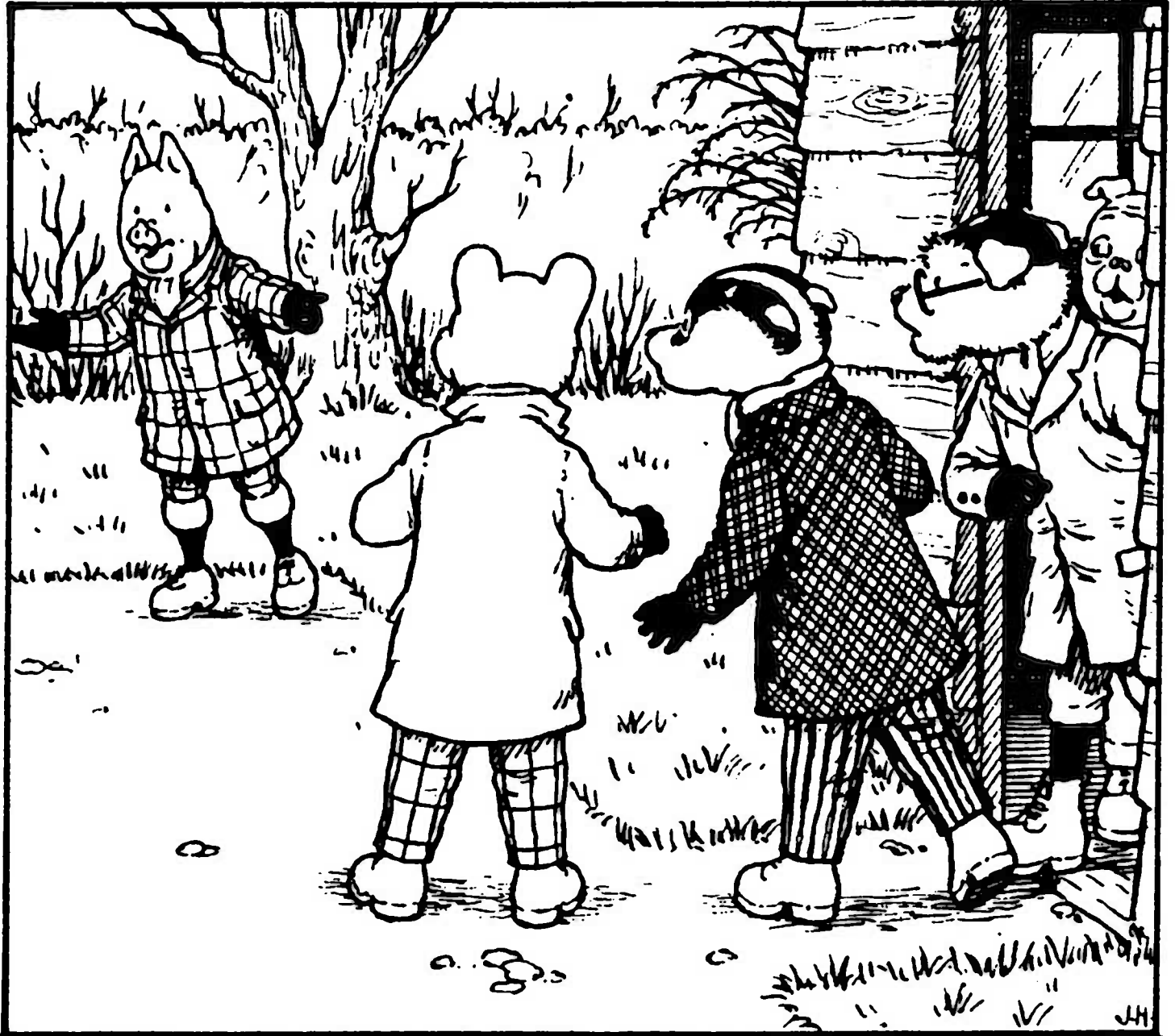


NUTWOOD SPECIAL ISSUE

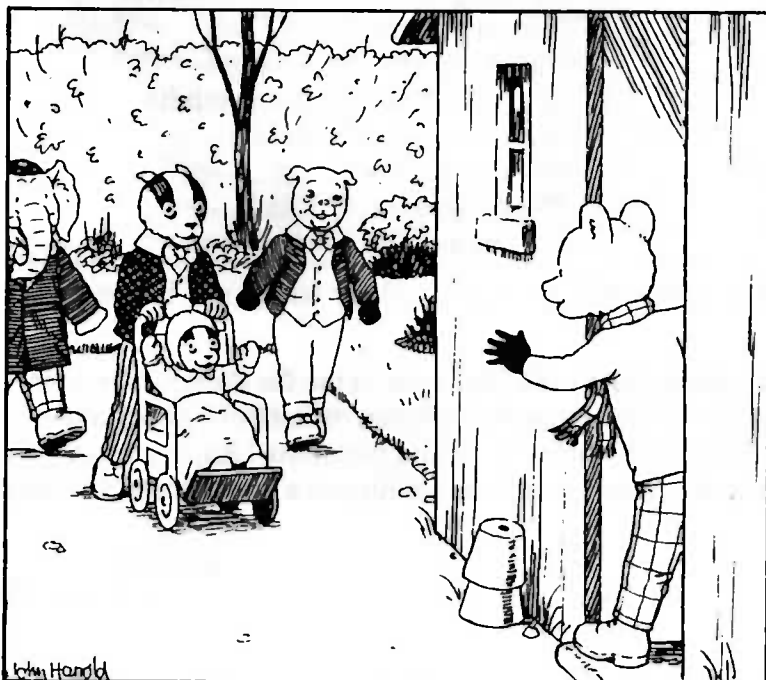
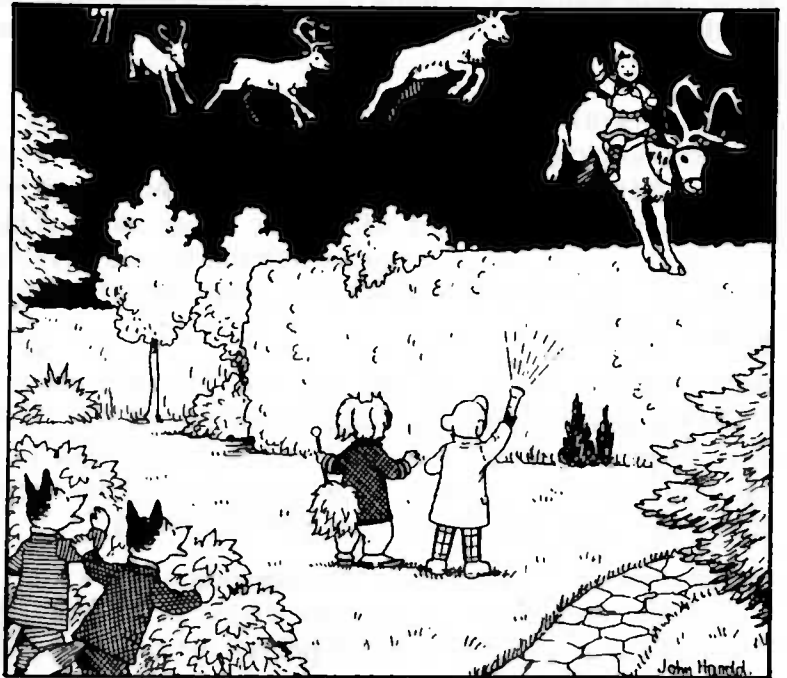


The Followers of Rupert in Conversation
with
JOHN HARROLD



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Followers
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**An edited transcript
of the meeting held
on September 17th
1988 at Brighton.**

THE JOHN HARROLD TRANSCRIPT

Introduction

This is a slightly shortened and edited version of the transcript Lionel Bidwell made of the question and answer session which John Harrold gave to the Followers at their Annual on September 17th 1988 at Brighton. In recent weeks, Ian Robinson, the new Rupert editor at the Express has read it through and made very many useful suggestions, for which we are most grateful. In addition, John has suggested a number of illustrations to go with the text. Again we are most grateful, as we are to Express Newspapers, for being generally helpful. In the Transcript, readers will find many ideas of great interest. One which made me think about the status of Rupert illustration, was when John said that he was not a "cartoonist".

Disregarding the older meaning of the word "cartoon" as indicating a preliminary design for a later work of art, it seems to me that what we generally mean by that word, is a specific piece of artwork which has three constituent elements: (1) it is frequently very economical in line drawing, (2) it often uses caricature or exaggeration in its portrayal of individuals, and (3) it appeals to our sense of the ridiculous, by savagely mocking or satirising, making fun of, or just gently laughing at the way certain human beings are or act. Political cartoonists consistently produce work which tries to have all of these elements very obviously present.

Rupert artwork does not fit easily into this category of "cartoon". It is finished and complete, being far from economical in line drawing. The various characters in Nutwood are not caricatures. Indeed, most are kindly and pleasant, and look as if they are. And though Rupert stories do have humour in them, it is not of the savage or mocking sort. Allied with this question of humour, I would argue that the "comic" situation is not important in Rupert stories, and though we have had various publications called Rupert "comics", excepting that the adventures in them may have the strip layout of such productions, that is about all they do have in common.

So what is Rupert art? I suggest that it is a form of book illustration, and that the work of John Harrold and his predecessors should be compared more to the finished artwork of Walter Crane, Arthur Rackham or E. H. Shepard. After all, it is chiefly remembered from the books, and mainly from the Annuals. One of the benefits of the more recent, larger sized Annual has been that the illustrations have been that bit bigger, and in fact nearer the size of the original artwork.

As a matter of record, John's first illustrations for a Rupert adventure were for "Rupert and the Worried Elves" which ran in the Daily Express from 14th October to 24th November 1976. After that he illustrated 16 of the 40 new stories which appeared in the next 8 years. These were:

Rupert and the Tattered Clothes	Rupert and the Inventor's Rocket
Rupert and the Spelling Bee	Rupert and the Jester Crab
Rupert and the Winter Tree	Rupert and the Pirate Boys
Rupert and the Dragon Mystery	Rupert and the Heavy Feathers
Rupert and the Worg Seeds	Rupert and the Lotus Isle
Rupert and the Mulp Gulper	Rupert and Rika
Rupert and Hamish	Rupert and the Windmill
Rupert and the River Pirates	Rupert and Old Tom's Trove

To these, should be added "Rupert and the Power Flower", a story in colour which ran in the Sunday Express Supplement in Autumn 1981.

However, from the adventure which started on 12th August 1985 (Rupert and the Go Cart), to the present time (Summer 1990) all original stories, whether written by James Henderson or Ian Robinson, have been illustrated by John Harrold. In all this makes a total of 50 stories up to and including "Rupert and the Sea Urchin". In the year which sees Rupert's 70th birthday, it seems fitting that Rupert's most recent illustrator should also have completed his 50th story.

Raymond Cassidy
Summer 1990

WENDY PRESTON: What were you doing before you were involved with Rupert?

JOHN HARROLD: I was working as a teacher and one of my friends at Art School who worked for Collins had the problem of finding someone to do the Rupert Cookery Book. They needed an artist who could emulate Bestall's style and also do diagrammatic drawings such as breaking eggs and stirring things. They actually tried several artists before they approached me. They knew I could draw academically and they asked me to try it. After that Freddy Chaplin asked if I would be interested in doing some work for the Express and that's how it started.

BRIAN LISHER: How old were you when you started drawing Rupert?

JOHN HARROLD: I have been doing Rupert for 14 years and I am 40 now.

KATIE HULME: Did you have any interest in Rupert before you started?

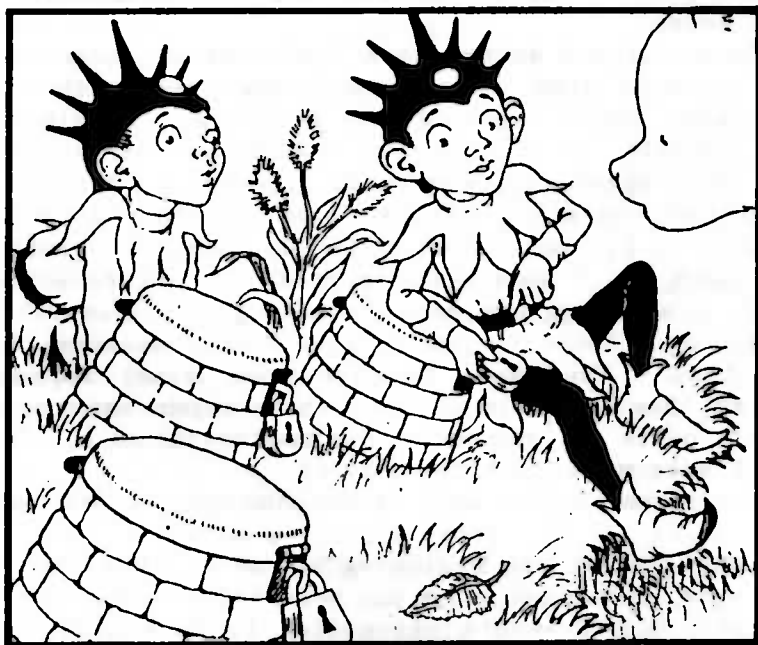
JOHN HARROLD: Not really, no. I had some annuals at home which I hadn't brought out very often. In fact I had been put off Rupert as a child through reading a Mary Tourtel annual. I think Tourtel's work is superb but it is quite Gothic. It manages to capture the elements of Gothic horror extremely well and I was frightened by the annual and didn't look at Rupert very much after that.

MARY CADOGAN: What work have you done for other publishers?

JOHN HARROLD: I do a lot of work for educational publishers: a lot of fairy stories, jokey stuff. I have been asked to do Posters for work for design companies and also drawing cars for car production companies, things that aren't terribly interesting. Some things are enjoyable.

MARY CADOGAN: You mentioned fairy stories, that sounds very interesting.

JOHN HARROLD: I enjoy fairy stories. I find I don't use all my drawing ability with Rupert. I work only up to a certain point. I can't use all my anatomy and I find the other work I do manages to satisfy that need. But I enjoy doing fairy stories most of all, things which involve fantasy or humour, the creation of an atmosphere.



The first story I did for the Express was 'Rupert and the Autumn Elves'

JOHN HARRISON: I am interested in your comment about fantasy as I always thought the first endpapers were almost pure fantasy. The little elf looking at the castle in the mist. I thought Roger Deen must have modelled himself on Bestall all those years ago. How much control do you have over the content, can you bring some fantasy into the Rupert Stories?

JOHN HARROLD: I do visually. Are you implying there is a lack of fantasy in Rupert stories?

JOHN HARRISON: No. You implied you felt there was a lack of challenge in the fantasy side in your art.

JOHN HARROLD: No, not on the fantasy side, but on the anatomy side. I have spent a lot of time learning how to draw human beings, but I can't use all this knowledge in Rupert, otherwise it becomes too realistic and maybe too frightening. I don't think there is much of everyday life in Rupert,

it is a special world. There has to be a certain softness, I think, in the drawing of the characters. More recently I have pulled it over to my stylised type of drawing, because it feels more comfortable that way.

IAN CRESSWELL: You described how you arrived at the Daily Express. The time you described corresponds I think to when Alex Cubie was illustrating Rupert, is that correct?

JOHN HARROLD: Yes, I believe Cubie was still working at that time. I don't know very much about that period, because I didn't do very much work at the beginning. It took a very long time and I worked from home with Freddy Chaplin and shortly after having started work for the Express I moved abroad which didn't facilitate things very much. I have never really met Alex Cubie or any of the other artists. I have never met Doris Campbell.

IAN CRESSWELL: There was a time when you were working in conjunction with other artists. Was the work swapped about?

JOHN HARROLD: No, no. The Editor would give different stories to different artists. At the beginning I was doing one or two stories a year and a couple of drawings for the annuals.

STRUAN WIGHT: Which Rupert character do you find most difficult to draw?

JOHN HARROLD: I think probably Pong Ping. I enjoy drawing the characters who have a lot of black and white in them like Bill Badger, who have a lot of texture, because that makes them an interesting abstract element on the page. Pong Ping is tricky because his proportions are difficult. There is a lot of fur flying around, the tail and the ears. I find the ears difficult to manage, so as to draw the ears without passing in front of his face. Also it's a problem drawing his jacket because it has a complicated little pattern which has to be repeated in each frame you see from the front or side on. At the beginning I drew a thin line round the pattern and then inked it in. Now I think it is much quicker just to black in the body and then paint the pattern on top with a brush and white paint. He's quite tricky. I don't think any of the others create problems.

MIKE GORDON: Do you have a favourite character?

JOHN HARROLD: I don't know really. I have enjoyed doing James Henderson's characters because Jim's mind works along the same lines as mine. He enjoys humour very much. I enjoyed working on the Knight and the Dragon which appeared two years ago, I enjoyed working on Terry who is in this year's annual. I don't think I have any particular favourites really. If I have favourites it's because they give me pleasure to draw and not so much because I am attracted to the character itself. If you are drawing characters made up simply of lines it can be a bit monotonous. If you have a character with a lot of black and white in it, such as I have said already the Professor's assistant, who has texture on his jacket, black leggings and a floral pattern as well, it's enjoyable and it also gives you a strong element to put in your frame, because the frames have to have a bit of punch to them. They have to have some visual impact, because the characters that you put inside them are made of very thick lines and these tend to dominate Rupert. Rupert isn't quite so dramatic in tone. I enjoy the characters with black and white which will make up a good composition.

LIONEL BIDWELL: Do you feel the style in which you have drawn the characters has changed during the last fourteen years?

JOHN HARROLD: Oh yes. The drawings which I did at the beginning are utter rubbish. I read something in the Nutwood magazine a year or two ago when you were talking about how I had attempted to emulate Bestall's style, but I wasn't attempting to do that. The first story which I did for the Express was 'Rupert and the Autumn Elves' which appeared in last year's annual. The drawings took a long time to do because it was my first story. It was originally called 'The Mystery'. Most of the drawings are very concentrated but there are some which have a certain lyricism. After that I was encouraged, because I think it was regarded as necessary to emulate the late Bestall's style, which is fairly simple line work, I was asked to thicken up my line work, to

break up lines and to be perfectly honest I hated doing that. I was a bit sickened by this situation. I was asked to do work which I could not identify with and I had no pleasure in it, and the work is bad. The reason why the work has changed is because James Henderon has over the years encouraged me to evolve my own style, at least impose my own style into Rupert. Rupert cannot be drawn from the outside or drawn to a formula. Maybe Mickey Mouse can but with Rupert you have to be able to believe in it, which I do, although before having started work on Rupert I had very little interest in it. I find it easy to become involved in most subjects, even things I do for other companies. If the stories are interesting then whilst I am drawing that I believe entirely in the story. These people are real and when I am doing the work these characters are all real. So James encouraged me to put as much as I could into Rupert. That is why the style has evolved. I feel happy now because I am using my own method of drawing but I think retaining the essence of Rupert.

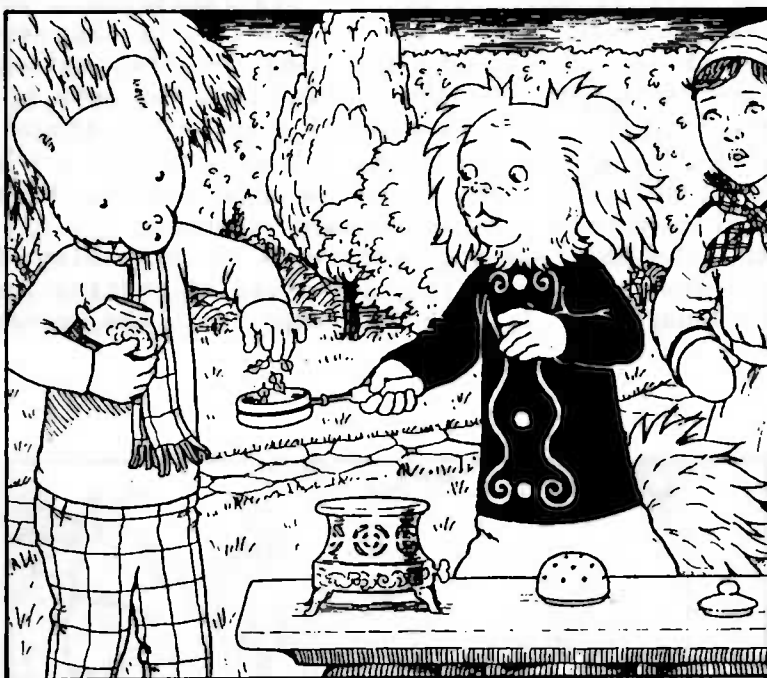
RICHARD BALL: You spoke just now of your enjoyment and pleasure you get from drawing the characters. Who in your eyes is the audience you are drawing the stories for?

JOHN HARROLD: I don't draw to please the readers, I draw to satisfy myself artistically. That's not meant to be insulting. I am not drawing to please someone. If I am given a story line by Jim the important thing is to do justice to the story line. If I have to illustrate something then I can't shy away from it. Sometimes with a difficult subject matter you can do a drawing which actually avoids it. Do something simple. The classic example here; you have probably seen it in battle scenes, to avoid drawing a crowd scene, you draw someone in the foreground screaming and this occupies most of the space which is actually avoiding drawing the battle scene. The story has to be true, I have to be able to believe in the thing in the first place and more important it has to please me artistically.

RICHARD BALL: So the significance between, on the one hand it might be a children's cartoon, and on the other hand the knowledge that there is a group of people like ourselves, doesn't influence anything in any way.

JOHN HARROLD: No. The most important thing is that I do as high a standard of artwork as possible (because I am not a cartoonist, I am an artist). When I start on a drawing I know when that thing should be finished, I know what has to be done to take it to a perfect state. For me Rupert is high quality artwork and if I do a drawing which I think is poor it makes me extremely unhappy, even if other people see it and think it is lovely.

PHIL TOZE: Does the fact that the pictures will eventually be coloured affect the way you draw in black and white?



"Pong Ping is tricky"

JOHN HARROLD: Yes it does. I know that Doris likes to have some sort of guide to colouring in. She doesn't like having a very minimal picture. She likes firm shapes to work to and colour in model shapes. When I do a drawing, I put in a fair bit of modelling as a guide for the colouring artist. I also put in a lot of modelling and texture for the newspaper because it gives the drawing a bit of punch on the page. If I draw a wall or a corner of a room, and if I draw a line for the corner and two for the floor it would look pretty bland for the newspaper. If I put a bit of texture in that corner or a bit of texture, a shadow in someone's arm or face, it will add a bit of punch to the drawing in the newspaper. I try to give a fairly firm visual guide for the colouring artist.

MIKE GORDON: Does James Henderson dictate the scenes you draw or do you read the story and decide yourself?

JOHN HARROLD: Hardly. Sometimes if Jim has a strong idea he will put visual notes but it is simply a guide. He doesn't dictate. Sometimes the text for an episode will be pretty minimal. Jim and I understand each other, he knows that I will do what he wants and will be able to realise his fantasies. Sometimes Jim will write a joke into the text, a joke which will not appear in the newspaper. The fact that he has written something amusing sets the mood for that episode and I can translate that humour into the drawing itself. It is important for both of us that the story is easy to understand and therefore he allows me to move things around and make a suggestion to him that maybe if we change the sequence, or move certain actions from one episode of one frame to the next that will facilitate the explanation, then he is quite happy for that. It is a very good working relationship we have.

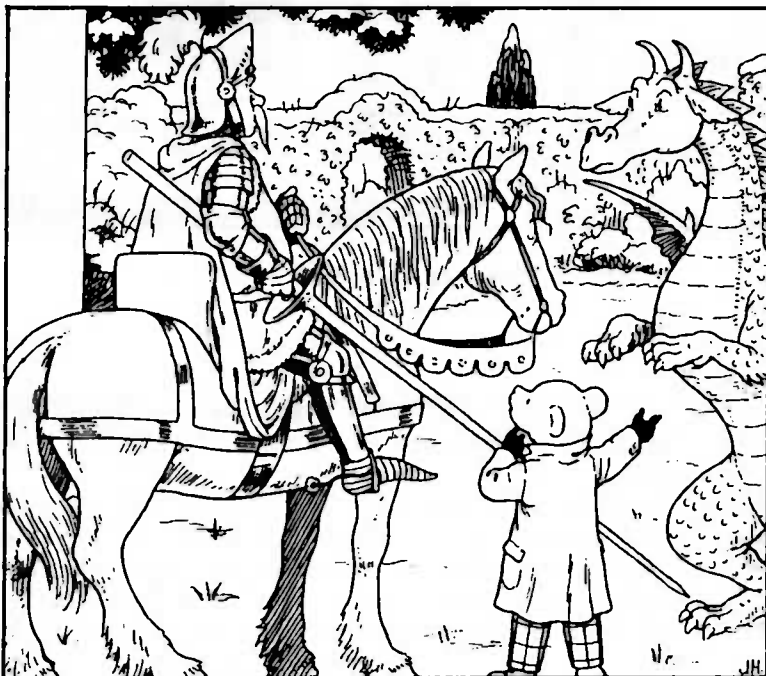
MIKE GORDON: Are you happy with the situation where someone else writes the stories and you draw them or do you have ideas of writing your own stories?

JOHN HARROLD: I think I am happy with the present situation. I have had fantasies in

the past about writing stories but I don't honestly think I have that talent. I am not a writer, I don't have any writing ability and Jim is a very good writer as you know. I really think I am an artist who needs some sort of guidelines, needs to illustrate something. I don't think I can originate a story. I have tried to think of story lines and come up with the most banal results. I think Jim's stories have a fantastic sparkle to them. They are very humorous and have a very good structure. I don't think I could ever create something like that. I would like to be able to do so, but I don't have the ability.

KIM MEUSS: Do you decide the themes for the endpapers?

JOHN HARROLD: Generally yes. Sometimes Jim will suggest something if he feels strongly about it. Most of the time I make up the endpaper subject matter but then it is not a dramatic structure, it is not one more story



"I enjoyed working at the Knight and the Dragon"

I can invent within a frame, within the space of the endpapers itself. I usually do that, because they are difficult to dictate. The first annual I did that horrible orange cover, the content had been dictated in detail to me by the previous editor and also the endpaper. I was actually told where to put everything, I suppose they had to have that control at the beginning.

SARA SHRIMPTON: Do you look back at previous drawings of Nutwood for the topography?

JOHN HARROLD: I did. I think I know the area fairly well now. It used to be a problem because one could look for a particular building, you could look through the old annuals and find an example of that building, a gate, a road or something, copy it and then discover in another annual a totally different version of that. I find that problematic. Some of Bestall's illustrations of Nutwood are actually turned round. Generally Rupert's cottage is in front of the common and the centre of the village is down the left hand side and one time Bestall put it to the right. When I am drawing a particular object I pick the most pleasing version of it I come across unless I devise one myself and simply use that again and again. I can understand why Bestall changed interiors from one story to the next. In one story you can devise a certain layout of a room which will suit that story perfectly and give you a pleasing picture and reflect the action and movement well. But move to another story and you are using the same setting, you find that with that setup you find you are cramming things in because they were like that in some other story, but you end up with a bad picture, and I think it is better sometimes to alter things slightly in order to create a pleasing drawing. I use a regular layout, I have an idea in my head of Nutwood. I use the positioning in Bestall's endpaper with the helicopter for the layout of Nutwood and the positioning of Pong Ping's house, the common, etc, and the village. What would be awkward would be to start drawing say the view from a certain angle from someone's house, in one of Bestall's drawings there is maybe a certain arrangement of hills. I think it would be foolish to start copying that the next time, to draw that same thing again and again. Maybe the position of a certain house you would recognise, but when it gets down to the finer detail I don't think it is worth the bother. It takes a lot of time researching it and I don't think it is worth the bother in the long run. I think it is better to make a good drawing than to be absolutely exact.

ANDREW DAVIES: You talked about your early work. The next big step must have been in 1979 when you first did the cover and the endpapers. Did you find that a big step and how long does it take to draw the cover and the endpapers?

JOHN HARROLD: I don't think it was really a big step because I did that not all that long after I started Rupert. It's not such a big step, I don't think I have made the step yet. For me Rupert is serious artwork which I should



"The Professor's assistant, who has texture on his jacket"

take to as high a level as possible, as high a standard as possible. I draw for children and I draw for artists, I hope my work can be appreciated by everyone. I think I can achieve a lot in my black and white work, I have done black and white drawings which I am proud of, which I can defend. My colour work I am not so happy about. At the beginning I was trying to produce something which was hopefully commercial, something which would be bright on the shelves. But using a watercolour technique the colours are pretty dreadful. I started using Gouache paint thinned down and used as watercolour to try and get a bright colour.

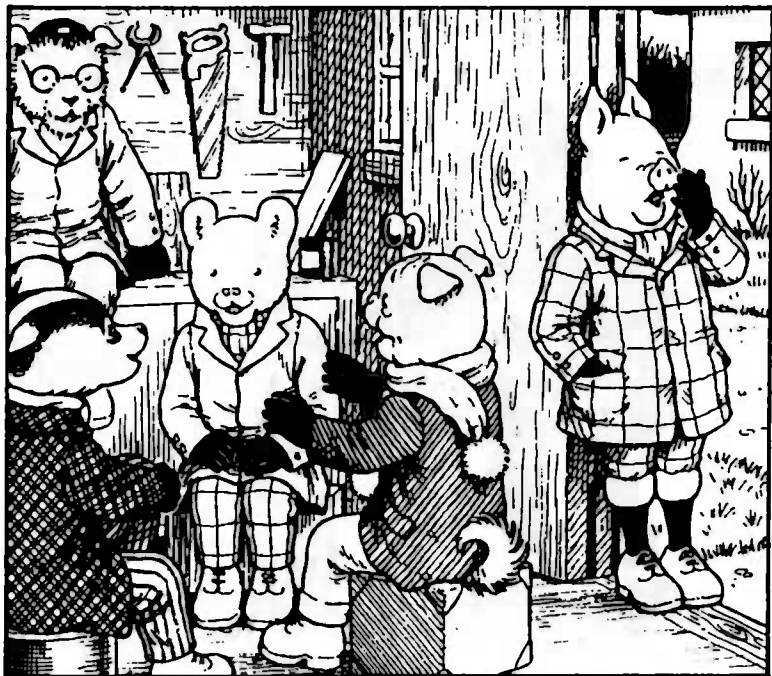
I wasn't really working in my own style and I am not in the habit of using bright colour anyhow. I was using a language with which I was unfamiliar. My natural drawing style is similar, but not in quality, to Rackham's line work with very little colour work, very dull colour work. To use bright colour was strange for me and it has taken a long time to get to this stage. At this moment there is not a lot I have done, a couple of paintings, one or two things which aren't bad. Some of the endpapers and covers I've done have potential, have elements which I think aren't too bad, but they haven't been taken to a finished state. There are weak elements in them, which as far as I'm concerned disqualify them as paintings. Therefore I think that step still has to be taken, in a way I think I still have to get to the stage when I can produce endpapers and covers which are hopefully reasonably perfect and with which I am happy. Sometimes I have done an endpaper in four days. I think the one which most people have asked me to sign, the snow scene from last year, took less than a week to do, I think it took five days and maybe benefiting from being done in a short space of time. A cover would take several weeks say. To sketch the thing out first of all, assemble all the characters, select which characters I want to put into the cover, work out some sort of story line if possible. It is difficult in a cover to devise a story line. It is difficult to avoid having all the covers resembling each other.

ANDREW DAVIES: Have you got a favourite cover?

JOHN HARROLD: No. I don't think any qualify as good paintings. This year's original painting is not terribly well reproduced. I did it on a very large scale. The Express gave me permission to work on a small size but a lot of the detail was lost in the process of reduction and printing. I think last year's painting wasn't too bad. The one the previous year had good bits in it and rotten bits which hadn't been taken to a good finished state.

LIONEL BIDWELL: Do you take into account what is going to appear on the spine?

JOHN HARROLD: Yes. This year's spine came out slightly off centre. Once the painting is done there is not much I can do. The figures which are slightly going off the spine were in the original painting exactly on the spine. The image wasn't reduced as far as it should have been, it should have been taken down a bit further. The



" it is of Rupert and his friends sitting in Bingo's hut"

Professor's head and shoulders should have been contained within the back page, you can see only part of his head.

IAN CRESSWELL: You made an earlier reference to material from which you conducted some research. What sort of material is this and who has made it available to you? Has it come through the Express for example?

JOHN HARROLD: I had Annuals to go from and Fred Chaplin sent me some late Bestall drawings printed on film. It wasn't his best work, it was typical of his late style. I was surprised by the thickness of the line, and I was surprised at being asked to copy that style. I am not criticising them for doing that, it is only normal that they should work to try to continue the style. When you dictate to an artist to thicken up his lines, to break his lines, etc, it is not the best way to produce good work.

IAN CRESSWELL: Cubie's style has been criticised because he drew with broken lines, and I was wondering if you were following on from Cubie in that sense.

JOHN HARROLD: I don't know. I don't receive much in the way of information. I was simply given these Bestall things to work from. When I was doing a story at the beginning, it was a very long process, there is too much information that you are dealing with in Rupert. Now I simply wait for the finished artwork, I have the frames already drawn out, a bit larger than they appear in the annual. I drew the thing out in pencil and then ink in or else do some pencilwork then ink in and then more pencilwork and ink in etc. In the early stages I had to do sketches which I detest doing. I had to work out the entire storyline using frames the same size as they appear in the paper, draw these out in pencil. Freddy Chaplin would give me a script, send back references which he had cut annuals to work from showing where I had made mistakes. Then I would do the finished pencilwork, send them back for criticism again and receive more references. The references he sent back were Bestall's drawings, just little snips, heads and full length figures cut out of annuals.

ROGER COOMBS: Does the Express allow you to have any of your work back and if not, are they storing it better than they did Bestall's?

JOHN HARROLD: I have no idea how they stored Bestall's. I don't know anything about that. All my stuff is stored in James Henderson's office in a cabinet. Everything is arranged in years and wrapped up in brown paper for easy reference. When Jim wants to select stories for an annual he has easy access to them. The paintings have all been framed, after the covers and endpapers are done they are framed. In fact I have some in my office in the Express. Recently they were filming in the office, filming James having a conversation with me for the television film and they put some of the paintings on the wall behind. From two years ago, there's the one of the elves, the dragon endpaper, the one of Rupert with the tadpoles and the 50th anniversary cover. These are framed, glazed and they are kept wrapped up in cardboard boxes. They go out on exhibitions as you know, the Express at the moment are going to Canterbury for an exhibition which opens in October and last year's endpaper will be there, the snow scene, that is being framed at the moment. They take good care of the stuff. I don't get the stuff back. No, I have been paid for the work. I don't want it back anyhow.

DAVID BALL: What about the rough sketches and preliminary drawings that you must have to do. Do you keep those or are they thrown away?

JOHN HARROLD: I don't really do rough sketches. I do sketches for only two things a year, the cover and endpaper, that's all. I don't do sketches for anything else, I go straight to the finished artwork. For the endpaper, I usually work on something extremely crude, which has no visual interest whatsoever, a simple ballpoint drawing. The cover I do in more detail, because the directors of the Express like to see what they are getting for their money, to make sure the thing is going to have some sort of commercial value. Preferably I do a same size mock up of the annual, the back page roughed out in a very crude fashion and the front cover done in a fair amount of detail. I throw it all out.

MIKE GORDON: How long does it take you to do the daily frames?

JOHN HARROLD: In my contract I am asked to do six episodes per week, that is twelve drawings per week. It really depends on the subject matter. I don't limit myself to a certain amount of time for each frame otherwise you would end up with frames which might have too much detail. Some of Jim's stories have fourteen characters. In this year's annual there is a story of Rupert on an Island and I think in some of those frames there are fourteen characters. There is a herd of unicorns, Rupert, the Sorcerer and his henchman. To explain what is happening some of these frames do take a very long time. It is not worth rushing it and ending up with a confused composition. Sometimes I can do a frame in twenty minutes, if it is a very simple frame. Sometimes it can take much longer. It depends if I get stuck on a frame. In this year's annual the first frame of 'Rupert and Podgy's Christmas', it is Rupert and his friends inside Bingo's hut, took me four days because I was constantly interrupted at home. An average time would be two to three hours, two hours if it is a fairly simple composition.

Something I omitted to say earlier. When I was asked if I draw for an audience, I said I don't, I draw for myself. But in one way I do draw for children. Jim and I both agree that the stories should be understood by children who maybe cannot yet read. I think that it is one of the most important things, I do draw in a way for children in terms of explaining what is happening in the story. I work on the idea that perhaps when a child receives an annual the story will be read through to him once by his parents or guardians. After that the child will want to read the story on his or her own and the story should be easy enough for the child to understand without having to rely on the text to explain what is happening. There are times obviously when the text is necessary. You can't explain everything. I try to use as much movement in the characters as possible, to make the story perfectly clear. A child who is too young to read or has difficulty in reading should hopefully be able to understand the story simply by following the drawings. The drawings should carry the weight of the story.

ROBERT CHAPMAN: Is that the reason why stories are now only thirty or so episodes long instead of fifty?

JOHN HARROLD: I think Jim Henderson has found that long stories can create problems for bedtime reading. If the story is extremely long one may have to stop a third or half way through. I think parents like to have stories of a workable length as a bedtime story. Also I don't think Jim likes a story which meanders too much, which has unnecessary detail in it. He structures his stories very very well.

PATRICK WALLACE: Can you tell us what you are currently working on?

JOHN HARROLD: It is a story for the Daily, the title hasn't been firmly selected. It's a story of Jim's involving the Emperor of the Far East who appeared in the Dragon Race years ago. Rupert and the Conjuror and Tigerlily and Pong Ping end up in his clutches. The conjuror is asked to resolve the mystery of an island which appears and disappears. Also at the moment we are working on ideas for the next annual, Jim has some stories selected and we are to discuss which stories would suit an L-shaped half title, which may be a half page because I think the patterns are becoming a tiny bit monotonous with these L-shaped half titles. They suit some stories and not others.

RAYMOND CASSIDY: I wonder if you can advise us as to how we can get the Daily Express to make the drawing a bit bigger. There has been a terrific shrinkage since 1920.

JOHN HARROLD: It is nothing to do with us. It is a decision which is made by other people at the Express. I think what is more important is that we have achieved a reasonable standard of reproduction recently. I have been putting more detail into my drawings. Even a very simple line would be distorted, an eye would disappear altogether or a line which was originally fairly fine would thicken up.

RAYMOND CASSIDY: Do you influence the number of double panels that make up a story?

JOHN HARROLD: Very slightly. Jim works out the story length, he works out a length which will suit reproduction in the annual, which hopefully does not end up as an odd number. I influence the length only so far as, sometimes Jim might think something can be explained in two drawings, in one episode, and I find it is far too much for one

episode and would be better spread over two episodes.

MARGARET HEATON: To what extent do you work at your own pace or are you constantly under pressure to meet deadlines?

JOHN HARROLD: No I can't work at my own pace, I have a weekly schedule, I have to hand in six episodes each week under the terms of my contract. It is something which all illustrators have to do. I want to do the work as well as possible. If I am asked to

draw a certain subject matter, a certain dramatic situation, the story works to a climax, maybe several figures there, maybe something fairly impressive, I don't want to avoid drawing that and do a simple drawing. If the storyline demands a spectacular climax then I want to draw that and spend the time on it, to create this real effect. It is difficult doing work which is pleasing and also which is done in time.

JOHN SWAN: Do you find it a constraint that Rupert has to appear in every panel?

JOHN HARROLD: That is a problem that Jim has mentioned as well. Although there have been examples, where Rupert hasn't appeared, in fact, there is a Bestall story where Rupert is locked in an underground chamber, 'Rupert and the Fishing Rod', I think it is called, where there is a drawing of Growler outside the locked door, Rupert isn't seen. It does create a problem particularly

when you have something fairly spectacular. In the story 'Rupert and the Power Flower' - Rupert and the Foxes get stuck in the sails of a windmill and I found that extremely difficult, to draw something as large as a windmill and yet show Rupert in it and show what else is happening in the story.

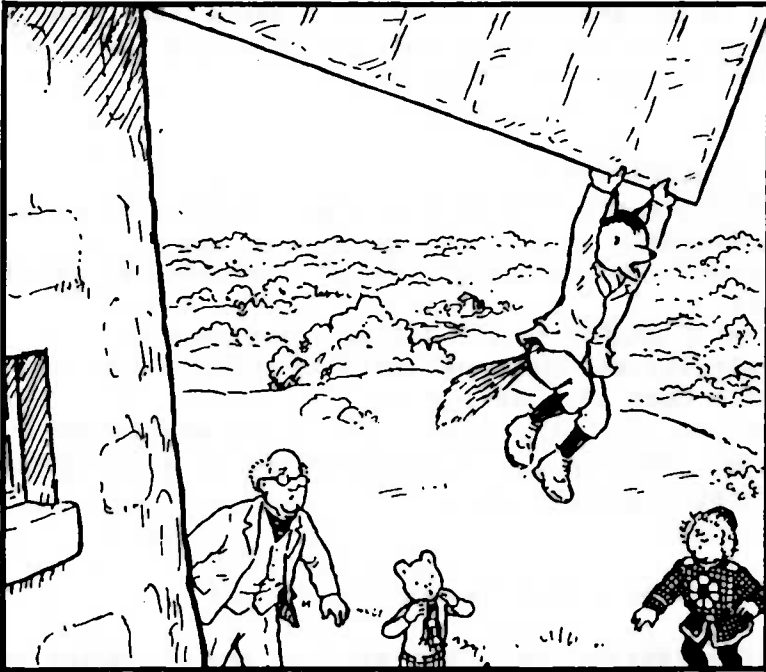
JOHN SWAN: Is the thinking mainly not so much that they wouldn't want it for an annual story, but that they want Rupert to be in every two panels for the newspaper?

JOHN HARROLD: It seems to be a tradition, that's all. Sometimes one wonders whether the tradition is all that necessary.

JOHN BECK: Are you constrained by the size of panel that you do? Alfred Bestall at one time did experiment by making larger size panels.

JOHN HARROLD: Not entirely. Jim was talking recently of the possibility of having one large panel. I don't find the dimensions or the size of the frames of interest. Also I have noticed I have thinned down the lines round the edge of the frames. Beforehand they were rather heavy for the drawings, I had to thicken up the linework to balance up the frame. I am accustomed to working in that size now, I don't find it a hindrance at all. What can be difficult is in the Christmas annual fitting the composition into the L-shape, which can be a bit of a problem at times. I like to change the shape of the half titles a bit to suit the different stories. Some stories may have an exotic U-shaped half title or the L-shape reversed.

MARGARET HEATON: I'd just like to say and I'd like it put on record that I think you



" to draw something as large as a windmill and yet show Rupert"

are to be congratulated. I think you are making a super job of the drawings.

IAN CRESSWELL: I'd like to know how far ahead you are expected to work.

JOHN HARROLD: It varies. Under my contract the work has to be six weeks ahead, there has to be six weeks work in hand. That is the minimum.

IAN CRESSWELL: How would it work for an annual, for example when would you have to start drawing the cover for the 1989 annual?

JOHN HARROLD: Now, starting now. All the stuff has to be done before Christmas, maybe the cover and endpaper will be finished shortly after Christmas, but the half titles and those pages which have to be key lined. (You probably know the process from George Perry's book, a blue key line made for Doris Campbell to colour in) all that has to be done before Christmas, so that Doris can get on with the work.

IAN CRESSWELL: So you are a year ahead?

JOHN HARROLD: A year ahead, yes.

IAN CRESSWELL: Can you tell us what will appear in it?

JOHN HARROLD: The stories that Jim has selected are some of my favourite stories.

IAN CRESSWELL: Are they all your illustrations?

JOHN HARROLD: Yes, that is the present selection. I think they are some of Jim's most inspired stories. I enjoyed them immensely.

MARY CADOGAN: Are you the sole Rupert creator as far as the art is concerned?

JOHN HARROLD: Yes. I also worked on the Rupert Fun book which we brought out this year. There is only the three of us. Jim does the editing and the writing, I do the drawings and Doris Campbell does the colouring in. The only other person who is really involved is Frank Parker, the books manager, who has the responsibility of getting the books out in time, of ensuring the annuals are distributed.

DEREK POLLARD: Who does the rhymes?

JOHN HARROLD: Jim does.

TONY SHUKER: Do you know if there is going to be a 1938 facsimile?

JOHN HARROLD: I don't know.

PATRICK WALLACE: I rang the Express fairly recently and they said we are not doing it this year but we are working on it and we should have got it together in the spring and it should be available in 1989, late summer.

JOHN HARRISON: Are you aware of the Rupert strip being sold to other countries?

JOHN HARROLD: Obviously in Holland. On the continent you get combinations of various cartoon strips in colour and small colour books and Rupert appeared in Holland in some of these books. I don't know where my work ends up exactly. I don't take much interest in it. I am sorry I can't answer the question.

BRIAN LISHER: Can you draw Rupert other than for the Express? For instance to hang on your own wall?

JOHN HARROLD: For my own pleasure, yes. I can do that, but not when money is going to be exchanged. I can't work for other companies.

BRIAN LISHER: I was mainly thinking if you had children and they wanted you to draw Rupert.

JOHN HARROLD: Oh no, that's no problem at all, no money changes hands. Obviously they wouldn't be very happy if I set up a factory and started printing Rupert.

RAYMOND CASSIDY: We understand that some of the artwork that Alfred Bestall did for some of the stories, for instance 'Rupert and the Unicorn' which has never appeared in an annual, has been lost. Is it possible that such a story can be reproduced in annual from the version in the newspaper.

JOHN HARROLD: This has problems so far as in the newspaper there is a half tone, there is a grey tone printed into the drawings. I don't think the newspaper reproduction would be very good. If you enlarged the image from the newspaper you would have to clean up a lot of the linework first of all. You would also have to remove all the little black dots which make up the half tone of Rupert's jersey and various other parts. There would be a lot of work involved in cleaning up those images I think.

RAYMOND CASSIDY: But it would be possible?

JOHN HARROLD: I think it would be possible if one wanted to spend enough money and time. It would take a lot of time to do the work. Don't forget the reproduction in the newspaper is poor, lots of the linework would be broken and distorted and also these grey areas would have to be cleaned up. It would almost be like doing the drawings again.

LIONEL BIDWELL: You referred earlier to not meeting Alex Cubie. Did you ever meet Alfred Bestall?

JOHN HARROLD: No. I lived abroad at the beginning and I moved back to Britain a year before Bestall died and we were never in London at the same time.

LIONEL BIDWELL: You drew the picture for the 50th annual cover from a photograph?

JOHN HARROLD: Yes. It is a pity I didn't meet Bestall, but he lived in Wales and it wasn't all that often I would be in England.

ANDREW DAVIES: One of the most contentious issues at the moment must be whether as an organisation we have got to change our name from the 'Followers' to the 'Meeters' because on the followers page at the back of the 1988 annual we have actually got 'Meet me every morning' rather than 'Follow ...' Were you aware of this when you were drawing the picture?

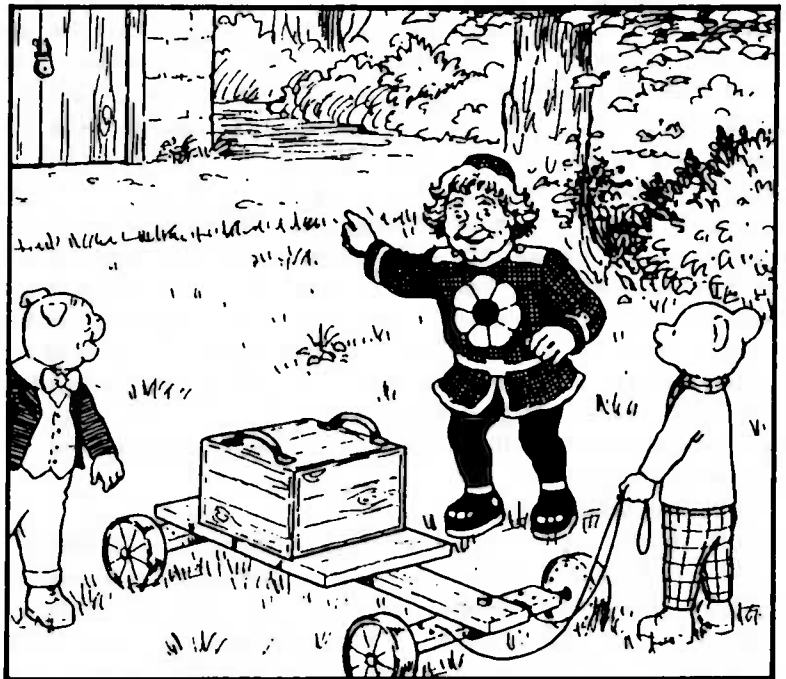
JOHN HARROLD: The thing evolved naturally. It wasn't all that conscious a decision. Although the text 'Follow Rupert every morning' has been following in all the drawings ...

ANDREW DAVIES: He is very nicely followed in this one.

JOHN HARROLD: He is not being followed, no. He is being admired, he is going to meet his friends and he is saying to the readers, "If you want to see any more of me, buy the Daily Express". I couldn't think of a subject matter for that, I couldn't figure out a following drawing and that was the best idea I had at the time I had to produce the drawing. I thought it was a fairly intimate eye contact drawing to have at the end of the book, rather than a profile where the spectator is not involved in any way, would be better. We had experienced adventures with him and now he is saying goodbye in a way, his friends are waiting behind for him and he is saying goodbye to the reader. When I did the drawing James Henderson realised that the 'Follow Rupert every day' wouldn't go well with the drawing, he thought it best to change the text. It is simply a case of completing the drawing. Does it cause you distress or not?

TONY SHUKER: I think it ought to be pointed out that we take our name from the fact that the word 'followers' has been used for 40 odd years.

LIONEL BIDWELL: Did you know about the change to include the endpapers at the end of the annual



" and Rupert constructs a go-cart"

as well as at the beginning in the 1988 annual? A change which I think most people here are quite pleased to see.

JOHN HARROLD: That isn't anything to do with me. I was told about it when the thing was printed. The structure of the book is not my responsibility.

MARK GARDNER: You have been drawing Rupert for fourteen years. Are you tired of drawing Rupert or do you see yourself going on for quite a while yet?

JOHN HARROLD: I think I will work for quite some time yet. I am not tired of it. At times I do get sick of it, as you can imagine it is not always a pleasure to draw because of the problems involved. Although a drawing or a painting might be quite pleasant to the reader, it sometimes can be difficult for me. I've tried to avoid getting to the stage of being tired, by making the work as much of a pleasure for myself as possible, by putting as much of myself into the drawings as possible, make it as pure as possible and satisfying. I think my drawings have reached a reasonable level, though they can go further. I think the paintings already have a warmish glow. It will be a long time before I get to the stage of being tired. The only time I do not enjoy work is when it's absolutely boring. Sometimes another publisher may give me a story to do which is dreadful, which I have no enthusiasm for whatsoever. I enjoy Rupert, I believe in it, I live in the world. When I am drawing the story I am not drawing for people. I enjoy something which exists, a real scene which I am copying down in ink. I get a lot of artistic pleasure from it and that is very important.

JOHN SWAN: In a sense, also in a general sense, what about say machines? What's the relationship between what you do and what James Henderson does on, I was thinking of saying 'Rupert and the Boy Pirates' where there has to be a machine that can fly upside down. Will James Henderson have much input, will he just say I need a boat that can fly upside down, but if you don't have proper seats somebody will fall off or hang on? Would James Henderson have any design input or would he just leave that to you? I noticed you mentioned you work on car magazines. Have you had a technical background? I have got three questions in one there?

JOHN HARROLD: No I don't enjoy doing technical drawing. When James Henderson devises a story involving machines he will design the machine himself and give me his sketches which pleases me greatly. I enjoy drawing figures, anything natural, trees and plants and human figures. I don't enjoy drawing machines and I find them quite hard at times. Jim does all that planning, and he must take the credit for it. He worked out the go-cart in this year's annual which was a tricky thing to draw. It was the story which maybe should have been started halfway through, because if you have read the story, Rupert finds (I hope I am not spoiling the story for you) bits of wood and constructs a go-cart, I think around episode twelve or something or later. Therefore it has to be of a certain shape, the wheels have to be able to flip up at a certain point, but I have to allow for these when drawing the original materials lying on the ground. The bits of wood have to be cut up to make up that go-cart, the axle has to be long enough to allow the wheels to flip up. It is quite problematic, because the machine is complicated. It is all Jim's imagination.

JOHN HARRISON: Have you ever been approached or have you ever contemplated doing a film type of cartoon?

JOHN HARROLD: No.

JOHN HARRISON: Have you any desire to do so?

JOHN HARROLD: Maybe. You wouldn't have one artist doing the work anyhow. One artist would have to design it perhaps, but a team of artists execute the drawings. It does appeal to me. When I was younger I was attracted by the idea of doing an animated cartoon. I wouldn't mind doing that.

MARY CADOGAN: Have you ever been placed with the situation with Rupert where you feel there is something which is absolutely impossible to convey visually?

JOHN HARROLD: I don't think impossible, maybe difficult. There are things which have to be explained in the text. One can use mime to convey most things, in fact sometimes

I put in too many pointed fingers trying to let the reader know somebody's talking about some object out there or some place. I don't know if there is anything impossible. Sometimes the subject matter can be so difficult to explain that the drawing suffers, the drawing becomes a bit constipated, lacking in fluency because of the necessity to explain things, but that is part of the challenge to deal with difficult subject matter but still hopefully make something visually pleasing from it. It is my belief that every frame should in theory be a little work of art, a drawing which pleases. If some of them fall short, it is inevitable having to produce work every week. You have good periods and bad ones. There are days when I can't draw at all, I cannot even draw a foreshortened hand and days when I draw extremely well.

MARY CADOGAN: In the annuals for instance one is always struck by the fact that every frame is really a little work of art. In theory you could almost take every one and reproduce it and make a picture from it. It must be an extraordinary talent because however clever Jim is, I am sure he is extremely skilled as a story teller, but to get it out in those few pictures must be very very difficult. Some of the drawings are quite complex.

JOHN HARROLD: They are complex, yes. The thing which bothers me is the aesthetic aspect. The story telling and the creating of atmosphere doesn't really pose a problem. I find that quite easy, it is something which comes naturally to me because I am sympathetic to the subject matter. What gives me a problem is doing a good drawing. It annoys me not to do good work and that is a problem, it is why I spend a lot of time playing around with the elements, to do something pleasing.

JOHN BECK: Does fitting the stories to the seasons involve careful planning, such as drawing the Christmas story in May?

JOHN HARROLD: Oh yes, that's Jim's job. He has to plan the stories to arrive seasonally.

JOHN HARRISON: Standard characters, I guess you can't deviate but we see occasionally a new character. How do you determine what this character should look like? For example The Sage of Um.

JOHN HARROLD: In the case of the Sage of Um, Jim Henderson gave a description, the Sage first appeared in 'The Dragon Race' years ago as a passing character, Jim asked for an elderly figure with a beard, I think, and glasses, I can't remember the details but I evolved the image. Sometimes Jim has sketched out a character if he has felt quite strongly about it. Jim devised the appearance of the Spelies. I think Terry is one of Jim's best invention, the pterodactyl. You can see his evolution in the book there. The two stories were drawn six months apart or maybe a year apart, I don't remember, and if you look where Terry appears at the end of the Go-Cart story he has an upturned beak. The pterodactyls are very repulsive creatures and I found it difficult to devise something which looked like a pterodactyl, that was fairly appealing. He has an upturned beak, a long beak, but by the time I got round to 'Terry's Return' his shape had changed. Something which happens in the process of drawing a story; you can devise a character at the beginning, before starting the story, a character which you think is pleasing, you begin drawing the character in one frame after another and the character starts to change shape, it starts to settle down and take on its final shape. I think one starts to pull out the essential characteristics of the person which tend to evolve as you work through the story. Years ago I tried to use Bestall's formula for drawing heads which didn't appeal to me personally anyhow. When devising new characters now I simply evolve something of my own. In fact the Knight which I think may be appearing shortly, Jim gave a vivid description of the Knight and I put it into fleshy form.

LIONEL BIDWELL: Do you know about any plans to do another Fun Book or any other interesting items that we don't know about?

JOHN HARROLD: No. I think the appearance of a second Fun Book would depend on the commercial success of the first one.

ROGER NEWELL: Do you have a collection of annuals of your own?

JOHN HARROLD: I have a very limited collection, no early annuals and they are all in a very bad condition because I pull them open at certain pages and they get covered in pencil dust. If I come across them in shops at a low price I will buy them, but I don't spend a lot of money on them. I don't look after them, I cart them about from the office to the flat and they are badly treated. They are working copies. Jim can supply references, he has the annuals in his cupboard.

ROGER NEWELL: Presumably he treats them somewhat better than you do.

JOHN HARROLD: Oh yes, of course he does.

GARY HARDING: The team of the three of you. Can we be assured that it will be a few years yet? Do the others have the same enthusiasm as yourself?

JOHN HARROLD: You would have to ask them. I don't know how to answer the question. I think Jim will be retiring in a couple of years. I am sure he will still go on writing after retirement because he has a very busy schedule. He is also the syndication editor in the Express, he is not simply the Rupert editor and he has other responsibilities which make his week very busy. Sometimes if he is writing a story he has to leave the story to go and see someone else or do something else. It is a hectic week. I intend to go on as long as possible but I can't answer for the others.

BRIAN LISHER: Do you actually draw the origami pictures as sometimes these are contained in the stories?

JOHN HARROLD: No. Bestall devised stories with some origami beings, but that was years ago. It hasn't happened recently as far as I know. I have never drawn origami picture. Jim draws the origami if necessary.

BRIAN LISHER: I was probably thinking of the early ones, like the flapping bird.

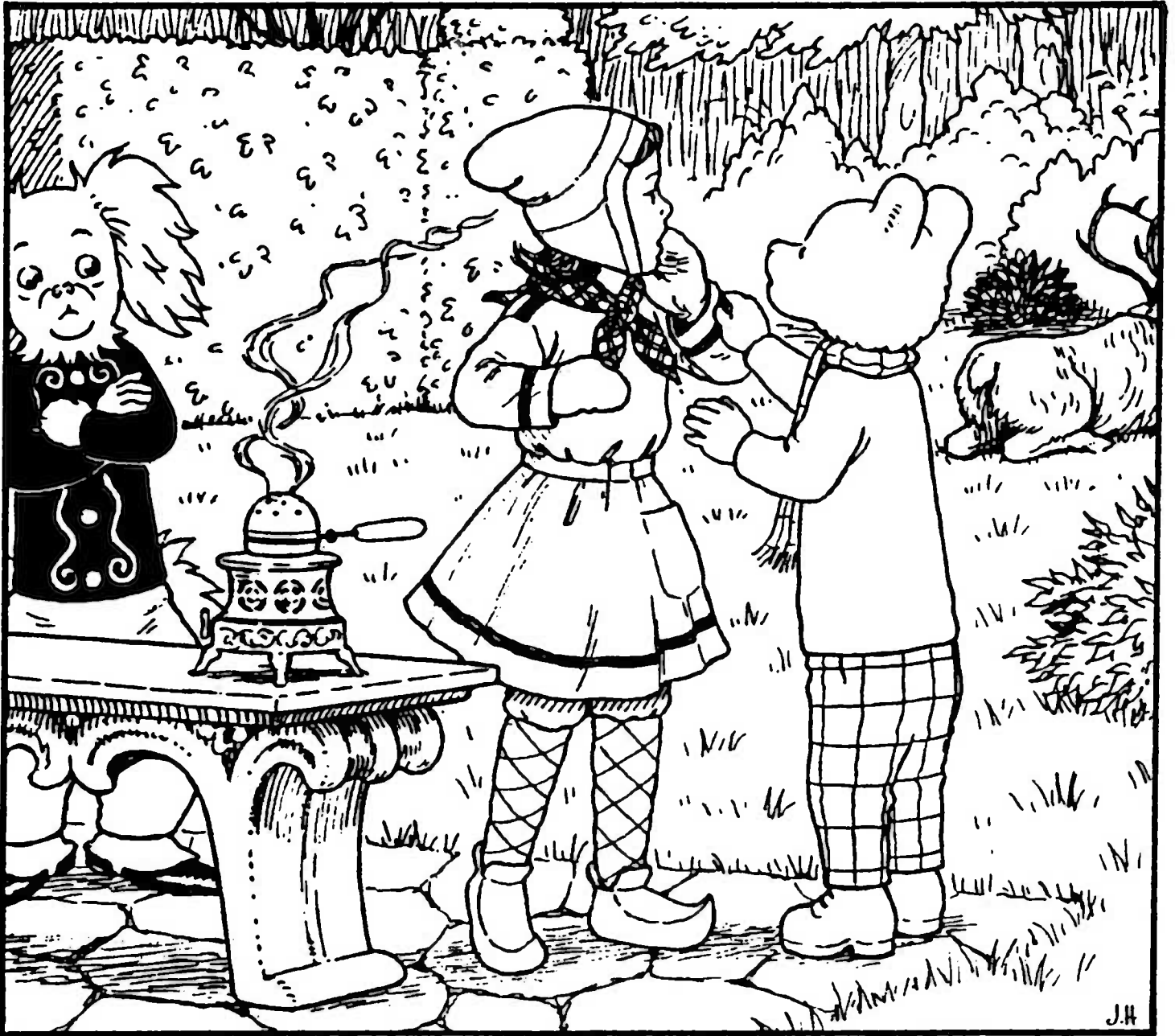
JOHN HARROLD: The one I liked very much was 'Rupert and the Green Buzzer'. It involves the Wise Old Goat and there is a green thing flying around which stings Podgy Pig at one point and eventually Willie Mouse who has one of these paper snappers, lends it to Rupert who catches it. I find that an excellent combination of story and game because it has something simple for the children who are listening to the story which they can play afterwards. It is an excellent idea. Nowadays Jim Henderson does most of the origami drawing. I did a couple of things years ago. One I originally did in the 1970s, at the end of one of the books, Rupert's magic printing machine or something, where you turn a handle and Rupert comes out. The other was to do with the story about the Professor's balloon house, 'Rupert and the Silent Land', when the Professor has a balloon inside a tent like building, he pulls cords and the building opens up like the petals of a flower. Fred Chaplin asked me to draw that as a puzzle in the same book comprising an image out of the red, yellow and blue lines, orange lines I think and the readers had to join up certain colours of lines to see the image. I am not terribly interested in origami.

IAN CRESSWELL: You referred earlier to some filming that took place which featured yourself and James Henderson. Could you tell us a bit more about what that will be?

JOHN HARROLD: It is not very exciting. The Daily Express have commissioned a film company to film the history of the Express itself, from its beginnings up to the move to the south side of Blackfriars Bridge, because the Express is moving next year to a large new building on the south side of Blackfriars Bridge. They are recording the history and the situation as it is at the present in the Express. They wanted to film something in the Rupert department. They filmed Giles. They asked Jim to have a conversation with me in my office. The film is going to be very short, the Rupert sequence will only last a few minutes. It is going to be printed on laser disc and buried in the new building, for the Martians to find. I think there may be a possibility of TV etc. I think it probably will be on TV, a couple of hours long. It's a long programme.

TONY SHUKER: If there are no more questions, it is nearly 5 o'clock and time we brought the proceedings to an end. It remains for me to thank you all for attending and to thank John Harrold for his most enjoyable way of satisfying our curiosity. Thank you.

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DAILY EXPRESS



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