



Number 106
Summer 2020

Nutwood Newsletter



Celebrating 100 years of Rupert stories

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Editorial

To celebrate our 100th edition we are sending you an enlarged issue of NN, a coloured Bestall Special plus our usual Supplement, and an Index for all the contributions included in the publications to date. We have also included in the newsletter an article from an earlier edition, now illustrated in colour, something not possible in those earlier days.

Our gratitude must go to the pioneering editors of Nutwood publications, particularly Tony Shuker for his Nutwoods and then Raymond Cassidy for taking up the NN publication reins in difficult circumstances when Nutwood ceased. We hope to continue to provide you with interesting quality publications in the future and look forward to our next 100 issues.

As many of you are probably aware, the Express publications were bought recently by Trinity Mirror, and the new Editor-in-Chief, Gary Jones, introduced himself in the paper on 2nd April. He identified that he started reading the Express as a five year old by “glancing” at Rupert Bear, so let us hope his affection will ensure the Express keep an interest in Rupert for many years to come.

John Beck (Editor)

A message from the Chairman

Hello again Followers. Well by the time you read this the AGM will be approaching but first some news about the “Bears!” Exhibition which we’ve contributed to with some nice Rupert content. Even apart from the Rupert element though it’s well worth seeing.

It’s now completed its opening run at the Seven Stories Museum of Children’s Literature in Newcastle where it was apparently a great success and will now be going “on tour”.

The planned appearance at Henley won’t now be happening, so the next venue will be the Cooper Art Gallery at Barnsley for two months, from Saturday June 30th until Sunday September 2nd. In other words it’ll be closing the week-end after our AGM.

The Exhibition will then move to Shrewsbury Art Gallery in spring next year and to Ulster Museum in the summer. Exact dates will be given when known.

So, do try to visit Rupert – and the other attractions – at one of the events.

And of course the other big thing coming up is our Annual week-end. Our stalwart organiser Tony, who officially stood down almost two years ago, has kindly continued to make the arrangements, backed as always by his ever-supportive family. It must be said that we would be in a very difficult situation without his loyalty to the Followers. And let us not forget also his many imaginative initiatives as Sales Officer.

So, while coping with yet more changes at the School, he has helped to put together a mouth-watering programme including a key talk from Howard Smith. This promises to be of major interest to all Rupert Followers. We also have a double dose of Roger Coombes, both afternoon and during our Dinner. Finally a great friend of the Followers is Adam Schumacher, producer of that perennial favourite the Rupert play. This time he will be taking on another rôle, as another of our Dinner speakers.

So, if you haven’t already made your booking, please do it now. Obviously the sooner it arrives on Tony’s doormat, the easier it is for him to finalise all the arrangements. And if you haven’t been to our Dinner before, then you couldn’t choose a better one for making your debut.

Look forward to seeing you all.

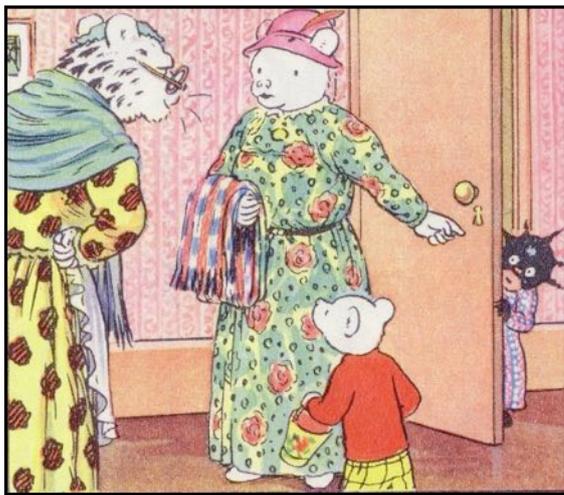
John (Swan)

Landladies of Sandy Bay

Readers will recall that in the *Nutwood Newsletter* number 72 Phil Toze introduced us to Mrs Tiger, who appeared regularly in Rupert adventures, but Mrs Tiger is not the only landlady who provides home comforts while Rupert is on holiday, as Phil explains.

Mrs Leopard

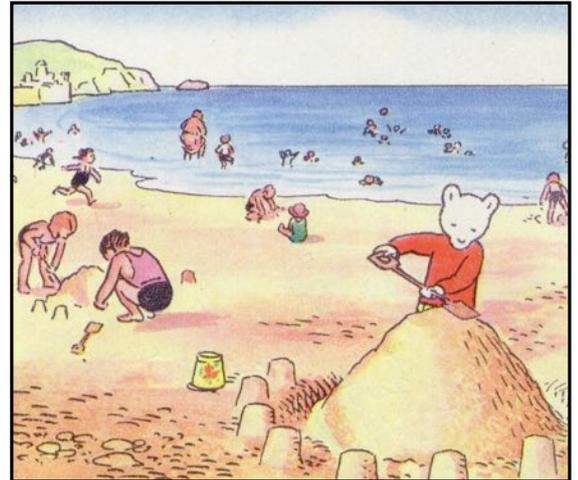
Mrs Leopard, a landlady at Sandy Bay, appears in only one adventure: *Rupert and the Castaway*, (B122) and her appearance is in one frame only.



The landlady allows Rupert's friend, Koko, to stay at her guest house.

Like Mrs Tiger, she is pleasant, kindly and accommodating, allowing an extra chum who hasn't booked in!

The Daily Express story appears in the 1954 Rupert Annual.



Rupert will have all the home comforts when he returns from a hard day's castle-building or from another exciting adventure.

Mrs Cheetah

Mrs Cheetah is another landlady at Sandy Bay. When Mrs Bear and Rupert stay at her guest house, she is kindly and accommodating, like Mrs Leopard, but, again, with only a brief appearance.

She also is unfazed by the arrival of an additional and unexpected guest. "Don't worry, Simon can share Rupert's room", the kind landlady exclaims, and makes up a spare bed, in the 1973 Daily Express story *Rupert on Chariot Island*. (P60)



Mrs Cheetah is surprised to find one extra guest arrive.

So, while Mrs Tiger may rule supreme, it is good to note that some of her feline friends can also play the part.

An Interesting Find

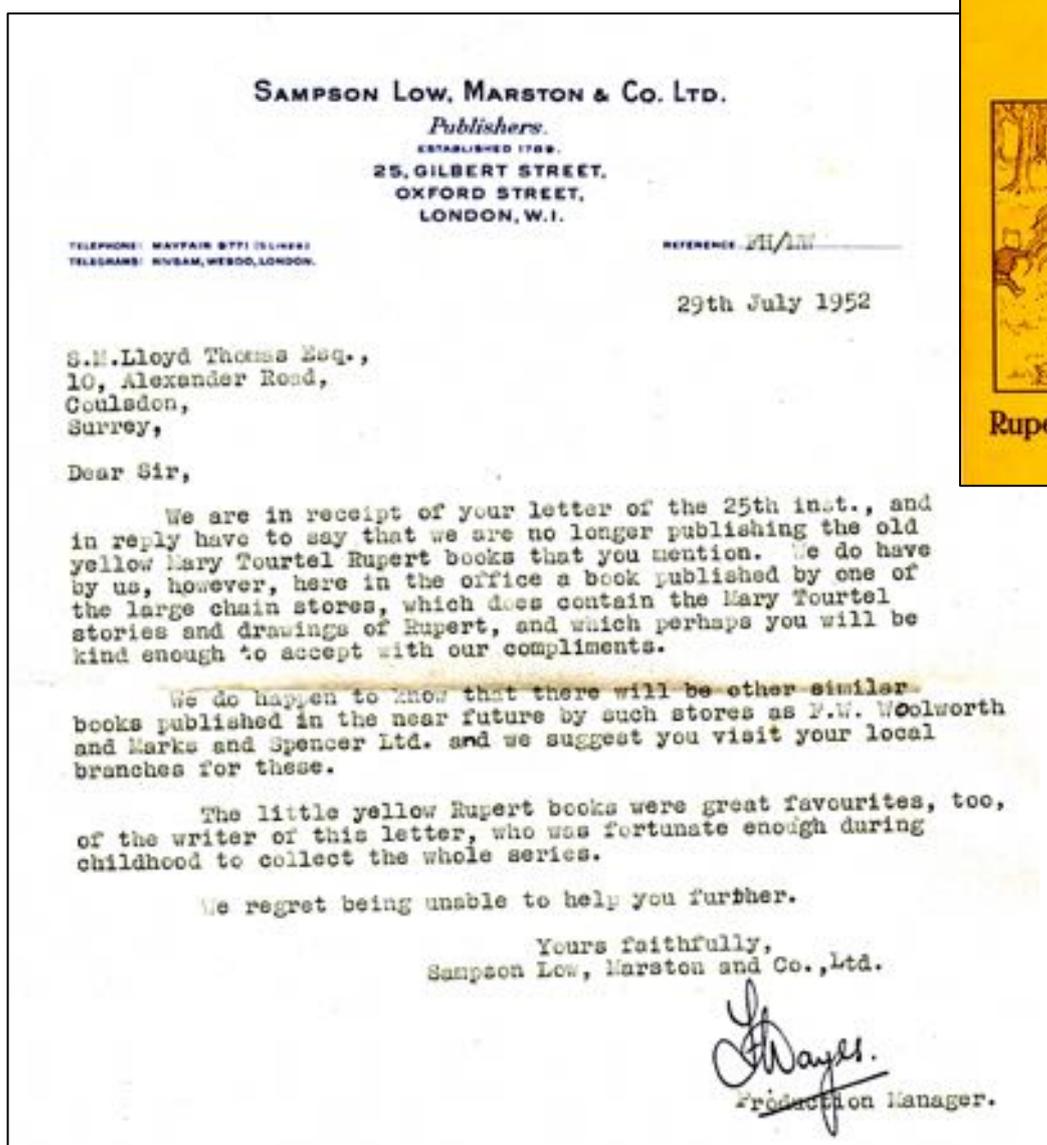
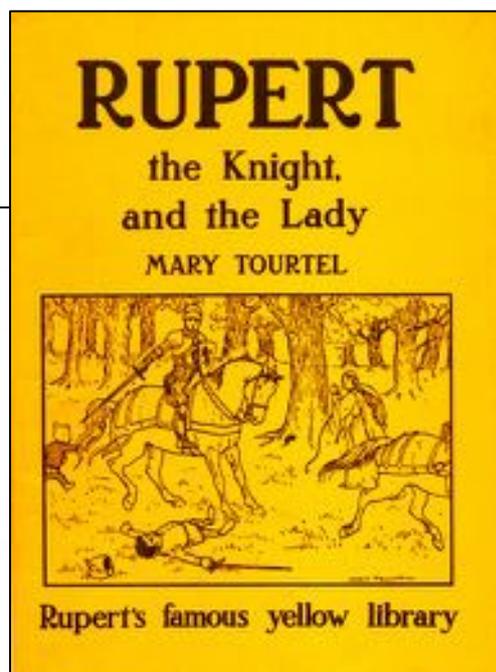
I recently purchased a few Rupert books locally; nothing exciting but there was a hidden piece of history lurking in one of the items. It was a letter dated 29th July 1952 from Sampson Low to a Mr Lloyd Thomas folded inside a mint copy of “Rupert the Knight and the Lady” in the Rupert’s Famous Yellow Library.

Production Manager, F Waynes, states in the letter “we are no longer publishing the old yellow Mary Tourtel Rupert books that you mention.” As a consolation he sends him a copy of a book he had in the office and says it is “published by one of the large chain stores. We do happen to know that there will be other similar books published in the near future by such stores as F. W. Woolworth

and Marks and Spencer Ltd”. It is worth noting that there is no store name in the booklet.

I only know of one other booklet being published in the Famous Library series, (Rupert and his Friend Margot), and if the letter and this book originally were together I wonder what happened to prevent the others mentioned being published. I suppose it is always possible that the letter was originally included with another book sent to Mr Lloyd Thomas, but it is still an interesting find.

John Beck



Treats and Goodies for Warwick 2017

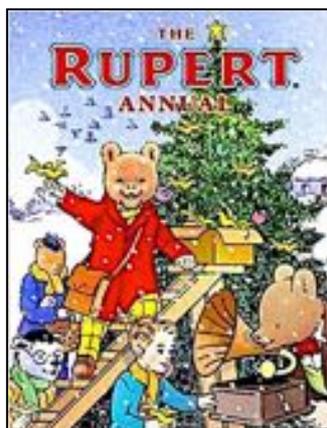


By the time this Newsletter reaches you, our annual gathering and AGM in Warwick will be drawing ever closer. Lots of exciting things are planned for the Saturday.

We have, once again, a fascinating talk about Alfred Bestall and his Rupert from our own Roger Coombes. We are in conversation with the Imaginative Book Illustration Society (IBIS - <https://www.bookillustration.org/>) who have much in common with us and hope to be able to send a speaker. Alan Murray also has plans to present a talk asking some questions about Rupert's past, present and future and then host/facilitate informal discussion(s) to allow Followers to express their views and to have them passed to Rupert's official guardians. We are delighted that, once again, Adam Schumacher will be producing a brand new play.

This year's Annual features a brand new story of Stuart's: *Rupert and the Christmas Birds* along with six other stories by four other Rupert artists. Seven stories means that, as with the last couple of Annuals, this one is a good size.

Stuart Trotter will be present and will be signing copies of the 2017 Rupert Annual. As in recent years, Stuart will also be drawing a head of Rupert or one of his chums inside some of the signed annuals, and these will be available for collection at Warwick provided they are pre-ordered in time.



Order your signed copy either:

- ♦ On your registration form, if you are attending Warwick, *or*
- ♦ On the enclosed postal order form.



New items will be available for sale on the Followers' stall, including some lovely coloured coasters and mouse mats featuring Rupert and his chums. The coasters are high quality foam backed and heat-proof. There is a lovely new Followers' badge for 2017, also a range of badges featuring Rupert and his chums.

Don't forget, all purchases at Warwick are at discount prices.

Rupert and Model Railways – thought for the day *by Roger Allen*

In his sketch in the Daily Telegraph on Saturday 8th April, Michael Deacon suggests that one of the principal interests in model railways is not the trains themselves but the miniature villages that the trains run through, with their trees, fields, animals, little men in hats and schoolboys fishing in ponds, all of which take so much care and skill in the making. These model railway countrysides do not depict the world as it is today, but are visions of a lost England before the Second World War or even before the First World War, an England of Rupert Brooke and of the Nutwood of Rupert Bear. It is an interesting concept that Nutwood, and the model railway scenery, depict an ideal world that we look back on, but that actually never really existed.



Early Mary Tourtel

In NN99 we featured an early Mary Tourtel story that appeared in Grant Richard's Children's Annual 1903. She also contributed to the Grant Richard's Children's Annual published in 1904.



Her early illustrated stories seemed very much to concentrate on bunnies and foxes, and this effort is no exception.

When one looks at the quality of her illustrative colour work, it is a pity she did not do many others. Even her Rupert contribution in colour was very limited with just nine full page efforts, which were then used in a number of publications, plus the covers to the three Rupert Little Bear's Adventures books. Perhaps we should not complain too much as her illustrative energies were all concentrated on Rupert from 1920.

John Beck

Bunny's Adventure in Old Fox's House

LOCKED up in a room, far from help and friends, little Bunny wept bitterly. She began to fear that she would never see her Father and Mother again.

It was all her own fault. She had been told never to go far from the snug little hole where her Mother and Father lived at the foot of an old oak tree.

But she quite forgot their warnings when she wandered one day to the edge of the wood, and found what a big world lay beyond it.

Soon she met a frog, who began talking to her.

He seemed so very kind, and told her that he could show her more wonderful things if she would come with him. So Bunny went.

Now, he was really a very wicked frog, who lived with an old fox. Whenever he met nice young rabbits he used to entice them to Old Fox's house, where they were locked up until Old Fox fancied rabbit for dinner.

Many a poor little bunny had disappeared lately, and that was why Papa and Mamma Bunny had warned their little daughter that she was never to wander far from their hole.

But alas! She only remembered their warning when it was too late, and she was in Old Fox's power.

To add to her misery, the Frog came every day to the window of her prison and said, "To-morrow, Old Fox will want you for dinner."

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At last, one day he came and told her that Mr. Fox really wanted her that day.

Poor Bunny was so unhappy, and begged the Frog not to take her to the cruel Fox, but help her to escape.

The Frog said he must obey Old Fox.

So he led her from her prison to the Fox's dining-room.

When she saw his cunning, cruel face, she felt lost indeed.

"What a delicious dinner I shall have to-day, Mr. Frog!" said Mr. Fox.

Just then they heard in the distance the cry of a hound, followed by the toot of the huntsman's horn.

Old Fox's shiny little nose turned dry with fear, for he knew the hounds were on his track.

Without a word he sprang through the window, and ran away as fast as ever he could.

The Frog was so frightened that he leaped out after him, and hid himself in a ditch near by, leaving Bunny to take care of herself.

This she did by hiding in a cupboard, hoping that the hounds would not notice her.

There she lay trembling; but they soon discovered the way Old Fox had gone, and hurried off, leaving Bunny in peace.

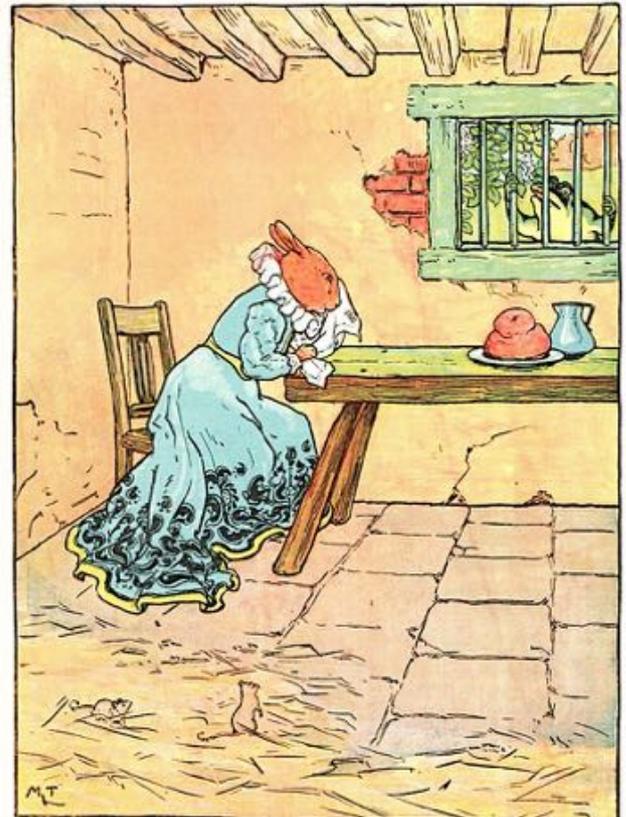
When all was still again she crept out of Old Fox's house, and, after much wandering, rejoiced to see in front of her the wood in which her Father and Mother lived.

She soon found their home at the foot of the oak.

She was so glad to be back safely, that, after telling them all her adventures, she promised never to wander away again.

MARY TOURTEL.

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After Bestall – The Characters of John Harrold

by John Lester

The Rupert of my childhood was the Rupert of Alfred Bestall, both in the daily ration of the newspaper and the opulence of the annuals, supplemented by the Rupert of Mary Tourtel. As a result I have tended to look with suspicion at post-Bestall Rupert and the new characters that have become established and with disappointment at the disappearance of old favourites whose faces no longer fit with the modern day.



Another problem that arises for anyone venturing into post-22 July 1965 territory (the date of Bestall's final Rupert pictures in the *Daily Express*) is that most of the stories are uncollected and thus, barring a marathon at Colindale (or maybe Boston Spa), inaccessible. I have read all the Tourtel and Bestall tales and can write with confidence about them. Not so those coming later. Thus besides my stated prejudice there is my confessed ignorance to be considered in what follows. But the later Rupert appears seldom in surveys so, very tentatively, let me venture into this territory with no childhood liking to guide my adult eye.

According to *The New Rupert Index* only fourteen of the 109 stories that appeared in the *Daily Express* over the next thirty years (i.e. till 1985 and not including those by John Harrold) enjoyed a presence in an Annual. Alex Cubie and Jenny Kisler are prominent among the illustrators but most prominent of all is the question mark: 73 stories have no accredited artist or author. Some of

them are forming welcome additions to our Nutwood Newsletters but these can only nibble at the huge feast that lies tantalisingly out of reach.

And so to the first character. In the second issue of *Nutwood* back in 1983 Tony Shuker praises John Harrold as having 'arrived' with the story *Rupert and the Dragon Race* (H01), drawn especially for the annual and written by James Henderson. Since Shuker was not slow to criticise where he saw cause, this positive assessment is worth having and, indeed, reflects my own feelings for the story. It introduces The Sage of Um, who has a cameo appearance when he is seen cavorting about the night sky with his Brella upside down and out of control. The Chinese Conjuror, Pong-Ping and Rupert are on the Conjuror's travel-cloud in pursuit of Pong-Ping's dragon, which has been lured into a dragon race by a villainous emperor, and the Conjuror's gyroscope, accurately thrown by Rupert to the Sage, turns the Brella right way up. The Sage's news that his predicament was caused by racing dragons sends the three friends on the travel-cloud rushing off once more to try to overtake them.



Shuker's expressed satisfaction with the new character was obviously shared for the Sage appears again in *Rupert and the Two Moons* (H02), a story written specially for the 1984 Annual, this time centre-stage and drawing Rupert into difficulties by his refusal to heed the Wise Old Goat's warning. He dominates the cover of the 1988 Annual, which contains *Rupert on Um Island* (JH22) – repeated in

2000 – where the Sage’s herd of unicorns is saved by Rupert from a young unpleasant enchanter. He has made five significant appearances since and been seen in 293 pictures in all. He complements characters such as the Chinese Conjuror and Wise Old Goat well and fits in comfortably to the Nutwood scene.

The same combination of Henderson and Harrold produced the little Lapp girl, Rika, whose anxiety for equality (Lapp girls may not herd reindeer) causes her to rustle Santa’s reindeer for a little herd of her own in *Rupert and Rika* (JH13) – a highlight of the 1986 Annual. She isn’t very friendly at first but when an exhausted Rupert falls dangerously asleep in the snow, she returns to warm him with a fire and hot soup – and the friendship begins. The picture of the concerned little girl heating the soup and regarding the waking Rupert is especially memorable. Rupert persuades Santa Claus to make Rika ‘the official keeper of my reindeer during their long holidays in the Far North.’ Another character has arrived, a female too – much needed since the Guides’ swansong in 1979.



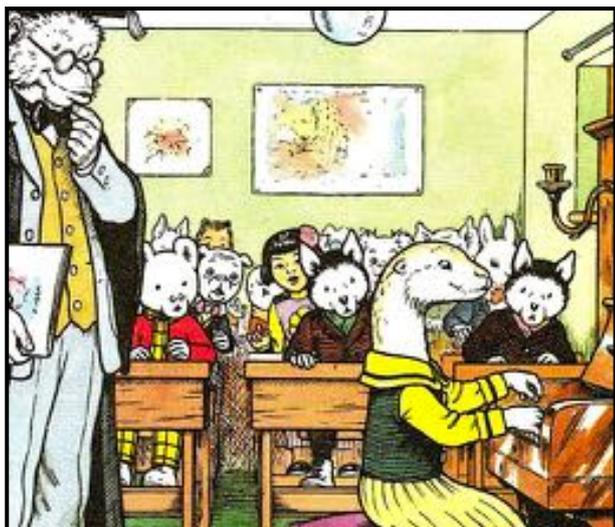
She also fits effortlessly into the Nutwood pantheon and returns for four more stories in the 1989, 1991, 1999 and 2004 Annuals. The 1991 story *Rupert and the Stolen Snowmen* (JH44) has a cameo from the Sage of Um in similar circumstances to that in *Rupert and the Dragon Race* (though he’s right way up this time), and was also reprised in 2006. The villain of this adventure is Billy Blizzard, the bad apple of the Jack Frost family, who first appeared in *Rupert and the Blizzard* (P11), an early post-Bestall story by Freddie Chaplain illustrated by Alex Cubie, first seen in the *Daily Express* from 16 December 1966 to 13 February 1967 and later in the 1980 Annual.

As the title *Rupert and the Stolen Snowmen* suggests, Billy Blizzard has deprived Nutwood of its snowmen and, when run to earth in the Frozen South, it is Rika with her reindeer lasso who manages to capture him. The impetus of Billy’s attempt to escape drags Rika down the snowy slope – another memorable picture.



Blizzard is to retaliate in *Rupert and the Christmas List* (JH92) in the 1999 Annual, locking Rika and Rupert in with Santa Claus while he attempts to take charge of Christmas. Rupert, Rika and her special bell, the one uncaptured reindeer and the Clerk of the Weather combine to foil his schemes. Earlier in the *Daily Express*, though later in the Annual (2005) is *Rupert and the Wind Chimes* (JH81) where Rupert and Ottoline prevent Billy sending all year blizzards to the world. He has been around for some time then since his 1966 introduction; a useful character whose mischief can serve to bring many other characters into play.

Like the Sage, Rika is not a permanent resident of Nutwood but the 1993 Annual saw the introduction of Ottoline in *Rupert and Ottoline* (JH58) – an Ian Robinson contribution. Female animal friends are not plentiful in Rupert; only Lily Duckling really qualifies (one would hesitate to call Rosalie a friend) and her appearances are infrequent. Once installed, Ottoline makes up for lost time, appearing in more pictures (718) than anyone but Bill between 1993 and 2006, 93 of them in her second year (1994). She is an accomplished pianist (as she shows on her first day at school, to Dr Chimp’s delight) and lives in Nutwood Manor - clearly more up-market than the other friends, very much the lady and obviously a firm favourite with her creators. Post-Harrold, though, there have been few sightings of the little otter.



As well as resident friends Nutwood also acquires resident enemies. In the 1990 Annual story *Rupert and Little Yum* (JH32) – repeated in the 2006 Annual – Rupert quickly runs foul of the new occupant of Nutwood Court, Sir Jasper, and his equally unpleasant servant, Scrogg. Sir Jasper catches animals for zoos (an occupation the far more pleasant David Attenborough once pursued) but this zoo quester steals animals from others, in this case a baby Yeti, Yum. Having rescued Yum, Rupert and Pong-Ping hand him over to two Chinese men who have come to retrieve him but Sir Jasper enlists a reluctant Constable Growler to arrest the pair in Pong-Ping’s house before they can escape to China via Pong-Ping’s lift. The cunning



constable affects not to know about this express route to the Orient and contrives to set the lift in motion with Sir Jasper still outside. Once in China, of course, Growler has no authority to arrest anyone.

The second villain, Sir Humphrey Pumphrey, is first seen in *Rupert and the Angry Sea* (JH38) attempting to add a Merboy (not specified as The Merboy) to his private zoo and causing an angry King Neptune to send fearsome waves to pound unwary fishermen – a dramatic beginning to the 1991 Annual. Thwarted there, he teams up with Sir Jasper in *Rupert and Sir Jasper’s Revenge* (SE4), a *Sunday Express* magazine story running from 8 December 1991 to 9 February 1992 but not seen in an annual. This is actually a sequel to *Rupert and Little Yum*, for the vindictive Jasper steals Pong-Ping’s pet dragon to sell to Humphrey. The two villains capture Rupert and Pong-Ping and prepare to use Pong-Ping’s lift – which Jasper remembers from the previous story – to send them to China. Jasper detaches the ‘Return’ lever to ensure the chums are marooned in China but Constable Growler arrives in the nick of time to save the day. The little dragon has escaped and made straight for the police station. Sirs J and H are arrested.



They are not out of circulation for long, though. Sir Humphrey returns to his familiar unscrupulous ways in *Rupert and the Goose Chase* (JH93) and *Rupert and the Pearl Fishers* (JH105), which appear in the 1998 and 2001 Annuals. Sir Jasper resumes his activities in *Rupert and the Reindeer Rescue* (JH53), collected in the 2004 Annual, when Scrogg alerts him to the fact that Rika and her reindeer are visiting. Once more Jasper tries to make use of Constable Growler, claiming that the reindeer have entered Britain illegally but again the policeman outwits him in much the same way as he did previously, ‘accidentally’ allowing Rika to say the magic words that will cause the reindeer to fly. Growler can be a clumsy copper when he chooses to be.



The problem with having this pair of dodgy knights in the vicinity is that Nutwood loses the feeling of being a safe haven, an idyllic English village that it has enjoyed prior to this with only the foxes as the resident irritants. The tone of the neighbourhood has decidedly declined and there is effectively a no-go area around Nutwood Court. For me the jury is still out on whether having villains in the village is a passable idea.

Another human presence is the Balloonist who makes his Annual debut in 1992 in *Rupert and the Falling Leaf* (JH51). Rupert has been up in balloons before in Mary Tourtel's time (he and Margot used one to escape a hungry giant in *Rupert's Latest Adventure* – T58) but a genial, if accident-prone, balloonist is new. Instead of landing in Nutwood he drags Rupert and Willie off to a tropical island where a handy mirror to reflect the sun's rays alerts a passing ship to the castaways' plight. Even then Rupert has to remind him that S.O.S. is the appropriate message. With his goggles, moustache and posh way of speaking he is more a caricature of a pilot than a character but then, presumably, that's what he's meant to be.

He returns in *Rupert's Birthday Adventure* (JH85) in the 2001 Annual where Bea Badger's ill-advised pulling of a lever sends Rupert, Bill and her off into the skies with the Balloonist sprawling on the ground. They contrive to win a balloon race and meet his brother balloonist who transports them back to Nutwood. Rupert, with Pong-Ping this time, has another unscheduled flight in the balloon in *Rupert and the Runaway Balloon* (JH40) in the 2004 Annual, which actually preceded *Rupert and the Falling Leaf* and thus explains why the balloon seems a new experience to Rupert in that story. So

presumably we have to cite August-September 1989 in the *Daily Express* for the Balloonist's real debut.

As well as new characters some of Bestall's rarely-seen creations are given a new lease of life. The Clerk of the Weather, summoned into action for *Rupert and the Rainbow* (B013) in the 1948 Annual but scarcely visible thereafter, becomes a familiar figure and gains an assistant in the 1989 Annual in *Rupert and the Thaw* (JH26). Both appear periodically thereafter. The seldom-seen Uncles Polar and Grizzly visit and are visited more often and are supplemented by an Uncle Boris. Cousin Joan, not sighted since Mary Tourtel's time, has also re-appeared. Meanwhile the evil Pine Ogre of Bestall's reign becomes the more acceptable Pine King of *Rupert and the Christmas Fairy* (JH112) in the 2002 Annual.



One particular change concerns the Professor's Dwarf. He is referred to as the Dwarf up till the 1977 Annual story *Rupert and the Silent Land* (B175). He is then absent from the next four annuals. When he next appears in *Rupert and the Gemlins* (P6) in the 1982 Annual he is called the Professor's 'Servant' and remains this till *Rupert and the Power Flower* (H04) in 1989. He is absent again from the 1990-2 annuals and then, in the story *Rupert and the Chinese Creeper* (JH54) in the 1993 Annual, he acquires the name Bodkin. Each time, then, that there has been a change of title for him, it has followed a prolonged absence, presumably so that the old reference would have been forgotten or, given new young readers (and not hoary old ones), not known about. Bodkin he has become and remained, though not to this hoary old reader's liking. He may be mediaeval in dress but I see no reason why he should be mediaeval in name. And besides, the word 'bodkin' means a

dagger, which is far from friendly. I would probably have quibbled about any name – after all, his master remains simply ‘The Professor’ – but this one seems singularly inapposite.

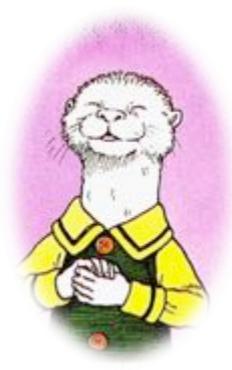


*Not now the Dwarf or the Servant – the ever-helpful **Bodkin***

Another change concerns the Imps of Spring who, after years of trying to operate unseen (except to the likes of Rupert, Bill and one or two others) decide to ‘go public’ in *Rupert and the Little Train* (JH34) in the 1990 Annual, with even the King arriving to make a formal complaint to Constable Growler. Thereafter they seem to be a little too familiar, appearing in circumstances where they would never have appeared under Bestall. But Tony Shuker has been here before me (see *Nutwood 13*).

So, a variety of new faces (The Sage of Um, Rika, Billy Blizzard, Ottoline, the Balloonist, Sir J and Sir H) and a restoration of some old ones are features of Rupert since Bestall. I’m sure there are others you feel should have been included. But that will do for now.

We all have our personal preferences and I have tried not to allow mine to become too intrusive. Enough to say that on the whole the legacy that Bestall left has been embellished by those who succeeded him and both artists and storytellers alike deserve our heartfelt gratitude.



Ottoline - a favourite new chum

John Lester

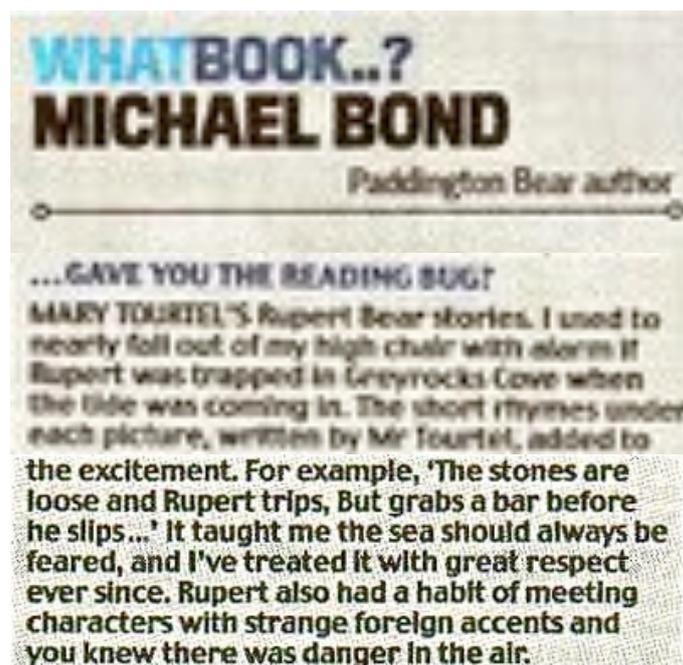
Rupert Badges

We have heard that Brian Adkins of the City of London Police who ran the Rupert Fund and who, for many years, has been wonderfully helpful and provided a superb service for Followers who collect Rupert pins and badges, is retiring from the Police and as Rupert Pin Man. His assistance over the years is very much appreciated by the Followers and we wish him a long and happy retirement.

At present we have no information as to the future of badges but will keep you informed as and when we have some news.

Another Rupert fan identified

Terry Slade sent us this interesting snippet, spotted in a recent edition of the Daily Mail:



Junior Club update

I apologise to all that because of family problems I was unable to send out any birthday cards for the month of April.

Further, it is regretted that due to increased postal and stationery costs, the Junior Club subscription will be increased to £5.00 with effect from September 2012.

Eddie Tarbuck

How Sailor Sam came to live in Nutwood

People choose where they live for a variety of reasons, and some people have no choice. But occasionally someone may receive an attractive offer of a home, and the offer is too good to miss; that is what happened to Sailor Sam. He had the luck to be offered a home in the beautiful, country village of Nutwood.

Sam first appeared in *Rupert and the Iceberg* in the Daily Express in 1938. The story begins with a splash and Rupert goes to the aid of an old man (sporting a magnificent white beard that hangs well past his waist). The man has fallen into a lake whilst collecting water-weeds. He proceeds to dash home and is startlingly nimble for someone of advanced years. He invites the little bear to his home and Rupert can scarcely manage to keep pace with the man. When the breathless bear enters the mansion he's impressed with a large collection of fish tanks containing not only fish, but many kinds of water-plants. By now the reader has guessed the man is not only seriously rich but a serious collector.

The Collector says he's flying to a cold land that day in his seaplane to collect a rare and valuable seaweed. Would Rupert like to come? You bet he does! He runs home to collect his coat and scarf and refuses to tell Mrs Bear where he's going. Strangely, she doesn't object.



The Collector pilots his plane to somewhere near the bitterly cold, inhospitable, bleak North Pole. He proceeds to search for the seaweed after saying to Rupert, 'You had better do a bit of climbing to keep warm.'

Rupert decides to visit his Uncle Polar Bear. What a coincidence this relation lives nearby. But how does he get to his Uncle's house? Suddenly a cheerful 'queer old sailor man' emerges from the rocks. This is Sailor Sam. He's dressed in an old-fashioned blue naval uniform and seems to spend his lonely, cold days fishing from his boat and living in his little hut.

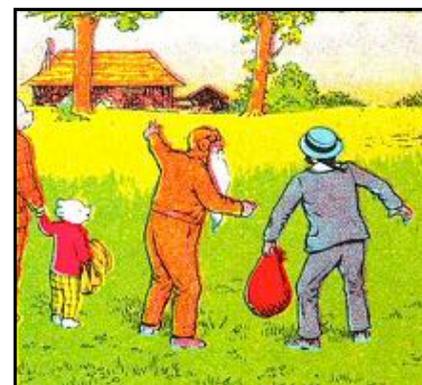
Why is he here? Was he banished to this unpleasant terrain? Does he eat anything other than fish? 'It's a dreary life up here alone with nothing to

do but fish,' Sam sighs. He takes Rupert to his Uncle but just as the youngster enters the igloo Uncle Polar says they are about to be plunged into months of darkness. Off Rupert goes and gets lost in a snow blizzard but is rescued by Sam. The illustrated frames look like scenes from the expeditions of Scott or Shackleton.



The pair board Sam's boat and set away to find the Collector, but the boat smashes into an iceberg whilst in a nasty storm. It is Rupert's idea that saves them; they use the iceberg as part of the boat and with the aid of the undamaged engine and ropes they escape the storm. Sam steers by the sun and stars and they eventually reach warmer waters. But the iceberg begins to melt and the boat's propeller becomes entangled with seaweed. As Rupert, Sam, the boat, the iceberg and the seaweed begin to sink the Collector's seaplane appears and the marooned pair are rescued. But it's a wonder the Collector doesn't fall into the sea with excitement when he sees the seaweed – it's that rare and valuable plant that he's after for his collection!

The Collector is delighted with the find and offers to take Sam away from the North Pole and fly to Nutwood in the plane. But oh dear, why is Sam unwilling to leave? So the Collector says he will provide the sailor with a brand-new boat with engine and sails. Sam agrees, and when the trio and the rare seaweed arrive in Nutwood Sam is given a roomy wooden shack in the grounds of the Collector's home.



So that's how and why Sailor Sam came to live in Nutwood.

A Sinister Story – not what you expect

by Roger Allen

Bideford in Devon, is my home town and to get almost anywhere in North Devon it will be necessary to travel over at least part of the A361, the North Devon Link Road between Bideford and Barnstaple and the M5. Some years ago I had decided to drive to South Molton, a town on the Link Road between Barnstaple and the M5, to visit the gallery of an artist friend who lived there. I had intended to leave the main road on my return and come home via smaller country roads through some villages that I had not visited before.

I had passed Barnstaple and then the exit to Landkey and Swimbridge on my right, when I noticed a new looking exit on my left with a sign pointing to Nutwood, 4½ miles. I had never noticed this exit before and imagined it must be to one of the new estates that are springing up all over North Devon. Less than a mile further on, there was another exit and sign again pointing to Nutwood, this time only 4 miles.

I swung off the A361 and took this exit. It was a narrow country road passing first through fields and then some quite dense woodland. The woodland ended and the road went through some

open country and I saw, projecting from some woods to the left of the road, what appeared to be the top of a Chinese pagoda, a folly of some bygone age I thought, and at some distance from

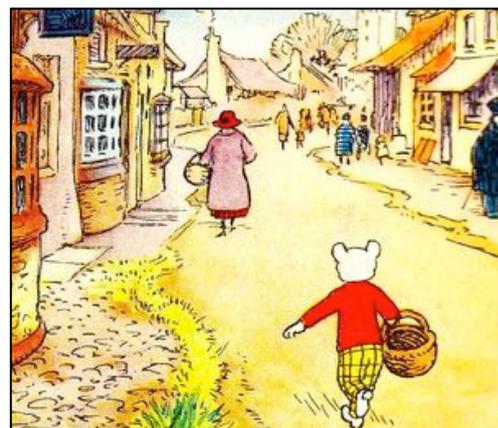
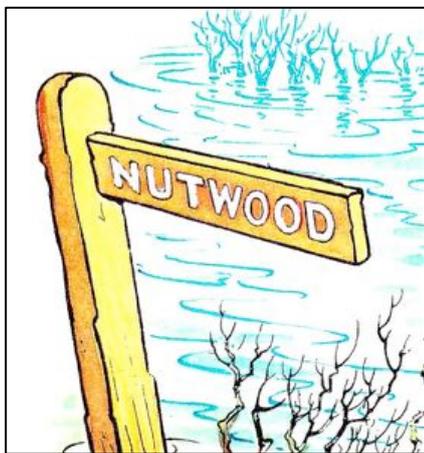
this there was a squat round tower with a small turret and flagpole on the top, but no flag. To the right I caught a glimpse of what appeared to be a large castle with complicated turrets and towers, this was at a great distance and was quickly hidden by the turns in the road.

The roadway itself was unusual, in that there were no hedges or ditches on either side, the tarmac was just a strip running through grassland which came right up to the edges of the road. At this point the road passed one or two cottages, mainly thatched but some were tiled. Simple dwellings they seemed to be, the front consisted of a central door with a window either side, mostly only on one floor but there were some with two floors and then the windows above replicated the two below. By now I was entering the actual village and quite a busy little scene it presented. People walking along the pavements between the shops but no real traffic in the street. I noticed one or two almost antique cars parked on the other side of the street but no movement.

I was driving very slowly to take in the scene and had noticed several shops on both sides of the main street. The first shop I noticed was a butcher's shop, with the butcher himself in a striped apron carrying an A frame outside, with,

no doubt, the day's offers written on it. Other shops included a toy shop and draper's stores; quite unusual I thought

for a small village, a general store and others. Glancing through the windows of the general store, I saw the shopkeeper behind the counter at the other end of the shop. It was very badly lit and he seemed to have a very dark and perhaps very hairy face. My eye caught a shop on the other side of the road as a lady covered in shawls was just returning into her shop. She had a very





large white head that I presumed to be white hair but from behind, the shape was for all the world like a sheep.

The street widened and bent to the left and there right on the side of the road was the church. A large square building with a small turret on

the top and all of a sudden the bells started to ring but only for a minute or two and then they stopped again. I drew up in the car and walked through the lychgate up to the door, but found it locked, in spite of the bells being rung. Returning through the graveyard I tried to read the inscriptions on one or two of the gravestones but the grass was very long and except for “In Memory of....”, the words carved on the stones were all obscured.

As I was returning to the car, a horse drawn carriage drew up beside me, the driver, dressed in a black suit, asked me



whether I would like a ride around the village and he would point out to me who lived where. There would be no charge for this as he was happy to show visitors around his village. I would rather have refused his kind offer but suddenly found my self sitting in his carriage and rolling off behind the plodding horse. He pointed out the squire’s noble residence just beside the church, and as we moved off he doffed his hat to an old gentleman with a long white beard who was shuffling slowly along the road holding on to a stout stick. The old man waved his arm to us.

We came to an area of open fields running beside some very thick woodlands. We got down from

the carriage and walked through a gate towards the trees. I noticed a scarecrow with outstretched arms and a hat standing away in the middle of the field. I suddenly realised that the weather seemed to have changed and the skies were darkening to a surprising degree, by the time we reached the woodland it was dusk like. I would have liked to return to my car but felt it would be churlish after the free offer from my guide. We were well into the forest now, when a rustling at my feet made me look down, to see a hedgehog coming towards me through the dead leaves. He suddenly stopped and then quickly turned and ran back into the undergrowth. At almost the same time a large red squirrel ran down the trunk of the nearest tree stopped when it saw me, ran down onto the ground and up the next tree to vanish as quickly as it had appeared.



I heard a sound straight ahead of me, and thinking it might be some woodsmen that my guide wished me to meet, I turned to him, only to find he had vanished while I had been preoccupied. The woods ahead were now in almost total darkness but I could see two large figures emerging towards me. The foremost had



a huge light coloured head and there were some bright spots of colour on its clothes, tie and waistcoat perhaps. He opened his mouth or rather a snout full of large teeth and gave a threatening growl. His companion who had the most enormous orange brown head loomed up and suddenly went down on all fours and I saw the

rippling body of a large lion before me. Fortunately in those days I could still run though not very fast and run I did. Back through the trees by the field to the open gate. I could hear the two behind me but somehow they were only chasing me half heartedly. Without actually looking I noticed that the scarecrow had moved from the centre of the large field to within a few yards of the edge of the field and the gate.

My car was somehow parked just outside the gate, I threw myself in and drove forward. I decided that I did not want to venture any further into unknown territory and would rather run the gauntlet back through the village and make for the A361. A few yards further on was a turning to the left with a signpost indicating Poptown, 3 miles and Robin Down 4 miles. I reversed at this point and drove back towards the village. People were still walking and talking on the pavements and they all turned to look at me as I sped through the village. There was no traffic, other than the two cars which I had seen parked by the road when I had arrived. I did not slow down and drove the four miles back through the woodland and fields until I suddenly and thankfully heard the sound of cars driving by and I came to the exit onto the A361. I had to turn left in the direction of South Molton, but I decided that I just wanted to return to Bideford and home. At the first layby I waited for a complete lull in the traffic and then did an illegal U turn back towards Barnstaple.

I passed by the sign to Nutwood and as I drove past, I saw a group of figures at the exit, the carriage and the brown horse were there and others, including a figure with what appeared to be a large orange brown head. I glanced back in my side and rear mirrors but there was nothing there to see. I have travelled over that stretch of

the A361 probably fifty times at least since then, maybe more, and either I was always distracted or the signposts had been removed but I cannot recall ever noticing those exits to Nutwood again.

Final Thought ...

I have often wondered what species of bear are Rupert's family. Almost certainly one of the many species of brown bear, possibly the Kodiak bear, one of the largest. Almost all species of bears are carnivorous to varying degrees. Bestall only lets the curtain fall aside a few times revealing a little reality behind the idyllic scenes of the World of Rupert. The bones on the ground in front of Uncle Grizzly's cave from the 1949 annual and the butcher's shop on page 74 of the 1944 annual, are two examples. Uncle Polar lives in the middle of an Arctic waste, with no supermarkets or general stores for thousands of miles around, yet he always manages to give Rupert some refreshment when he drops in. Thinly sliced cured seal springs to mind. One enquires what meat the butcher sells and who buys and eats it. He will have several customers, the Bears and Dr. Lion are obvious possibilities, but what about Mr Foxhound who runs the drapers shop and Constable Growler and the Postman. I am sure that the good Mrs. Tiger at Rocky Bay and Mrs. Leopard at Sandy Bay, serve up, at their boarding houses, full English breakfasts with plenty of bacon, to the Bears, when they are on holiday at these places, and I doubt they serve them salad in the evenings.

Roger Allen



Rupert at Selfridges

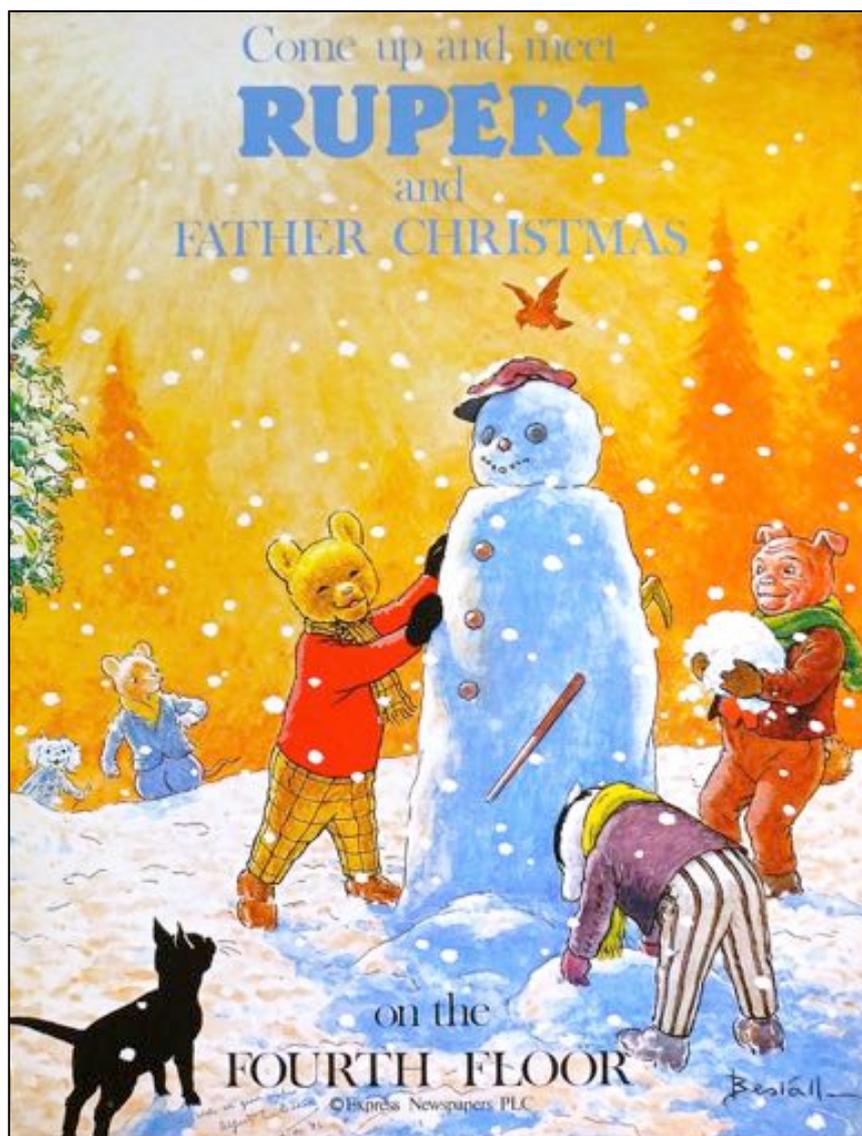
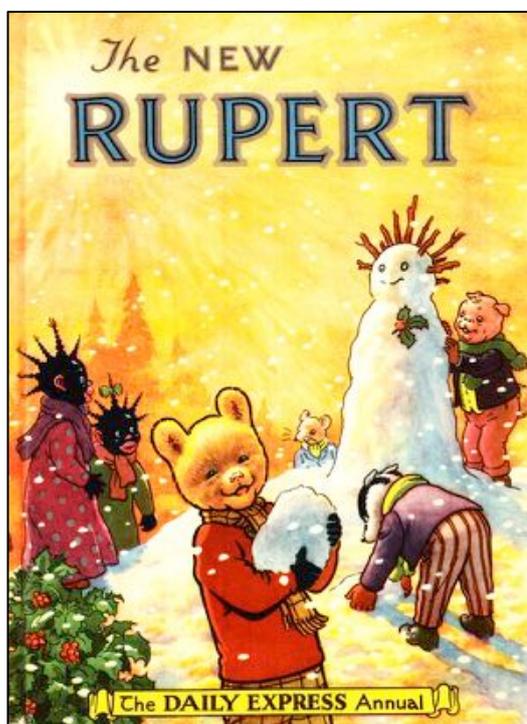
The origin of our NN95 cover

In 1982 Selfridges London store dedicated their children's Christmas section to celebrate Rupert. As well as special wall plaques, which they eventually passed on to the Followers and have decorated our Annual Meeting venues in the past, they also gave away a tin badge featuring Rupert and Father Christmas. Also a poster to advertise the event was produced and is shown here, and Alfred Bestall supplied the original artwork which appears as he painted it on the cover of this issue. It was probably the last piece of commercial Rupert art he produced in colour as sadly he passed away in January 1986.



Alfred obviously based the painting on the 1954 Rupert Annual, replacing some of the background characters for PC reasons. It is certainly a very Christmassy scene and we are pleased that we are able to reproduce it here for a wider Rupert audience.

John Beck



A Heart-stopping Moment

We often read about Rupert's life being in danger during his adventures. The situations include life-threatening circumstances, the encountering of evil characters, the undertaking of terrifying journeys and indeed coping with all sorts of problems which are guaranteed to raise the reader's level of anxiety. And those illustrations of Rupert in trouble provide us with many a heart-stopping moment.

One of my favourite heart-stopping images from the Rupert stories isn't one of the aforesaid situations, but a cheerful one where he is happily sawing logs. Rupert isn't using a bow saw – no youngster should be entrusted with such a dangerous tool – but there he is portrayed actually turning the handle of a vicious looking circular saw! And without the Health and Safety regulations of a hard hat, goggles, gloves and whatever other protective clothing is required. And isn't there something in the law about a minimum age to operate machinery? Circular saws, used in saw mills from the 18th century, have now largely been replaced by band saws.

*Bow, circular, band or chain –
Beware young bear they all can maim.*

Let's take a brief look why we find Rupert in charge of that handle, and the blame lies with one person: Oscar.

Oscar appears at the end of the story *Rupert and Willie* in *A New Rupert Book* 1945. In December Rupert has elected to gather wood for Mr and Mrs Bear, and this is the start of an adventure which also features

Willie
Mouse and
a rich,
stately old
gentleman
who owns
a mansion.
The
gentleman
requests
his strange
little
servant
woodman,



*Old Oscar might be very strong,
But mixing kids with saws is wrong!*

Oscar, to provide wood for the chums to take home. Straightaway the energetic and powerful Oscar chops down a pine tree then divides it into ten-foot lengths. He fetches several more lengths of pine tree and then has an idea.

'I believe you two could do part of this job and save half the time,' he says. 'It's not difficult at all.' Oscar might have added although it's not difficult it's dangerous, but remains silent about this useful piece of information. Turn from page 65 to 66 and the first frame shows my favourite heart-stopping image. 'They turn the handle round and round and watch the logs fall to the ground' might well have become:



*They turn the handle round and round,
And Rupert's hands fall to the ground.*

And Willie's whiskers might get sliced too, because he's dangerously close to that evil-looking machine. Fortunately there are no casualties. These days Oscar might have used a chain saw; perhaps with such a machine he would have also asked the chums to have a go?

My, isn't Oscar strong! Look how he takes the shafts of the cart which transports a mountain of freshly-sawn logs, with Rupert and Willie sitting atop, to Rupert's home. The old gentleman doesn't need to employ a horse with Oscar working around his estate. Mr Bear is surprised and delighted when he sees the wood, for now the family will be warm that winter. And one wonders if Rupert's parents, every time they bask by their fire enjoying the heat, know who stood close to, and controlled, the saw which cut the wood.

I can look at the illustrations of Rupert in all manner of dangerous situations without blinking an eye. But as a parent I get that heart-stopping moment every time I look at that picture of Rupert at the handle of the circular saw (but to be honest, I don't look that often).

What are other Followers' favourite heart-stopping moments?

Ruth Sear

Let's hear yours, Ed