



The Federation of Children's Book Groups

Newsletter

Summer 2014



Cressida Cowell, opening the Conference on Friday evening

Looking Back over 10 years of attending the Federation Conference

Rebecca and I first decided to come along to an **FCBG conference** because our mother would come back from her long weekends of books with so many fun stories and full of such enthusiasm that we were a bit jealous. As we had been involved in the Federation as keen book testers since we were children, and were also both studying relevant degrees at the time, with ideas of going into careers in book related industries we managed to convince her that one year she should bring us along too. That was exactly 10 years ago - at the 2004 conference in Birmingham - and we've been coming along ever since!

At our first conference we were so excited to meet the authors and illustrators, to hear them speak and get our books signed. We were completely overawed by all the other information, and all the cake! We skipped the more serious things such as the AGM and instead had conversations with **Holly Black** and **Tony Diterlizzi** about fingerless gloves and creating fairies. We didn't really talk to many of the other delegates though.

Now we have a somewhat altered perspective, both having started on those career paths and become more involved in the Federation ourselves, Becca of course sitting on the executive committee. We still very much look forward to the authors and talks, which are still of great interest to us but what perhaps makes the event so exciting to us now is meeting

up with familiar faces and getting to know new ones. We have found it is often the conversations sparked by the talks and seminars that are had over lunch or a drink in the bar which prove to be the interesting and inspiring moments of the weekend. It's great to get so many different perspectives on the book industry, and to be able to get enthusiastic about books, and ways of sharing them, with like-minded people.

Our Highlights from the last 10 years

A lot of laughing and some puzzling questions with the **The Two Steves** at their Friday evening Pub Quiz in 2013.

Listening to magical story telling from **Cat Weatherill** at the University of Hertfordshire in 2005.

Spending a spellbound hour listening to **Judith Kerr** talking about her childhood and her writing.

Brian Wildsmith showing off his party trick of being able to draw with both hands, in Birmingham at our very first conference.

Philip Reeve talking to us all about travelling cities on our first visit to Worth Abbey.

All the birthday parties and anniversaries that we help to celebrate - the **Gruffalo's 10th**, **Kipper's 18th**, **Mr Gumpy's**, **Puffin's 70th**, **Walker's 25th**... and many, many more.



Philip Reeve and Sarah McIntyre waking everyone up on Saturday



A sea of sea monkeys

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www.fcbg.org.uk



Conference 2014



Alex Milway closes conference

This year **Cressida Cowell** opened conference with some wow factor by showing the trailer for the next film instalment of 'How to Train Your Dragon' before regaling us with stories of her childhood holidays spent on a remote island and where she finds inspiration.

Sarah McIntyre and **Philip Reeve** were a great choice for first thing on Saturday morning, really ensuring we woke up. They caused much amusement posing for photographs in their brilliantly eccentric outfits, sharing stories of how their collaborations came about and what's to come next. I think everyone enjoyed learning how to draw sea monkeys for themselves and then waving their drawings about as accompaniment to the sea monkey song.



Justin Somper and Ruta Sepetys with Ros Bartlett

Justin Somper was talking about how her books happen which she illustrated with an amusingly put together Powerpoint slideshow revealing what her brain 'looks like' at various stages of the process.

One of my personal highlights from this year was the seminar I chose to go to with **Abie Longstaff**, which was really informative about her work and the way she constructs the fairy tale world of her picture books, adding in so many rich entertaining details. She carries ideas across the books in the *Fairytale Hairdresser* series, collaborating closely with the illustrator to reference previous stories using the background characters and in the way the town develops, which is not something I had really thought of before.

The Gala dinner speaker, **Ruta Sepetys**, was absolutely riveting, fascinating us with the stories of her family history

The weekend continued well with the quality of speakers being very high this year and several book 'birthdays' were celebrated over the course of the weekend. We were lucky to have quite a lot of illustrators and it's always brilliant to have lovely pictures to look at during the talks, as well as hearing about their interesting processes.

Meg Rosoff's talk was really funny,

in Lithuania and of persecution under Stalin's reign of terror. Despite the heavy subject she managed to make it both engaging and funny, whilst also encouraging us to go out in search of our own stories.

So once again we headed home with our heads full of stories and ideas and our bags laden down with all the books we didn't mean to buy but couldn't resist once we'd heard so much about them. Really looking forward to seeing everyone in Grantham next year!

Written by Jessica Knight, the illustrator behind the 2014 Conference logo. Jessica first joined the (now closed) York Children's book group along with the rest of the Knight family in 1996.

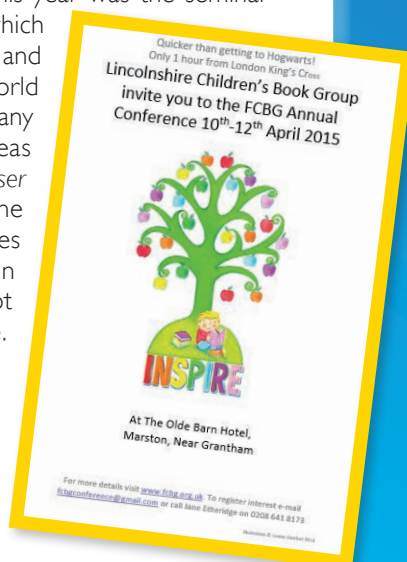
Conference 2015 will be held at the Olde Barn Hotel, Marston, near Grantham and Lincolnshire Children's Book Group (formerly Barrowby and Grantham) are working hard to make it a fab one! Put the dates in your diary: 10th-12th April.

Creating a Reading Space

We've all been reading a long time, and as such we've all developed our own habits around reading, including our favourite place to read. As adults we might have had to learn to adjust some of the reading habits we had when we were younger, and we probably don't have as much time to spend tucked up with a book as we would like to, but when we do we want it to be somewhere cosy, comfortable and with not too many distractions.

When it comes to creating the perfect reading space for children, whether at home or at school or in a library we should be aiming to create the same kind of environment.

- Comfortable and inviting – it should be somewhere that is immediately welcoming, that draws you into it and somewhere you can happily spend a lot of time, with cushions or blankets and the space to curl up or stretch out, with enough space for a couple of people to be able to share stories together.
- Quiet and calm, but not silent – for those that find it easy to read anywhere it can be easy to forget that a lot of noise can make it incredibly hard to concentrate, but too quiet can also be difficult.
- Well lit – to help protect little eyes.
- And, very importantly - space for books! – especially for children, books should be displayed at a good height, easy to find and choose from, but they shouldn't be overwhelming in the space – too much choice can be distracting!





National Share a Story Month 2014

Imagination and Inventiveness

As you all know very well, May is the month that the Federation devotes to celebrations of storytelling. We all like taking the time to spread the joy of a yarn well-spun, and if there are some exciting crafty activities going along with it, and the possibility of some kind of sweet treat involved, so much the better!

For this year's National Share a Story Month the Federation partnered with Puffin and Dahl & Dahl, for a month long celebration of Imagination and Inventiveness, inspired by 2014 marking the 50th anniversary of the publication of Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Amazing events were held around the country with top hats tipped and lollipops raised to some of Roald Dahl's best-loved characters.

More from some of our members about what their group got up to:

Members of **READING CBG** donned Willy Wonka style top hats and waistcoats for the Roald Dahl themed drop in activity at Reading Central Library on Saturday 10th May. Tables were spread with a variety of activities, information about the Federation and chocolate cake (to celebrate the 50th birthday of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*).

Even before the official start time, families started to arrive and before we knew it the library was heaving with 60 children plus their parents! As one of the events of the annual Children's Festival, we were in the official programme and the inclement weather also worked in our favour. Children of all ages had a go at making 'sweets that looked round' and 'luminous lollipops', creating their own sweetie concoctions and entering a quiz about the author.

Lots of interest in the group, smiley faces and full tummies - an unqualified success! Happy Birthday Charlie!

Chris Routh, Reading CBG

SADDLEWORTH CBG (our very newest group!) used their National Share a Story Month event as their launch party:

Our launch party was a great success! Fifty eight children signed up as members and brought their families and friends... Very busy indeed.

Mr Willy Wonka turned up as a surprise guest! He gave out Golden Tickets and chocolates to children who completed the quiz. Book group members designed sweets and ice creams with imagination and flair; as well as making top hats fit for the most glamorous of Dahl occasions. Willy Wonka judged all the design competitions and there were lots of books as prizes, some donated by Waterstones Oldham. The local Yorkshire author, Roddy Brooks, came to the event and donated two copies of his book, *The Journey*, which he signed for lucky winners.

Children built a Great Glass Elevator, which became a popular play area for the entire event, and there were Augustus Gloop and Mike Teavee games to join in with too.

After all the crafts and games, storytelling and building, there was a chance for all the children to try Wonka's Whipple Scrumptious Fudgemallow Delight and many children also took home Stickjaw Toffee, for talkative parents.

All in all, it was a happy party atmosphere and there has been a lot of positive feedback from parents saying how much their children enjoyed it and they're looking forward to next month's event.

Kate B, Saddleworth CBG

And finally, **YEO VALLEY** Children's Book Group celebrated with an exciting event for everyone, with some incredibly delicious activities, as their members got to dive (though not quite so literally as Augustus Gloop) into a chocolate fountain. They also practised dancing like oompa-loompas and designed their very own brand of confectionary, whilst extracts from the book were read aloud.

The event made it into their local paper (you can see the clipping on their blog, or find some fantastic pictures at http://www.thewestonmercury.co.uk/news/education/children_enjoy_sweet_treat_1_3606821)

The proceeds from the raffle at the Gala Dinner at this year's annual Federation conference have been donated to Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity and we are delighted to be able to say that we raised a marvellous £300. To find out more about them and the work they do please visit <https://www.roalddahl.com/charity>



Reading CBG:
Fun activities,
crafty things
and making
giant lollipops!



**Willy Wonka at
Saddleworth CBG**



**Saddleworth CBG: Augustus Gloop and
Stickjaw Toffee!**



A SUMMER OF ADVENTURES

The summer is the perfect time to get away from everything, and make your own stories, and there are plenty of places around the country just waiting to provide an opportunity to create something magical.

TRAVEL BACK IN TIME...

BEAMISH

Beamish, in County Durham, is a world famous open air museum that tells the story of life in North East England at several different points in history. Different parts of the 3 acre site take you back to a different era – visit the 1820s at Pockerley Old Hall, spend some time in the early 1900s as you walk around the town and journey back to the 1940s on a war-era farm. All of the different eras allow you to try your hand at different skills, including candle making and calligraphy whilst the town offers a range of shops, including a printer's and stationer's, a bakery, a sweetshop and a grocer's, all displaying amazing wares sure to tempt you.

Special events are going on most weekends that have a particular focus on one of the eras. Beamish is open every day 10am -5pm, last admissions 3pm.

BLISTS HILL

Blists Hill open air museum is part of a group of museums centred around Ironbridge Gorge in Shropshire, an important centre in the industrial revolution. Blists Hill offers visitors the opportunity to experience life as it was over 100 years ago through the sights, sounds, and smells of a Victorian Town, populated by characters who will give you a fascinating insight into Victorian life as they go about their daily lives in their cottages and places of work.

As you wander about the town take the opportunity to exchange your money at the Bank into pounds, shillings and pence; visit the Victorian Pharmacy to find out about some curious cures; witness traditional skills in action at the printers, candle makers and decorative plasterers; try traditionally cooked fish and chips or fresh bread from the bakery; discover some 'old favourites' in the sweetshop; and dress up in Victorian costume and get your portrait taken.

Do also take a look at their upcoming events page, as this summer offers opportunities to bump into some well-known literary characters (including Sherlock Holmes and Oliver Twist!)

Open every day 10am – 5pm; It is suggested that you should allow 2 - 4 hours for a visit to Blists Hill Victorian Town and, as it is mostly outdoors you should make sure you're dressed for the weather and for walking on unmade roads.

BECOME A SECRET AGENT...

"The evil Dr Iscove has used the good Professor Irene Bop's brilliant mind to create a treasure teleporting machine. He has stolen treasure from around the world, from the Louvre to the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London. His next mega-theft is to steal the pocket money of everybody on the planet."

This summer at the Discover Story Centre in Stratford you can have the chance to become a Secret Agent as part of their interactive family exhibition. Attend the secret training centre and learn surveillance techniques, how to crack codes, make yourself invisible and all the skills needed to stop Dr Iscove before it's too late!

Open weekdays 10am – 5pm and weekends 11am – 5pm

Ends August 31st

Find out more: www.discover.org.uk

BE A LITTLE MONSTER...

I am sure that I have written here before about the fantastic Hoxton Street Monster Supply Shop in London, with the Ministry of Stories tucked away behind it. If you're not aware yet of the Ministry it is a non-profit organisation that works with children on their writing skills, running workshops in schools and at the Ministry itself. The Monster Supply Shop will be open throughout the summer, packed full of the things that both little and big monsters might need – tinned Alarm and Creeping Dread, Fang Gloss and Zombie Fresh Mints.

Open Tuesday – Friday, 1pm – 5pm and Saturday, 11pm – 5pm

OTHER NEWS AND EVENTS

BOOKTRUST BEST BOOK AWARDS

The shortlist was announced for Booktrust Best Book Awards with Amazon Kindle. This year is the first year of this new award for children's books and apps, which will award prizes to the best book in the following categories: 0-5 Years: Best Picture Book; 6-8 Years: Best Story Book; 9-11 Years: Best Story Book; 9-11 Years: Best Fact Book; 12-14 Years: Best Story Book; and 0-14 Years: Best Tech Stuff.

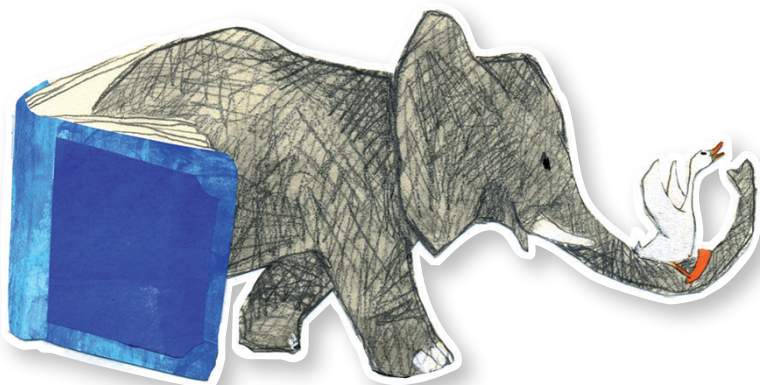
Voting is now closed, and the winners will be announced at a ceremony held in central London during Children's Book Week at the beginning of July.

CARNEGIE and KATE GREENAWAY

The winners of the 2014 CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway medals have been announced at a ceremony in. The Carnegie medal went to *The Bunker Diary* by Kevin Brooks, and Jon Klassen's *This is Not My Hat* has been named the winner of the Kate Greenaway medal. Congratulations to them both. If you want to find out more, perhaps see what other books were on the shortlist or watch clips from the ceremony you can visit: <http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/2014awards/>

THEATRE

Looking for an exciting and entertaining trip to the theatre guaranteed to provide delight for everyone? *The Elephantom* has charged its way to the West End and can be found at the New London Theatre where it runs until 6th September. From the same puppeteers who brought *War Horse* to life on stage and based on the book by Ross Collins, *The Elephantom* tells the story of one little girl and her larger-than-life friend. The story is magically created on stage through the use of puppetry, movement, dance, music and theatrical ingenuity.



CATCH A DOSE OF MIDSUMMER MADNESS WITH THE MOOMINS

When a huge flood sweeps through Moominvalley, the *Moomins* find an exciting new home... a floating theatre! But they have a lot to learn ... Tove Jansson's amazing characters are brought to life through the use of breathtaking puppetry, live music and humour. Find them at Polka Theatre in Wimbledon, where *Moominsummer Madness* runs until 16th August.

EXHIBITIONS

26 Characters continues at the Story Museum in Oxford – an exhibition featuring 26 well known authors dressed as their favourite characters from literature, staged in the incredible half-finished space of the Story Museum. Hear the stories behind each author's choice and look out for a talking throne, get lost in Middle Earth, and choose who you'll dress up as for their digital gallery. Runs until November.

You can also still catch Jacqueline Wilson's *Daydreams and Diaries* (until November) at the V&A Museum of Childhood, with a chance to dig around in her childhood bedroom, read extracts from her diaries and find out what her teacher's wrote in her school reports. And if other people's diaries are something that interests you, then you may also want to make a visit to another exhibition at the V&A Museum of Childhood, *The Great Diary Project* which has on display the real diaries of children and teenagers at moments in history between the years 1813 and 1996. The collection offers a brilliant insight into changing attitudes and childhood experiences over the last 200 years. Ends October.

Another continuing exhibition, this time at Seven Stories, is *Moving Stories: Children's Books from Page to Screen*. Like all of Seven Stories exhibitions this is an interactive environment, offering children the chance to get involved and do their own creating, as well as offering rare glimpses of original manuscripts and illustrations, costumes and storyboards, puppets and film footage. And if you can't make it to Newcastle to visit the exhibition why not have a play on the <http://www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/wordstopictures> website, where you can try your hand at illustrating an extract from the same books that are included in the *Moving Stories* exhibition!



Celebrating Non-Fiction for Children and Young People – FCBG plans for the future

Zoe Toft - Posted on the Blog, June 12th 2014

Last month the National Executive agreed to a change in the way in which the FCBG celebrates non-fiction for children and young people.

From this year instead of focussing on a single day, we shall be celebrating 'National Non-Fiction November', hoping to emulate the success of National Share-a-Story Month. In other words we are encouraging groups to find an occasion, any time during November, to highlight non-fiction.

We took this decision based on feedback from local book groups and other organisations interested in supporting children's non-fiction. It was widely felt that a month long celebration would facilitate a higher level of participation.

We'll be calling this celebration "National Non-Fiction November – Adventures in the Real World". A logo will be forthcoming.

This year's theme is **The First World War**, but this theme is not exclusive; all non-fiction for children and young people will be celebrated. The theme is merely to provide a focus for those who want it.

In the Autumn a new section of the FCBG website focusing on non-fiction for children and young people will be launched. There will be new pages with details of non-fiction awards, how book groups can get involved with these, ideas for using non-fiction in groups, schools, homes, promotional material, videos and much more.

During November we hope you'll also look out for special online initiative featuring 30 days of (children's/young people's) non-fiction around the web, on book blogs, publishers websites, the websites for literacy, reading for pleasure and teacher organisations. As well as author interviews, opinion pieces, and practical tips there will also be several competitions and giveaways which members may take part in. Do keep an eye out for this nearer the time.

Read the blog post in full – with more details of what is currently being planned – here: <http://www.fcbg.org.uk/celebrating-non-fiction-for-children-and-young-people-fcbg-plans-for-the-future/>

Also from the FCBG Blog

More of what the Federation has been sharing on the blog recently! <http://www.fcbg.org.uk/readaction-free-stress-relief-prove-it-by-nicola-morgan/>

Nicola Morgan provides an insight into how reading can help people to relax, giving them relief from stress – and asks for help in furthering the research into the link between making time for books and dealing with anxieties.

<http://www.fcbg.org.uk/magic-breakfast-book-clubs/>

A post from **Give A Book**, a charity that is providing children in schools with both breakfast and books, to help give them a better start to their day.

<http://www.fcbg.org.uk/a-book-group-activity-idea-for-spring/>

Walker Books have provided downloadable resources to be used alongside the gorgeous *A First Book of Nature* by Nicola Davies.

And a quick word from the Federation's new Chair, **Sarah Stuffs** (in case you missed it when it was shared through UpdaTED last month.)

Hello all

I've now taken over from Julia as chair – a very hard act to follow but I'll do my best! I shall miss the RHCBA but have left it in safe hands with Wendy Gilham. It is going to be an exciting year with revitalised initiatives under the National Share A Story Month and National Non-Fiction Day banners. I've just come from an NSSM activity session in Reading where around 60 children had lots of Dahl-related fun. Don't forget to share your local activities with the newsletter and the website so that we can all promote the FCBG together.

There's more exciting news too. Those of you who were at Conference or at the Eleanor Farjeon event in Birmingham, already know that FCBG founder Anne Wood has outlined her intention to give the Ragdoll Foundation's annual Jean Russell Gift to the FCBG for 2014 in recognition of how we have developed. The Executive has begun work on a proposal to present to the Foundation in the autumn and we'll keep you all posted when there is more news to share.

Lastly for now I'd like to welcome **Saddleworth CBG** – our newest group fresh from their launch event on 10th May.

Sarah



Sarah Stuffs



NEWS from the groups

As always, we are really eager to hear what YOUR group has been up to, so please keep in touch!

Of course many of our groups have been busy celebrating National Share a Story Month, but there's been plenty of other things going on as well!

Firstly, we should all say a big welcome to our newest group –

SADDLEWORTH CBG!

You've already read all about their launch event, featured in the NSSM round-up, and recently they held their second event with story-teller **Susanna Meese**.

We're looking forward to hearing a lot more from them in future! And if you can't wait until the next newsletter, you can keep up with them on Facebook here: <https://www.facebook.com/saddleworthchildrensbookgroup> or Twitter: @saddleworthCBG

ALDBOURNE Children's Book Group

Have recently hosted a small event with the poet **John Foster**, held in the sunshine with plenty of strawberries and cream for all to enjoy. They will also be getting involved with some of their local community events over the summer, including a bookstall at one of the nearby Church fetes and creating a float for the Carnival.

LEWES Children's Book Group

Celebrated their 40th birthday earlier this month, with guest authors and illustrators including **Emily Gravett, Gillian Cross, Ali Sparkes, Chris Lloyd and Steve Cole** – we're looking forward to hearing more

about it and hopefully seeing some lovely photos soon... They have also redesigned their logo this year, and I think you will agree it looks fab!

IPSWICH Children's Book Group

At the beginning of June Ipswich hosted an event with author **Joseph Delaney** – talking about his latest book *A New Darkness*, part of the *Spooks* series, and the forthcoming film based on the series: *Seventh Son* (due out in 2015).

YEO VALLEY Children's Book Group

Have fairly recently updated their website and now have their own blog! To read more about their events, see what's coming up (and take a peek at the press cutting after their NSSM event) visit <http://www.yeovalleycbg.org.uk/>

OXTED Children's Book Group

On a sunny June afternoon the Oxted Children's Book Group ran a book stall at their local scout group's Donkey Derby, hoping to raise awareness of the Group and so attract some new members, as well as selling books from previous testing years. They were very pleased to raise £200, half of which was donated to **Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity**.

A photo of the stall, before the book-buyers descended!

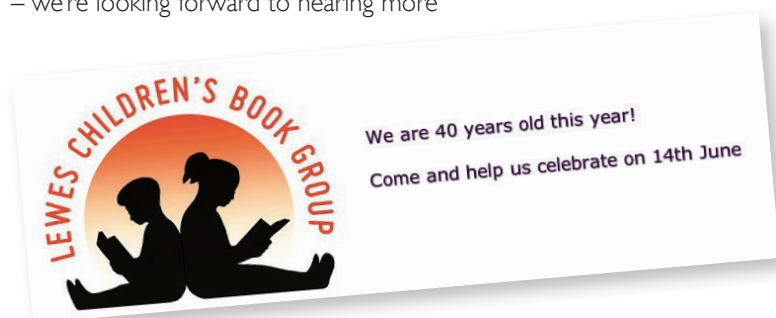
GET READING READING

As you've already heard Reading held a very successful NSSM event in May and they have more events planned for the next couple of months! On Saturday 19th July they will be doing some storytelling in Forbury Gardens, as part of the Reading Fringe Festival. And in August they are hosting some dragon-themed author events at a couple of their local libraries, featuring storyteller and writer **Margaret Bateson-Hill**, with some crafty things going on too.

WEST WALES CBG

Are currently celebrating their 15th year – they hosted a party in June with **The Two Steves, Jackie Morris, Nicola Davies** and more. They've also recently launched a gorgeous brand new website at www.wwcgbg.org.uk – it's definitely worth taking a look!

And don't forget, that we really appreciate hearing from our groups when they have exciting things going on, so please do keep in touch with the executive committee! For the right person to contact about the website or the newsletter see the final page!





Books on Film

Maleficent, on release: Disney takes another look at the classic fairy tale *Sleeping Beauty*, re-imagining the motivations behind its villain. The film is very rooted in Disney's own 1959 animated version, and provides some incredibly stunning visuals.

The Fault in Our Stars, on release: an adaptation of the novel of the same name by John Green (Penguin), the tale of friendship and love between two teenagers who initially meet through a cancer support group.

How to Train Your Dragon 2, in cinemas July 11th: The follow up to the 2010 film based on Cressida Cowell's *How to Train Your Dragon* series (published by Hodder Children's Books), centred on the young Viking Hiccup and his dragon companion Toothless as they explore further and discover even more about dragons than they thought there was to learn.

The Boxtrolls, scheduled for release in September: Based on *Here Be Monsters!* by Alan Snow (Oxford University Press, 2005) and set in the fictional location of Ratbridge, *The Boxtrolls* features many strange and fantastical creatures, some familiar to us and some less so, including a sub-species of the common troll that has taken to living in boxes, and is in danger from an evil pest exterminator.

Trash, due out in October: the anticipated adaptation of Andy Mulligan's novel, the story of three boys in an unspecified third-world country, who make a dangerous discovery whilst picking through the rubbish dump from which they make a living.

Deadline for the next issue is
October 4th 2014

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don't forget our website: www.fcbg.org.uk *where you can
subscribe to our blog!*

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Introducing the new Executive Committee 2014-2015

If you'd like to know more about the members of the Committee then visit the Committee page on our website – where you can read about where we come from, and some of our favourite books.

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The next Executive meeting will be 18th October 2014.

All meetings are held in London. Please contact Sarah for further information at least two weeks in advance if you wish to attend as an observer.