

# Newsletter

## 1968 - 2018 FCBG GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

*50 years of bringing children and books together*

2018 will be an extremely important year in the history of the Federation of Children's Book Groups as we celebrate our Golden Anniversary. There will be a whole year of celebrations culminating in a special event in Birmingham on 3rd November.

The year will start with the launch of our latest booklist which consists of our members' favourite books from the past 50 years. This will be available to download from the website and as a hard copy to be handed out at all the celebratory events.

Next comes our annual conference which will be at Queenswood School and is being organised by Herts CBG. Speakers will include four times CBA winner Michael Morpurgo, two times CBA winner Jacqueline Wilson, Children's Laureate Lauren Child and many authors and illustrators who have been involved with the Federation over the years. Conference will open with a special 50th anniversary tea party. There will also be a display of FCBG history which will be available for groups to borrow for their own celebratory events.

Later in the year will come Golden National Share a Story Month, the Golden Children's Book Award and Golden National Non-Fiction November. The

Jean Russell Storytelling Project will run throughout the year with a special performance at the event in Birmingham.

We hope that all FCBG members will be joining in with the celebrations by holding their own events. Vice Chair Chris Routh has produced a fantastic resource pack for groups which includes templates for bunting and bookmarks, bear themed quizzes and teddy bear party invitations. We want every group to hold their own event and send us photos which will be added to the website and used for a display at Conference 2019. Look out for a surprise present from us in the post soon. We hope you will make use of it throughout the year to celebrate and promote the work of the Federation.

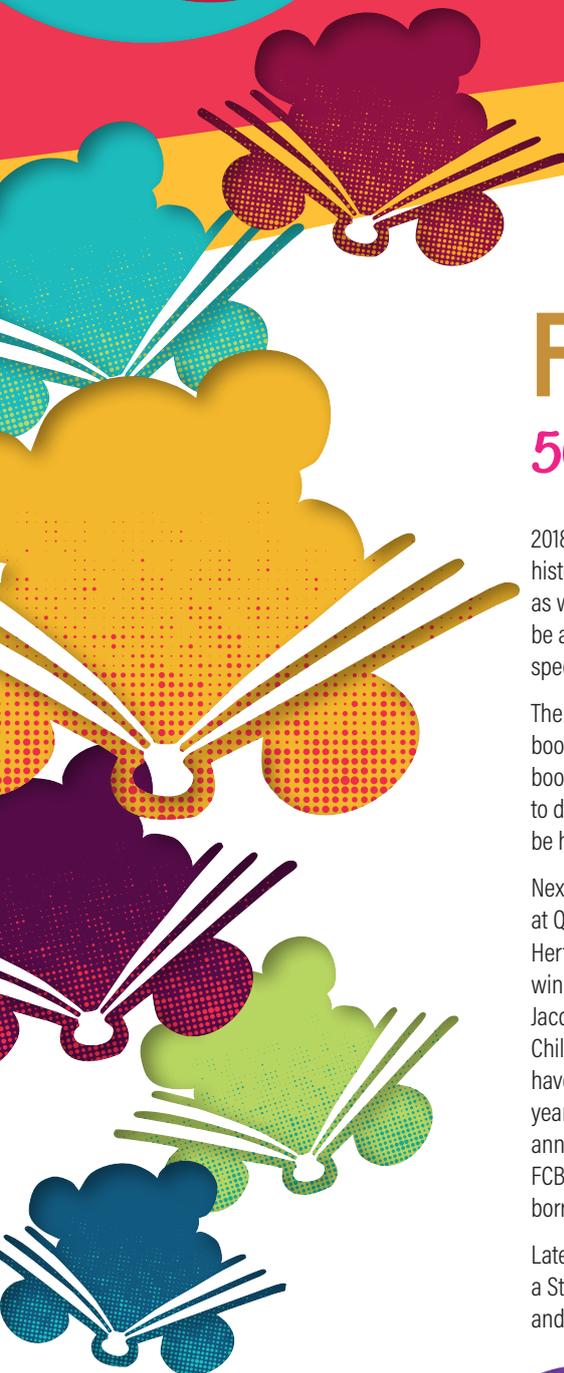
Finally, we will be producing three copies of the newsletter next year because there will be so much to tell you all as the year progresses.

The hard work carried out by the groups around the country has enabled the FCBG to support children's reading over the past 50 years and I hope that all of you will join us in our celebrations.

**JANE ETHERIDGE**  
CHAIR

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# Children's Book Award

The Federation of Children's Book Groups  
Registered Charity 268289

Our new website, [www.childrensbookaward.org.uk](http://www.childrensbookaward.org.uk), is packed full of resources and fun activities for children of all ages based on all of our Winners in 2017 and on our Top 50 Pick of the Year. And you can sign up NOW for information on how to vote online for 2018 and join the Voting Countdown.

Our twelve testing groups across the UK are still reading and reviewing the books that have been generously provided by the publishers. In total, the volunteer testers circulate over 1,000 books from over 100 publishing imprints to nearly 250 schools and families across rural Scotland, Lincolnshire and West Wales as well as in large cities such as London and Plymouth every year, meeting tremendous logistical challenges. The votes will come in in early February and the Top Ten shortlist will be revealed soon afterwards. If you are not a member of a Testing Group and want to be involved in our Top Ten voting in 2018 e-mail [contact@childrensbookaward.org.uk](mailto:contact@childrensbookaward.org.uk) to be the first to hear the Top Ten or follow us on Twitter @CBACoordinator. The web site will have downloadable Top Ten packs with bookmarks, stickers, bunting and great ways of getting children involved in the voting. And remember, the work that the children write or draw about the books can be entered for the portfolios that are presented to all the Top Ten authors and illustrators at the Award Ceremony in June.

Our Children's Book Award is still the only national award voted for entirely by children from start to finish; we listen to what the children enjoy most, empowering them by making their vote count. Remember that any child in the UK can take part in the Top Ten voting, so encourage all your friends, family and schools to get involved in the children's choice!



VISIT  
OUR NEW  
DEDICATED  
WEB SITE  
ON THE  
CHILDREN'S  
BOOK  
AWARD

## NATIONAL NON-FICTION NOVEMBER 2017

**As we go to press, National Non-Fiction November is in full swing. Watch out for full news of this event in the next newsletter, due out in March 2018.**

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[www.fcbg.org.uk](http://www.fcbg.org.uk)





# Tweeting your way to success

## 'Getting Reading Reading' on Twitter

Reading Children's Book Group currently has a healthy following of 400 on Twitter and follows around 550 accounts. Our aim is to promote what we do, to network with local community groups, libraries, schools, book shops and authors, and to shout out about all things concerned with getting children and books together. We tweet or retweet news about local book events and book awards, nearby places to visit, advice and research about reading, plus the odd book or two! As well as building a local presence, we also see ourselves as ambassadors for FCBG and retweet news from other CBGs and about the Children's Book Award, the annual conference, NNFN and NSSM.

The choice of what to tweet about and retweet, who to follow and who to interact with on Twitter has been made with care - it can be very effective in building a group's profile and it will definitely be noticed. A follower recently commented that they 'liked the ethos' of the 'Getting Reading Reading' account. Have a look at North Somerset CBG's Twitter which has built an impressive following for their Teachers' Book Award through regular tweets about the eligible books, using the usernames or 'handles' of authors, illustrators, publishers and book shops and the hashtag for the award (#NSTBA17). Or Ipswich, which uses a similar approach to connecting with their local community to ours. We both enjoy tweeting about Fed Ted's adventures as well.

But what does the group actually get out of this? First and foremost it is free advertising. We know it works: people have come to events they've seen advertised on Twitter, occasionally from quite a distance. If you tag locations, organisations and publishers there's a strong possibility that they will retweet your message; you can use effective hashtags to attract attention and link your tweets to hot topics in the wider world of children's books. For us, Twitter has also been instrumental in nurturing partnerships with our local libraries, museums and book shops, as well as the organisers of annual events such as Reading Children's Festival and Reading Fringe Festival. Once established as part of a mutually supportive network, your followers (some of whom could even be local authors, illustrators or publishers) will help to broaden awareness about what your group does as a matter of course.

Twitter is definitely the preferred form of social media for the majority of people involved in creating, promoting, selling and mediating children's books - authors, illustrators, publishers, reviewers, librarians, teachers and parents, not to mention national organisations like BookTrust, The Reading Agency or the School Library Association, for example. As we look forward to our 50th anniversary next year, it would be great if more CBGs were to join the conversation on Twitter and help us to celebrate and promote the great work of FCBG, both locally and nationally.

**CHRIS ROUTH**



# THE BOOKTRUST ANNUAL LECTURE & Celebrating 25 Years of Bookstart



FCBG Chair Jane Etheridge and I attended a very special evening of celebrations on October 19th, which was organised by BookTrust and held at The Royal Institute of British Architects in London. The evening began with the BookTrust's Annual Lecture delivered by the new Children's Laureate, Lauren Child, who explored the inspiration for and influences on her own writing and artwork. She is clearly passionate about the importance of the visual aspect of storytelling. But her main message was a plea to give children time to think about nothing, to even be bored. This is the time they are most likely to have ideas and develop their own creativity.

The second half of the evening was a celebration of Bookstart, the book-gifting initiative which started 25 years ago with a pilot project involving just 300 families and is now a universal programme which gets books into the hands of 1.4 million babies and young children every year. Congratulations to founder Wendy Cooling who was presented with a BookTrust Outstanding Achievement Award for her incredible work which has sparked similar projects around the world.

CHRIS ROUTH



## GNSSM 2018 Celebrating A World of Stories

The aim of next year's **Golden National Share a Story Month** is to celebrate stories, poetry, myths and legends from around the world, exploring other cultures as well as our own British stories.

Book groups will be encouraged to choose a country or link to the backgrounds and cultures of their members, and enjoy their stories. Story sharing sessions and/or cultural events could be held with words, music, art work, food and costume from a particular land. We shall also highlight and explore Literature in Translation.

GNSSM will encourage story-telling and sharing, and book group member children as well as guests from their local community can be invited to read stories or tell their own tale and celebrate their country.

There will be a particular theme of **Golden stories**, to celebrate the FCBG's 50 years with the aim to identify as many as possible, share them across groups and list them on the Federation website.

There will also be a theme of **food** – looking at traditions of cooking and telling stories. Are there similar recipes in different cultures or stories with food as a main 'ingredient' to the tale?

More details with ideas and contacts will be sent out to groups in the New Year along with information about competitions. So time to start planning your group events for GNSSM 2018!

LOUISE STOTHARD





# NEWS FROM THE GROUPS



## SOLIHULL CHILDREN'S BOOK GROUP

Phyl Gaunt

On Wednesday 13th September **Steve Smallman**, author and illustrator of wonderful picture books, visited Hazel Oak Special School, Solihull, to open their newly refurbished library. Steve spoke in assembly and then performed the opening ceremony. He then did reading and drawing sessions for classes throughout the school. By the end of the day Steve had shared his talents with children ranging in age from five to fifteen. They were all transfixed by his illustrations and loved his books ranging from 'Dragon Stew' to the perennial favourite 'Poo in The Zoo'. Meanwhile, all classes were visiting the library and enjoying choosing books in delightful surroundings. It was a great day and so heartening to see a library given such value within the school community. Long may it continue.



## READING CHILDREN'S BOOK GROUP

Chris Routh

In July, the group organised and sponsored two author events for families as part of the Reading Fringe Festival programme, featuring local authors **A F Harrold** and **Holly Webb**.

Since September *Getting Reading Reading* has been offering an extra monthly story session at Reading Central Library aimed at 5-7 year olds, which takes place immediately before the established meeting for 8-12 year olds. **Sue Palmer**, another local author, joined our 8-12s session in October to explore what it takes to be an astronaut. The group is now looking forward to a special extended session for the older age group at The Museum of English Rural Life to coincide with National Non-Fiction November. There is also an established, regular monthly meeting for group members participating in CBA Testing to provide an opportunity to swap bags, recommendations and ideas.

## IPSWICH CHILDREN'S BOOK GROUP

Shirley Imlach

In conjunction with Andersen Press, Ipswich CBG was very pleased to host an entertaining event with the creators of the Dragonsitter series, **Josh Lacey** and **Garry Parsons**. Children from two schools enjoyed an afternoon of readings, chat and drawings as they found out what is involved in being a Dragonsitter. Having a dragon to stay can result in scorched curtains, smelly piles of dragon poo and a very large shopping bill, especially for chocolate! It is also a lot of fun and can lead to crazy adventures!

Thanks to everyone who came along, and especially to Josh and Garry for all their hard work.



## LEWES CHILDREN'S BOOK GROUP

Lots to celebrate in Lewes!

Members of Lewes CBG were delighted that their chair, Jenny Maidment, was awarded an 'unsung heroes' award for her work with LCBG, at an event organised by Lewes District Council. The awards recognise the contribution of volunteers to their local community and were presented at a special event at Lewes House.

Their treasurer, Diana Rogers, recently celebrated her 80th birthday. Diana has been involved with LCBG for over 40 years, and many local children's writers, including authors **Miriam Moss**, **Hilda Offen** and **Jon Walter**, as well as past and present members, joined together to wish her a special day. The group compiled a Quentin Blake illustrated card which turned into a small book of messages from well-wishers, and bought her a bouquet, a Roy Kirkham 'Creative Writing' (book design) bone cup and saucer, and a voucher.

Lewes Children's Book Group sponsored a visit to Iford and Kingston primary school by **Ronda** and **David Armitage** in July in celebration of the 40th anniversary of 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch'.





# NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

## HERTS CHILDREN'S BOOK GROUP

Roshan Hunt

From reading to the red carpet, there ain't no party like an AR party.

Fearnhill School in Letchworth, a member of Herts CBG, has won a prestigious, national award from Renaissance Learning, providers of the Accelerated Reader (AR) computer-based reading scheme. The judges awarded Fearnhill winner in the Most Creative Celebration of Reading category at an exclusive event atop the National Theatre on London's South Bank.

The winning celebration at Fearnhill involved students who had read at least one million words, or whose reading ages had improved hugely, receiving golden tickets to a red-carpet event. The School's music students performed songs based on books, including a rousing performance of the 1978 Kate Bush classic Wuthering Heights, sung by the Head Girl.

Cupcakes with edible book covers were very popular and students competed in a Bananagrams challenge by completing crossword type grids. There was also a sneak preview of 8ft canvases of iconic book covers which Fearnhill's Art students are working on to display in the Library.

Mrs Hunt, the Librarian and LRC Manager is an example of successful school investment in a Chartered Librarian.

## YEO VALLEY CHILDREN'S BOOK GROUP

Heidi Hollis

Meeting the Minpins in the North Somerset Forest. The Yeo Valley group met one sunny Sunday afternoon in mid-October, gathering at Goblin Combe, the site of a North Somerset environment centre set in 130 acres of beautiful natural forest. After a brisk hike up to the outdoor gathering place, attendees were welcomed by the orange glow of the sun through the trees as well as that of the campfire, toward which all ages were drawn. The event drew focus from Roald Dahl's story of *'The Minpins'*, tiny woodland folk so small they ride about on birds and make their homes in the knots, nooks and crannies of the forest's majestic trees. They are hunted, though, by the Gruncher, a fearsome creature with fire in his belly and smoke so heavy through his nostrils that no one is quite sure what he looks like, and he himself cannot see where he is going. Into this world, Little Billy, a boy of just so many years, voyages out of sight of his mother, and with the cooperation of the Minpins and the birds, becomes their hero and defeats the Gruncher.

Children of all ages (and those adults who retain vivid imaginations) enjoyed time around the campfire as selections of the story were read aloud. The guest host, **Chloe Brown** and her team from the Yeo Vale Forest School then led a series of Minpins-inspired forest craft activities, all using the twigs, branches, moss, berries, leaves, sprigs and other natural resources found around us (and a bit of brown clay or a couple of lolly sticks thrown in for good measure). Children led adults and created their own Gruncher monsters, built Minpin homes in the knots of old tree stumps, and recreated the celebration scene in forest floor story frames, complete with "winkleberries and puckleberries and muckleberries and twinkleberries and





snozberries." Much fun then ensued – some were whittling roasting sticks (the potato peeler being in great demand), others reinforced an ailing bivouac, or cast magical spells using forest-provided wands while hot dogs bubbled in a pot on the fire. Ketchup flowed freely, sticky mouths consumed roasted marshmallows aplenty, and several knees and bottoms were soiled dutifully. None of us wanted to leave, but we kept a close lookout for the Minpins as we hiked back down to civilisation, as the season's first crisp leaves crunched underfoot. Welcome to Autumn.

Tips for running an event like this:

- invite a Forest School teacher to lead the craft activities - a tarpaulin strung between trees helps define a 'create station'
- charge £1 for hot dogs (provide buns and ketchup)
- invite attendees to bring their own water, marshmallows, veg peelers for whittling
- have someone get there early to light the fire
- the reader needs to have a voice which can carry outdoors
- the hike is a great way to bookend the event -- if your gathering place is near to parking add another extra layer or additional activity (eg. if you have a singer/performer available have them lead the creation of a Gruncher Song)
- If people are engaging with their surroundings, it's a success!



# Hilarie brings a new **GLow** to the Federation!

Sharing a love of reading has been my joy and passion, both with my own children and all those that I have taught over the years. Finding different authors and enjoying their work has been, and still is, a never ending source of delight.



My connection with the FCBG began about ten years ago when I met Libby Allman and consequently started testing books in school for the Children's Book Award. Since then I have regularly attended conferences, become more acquainted with the book testing process and got to know people who work so hard to promote a love of reading.

Since retiring from full-time teaching, I have been able to involve myself in organising book events for children, in and out of school, and meeting others who are equally enthusiastic about books and the role they can play in people's lives.

As newly appointed Group Liaison Officer (GLO) I look forward to engaging with the groups around the country, maybe helping set up some new ones and being there to offer ideas and support.

[hilarie.medler@btconnect.com](mailto:hilarie.medler@btconnect.com)



NICK SHARRATT

## A GOLDEN TREASURY: Hidden Gems and Bright Futures

*The 50th anniversary conference of the  
Federation of Children's Book Groups*

*Queenswood School, Hatfield*

*13th-15th April 2018*

Confirmed speakers include Michael Morpurgo, Jacqueline Wilson, Lauren Child, Robin Stevens, Katherine Woodfine, Meg McLaren, Jackie Morris, James Mayhew, Zeb Soanes, Justin Somper, Sarah Crossan and Heather Crossley.

Members of Herts CBG, our hosts, have recently learned how to make paper flowers from recycled book pages. They will be practising their skills over the next few months, but to find out why, you will need to join them at the conference!

Top Tip for Conference: as it's our Golden Anniversary, do make sure you pack something golden to wear at the Gala Dinner on the Saturday evening!

For updates and booking information see [www.fcbg.org.uk/conference](http://www.fcbg.org.uk/conference) or email [fcbgconference@gmail.com](mailto:fcbgconference@gmail.com)

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

## JANUARY

- 2nd Costa Book Award winners announced  
27th Deadline for first round of voting for Children's Book Award  
tbc Lollies (Laugh Out Loud) Awards announced

## FEBRUARY

- 2nd Harry Potter Night  
14th International Book Giving Day  
Mid-Feb Announcement of CBA Top Ten

## MARCH

- 1st World Book Day  
1st Blue Peter Book Award  
16th Short list Carnegie & Kate Greenaway Awards announced  
7th -18th Imagine Children's Festival, South Bank, London  
18th World Book Night

## APRIL

- 13-15th FCBG conference, Queenswood School, Hatfield, Herts.

Deadline for the next issue is Monday 5th March 2018

Next Issue: National Non-Fiction November 2017  
Golden 50 Book List

Your Group's celebrations of the Federation's 50th Anniversary so far ...

Please send all your group news, high resolution photos and top tips to [hilarie.medler@btconnect.com](mailto:hilarie.medler@btconnect.com)  
Please note this is a new address to send your articles to.

Follow us on Twitter @FCBGNews and on Facebook and don't forget our website: [www.fcbg.org.uk](http://www.fcbg.org.uk) where you can subscribe to our blog!

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# Spreading the Word about FCBG

As usual, the Chair and Vice Chair have been busy representing the Federation at a variety of book launches, industry events and meetings surrounding our upcoming anniversary celebrations. As well as those mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, highlights include the CLIPPA ceremony in July, YALC which was a great opportunity to talk to publishers, the opening of the Michael Morpurgo exhibition at the Museum of Childhood, the launch of Lockwood & Co and the SLA School Librarian of the Year Award.

## Executive Committee

The next Executive meeting will be on 13th January 2018. All meetings are held in London. Please contact Jane for further information at least two weeks in advance if you would like to attend as an observer. **We are currently in need of new members of the Executive so if you think you may be interested, this is always a good first step.**

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Many thanks to **Christine Leggett** (Minutes Secretary) who has now stepped down from the Executive Committee. We are delighted that **Hilarie Medler** has been co-opted after attending Executive Meetings as an observer. She will be formally elected at the AGM.

