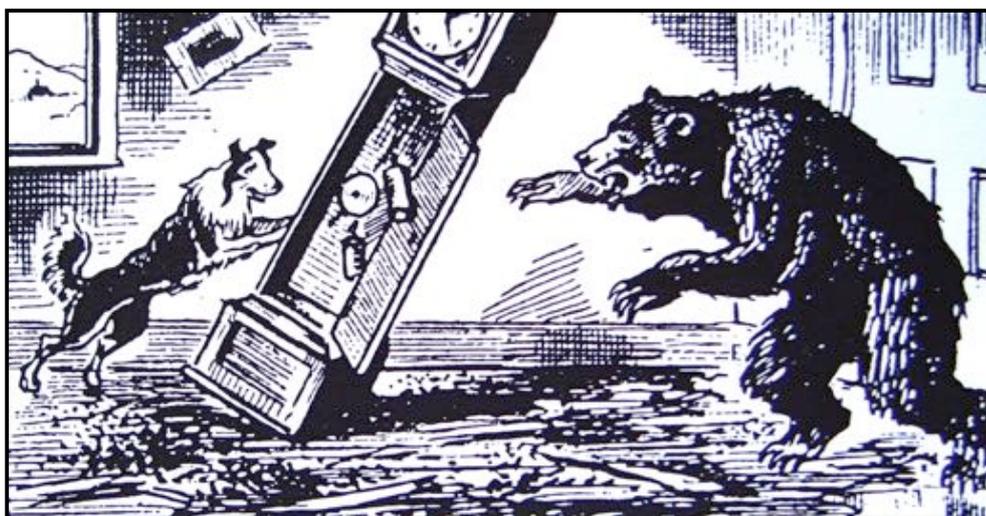
convey a sense of by-gone charm and nostalgia. The famous Border collie had a succession of exciting adventures throughout the years, set not only in Selkirk, but in the rest of the world.

In Selkirk alone we read about crooks, smugglers, kidnapers, spies, thieves, tinkers, poachers – I bet you didn't know that part of Scotland used to contain so many criminals! The sheepdog helped solve petty crime, kidnapping, sheep stealing and smuggling. And there always seemed to be a village bobby handy to make an arrest. Bob was always there to help the blind, the disabled (described as 'crippled' in the stories), the old, the poor, widows, orphans and domestic and wild animals. Bob was kind, courteous, and helpful to all.



Andrew Glenn led a life that was far from tranquil. In the annals of Bob and Andrew the pair are kidnapped, poisoned, blinded, knocked unconscious, beaten, kicked, nearly drowned and shot – but not all at once! In the Border country Bob watched and tended the sheep with Andrew on the beautiful, wide, wild hillsides. Bob had 'the eye' i.e. the power to command the sheep. Time after time he saved them from foxes, killer dogs and rustlers, dangerous storms, floods and blizzards.

The Black Bob stories were written by various writers. The talented artist was Jack Prout (1900-1978). In the 1930s he started work as a staff artist with D C Thomson in Dundee (the publisher of *People's Friend*, *My Weekly*, *The Dandy* and *The Beano*).



During his working life Jack never owned a dog, saying that he'd had enough of dogs after drawing them all day! But in the mid 1960's Jack's son presented him with a black and white Border collie puppy. For many years Jack and his dog were inseparable and often seen enjoying their walks around the countryside of Dundee.

And guess the name of Jack's dog ...

A 'must-read' book for fans of Black Bob is *THE VERY BEST OF BLACK BOB – THE DANDY WONDER DOG*. It was published in 2010 by Waverley Books, Glasgow. (Black Bob © D C Thomson & Co., Ltd.)

*My thanks to Bill Mcloughlin of the Syndication Department, D C Thomson & Co. Ltd. for giving permission to reproduce the images of Black Bob.*

*Ruth Sear*

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## Charity pins

John Leggett writes that he had organized a new pin for Christmas 2011, for the Lions "A Gift for Living" charity.

The badges cost £8.00 a set including mailing. John has a few sets of the previous issues left at £5.00 a set.

Any Follower interested in the latter should contact John at Frogmore, Maidenwell Lane, Navenby. LN5 0ED

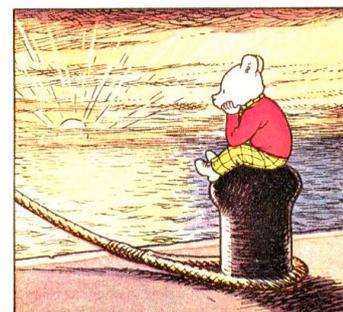


*Our apologies for the image quality, which was supplied by others*

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## Frank Parker (1927 - 2011)

It with sadness we record the death of Frank Parker who was Book Manager at the Daily Express until he retired in 1990. He was responsible for Rupert Annual production and was instrumental in the change to the larger size in 1980 as well as initiating the series of Rupert Annual Facsimilies. He also established John Harrold as the official Rupert artist by giving him a full time contract to ensure that he had sufficient time to devote to Rupert illustrating.



# A Rupert (Murdoch) Cartoon

(by Tony Hall in the Eastern Daily Press)

Oh, Mr Hall, how could you dare  
To so besmirch poor Rupert Bear?

Although we know the name's the same  
Our Rupert plays a different game.

Our bear would never do the things  
That owning daily papers brings.

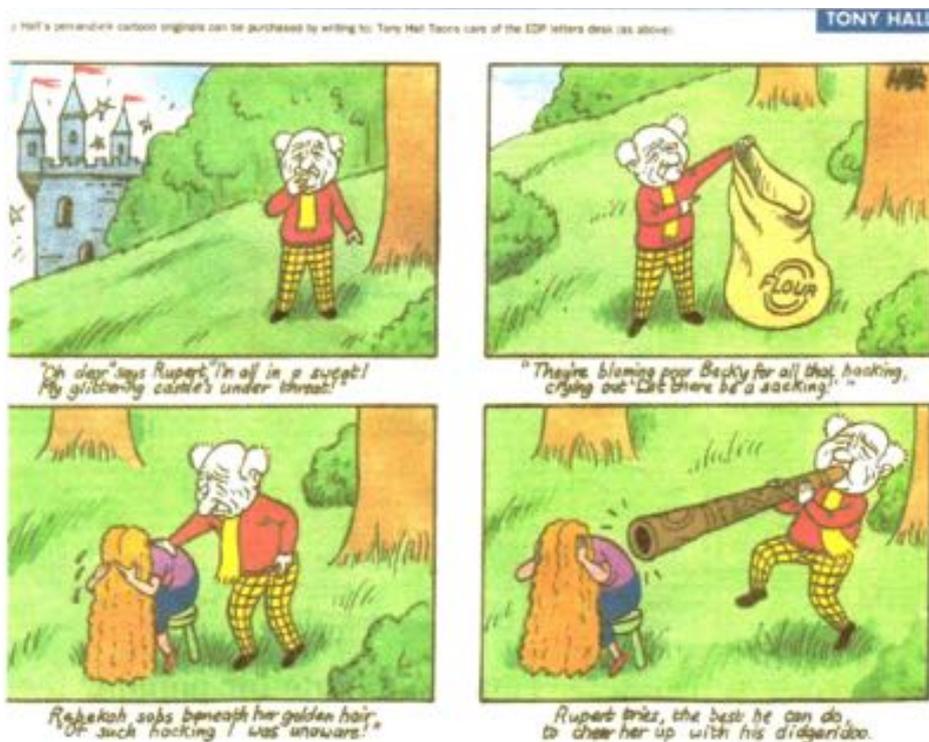
RB is honest, true and strong  
He really would not sanction wrong.

Poor Mr Murdoch really should  
Eschew all matters not so good.

But there in Nutwood mobiles were  
Not used by our young Rupert Bear

Poor RM ought to take great care  
And have more friends like Rupert Bear.

Now with this missive we will close,  
From Christine and Roger Bemrose.



## School visit to Nutwood

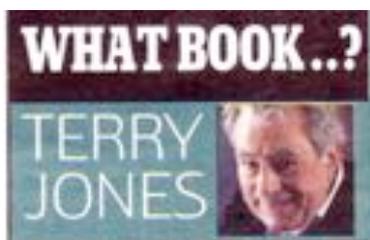
Christine Sturrock has written to update us on the Rupert Exhibition initiative she undertakes for her local school, Long Preston. She first had an open house visit featuring her Rupert collection in 2006 (noted in NN61), and it has now become a popular and regular annual feature in the local school's calendar. This July, thirty members of Class 1, assisted by three staff, visited Christine, who has her collection displayed in three rooms at her house where she provides a variety of Rupert-related entertainment for the children, including jigsaw making, games and videos. With the party split into three groups, time is allocated to each area so that everyone gets to see everything, and there is not time for any of the children to get bored. There are also Rupert ornaments in the garden to see, and, if the weather is fine, this provides a great location for a picnic.

Christine says the children enjoyed the recent visit very much and the headmistress sent a nice appreciative note of thanks. Christine admits to dressing up as Rupert on the day, but did not send a photo, so we include the one she sent of her at the 2011 Annual Meeting. Christine says "I love the AGM and always have a super time. Thank you to all the hard workers.



# To so many of us Rupert was an inspiration ....

This article, by our Honorary Follower, Terry Jones, appeared in the Daily Mail on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2011



**...ARE YOU READING NOW?**  
**I'M READING** (among other books) *The Chronicles Of The Revolution 1397-1400* edited by Chris Given-Wilson, because I have a personal interest in uncovering the murky world of 14th-century history and politics. In particular I believe King Richard II to have been a victim of medieval spin. At the moment I am trying to date two manuscripts from *Confessio Amantis*, by a contemporary of Geoffrey Chaucer's called John Gower. They are used as an indicator that Richard II was unpopular during his reign, which I don't believe. They are the only two manuscripts that could possibly be dated before Henry IV usurped Richard II, so if I can show that at least one of them dates from after the usurpation, it undermines the idea that he was unpopular.

**...WOULD YOU TAKE TO A DESERT ISLAND?**  
 The Rupert Bear Annual for 1946.

**...FIRST GAVE YOU THE READING BUG?**  
 THE Rupert Bear Annual for 1946. It was just so full of invention



Inspiration: Rupert Bear

and wonderful stories: Rupert On Coon Island, Rupert And The Blue Mountains – long before George Lucas made Indiana Jones, illustrator and storyteller Alfred Bestall had cars on rails speeding through the middle of mountains and flying across chasms on ropes. I can remember starting school and taking my Rupert Annual with me because I was so excited by it. Humour, fantasy and adventure – what more could you want?

**...LEFT YOU COLD?**  
**JOHN GOWER'S** *Confessio Amantis*. It is so dull and long-winded. Gower never knows when to stop.

■ **TERRY JONES** is one of the first authors to join *Unbound*, a website where readers choose what gets published. Watch his pitch for *Evil Machines*, a new collection of cautionary fables, read the first short story *The Truthful Phone* and pledge your support for a limited edition hardback at [www.unbound.co.uk](http://www.unbound.co.uk).

## Rupert question puzzles academia

Some of the brightest young minds of Durham University were flummoxed on University Challenge (BBC 2) on August 15<sup>th</sup> 2011.

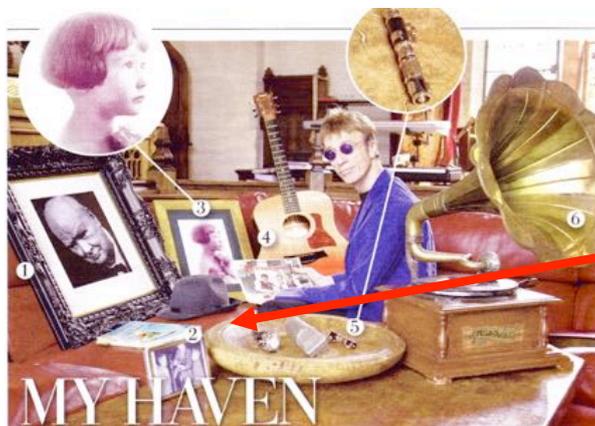
Question from Jeremy Paxman: 'From 1935 to 1965 Alfred Bestall wrote and illustrated eponymous stories of which children's character, who first appeared in the Daily Express in 1920?'

After some debate the University of Durham contestants decided to answer: 'Just William.'

Despite their lack of knowledge of this important subject, Durham scored 325 points and beat their opponents, the University of Plymouth, who scored 45 points.

Ruth Sear

## And yet another celebrity fan uncovered .....



### MY HAVEN ROBIN GIBB

*The Bee Gee invites us into the living room of the 12th-century Oxfordshire home he found by accident on a Sunday drive*

**1 HISTORY MAN** Winston Churchill is a hero of mine. He's one of the greatest men that ever lived. I've always had a romantic feeling about the past, always loved history, which is why I bought this house. I saw it and I had to have it. It was built in the 12th century and used to be a monastery. It's older than Westminster Abbey, and it's said Henry VIII visited with Anne Boleyn. It has its own chapel and there's even a resident ghost.

**2 SOUND GOES** Here we are at Manchester Opera – one of our earliest performances – in 1956. Me and Maurice are in shorts singing Lollipop. Lollipop in harmony at a kids' matinee. Little did we know someone from the Manchester Evening News was in the audience and he took this picture. When our mum Barbara saw it in the paper she said, 'What have you been up to?' We hadn't told her beforehand.

**3 HUSBAND'S WORD** I had this picture of my mum, taken in 1963 when she was about two or three. Stolen up because it's so beautiful. It's almost sexy, very artistic, with that 1920s bob hairstyle she's wearing. She's 5'11" and lives in my house in Miami, near my brother Barry. She loves the sun. She's hard as nails, tough as old boots and sharp as a tack. My father, Hugh, who gave up work to travel with us, died in 1992.

**4 HIT MAKER** My brother Barry and I used this old Newman guitar to record songs like 'Jive Talkin'' and 'Stayin' Alive'. It's our lucky instrument because we played it on so many hits. It's wonderfully crafted and gives an outstanding sound. I bought it in Memphis in 1973. I'd never part with it because it means so much to me. I've had countless guitars since – but this one played the most important part in my career.

**5 SHIP SHAPE** Dina, my wife, gave me this pen one Christmas. It's actually made from a piece of a chandelier from the Titanic. I'm fascinated by the Titanic story. I've been writing a requiem and celebration with my son, RJ GIBB, who's very talented. I've always wanted to write a classical piece, and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra will perform it next year for the 100th anniversary. It's not morbid at all.

**6 WORK OF ART** This 1920s record player, complete with the old large horn and needle, is really special to me. It signifies what my life has been about – making records. To me it's just a wonderful piece of art. Today technology has replaced art, even with cars. Body-boards don't look like they used to. I think beauty is something that's for ever – and something that's for ever has to be something good.

Spotted in the Daily Mail on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, where Robin Gibb sits in his "haven" surrounded by items that have influenced him – nestling between a picture of Winston Churchill and Robin's beloved mother is a very battered (presumably well read) copy of the 1956 Rupert Annual.

## Did you know?.....

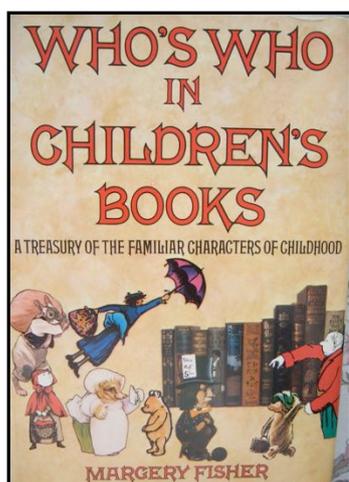
Alfred Bestall was named and one of his illustrations from Punch was shown in the programme "Glamour's Golden Age" (part 3) on BBC4 on 12 July 2011. The illustration is the one shown on page 69 of Caroline Bott's book "Alfred Bestall's Punch & Tatler drawings and paintings" and on page 41 of George Perry's "A Bear's Life" with the words "There look! That's the kind of perm I'm going to have."

Keith Pugh

## Is Rupert a pert and rather vulgar manikin?

Margery Fisher (1913-1992) was a well-known and respected authority of children's literature. She was an author, lecturer and reviewer of the subject. She wrote *Who's Who in Children's Books* which was first published in 1975 by Weidenfeld & Nicolson (the company was acquired by The Orion Publishing Group in 1992). The book is a compendium of famous characters featured in children's fiction, and they are described alphabetically; so under R is *Rupert Bear*.

In the book *Rupert Bear's* history is outlined, beginning with Mary Tourtel and ending with Alfred Bestall (this book, remember, was published in 1975 when Alfred was alive). But a Follower of Rupert might be surprised to read the following extracts written by such an eminent critic as Ms Fisher:



... The post-war, suburban Rupert has ousted the amiable little bear who had one foot in Fairyland.

Rupert enjoys a safe, cosy home life, with a comfortably rotund mother and a pipe-smoking father who encourage him to help other people and are not

more than mildly anxious when he is overdue from one of his expeditions.

Sadly, the fairy tale world has now given place to a more commonplace one. Rupert is now involved with smugglers, petty crooks and old salts with treasure maps, while the elves who appear occasionally are gauzy nonentities whose trivial tricks have no true magic in them. The change has taken much of Rupert's charm away. Now that he and his chums are involved as much with humans as with the denizens of Fairyland (with Girl Guides, a Chinese conjuror and his daughter, "Sailor Sam and his lad Rollo", among others), he has changed from seeming a child fascinated by wonderful adventures to a pert and rather vulgar manikin disguised as a bear. The Rupert stories were originally a respectably lowbrow form of fairy tale; they gained a reflected colour from tradition. Now they are one-level, one-dimension

frolics addressed to "uncritical and inattentive readers". The journey from Fairyland to suburbia has been a sad one for Rupert Bear.

(This extract from *Who's Who in Children's Books* by Margery Fisher is reproduced by kind permission of Orion Children's Books.)

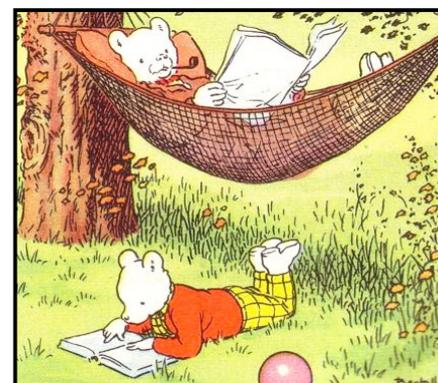
Note *Sailor Sam and his lad Rollo*.

Well, that explains why Sam hangs about Nutwood

and isn't living in a seaside town, as one would expect a sailor to do. I wonder if the gypsy Granny knows about her grandson's parentage?

Did Alfred Bestall read the above description? And are the fans of Rupert, young and old, *uncritical and inattentive readers*? I think not.

*Ruth Sear*



*A pert and vulgar manikin!  
So Rupert reads – can it be him?*

### Membership Problems

We are sorry to have to announce that our membership is falling. As well as sadly losing half a dozen Followers over the last six months to that Nutwood in the sky, we have also not had 142 renewals returned from the reminders we sent out with the last Newsletter. From the earlier days where we had 1300 members we now only have 800.

This means our income is being reduced and this will impact on the size of future Nutwood Newsletters as well as putting future Supplements at risk.

You can do your bit for the Society by recruiting a new member and what better way than to give a membership to a friend or relative as a Christmas present. We will also add a free scarf to the gift subscription plus give you a present for organising it. Enclosed is a form for you to use, which details the offer.

So please help us to keep our numbers up by recruiting a new member so that we can maintain the level of service we want to give you.

*Tony Griffin (Membership Secretary)*

# Nutwood Postbox

Regarding recent correspondence concerning the Rupert Hot Air Balloon, in July 1997 I was at the Huddersfield Balloon Rally, where about 15 balloons were on display, tethered but inflated. Unfortunately no Rupert.



**John by the Rupert balloon trailer**

On one of the stalls, I met Marc Pacan of the "Flying Pictures" who illustrates post cards with a balloon. He told me the Rupert balloon had been destroyed by fire, either due to the burner or had happened in storage. Never-the-less a sad end.

The Rupert balloon was one of the largest made; produced by Camerons of Bristol for Express Newspapers and its registered number was G-STML. The rally did provide me with something of Rupert though. In the car park one of the balloon trailers had a Rupert scene on one side, painted by Sue Maud from Malton. (are you a Follower, Sue?)

I don't know how many Rupert balloon post cards were published, I have only been able to find 4. Regarding the ones painted by Marc Pacan, I'm sure he said that he had not produced many. I have five.

**John Rothwell**

Thank you for the Summer *Nutwood Newsletter* and the much-appreciated bonus of the Supplement.

In the *Newsletter*, we occasionally have our attention drawn to whoops! slip of the pen/brush illustrations in the Annuals. Here are two more. I'm sure that fellow Followers have already spotted them, but just for the record.....

In *Rupert and Ninky* (1949 Annual), Bill Badger has made a remarkably rapid change of some very sartorially elegant pyjamas. In frame 16 he is wearing a rather fetching combination of light orange with light blue collar and cuffs. In the following frame the

colours have been reversed. Either a rapid change or the colours have run in the wash.

In *Rupert and Santa Paws* (1983 Annual), although it is "just a few days before Christmas", the weather is very mild for the time of year in Nutwood, with the grass still green and not a flake of snow. By frame 6, however, there has been a heavy fall of snow, but by frame 12 the thaw has come, and there is not even a trace of slush. Remarkably changeable weather for the time of year!

**Geoffrey (Gower-Kerslake)**

I have recently been reading Phil Toze's excellent new book *Rupert Who's Who*, 2011. I came across a previously unknown character Wizard Gandolphus who appeared in *Rupert and the Three Robbers* in 1927. Another much more well-known wizard with a very similar name, Gandalf, appeared in the *Hobbit*, ten years later in 1937, and subsequently in the *Lord of the Rings* 1954-55.

An intriguing thought occurs ..... was J R R Tolkein, Professor of English at Oxford University, influenced by *Rupert and Mary Tourtel*?

**Aubrey W Stevenson**

I am writing to inform you and my fellow Followers of a couple of "Rupert" gardens I have visited lately, which wistfully reminded me of the



**The Rupert gardens at Marqueyssac**

endpapers that fascinated me as a child, perhaps tracing a pathway with a finger as I imagined myself in the landscape with Rupert and friends, perhaps able to join in with their adventures.

The first is the Jardin de Marqueyssac overlooking the Dordogne in France.

Its box gardens, curious sculptures and "rock heads" remind me of a Rupert style environment.

Closer to home, Biddulph Grange garden in Staffordshire was even more inspiring, as it has twists and turns, passages and tunnels. It is run by the National Trust and has been restored to its former Victorian glory.

You find yourself in Italy, Scotland, Egypt and China all in 15 acres!

I could imagine Rupert and his chums having a great adventure there – it even has upside down trees! Have they read the *Queer Path*?

Both worth a visit

**Maxine Harris**

I have just finished reading the 2011 Rupert Annual which I enjoyed, although I could not help but echo the lines from the Peggy Lee song, 'is that all there is?'

With only 4 stories in the Annual, even my local book-seller commented on the slender book size and asked me if it was still worth purchasing. I must admit that while I answered 'yes', it was not quite as adamant as usual.

The last time we were 'treated' to 5 stories was back in in 2007. In the current Annual, there were 2 great Alfred Bestall stories, a very good one from John Harrold and 1 by Stuart Trotter. While Stuart's story was 'new', his illustrations were in his usual minimalistic style – hardly any / very little facial expressions on any of the characters and poor background detail / definition.

One cannot help but wonder if Egmont are really interested in printing the Annual – and surely there is another artist in the John Harrold style out there, who could give a more artistic and deserving flourish to Rupert, his family and friends.

**Susan Heitman**

In a previous *Nutwood Newsletter* there was speculation about where Nutwood might be located. Followers may be interested to know that there is another Nutwood. Unfortunately this is not a village with a common but is just a wood. It is situated 4 miles west of Bishop's Castle in Shropshire and the

Offa's Dyke long distance footpath runs through it.

Intrepid explorers are more likely to stumble across the Pine Ogre than Rupert and his chums. It seems, however, that they may be somewhere in the vicinity. There is a "Badger Moor" and 2 miles to the south of Nut Wood, just off the Offa's Duke path is "Golly Coppice"

This Nut wood is not accessible by road. The nearest road is the Kerry Ridgeway out of Bishop's Castle, single-track, (an old drovers' way) with no proper parking places. The wood is on the north side of a steep valley of the River Unk, down the Offa's Duke path from the Ridgeway.



#### Nutwood - but not the common

*So off to Nutwood we must go,  
But not by car; what a blow!  
To find the chums we must try,  
It's quite a task, let's hope it's dry!*

**Keith Pugh**

Thank you to the Nutwood Newsletter for the excellent re-prints of *Rupert and the Imps' Plot*; *the Puppet Cave*; *the Picnic Trick* and *the Ramblers*.

When these stories first appeared in the Daily Express, I was between the ages of seven and ten, so I found these stories to be so real and exciting! I still have all these stories, which I had cut out from the Daily Express, but it is really nice to receive them in booklet form. The written stories of Freddie Chaplain were of the highest quality and coupled with such detailed drawings by Jennifer Kisler and Alex Cubie, I found them truly captivating! As a young child I also loved the beautiful Rupert stories of Alfred Bestall, but looking back over fifty

years, the Freddie Chaplain stories will always be my personal favourites. We are so lucky to have had so many gifted writers and artists in the life of Rupert, giving the young reader like myself so much pleasure over the years.

**Rod Prescott**

As the post box is opened, a daily ritual here in rural France, what joy "it's the Rupert Newsletter, what delights are in store?"

Being left-handed I always open everything from the back! First page (for me) Nutwood Postbox, and letters of criticism about someone's hard work. Yes in an ideal world all is perfect, but unfortunately it is not and nothing or nobody is. Next, news of the North West Group; very interesting to hear what goes on in other groups. We used to have some great meetings with Doreen James when we lived in England. Great memories, thank you Doreen for all the hard work you put into the meetings.

Next article "This book belongs to .....?" and I haven't got any further! If Ruth Sear was fortunate enough to receive Rupert Annuals as presents are they in perfect condition, unnamed, unclipped, untouched?

Ms Sear did not have to buy the books she has, in the condition they are in, if she is so disgusted by them.

I hope Rupert Annuals are still being given as presents and that people are still writing endearing messages in them. They are the innocent ones who don't give gifts to be stored in the hopes of future monetary gain.

**Angela Bennett**

In NN79, Ruth Sear laments the "desecration" of second hand Rupert Annuals. Why, she asks, do people dedicate them to members of their family or friends, and actually use the colouring pages to colour?

One of the developing areas of study of the History of the Book is that of annotations to books, on the realization that annotations can provide informative insights into how books were used and the thoughts of their

owner/s. Why should Rupert Annuals be any different? A clean copy is the same as the thousands of other copies from the same printing. It is gleaming and glossy, but it is impersonal, it is anonymous, it is but one among many. But annotate that copy in any way, and it becomes unique; there is no other copy like it.

For example, the first second hand Annual on Ruth's list: 1943. The year alone tells us of conflict and suffering, of fear, anxiety and sorrow. But because of the dedication more thoughts arise. We wonder about James and Sheila and Emma. What sort of Christmas was it for them in 1943? Was their father or husband or brother abroad serving with the forces? Amongst the festivities of Christmas, what were the thoughts of the mother, the wife, the sister? We do not know. But we are privileged to share in that act of giving, that act of love, from Sheila and Emma to James - that hope that the Rupert Annual might give some joy, some escape into a happy world far from the world of 1943. That Annual, "desecrated", is like no other Annual of that year. It has been transformed from the clean copy fresh off the press by a simple dedication into something intimate and personal.

Do the dedications in the Annuals not tell us something of the care and thoughtfulness of the giver and of the love for the person to whom it was given? Do the "desecrated" colouring pages not tell us something of the joy felt by the possessor of the Annual? Do not all the dedications and colouring and scribbling make Nutwood come to life? Isn't that what Nutwood is all about?

**Geoffrey Gower-Kerslake**

#### **Editorial comment:-**

*We think Angela and Geoffrey have perhaps rather over reacted to what we felt was a light-hearted, tongue-in-cheek comment on the additions made to books by well meaning relatives and enthusiastic children.*

*What is your view?*

**Send your letters and pictures to  
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