

Look and Learn
A History of the Classic
Children's Magazine

By
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Introduction

The Fabulous Caravan

On Monday, 15 January 1962, a brand new paper arrived in newsagents around the British Isles. Brightly coloured with red and yellow prominent, the cover was dominated by two pictures; to the left was a photograph of the young Charles, the Prince of Wales; to the right was a portrait by Derek C. Eyles of Charles Stuart—the Prince of Wales of 300 years earlier. Inside, readers would discover the rousing story of how Charles, exiled to France during the Civil War, had learned of his father's death at the hands of the Roundheads. Two years later, in 1651, he was crowned Charles II by the Scots and led an army into England. The two armies met at Worcester where the war had begun nine years earlier; Charles at the head of Royalist forces and Cromwell leading his Parliamentarian armies. Cromwell triumphed, leaving Charles to escape through the narrow cobbled streets of Worcester.

In retelling this gripping tale, the anonymous author did not confine himself to dry facts; instead the reader was thrust right into the action:

Breathlessly he flung himself into a narrow, dark alley and hid in a shadowed doorway. The raucous shouts and stumbling footsteps of the Roundhead soldiers chasing him went past the entrance to the alley and faded away in the distance.

Panting, he huddled himself against the crude wooden doorway and rested his unshaven face against the splintered oak. For the moment he was safe.

'His Fight For The Crown' was a model example of the kind of features that were to be found in the new paper. Vigorously told, it brought history to life in the same way that a good novel can. Young readers used to sitting silently and uncomfortably in class copying down lists of monarchs must have found this a breath of fresh air. The article was beautifully illustrated by H. M. Brock and Sep E. Scott¹, adding visual excitement to the page.

¹ The Scott illustration was from the cover of *Thriller Comics Library 144*, October 1956.

Elsewhere in this first issue, colour photographs and colour illustrations helped tell the history of Rome and reveal the wonders of nature; you could learn about Vincent van Gogh, the Grand Canyon, how Japanese children celebrated the festival of *Shichi go san* and how to keep a Basset hound. Other articles probed the depths of space for life amongst the stars and below the ground for oil. The story of Parliament was magnificently illustrated across the centre pages; equally superb was the first leg of a trip exploring the history of towns and villages along the road from London to Dover. And for those readers who enjoyed stories as well as history, nature, science and art, there were the opening chapters of 'The Children's Crusade' by Henry Treece and Jerome K. Jerome's famous 'Three Men in a Boat' plus a feature on Sinbad and the famous author and explorer Sir Richard Burton who had translated his adventures.

A huge amount was packed into the 24 pages of this first issue but over the coming weeks it was proved to be simply an opening shot across the bows of all previous educational magazines. British readers—old and young—had never seen anything like this before. Older readers who recalled the glory days of the *Children's Encyclopaedia* in the early years of the 20th century would have found the style of writing a good deal more energetic and direct and the illustrations far more dynamic. In the fifty or so years since the founding of the *Children's Encyclopaedia*, printing technology had raced on: gravure printing meant that colour magazines could be produced at a cost that was not outside the range of children's pocket money. This was education for a new generation that had grown up in the austere days after World War Two, bright, spirited and fun.

The new magazine was *Look and Learn*.

* * * * *

Look and Learn lived up to its editor's claim that it was to be "a treasure house of exciting articles, stories and pictures." At 10¼" by 13½" (26 x 35 cm), it was larger than most children's comics then on the newsstand although a little narrower than the famous *Eagle*. Most gravure comics in the 1950s had given over their front page to a character (in *Eagle's* case that was Dan Dare, whilst rival *Junior Express Weekly* had Rex Keene and Wulf the Briton); *Look and Learn* for many years dedicated its covers to a single painted illustration, with only one or two lines about what could be found inside.

A red banner across the top of the cover held the logo which incorporated a globe with two children sitting either side, a young boy playing with a model aeroplane and a young girl reading. Even in repose, our friends in the banner were using their imaginations—if the logo was to be updated for the 21st century our young boy would be gripping the controls of his video game and the young girl sending a 'txt' to friends on her mobile.

The premise of *Look and Learn* was to inspire the imaginations of its young readers. To advance this principle, the features were clearly and briskly written and illustrated by some of the finest artists of the era resulting in a magazine of unmatched quality. Whilst the sheer quality of the paper might have been more appreciated by parents than children, the target audience was also well served: the breadth of coverage in *Look and Learn* was vast, the writing never dull and the artwork always attractive.

In its early years, *Look and Learn* did not carry comic strips. However, a merger with a companion title that had failed to take off in the same way brought with it the classic 'Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire'. This was a science fiction epic, a mixture of Ancient Roman warriors and futuristic hardware, a classic made all the more attractive by the artwork of Don Lawrence, who ranks with Frank Hampson, Frank Bellamy and Ron Embleton as one of the finest comic artists of all time, his work lauded throughout Europe and still in print in countries from Holland to Indonesia.

Look and Learn could boast artistic talents from across Europe—primarily from Italy and Spain—as well as the cream of talent from Britain: Peter Jackson, C. L. Doughty, Sep E. Scott, John S. Smith, Wilf Hardy, Angus McBride, Richard Hook and Roger Payne to name but a few. The paper had been designed around the work of famous historical artists like Fortunino Matania, who was able to contribute new artwork to the paper in his final years.

In a promotional supplement published along with the first issue, the editor, David Stone, promised that:

Look and Learn is not a comic, or a dusty old encyclopaedia pretending to be an entertaining weekly paper. It is really like one of those fabulous caravans that used to set off to strange and unknown places and return laden with all sorts of wonderful things. In our pages is all the excitement, the wonder, the tragedy and the heroism of the magnificent age we live in, and of the ages which make up the traditions which shape all our lives.

Today, the world changes at a rate undreamt of even by our mothers and fathers. In the scurry of our daily life, we sometimes lose sight of what is really important. Of necessity, newspapers and television must adapt themselves to today's frantic pace, and many of us find ourselves bewildered by ever-changing headlines rushing by like racing cars at Silverstone.

Many people, tiring of newspapers, turn to papers which thrive on what is called "escaping." By means of lurid tales of fantasy these papers seek to deaden the minds.

Between these two extremes there must be what the Ancient World called the Golden Mean, and what we would call a happy medium. A happy medium means a

nice balance between fact and fiction, between information and entertainment, between, if you like, laughter and tears. It is our hope that *Look and Learn* will be the most happy medium of all. But you must be the judge of that.

Look and Learn lived up to that promise for over twenty years. It was most certainly not an encyclopedia in the common sense of the word, although a handy subject index appeared at regular intervals and especially designed binders were available from the very beginning for readers to keep their copies in good condition. Some series, like those by Leonard Cottrell, drew on material from full-length works which were available to readers through libraries. Other, original series grew into substantial works over the weeks they ran; little wonder that *Look and Learn* became a popular source for reprint material over the years. "There will always be something in *Look and Learn* to please you," was another promise the paper certainly lived up to.

The story of *Look and Learn* is not in itself a complex one. For over 1,000 issues it provided some of the best entertainment available to young readers—not only in Britain but around the world. During its twenty-year history there were many changes behind the scenes but from its first issue in 1962 to its last in 1982, *Look and Learn* always lived up to its promise to educate and entertain, a "fabulous caravan" of wonder and knowledge, a "treasure house of exciting articles, stories and pictures" that aimed to make the paper "The Best Weekly Magazine Ever Published."

1: "Cheap, agreeable, and will not offend..."

Educational periodicals for children date back to the eighteenth century, when an enterprising publisher by the name of John Newbury began publishing *Lilliputian Magazine* in 1751. Newbury's little magazine was a miscellany of stories, rhymes and folktales which also included scores to the latest "country dance" and a recipe for mince-pies "of such materials as are cheap, agreeable to every Palate, and will not offend the Stomach."

Though short lived, *Lilliputian Magazine* was the first of hundreds of magazines that have appeared over the past 250 years aimed at children. In the early 19th century, almost a dozen attempts were made to establish an instructive and educational magazine for the youth of Britain. These early titles were notable only for their earnest desire to inform and instruct and their uniform dullness. Perhaps the most fascinating was *The Children's Friend*, although interest in the title has more to do with its editor, the Reverend Carus Wilson, than in its contents. Wilson is today best known as the founder of the Clergy Daughter's School where Charlotte Brontë was educated and her novel, *Jane Eyre*, contains an unflattering portrait of Wilson as Mr. Brocklehurst, the incumbent of Brocklebridge Church.

The most famous children's weekly of the 19th century was the *Boy's Own Paper*, first published by the Religious Tract Society in 1879. In line with other boys' papers, the *BOP* (as it was popularly known) emphasised naturalness and manliness and was home to adventurous and fiercely patriotic stories of school, sport and exploration by the likes of Talbot Baines Reed, W. H. G. Kingston and Jules Verne. *BOP*, like all children's magazines, was filled with text material—80 million words' worth in its first 60 years. Early magazines had usually included only a single woodcut illustration but as printing technology improved, so did the illustrations. *BOP* would often include photographs of popular sportsmen and diagrams to accompany articles on how to make everything from kayaks to wireless sets. Sporting activities kept the readers fit and features on foreign countries, animal hunting and exploring helped educate them about the world beyond these shores. A reverend was always on hand to pen a brief, moral 'talk',

while Dr. Gordon Stables offered medical advice which inevitably involved getting plenty of fresh air or taking a 'cold tub'.

Boy's Own Paper, and its companion, *Girl's Own Paper*, were priced at a penny and were the kind of papers that the Religious Tract Society hoped would put an end to the 'penny dreadfuls' that were published from the 1860s onwards. These cheaply produced magazines for both boys and girls, with titles like *Boys of England*, *The Young Briton* and *Belles of England*, contained 'fierce' stories of pirates, historical battles and school stories, establishing the latter as a regular staple of boys' and girls' magazine fiction. They also often contained brief articles, to back up the claim by their editors that the magazines were educational and morally sound. The young readers almost certainly skipped over them to get to the latest episode of "Alone in the Pirate's Lair" or the adventures of Jack Harkaway.

What did kill the 'penny dreadfuls' finally in the late 1890s was the 'halfpenny dreadfuller', as Winnie the Pooh creator A. A. Milne once called them. These were the creation of Alfred Harmsworth, the publisher of *Answers to Correspondents*, a miscellany of information and serial stories by popular authors. Alfred, who would later become Lord Northcliffe, and his brother Harold Harmsworth (later Viscount Rothermere) were a fearsome team, both determined to establish a publishing empire for themselves. When it came to producing a publication for boys, their strategy was to undercut every other publication, knowing that it would force other publishers to follow their lead. And to make sure that they were firmly established in the halfpenny market, the Harmsworth brothers put out three new titles in quick succession, the *Halfpenny Marvel*, *Union Jack* and *Pluck*, in 1893-94. *Boys' Friend* and others quickly followed.

In 1890, Alfred Harmsworth had published *Comic Cuts*, a halfpenny humour magazine filled with jokes and cartoons which was soon selling 300,000 copies a week and gained some useful publicity when the former Deputy Speaker, Sir Lyon Playfair, was spied in the House of Commons furtively reading a copy tucked inside the 'Order of the Day'. Even at the price of a halfpenny, within two years it was making more money than the penny *Answers* and was to be the rock upon which the Harmsworth brothers founded their publishing business.

The importance of *Comic Cuts*, and its companion *Illustrated Chips*, was as a stepping-stone towards the comic papers that we all remember from our childhoods. When the Harmsworth brothers brought together all their various publishing ventures under one roof, they named the company Amalgamated Press, which would eventually become the largest publisher of children's weeklies in the world.

Long before Lord Harmsworth could make that claim, he had published one of the best-selling educational books for children ever produced. The first major survey of universal knowledge was the 37-volume *Naturalis Historia*, first published in AD 77, which gathered

together facts gleaned by its author, Pliny the Elder, from 2,000 different sources. The first encyclopedia published in English appeared from William Caxton's famous press in 1481, although the term "encyclopaedia" (from the Greek meaning "whole circle of knowledge") was first used by German professor Johann Heinrich Alsted in 1630.

The earliest educational work for children dates back to the Middle Ages when Anselm of Canterbury wrote the catechism *Elucidarium*, one of a series of works that tried to explain Christian faith. In the wake of Anselm, the vast majority of children's books until the middle of the 19th century were instructional. Although education was not available to all, it is wrong to think that the working classes were wholly uneducated before the Education Act of 1870. The widespread education of children had already been spearheaded by charity schools in the 18th century and books helped well-meaning parents in areas they had not been taught. Books were not only aimed at improving the knowledge of nature, science and art but also the morals of younger readers. Education was seen as a way to keep children engaged during their leisure time: as Lady Fenn wrote in her *Rational Sports* in 1783, "It is leisure which corrupts half the world. Where time is not agreeably occupied in some innocent pursuits, *Boys and Men* have recourse to vice."

Educational works aimed at the younger generation were all produced in a question and answer format. Typical of this was *The Child's Guide to Knowledge, being a collection of useful and familiar questions and answers on every-day subjects, adapted for young persons and arranged in the most simple and easy language* by A Lady [Fanny Ward]². First published in 1825, which went through at least 63 editions before the Great War. This begins:

Question. What is the World?

Answer. The earth we live on.

Q. Who made it?

A. The great and good God.

Q. Are there not many things in it you would like to know about?

A. Yes, very much.

Q. Pray, then, what is bread made of?

A. Flour.

Q. What is flour?

etc.

² Modern readers will probably only know of this title from reading *The Railway Children* by Edith Nesbit where it is mentioned in passing in chapter 2.

This impassive recitation of facts was the standard for many years as it was thought that pictures "might take off the attention of children." It was not until the next century, in 1908, that Arthur Mee revolutionised the format with his highly illustrated *Children's Encyclopaedia*, which would give rise to Mee's finest creation, *The Children's Newspaper*.

The first newspaper for children had actually appeared some years earlier. It was edited by George Weatherly, not so much as an attempt to "fill an existing void in the weekly literature of the day, and to provide what has for so long a time been needed: a journal of a sufficiently high-class character and aim to invite and to rivet the attention of the Boys' of our land," as the first editorial boasted, but as a way for its publishers, Cassell, Petter, Galpin and Co. to put out a cheap paper. The "penny dreadfuls" of the era survived because their costs were so low. Payments to authors and illustrators were small and their work was endlessly reprinted in different journals. Cassell's reasoned that news from a variety of papers and journals could be recycled in the same way, as was already a fairly common practise on adult penny papers.

The premiere issue of *The Boy's Newspaper* appeared on September 15, 1880, its 16 pages filled with closely-set type covering the affairs of the world at large, scientific discoveries, potted biographies and sporting news from schools and universities. A handful of stories appeared in the early issues and, starting in issue 17, a serial, 'In the King's Name', anonymously penned by George Manville Fenn.

This addition came too late and, after 34 issues, Cassell sold the title to W. J. Ingram and tried again with *The Boy's Illustrated News*, adding the vital ingredient of illustration. Ingram had the same idea and had the resources of the *Illustrated London News* to draw on for woodcuts. Ingram's paper also had 8 pages of fiction, although this petered out as the months passed and the number of illustrations fell to two per issue. *Boy's Newspaper* was allowed to drift peacefully away after 98 issues.

Ingram was not deterred, however, and launched *Youth* a week later (August 2, 1882), edited along the same lines by Edward Morton, with much of the fiction written around old illustrations. Morton was a dramatic critic for *The Referee* and, in 1884, was joined by an assistant editor, young Alfred Harmsworth, who took over the editorship when Morton switched from writing about theatre to writing plays. Although *Youth* was never a best seller, it offered Harmsworth the opportunity to learn the nuts and bolts of putting together a weekly paper and meant that he was able to meet and mix with editors, artists and writers on Ingram's famous *Illustrated London News*. As well as writing and rewriting many of the factual pieces, Harmsworth also penned the serial 'Fame and Fortune', about a young lad who grew up in poverty in the provinces but found success in publishing after coming to London.

Youth, unable to attract any substantial advertising, was sold off by Ingram in 1895 but it helped put Harmsworth on the path to success. After working for Coventry-based Iliffe & Co. as

an editor, he returned to London in 1888 to launch *Answers to Correspondents* which, as we have already seen, was to become the cornerstone of his publishing empire.

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Alfred Harmsworth inaugurated a 'part works' publishing department in 1897 to produce *Sixty Years a Queen*, which was published in eight fortnightly parts. The idea of part works had been established for almost a century so that educational books and novels could be published a chapter or two at a time, which could be read weekly or monthly and bound together once the work was complete; Charles Dickens issued his novels this way in shilling monthly instalments.

Harmsworth followed this successful debut with other works over the next few years covering the life of Nelson, the South African war, another and more intimate biography of Queen Victoria immediately following her death, the war between Japan and Russia, and the *Harmsworth Encyclopaedia*.

In 1904, Harmsworth employed a young journalist by the name of Arthur Mee. Mee was a short, slender northerner, a life-long campaigner against alcohol with strong religious beliefs who, nonetheless, had made an impact when he arrived in Fleet Street eight years earlier.

Alfred Harmsworth, at the time publishing a hugely successful fortnightly encyclopaedia, was looking for a follow-up and appointed Mee as the editor of this new part work, to be called the *Harmsworth Self-Educator*. John Hammerton, a friend from his days as a newspaper editor in Nottingham, was one of Mee's editorial team and later recalled the astonishing task *Self-Educator* entailed when it was planned:

What days and months of excitement ensued! Arthur's "drive" was never seen at such high velocity again. The magnitude of the new publication as he outlined it was colossal. The expenditure that would have to be faced, the large editorial staff to be assembled, the multitude of outside contributors to be selected, to bring into being a fortnightly publication averaging 136 pages, each part containing over 100,000 words and hundreds of pictures and diagrams. All this, mark you, in five or six months, by contrast with the seven years which the Encyclopaedia had been in the making—well, it would be futile to attempt a picture of the ensuing hurry-scurry, which only now in the film age could be made realistic on thousands of feet of celluloid. In the bright lexicon of Arthur there was no such word as 'impossible.'³

³ J. A. Hammerton, *Child of Wonder*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1946, p.98.

The *Self-Educator* was a masterpiece of planning and ran for 48 fortnightly issues, the first published in October 1905. The complete series was gathered into eight volumes, running to over 7,000 pages covering everything from art, music and literature to chemistry, history, geography and natural history, all heavily illustrated with photographs and line drawings. According to Alfred Harmsworth's biographers:

The *Harmsworth Self-Educator*, which followed, an even more abounding success, was a source of keen personal satisfaction to Alfred, who had 'the heart that seeks the public weal,' and who could claim that if such publications were animating rather than educative they kindled a wish for knowledge in innumerable minds. *The Harmsworth Self-Educator* was so popular that copies were snatched from the bookstalls as soon as a new issue appeared. ⁴

Mee's next success began appearing in October 1907, the *Harmsworth History Of The World*, co-edited by Hammerton and published in 51 parts. For this Mee gathered together some of the finest historians of the time, including W. M. Flinders Petrie, A. H. Sayce and W. J. Sollas who had the ability to write learnedly and colourfully on their specialised subjects.

While this work was still being published, Mee began concentrating his efforts on a new part work that he was to call "the book of my heart." *The Children's Encyclopaedia* was inspired by his seven-year-old daughter's incessant questions and was another vast compendium of knowledge, inspiring Alfred Harmsworth to write, "It will give delight to hundreds of thousands, probably millions, of little people and that fact ought to be a great joy to you, as it is to me."

The *Encyclopaedia* made its debut in March 1908 and ran for 50 fortnightly parts until February 1910. Surprisingly, although it started reasonably strongly, the first issues were not quite the success hoped for. However, as the week's passed, sales began to increase and George Dilnot later recorded, "For a part publication it had the unusual experience of increasing in circulation as each fortnightly number came from the press, so that many reprints of the earlier numbers had to be made."⁵

The *Children's Encyclopaedia* was, in fact, one of the most successful books ever published by the Amalgamated Press. As its original run came to an end, it was relaunched in February 1910 as the monthly *New Children's Encyclopaedia*. The title changed over the next few years to *Children's Encyclopaedia Magazine* after a few months to *Children's Magazine* in 1911 and eventually to *My Magazine* in 1914. From September 1910, the monthly magazine also included

⁴ Reginald Pound & Geoffrey Harmsworth, *Northcliffe*, London, Cassell & Co., 1959, p.294.

⁵ George Dilnot, *Romance Of The Amalgamated Press*, London, Amalgamated Press, 1925, p.30.

a supplement of news entitled *The Little Paper* which would inspire Arthur Mee's most famous paper, *The Children's Newspaper*.

Alfred Harmsworth recognised the potential for good influence this new monthly paper had: "Few men in England have such power in their hands for good as you, if your *Children's Encyclopaedia* and the *Little Paper* were absorbed by even a small proportion of the children of the Empire" he wrote to Mee.⁶

Harmsworth's appreciation of Mee's efforts were not always appreciated by others in the Amalgamated Press. The preparation of part works and the hundreds of thousands of words that entailed—the *Children's Encyclopaedia* ran to 7,412 pages—was costly. Arthur Mee himself was earning over £2,000 a year—the equivalent of £450,000 a year today—and Harold Harmsworth, in charge of the financial side of the company, used his brother Alfred's trip to Newfoundland in 1909 as "a perfect opportunity of overhauling the entire expenditure side of Mee's department."

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The 8-volume *Children's Encyclopaedia* was heavily promoted after the Great War and had sold some 800,000 copies in 12 editions by the time it was relaunched in an extensively revised edition in October 1922. The new 59-part series now ran to 10 volumes and its success eclipsed that of the first edition fourteen years earlier despite a price rise to 1/3 from 7d per part. Mee, who had a flair for publicising his work, sent a copy of the first part to Balmoral Castle and received a letter of thanks from Lady Bertha Dawkins in which she said, "The Queen commands me to thank you very much indeed for the first fortnightly part of the new 'Children's Encyclopedia'; her Majesty has looked through it, and thinks it so delightful that she has at once given it to one of the Balmoral schools for the use of the children."

This new version of the *Encyclopedia* (the old-fashioned diphthong having been dropped) went through 14 editions until 1946, in which year John Hammerton estimated that 52 million volumes had been sold and continued to sell all over the world. A revised American edition edited by Holland Thompson was published as *The Book Of Knowledge* in 1911-12 and went through dozens of editions. Translations appeared in France, Italy, Spain and China.

⁶ Alfred Harmsworth, letter to Arthur Mee, quoted by Pound & Harmsworth, *op cit*, p.398.

⁷ Harold Harmsworth, memo to George Sutton, quoted by Pound & Harmsworth, *op cit*, p.386.

2: "The story of the world today for the men and women of tomorrow"

When the *Children's Encyclopaedia* was relaunched in 1910, the updated version soon added a new feature, 'The Little Paper', which ran each month as the title evolved from encyclopedia to monthly magazine. This supplement was the precursor of *The Children's Newspaper* and continued to run until June 1919 when it was incorporated into its new sibling.

Subtitled "The Story of the World Today for the Men and Women of Tomorrow," *The Children's Newspaper* epitomised Mee's values and was steeped in his twin faiths: Christian ethics and the British Empire. Mee firmly believed in Britain's youth and that children could be guided to better, more creative lives through education. Where the *Encyclopaedia* gave the nation's children a firm grasp of many subjects—historical, geographical and practical—his *Children's Newspaper* was to keep young people up to date with the latest in world news and science.

The launch issue, dated 22 March 1919 and priced 1½d., was deliberately laid out like a popular adult newspaper with the addition of a photograph (compare this to that famous broadsheet, *The Times* which, in 1919, still carried long lists of births, deaths and marriages, personal ads and announcements on its front cover). The lead story and photograph describe the launch of an airship on the Yorkshire moors, claiming that "The inventors have given the airship a lease of life for ever." In short, informative paragraphs, the story unfolds: rather than the dry prose of the adult newspaper, Mee relates the story with a sense of wonder...

This great ship floating above the earth, as high as a church and as long as a street, is a thing of grace and beauty as it moves among the clouds; but what is an airship in reality? It is a stupendous bag of inflammable gas and underneath this dangerous

cargo great engines are roaring all the time, generating electricity, creating sparks, and sometimes throwing out flame.

This floating reservoir of fiery gas had been used during the recent war but its safety was questionable now that Europe was at peace. The only lighter than air gas available at the time had been hydrogen; helium had been discovered in 1895 but it was only available at a huge cost. However, as Mee explained, American scientists had recently discovered a process which dropped the price of helium from hundreds of pounds per cubic foot to pence and this would allow engineers to make vast airships that would be as safe as ocean ships or trains.

Other stories from the front cover of *The Children's Newspaper's* debut issue were a call to the newly formed League of Nations to include children in their thoughts of how to create a better, more stable post-war world: "To make peace you must begin at fifteen or sixteen, at twelve or thirteen, at nine or ten. You must grow up loving peace and hating war. You must fill your heart and head with the great idea of a united world..." One of the few signed pieces (and then only with the initials "E.A.B.") told of a war horse named Major who was now safely returned to his Surrey fields after serving on the Western front. The fourth and final cover story told of the sinking of the *Hoste*, a destroyer of the British fleet, in the North Sea.⁸

Inside the 12-page paper, stories ranged from surprising facts and figures about the British coal industry to how the railway system had been damaged by the war, from the best upcoming kinema (*sic*) films for children to "news from a Handley Page" from a correspondent looking down 3,000 feet above the Pas de Calais road.

Over the coming weeks *The Children's Newspaper* contained dozens of anonymously written news items, with the occasional initialled byline: E.A.B.⁹ and J.D.¹⁰ were prolific early contributors, the latter sometimes credited as "our political correspondent." "Our international correspondent in Europe" was H.F.; R.G. was "our correspondent in the clouds," his position soon taken over by E.W., "our aerial correspondent"; L.Y. provided movie news as "our cinematograph correspondent" and C.R.¹¹ was the paper's regular nature correspondent with a weekly column. E.S.G.¹² provided snippets on a wide range of topics, whilst other regular and irregular contributors included C.S. (weather correspondent), G.J. (zoological correspondent), J.A.T. (geological correspondent) and R.C.M. ("our children's doctor").

⁸ The piece does not make it clear that the events had taken place some years earlier in December 1916.

⁹ E. A. Bryant.

¹⁰ John Derry (1854-1937) who worked with Mee on *The Children's Encyclopedia* and many other publications. He was on the staff of the Amalgamated Press from 1908.

¹¹ Charles Ray.

¹² Edwin Sharpe Grew (1866-1951).

The most prolific early author was Harold Begbie who wrote a great deal of the editorial content for many years, including many lead features on the cover and a lot of the material on the 'Editor's Table'. Begbie, a former magazine editor, newspaper columnist and novelist, was best known as the writer of "Fall In!", a propagandist poem published in the *Daily Chronicle* in August 1914, written to swell the number of volunteers. This was soon set to music and became one of the most famous songs of the Great War. Begbie continued to write for *The Children's Newspaper* for almost a decade before his death in 1929.

From this gathering of anonymous talent, it is possible to see how wide the coverage of *The Children's Newspaper* ranged. It also contained a regular serialised story (beginning with 'Martin Crusoe' by T. C. Bridges) and could boast short letters to boys and girls by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, a famous American Temperance poet, and C. B. Fry, the famous cricketer. Wilcox, then living in England, died shortly after the launch of the paper and was given a flattering tribute which quoted one of her most famous verses, "Laugh, and the world laughs with you; weep, and you weep alone." Other famous authors in the early years included Lord Robert Baden-Powell, the creator of the Scouts, and economics expert Sir Leo Chiozza Money.

G.F.M. ("Our Astronomical Correspondent") was the byline on a news item about Venus in the very first issue, marking the debut of George Frederick Morrell, who was to become *The Children's Newspaper's* longest-running correspondent. Morrell was one of the pioneers of visual education and for over fifty years used his talents to write articles and draw picture-diagrams which were often clearer and more attractive to younger readers. Morrell had been a contributor to the *Children's Encyclopaedia* from its first issue and he continued to write for *The Children's Newspaper* until shortly before his death in 1962. Morrell was fascinated by all branches of science, although astronomy and geology were his great loves; even at the age of 80 he could be found leaning over the lip of the crater at Mount Vesuvius trying to photograph some fossil with a stereoscopic camera, his wife gripping his heels to make sure he didn't tumble in.

In its early days, *The Children's Newspaper* also ran brief stories, cartoons, rhyming puzzles and a back page filled with the latest photographs. Although it may seem a little dry nowadays, in 1919 it was an astonishing feat of writing, editing and publishing. If any complaint could be made—and that only in retrospect—it might be that the paper was too staid and unchanging over the years. A copy from 1919 looks very much the same as one from thirty years later. In October 1941, Mee celebrated his jubilee as a writer by looking back over the differences of fifty years. "Writing of the things of peace, trying to make righteousness readable, his fifty years began in a quiet and tranquil world, his fiftieth began with the dodging of bombs by day and the snatching of bits of sleep underground by night; yet he remains an Optimist and a dreamer of

dreams. He has seen what he has seen. He has seen Civilisation march to the gates of the Millennium and suddenly break to pieces; yet he knows that all is well."

The world may have moved on in fifty years but Mee's florid writing style had not altered, his interests had not swerved and his sense of patriotism and religious faith had not faltered. Science and technology had marched on; Britain had been through the "roaring twenties" and the world had seen an "almost incredible transformation" but *The Children's Newspaper* was essentially unchanged.

Without doubt Mee felt that *The Children's Newspaper* was reflecting the changes in the world. In 1929, on the paper's tenth anniversary, it was noted that the paper "is giving our boys and girls a faithful record of what is happening in the world, and a true conception of the things that matter week by week. It has been said of it that it is the most potential factor in the bringing-up of the rising generation."¹³

Mee's influence on the youth of the 1920s and 1930s is impossible to measure but his popularity remained enormous. *The Children's Newspaper* is said to have been regularly selling 500,000 copies a week and Mee's volume of essays entitled *Nineteen-Forty. Our Finest Hour*, published in September 1941, marked his millionth volume in print—this figure *not* counting sales of the *Children's Encyclopedia*. A brief sampling of people who have mentioned Mee's influence would include the author George Macdonald Fraser, described by a schoolmaster as a "strict neutral in the battle for knowledge," was educated through reading Arthur Mee's *Children's Encyclopedia*; Muriel Spark, the novelist, was a subscriber to *The Children's Newspaper*; Anthony Valentine, the actor, had to audition for child agent Valerie Glynne at the age of 10 and chose a poem found in the *Children's Encyclopedia*; Keith Waterhouse, the playwright, has a set of the *Children's Encyclopedia*; and artist Patrick Reyntiens, OBE, was a regular reader of *The Children's Newspaper*.

Enid Blyton was also a young contributor encouraged by Arthur Mee, recalling in her autobiography that, aged 14, she sold a poem to one of Mee's magazines. "To my utter amazement and delight, I had a letter back from the great man himself. He liked my poem. He would print it. But more than that, he told me that he liked the letter I had sent with it. 'You can write,' he said. 'Send in other things to our page. Perhaps one day you will *really* write.'"¹⁴

* * * * *

The Children's Newspaper was not a one-man operation. Behind Mee was a team of keen journalists and also sub-editors. In the 1920s Mee's assistant editor was Dick Towler and, for a

¹³ *My Magazine*, March 1929.

¹⁴ Enid Blyton, *The Story of My Life*, London, Pitkin, [1952], p.70.

while, Frank S. Pepper was the office boy. Pepper, who went on to become one of the most prolific writers of boys' stories of all time, joined the office in 1926 having recently left school. "After Matriculation my parents wanted me to go to university, but hearing that Arthur Mee, editor of *The Children's Newspaper* and *Children's Encyclopedia*, needed an office boy, I got myself the job, in the firm belief, which future experience did nothing to change, that a few years with Arthur Mee would teach me more about becoming a professional journalist than any university."

Pepper worked on the paper for five years, at first writing a few captions, then short 'filler' paragraphs and, eventually, longer pieces; by 1930 he was freelancing articles to other papers and soon after began writing fiction which was to keep him busy for the next fifty years. In 1948, he created the characters Bill and Jill, a pair of adventurous twins, whose stories appeared weekly in *The Children's Newspaper*.

One habit Pepper picked up from Mee was gathering newspaper clippings. From his earliest days in journalism, Mee famously saved interesting items from newspapers and built up a library of 250,000 cuttings which he filed away in envelopes and which helped generate ideas and information for the hundreds of articles he wrote. He meticulously maintained this vast collection for many years. Pepper also built up a vast collection of clippings himself, which he was later to put to good use in a series of books published in the 1980s, including the *Handbook of 20th Century Quotations*, *Dictionary of Biographical Quotations* and *Contemporary Biographical Quotations*.

Arthur Mee also had a heavy influence on his successor, Hugo Nelson Tyerman, who picked up the editorial reins of *The Children's Newspaper* on Mee's death in 1943 and remained in charge of the paper until he retired in 1952 at the age of 72.

Tyerman, born in 1880, was the only son of Nelson Rich Tyerman (1859-1899), a Victorian poet. Hugo was named after Victor Hugo, Nelson Tyerman's favourite author (he dedicated one of his books of verse to the famous Frenchman and corresponded with him). Young Hugo attended Bedford Grammar School where his father was a school master and joined the staff of Sir Isaac Pitman & Son in 1898. He later moved to Cassells and then to the Amalgamated Press in the early 1900s, where he worked with Arthur Mee as picture editor on *Children's Encyclopaedia* and on *My Magazine*. He became a prolific contributor to *The Children's Newspaper* and, as one would expect of someone who had worked so closely with Mee, *The Children's Newspaper* under Tyerman was almost identical to its pre-war composition of news, science, history, geography, stories and verse.

In 1950, *The Children's Newspaper* was suddenly faced with a major rival—as were all comics of that era. *The Eagle* was launched in April and immediately became a best-seller amongst children who followed the weekly adventures of the paper's cover star, Dan Dare. Edward

Hulton, the publisher of *Eagle*, carried out a readership survey in 1950 which revealed that *The Children's Newspaper* was still one of the most popular papers for children, behind the *Eagle* itself and *Mickey Mouse Weekly*. Weekly sales of *The Children's Newspaper* were around 350,000 (down from the pre-war figure of 500,000) and the title was most popular amongst 8 to 10-year-olds, who made up 50% of the readership. The paper was still popular with 11 to 13-year-olds but its popularity waned rapidly with children over 14.

The Second World War had devastated Britain's paper supply—the majority of it came from Africa and Scandinavia and was impossible to import—and most publishers struggled until paper rationing was ended in 1950. *The Eagle* was one of the first new papers to launch and other papers which had been forced into fortnightly publication were able to switch back to weekly. Increased production thanks to the availability of paper simply spread pocket money thinly across a greater range of titles. Even a paper like *The Children's Newspaper*, which was expected to be bought by parents rather than the children themselves, suffered with sales falling dramatically over the next three years to just 200,000. It was time to try and revive the fortunes of the now ageing paper.

Sydney Warner was a rather younger editor than his predecessor but had already worked on the paper for many years. Having joined the staff under Arthur Mee, he too, like Tyerman, was heavily influenced by Mee.¹⁵

Although he was a strict grammarian—prompting one of his colleagues to comment "Sydney Warner could spot a solecism at twenty-five yards"—and maintained many of the Mee traditions, Warner was the first editor to try and modernise *The Children's Newspaper* and under his editorship the paper began to run a wider range of features to attract readers rather than their parents. Bob Bartholomew, who had joined the paper as a boy of 14, and returned to his post as sub-editor after the war, recalls that, prior to Sydney Warner, the paper was rather dull: "We had to bring *The Children's Newspaper* up to date. Let's face it, *The Children's Newspaper* was terribly old fashioned. I was interviewed some ten years ago and I looked at the original ones and they were jolly good but they were almost a replica of *The Times*. Arthur Mee maintained that this was *The Times* of children's literature and by golly it was going to look like *The Times*."

"When Sydney Warner took over he realised he had to introduce more popular things, so he actually got television reviews put in, film reviews, and encouraged me when I wanted to put sport into it. Prior to about 1950 there was almost no sport whatsoever in *The Children's Newspaper*. I started writing little snippets about sports and so forth and then introduced

¹⁵ Both Hugo Tyerman and Sydney Warner were employed to continue Arthur Mee's 'The King's England' books which explored the sights and history of different counties around the country. Mee compiled the first book in 1936 and Warner co-edited the last in 1953.

interviews with sports stars like Christine Truman, Brian Phelps and young Stanley Matthews, the Wimbledon boy's champion."

The look of the paper was also improved under art editor Ted Pope, who had joined the paper after serving as a Special Constable with the Metropolitan Police during the war. Pope was awarded the George Medal for bravery in 1941: he was on duty one night when German bombers scored a direct hit on a nearby house. Pope was blown to the ground but recovered quickly and helped a number of severely injured people who had been caught in the blast before entering the house to rescue a woman trapped on the second floor.

During Sydney Warner's editorship, *The Children's Newspaper* ran a great many excellent serials by the likes of Geoffrey Trease, John Pudney and Malcolm Saville. In January 1954, the front cover featured an interview with Anthony Buckeridge that heralded the arrival of Jennings and Darbishire, the famous schoolboy pals whose adventures at Linbury Court school had entertained millions of children on radio and in books since 1948. The publication of *According to Jennings* in *The Children's Newspaper* was something of a coup for editor Warner and the paper went on to publish another seven Jennings novels over the next few years.

Another scoop was the publication of *The Secret of the Gorge* by Malcolm Saville, the latest novel in his best-selling Lone Pine Club series, and a number of serials featuring the Conways by Geoffrey Morgan, which ran in *The Children's Newspaper* throughout the 1950s.

The improvements in both look and content helped raise the profile of *The Children's Newspaper* after a number of years in the doldrums. The war and the shortage of newsprint had meant the paper had struggled for a decade with a slim eight pages; since the relaxation of some of the strictest controls in 1949, the pagination had increased to twelve and the paper certainly benefited from the increased space in the 1950s.

Such was the recovery that *The Children's Newspaper* began to attract rivals.

The first issue of *Junior Mirror*, a 16-page, tuppenny paper launched on 1 September 1954 by the *Daily Mirror* newspaper, featured a new Biggles novel by Capt. W. E. Johns (an abridged version of *Biggles, Foreign Legionnaire*). The famous 'Pip, Squeak & Wilfred' characters were transferred from the parent paper and three new comic strips were included, featuring 'Space Captain Jim Stalwart', 'The Fighting Tomahawks' and 'Flash, the Wonder Dog'.

On the surface the paper was successful and its publisher, Pictorial Publications Ltd., boasted "In its early days the sales of *Junior Mirror* far exceeded the highest expectations, but sales subsequently settled down to nearer the level originally expected." This "settled down" figure was over 500,000 copies a week despite heavy competition from *Junior Express* (Beaverbrook Newspapers), launched the same day, and *Junior Sketch* (Associated Newspapers) a week later.

Junior Mirror unfortunately lost ground in the spring of 1955 when industrial action meant the paper was off the shelves for four weeks. Eventually it folded at the end of February 1956, its publisher blaming high costs and labour problems.

Junior Express Weekly was launched as a separate paper on 18 June 1956, in a similar two-colour format to *Junior Mirror*. It, too, relied more heavily on comic strips than the news format of *The Children's Newspaper*. With the popularity of science fiction in comics, it is no surprise that the *Junior Express Weekly* included 'Jeff Hawke' in its line-up. Jeff was a relative newcomer to the *Daily Express* newspaper but would prove to be one of the most popular science fiction strips to appear in the UK, running for many years and still able to boast a strong fan base, a fan club and club magazine.

With issue 74, *Junior Express Weekly* became *Express Weekly* and became more recognisably a comic in the *Eagle* style. Jeff Hawke was now printed in full colour on the centre pages and cowboy hero 'Rex Keene' appeared in full colour on the cover. The new *Express Weekly* ran successfully until 1960 when it became *TV Express Weekly*, although this incarnation only lasted another 20 months before it was folded into its companion, *TV Comic*.

The Children's Newspaper fought back during this period with some fine serials (*Our Friend Jennings* and *Thanks to Jennings*, both by Anthony Buckeridge; *The School Beyond the Snows* by Geoffrey Trease and others) and also introduced a number of comic strip adventures that remained true to the newspaper format of the rest of the paper. These strips ranged from life stories of Louis Pasteur and Hereward the Wake to adaptations of Sherlock Holmes, many of them skilfully drawn by Peter Jackson although, truth be told, they could not match the full-colour splendour of *Express Weekly's* 'Wulf the Briton'.

However, *The Children's Newspaper* was to see off all of these upstart rivals despite facing many problems. As the 1950s drew to a close, the paper suffered a blow when a national printers' strike forced it off the newsstands from mid-June to mid-August 1959. Children following the latest serial, *The Dawn Killer* by Monica Edwards (based on her screenplay for a Saturday morning movie serial) had to wait nine weeks between episodes.

While the paper was off the newsstands it was decided to give it a new look. Art editor Ted Pope had died in a train crash in 1957. His replacement was New Zealander Noel Cook, who enlivened the covers by moving the title heading into the top left corner—much like today's tabloids—which allowed more space for larger and more dramatic illustrations. A regular three- or four-panel comic strip, 'All-Round Alfie' by J. Bryant, was added to the back page, which was now almost exclusively dedicated to sport. Old-fashioned features like Jacko the monkey had already been dropped and record reviews introduced.

Jacko had been one of the longest-running features of *The Children's Newspaper*, a mischievous monkey who appeared on the children's page, tucked away amongst the puzzles

and picture questions. Jacko was the *bête noire* of his older brother Adolphus who was forever on the receiving end of some piece of tomfoolery. Jacko was to run and run (and skip and slide and dash about) for decades, and was still appearing every week in the years after the war.

"Jacko is the one thing that people remember about *The Children's Newspaper*," says Bob Bartholemew. "Children want to be entertained and for years Jacko was the only entertainment the paper offered. However informative and well-written the paper was—and it was—it still looked terribly dull."

The last links with the Arthur Mee days of *The Children's Newspaper* ended with the departure of Sydney Warner in 1961. His replacement was former schoolmaster John Davies, who oversaw the next stage of the paper's modernisation. In November 1961, a new banner heading appeared on the cover and this 'freshening up' of the paper's contents also saw the introduction of readers' letters. More substantial changes followed in January 1962 with the addition of a regular column specifically aimed at girls, written by Jonquil Antony (famous at the time as a scriptwriter of the radio show *Mrs. Dale's Diary*), a feature entitled 'Let's Go', which took readers around the country to interesting holiday destinations, and a new regular column by Maxwell Knight, which invited readers to 'Take a Look at Nature'. Knight was then a well known radio and TV personality. What was less well known to young fans of his cheerful column was that the genial naturalist had worked for over thirty years as an agent for MI5.

These changes were helped along by new art editor Stan Macdonald, who had worked under Ted Pope, Noel Cook and South African David Cherry before replacing Cherry around the same time as John Davies was appointed editor.

The surroundings at John Carpenter House where the paper was produced may have retained their almost Dickensian air—with a porter arriving daily to fill the brass coal scuttles in each of the offices—but the editorial team were more forward-looking than many might give them credit. Over the next couple of years, John Davies tried to make the paper lively and interesting for his readers, keeping a balance between staying true to the 'newspaper' format and introducing new elements. Jonquil Antony's column was replaced in 1963 with a chatty collection of paragraphs gathered under the heading 'Specially for Girls' edited by 'Vicky' (although actually written by staff); Patrick Moore, whose *Sky at Night* series had begun appearing on the BBC in 1957, could be found regularly 'Looking at the Sky'; C. W. Hill provided an insight on 'The World of Stamps'; pets now had their own corner and 'Science Survey' (by Derrick Royston Booth) kept readers abreast of all the latest developments.

In January 1964, *The Children's Newspaper* opened a 'Pop Spot' with a large photograph of John Lennon; the rest of the Beatles followed over the next three weeks. The 'Pop Spot' is a fascinating snapshot of the era's top of the pops, featuring photographs of everyone from Adam

Faith and The Yardbirds to Twinkle and Kathy Kirby. The Beatles were voted the most popular band two years running.

Unfortunately, even the introduction of other new features—'All About Ponies' by Ralph Greaves and a 'Scouting News' column—and the paper's livelier look could not stop the circulation from drifting downwards. A series of comic strip adaptations of Shakespeare's plays had begun appearing in 1963, most of them drawn by Italian artist Dino Battaglia, and popular novels continued to be serialised, amongst them *A Castle for the Kopcheks* by James Stagg, the winner of the £500 E. Nesbit Prize for a family tale in the Nesbit tradition. In January 1965, the price jumped from 6d. to 9d. and the pagination to 16 with the addition of a fascinating new 4-page feature entitled 'Why?', which covered a wide range of topics often written by travel broadcaster Bob Danvers-Walker.

But even this could not lift the paper's circulation. Despite the best efforts of editors Sydney Warner and John Davies and the staff under them—Alan Ivimey¹⁶, Edward Northcott, Bob Bartholomew and others on the editorial side and art directors Noel Cook, David Cherry and Stan Macdonald—to modernise and keep the paper relevant to children in the post-war years, *The Children's Newspaper* came to a close with its 2,397th issue. Sydney Warner returned to the front page for the final editorial paying tribute to founding editor Arthur Mee. In his final editorial, headlined 'The Last One', editor John Davies said:

As I write there is a blank space at the top right-hand corner of page 2 of the final issue of CN—waiting for this, my last *It Seems To Me...*

It is difficult to know what to say, except that I am very proud to have been one of the editors of this famous paper. It has been a happy job, and I've had the great good fortune to have the support of a most loyal and capable staff.

CN's basic object has always been to provide information and report on current affairs as simply and honestly as possibly—and to entertain.

CN has a great "family" of readers all over the world, and has arranged thousands of pen-friendships, many of them between people living thousands of miles apart. This is one of the things I am most pleased about, because, as I said in this column some time ago, if people get to know each other they will be less likely to fight each other.

Now we have come to the end, but I am happy to be able to tell you that some of our most popular features—our Shakespeare picture serial, and our Chess and

¹⁶ Ivimey was a journalist and wartime R.A.F. intelligence officer who, in late 1946, had presented the early episodes of 'Woman's Hour' on the radio.

Stamps features—will be continuing in our companion paper *Look and Learn*, beginning with the issue dated 8th May, 1965.

You will find further details about *Look and Learn* elsewhere in this issue and I think you would probably like this paper very much—unless, of course, you read it already.

Goodbye. And good luck!

The Editor

3: Creating a Treasure House

The regular week-to-week appearance of a magazine like *The Children's Newspaper* often disguises major changes that occur behind the scenes. On the surface, *The Children's Newspaper* might have appeared as serene as a swan on a lake but, as we have seen, the paper had four editors over its lengthy existence; sub-editors, art editors and office juniors came and went; even the publisher changed more than once.

The Amalgamated Press, who published the first issues of *The Children's Newspaper* in 1919, had first changed hands in 1926 following the death of its founder, Lord Harmsworth. The A.P., as it was commonly known, produced over 100 magazines of all types and had strong encyclopedia and book publishing divisions. For the next thirty years the company maintained its position as one of the major popular magazine publishers in the United Kingdom, alongside George Newnes, C. Arthur Pearson, Hulton Press and others.

Cecil Harmsworth King, chairman of the Daily Mirror newspaper, considered the A.P. a perfect target. Keen to expand his business, King made an offer for the A.P. in 1958. The previous few years had been difficult ones for all magazine publishers who were facing rising printing costs and falling advertising revenues thanks to the introduction of commercial television. The offer was accepted and, in January 1959, Cecil King was appointed chairman of the A.P. A few months later, King announced that the A.P. was to be known as Fleetway Publications, named after the famous company building, Fleetway House, in Farringdon Street. Fleetway also owned the neighbouring building, aptly named New Fleetway House, which, between them, covered 200,000 square feet of office space just off Fleet Street, the famous "street of ink" at the heart of newspaper publishing in London.

Within a few months of Cecil King taking control of Fleetway Publications, Odhams Press absorbed both Hulton Press and George Newnes, making it the largest magazine publisher in the world. King contacted new chairman Christopher Chancellor with a suggestion that the two

companies should rationalise the lucrative but overcrowded women's magazine market in which Newnes (now owned by Odhams) and Fleetway were the major players. Chancellor turned down the idea but King persisted, offering a merger which Chancellor interpreted as possibly the first steps in a takeover bid. Chancellor turned to the Mirror's rival Thomson Newspapers and announced a possible merger; the Mirror Group countered with a bid for Odhams which was too attractive for their board of directors to ignore. Fleetway took over Odhams in March 1961.

It is against this background of company politics and takeovers that *Look and Learn* was first created. The man responsible was 46-year-old Leonard Matthews.

Matthews was something of a legendary character at Fleetway. His career in comics had begun in 1939 as an assistant editor on *The Knock-Out Comic*, one of a pair of comics launched by A.P. to combat the appearance of two new rivals on the market. Dundee-based D. C. Thomson had launched their first comic, *The Dandy*, in December 1937 and a companion followed eight months later, *The Beano*. Their success was immediate—and they remain two of the most famous comic papers to this day.

The A.P. fought back with *Radio Fun* in October 1938 and *The Knock-Out Comic* in March 1939, both modelled on the Thomson papers but with their own particular spin; *Radio Fun* was closely tied in with popular radio stars of the day, turning Arthur Askey, Sandy Powell and Flanagan & Allen into comic strip stars; *Knock-Out*, like the Thomson papers, drew on the company's long storypaper tradition for some of its characters, namely Sexton Blake and Billy Bunter.

Both new titles were successfully launched just as A.P.'s comics were about to face their toughest challenge yet. When war was declared in September 1939, supplies of paper from Africa and Scandinavia were soon cut off. Paper rationing came into effect in early 1940 and would not be lifted for ten years. No new titles could be launched during this period and the A.P. was forced to fold seven of its older titles in May 1940; other titles were published fortnightly to help free up precious newsprint. Comics stood still until 1950, when paper was finally deregulated.

Many members of staff were called up. Edward Holmes, the founding editor of *Knock-Out* joined the R.A.F., as did his assistant, Leonard Matthews. Unlike Holmes, Matthews was posted to nearby Kingsway, compiling air-training manuals for the Air Ministry, and was still able to continue work on *Knock-Out* for the paper's war-time editor, Percy Clarke. As artists were called up, Matthews found himself creating, writing and illustrating strips as well as making himself useful in other ways, volunteering for fire-watch duty on the roof of Fleetway House.

After being demobbed in 1946, Matthews returned to *Knock-Out Comic* (soon to drop the hyphen), rising from sub-editor to editor in 1948, when Ted Holmes was given the task of creating a line of comics for the Australian market. Shortly after, in the spring of 1949, the A.P.

purchased two new papers, *Sun* and *Comet*, which were handed to Matthews and Holmes respectively. With paper rationing about to come to an end, Holmes proposed a new title which would use artwork published during his Australian comics venture; unfortunately, the only presses available to him were those used by the pocket libraries, small, digest-sized booklets that had been a popular format for many years. Holmes resized the artwork and produced *Cowboy Comics*. In 1951 he added *Thriller Comics* as a companion. *Thriller* was passed over to Matthews in 1952 so that Holmes could create a third title, *Super Detective Library*. This move meant that Matthews had to take a more managerial role and editors were bought in to handle the various papers he now had. A newcomer named Mike Butterworth became Matthews' right hand man.

Matthews' tastes in illustration were formed by books he had read during his youth and, because of paper rationing, many famous illustrators were finding work difficult to come by during the 1940s, a situation that, thanks to Matthews, *Knock-Out* was able to benefit from.

Percy Clarke had introduced a series of classic novel adaptations to the paper in 1942, beginning with 'Gulliver's Travels' drawn by Eric R. Parker. Adaptations of novels by W. H. G. Kingston, Capt. Frederick Marryat, Robert Louis Stevenson, R. M. Ballantyne and Charles Kingsley followed. Parker, Mike Hubbard and D. C. Eyles were three popular pre-war A.P. illustrators drafted in to produce these strips. Matthews, newly appointed as editor in 1948, was keen to expand beyond classic novels and write original swashbuckling historical serials of the kind that Errol Flynn and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. had made so popular in the cinema. He himself had already written a series of stories featuring 'The Three Musketeers' in 1946.

A fortunate coincidence occurred. An agent contacted Matthews on behalf of his client, a well-known book illustrator and poster artist whose workload had dried up in the years immediately after the war. The artist was 69-year-old Sep. E. Scott and Matthews leapt at the chance to have him draw the adventures of pirate hunter 'Captain Flame'. Matthews then approached other agencies as other new strips were introduced into his paper: Reginald C. W. Heade, T. Heath-Robinson, W. Bryce-Hamilton, Lunt Roberts and H. M. Brock all debuted in *Knockout* in 1949.

Sadly, some of these artists were approaching the ends of their careers. T. Heath Robinson, for instance, was already 79 when he drew his first strip and was still drawing for Matthews at the time of his death, aged 83, in 1953. H. M. Brock was already a celebrated illustrator in the mid-1890s and by 1950, when he was 75, his eyesight had begun to fail. His last strip work for Matthews appeared in 1957, the same year that Reginald Heade died at the early age of 54.

Matthews attracted many more talented artists to the ranks of his comics, amongst them Pat Nicolle in 1950, Peter Jackson and C. L. Doughty in 1953 and J. Millar Watt in 1956. All were highly adept at drawing the kind of historical romances Matthews favoured and would be the bedrock of *Look and Learn* when it was launched a few years later.

In Ted Holmes and Leonard Matthews, the Amalgamated Press had found two relatively young editors (both were in their mid-forties) with the vision to take their comics in new directions; at the same time, the old guard of comic editors—many of whom had joined the firm before the 1914-18 war—were coming to the end of their careers. Harold J. Garrish, who was head of all the juvenile publications, died "in harness" in 1956 after over 60 years with the firm. The lieutenants of Garrish's comics empire were Percy Montague Haydon (raised to the board of directors in 1955) and Stanley J. Gooch. Gooch, managing editor of many of the firm's most famous comics, died in 1958 and Haydon, managing editor of such famous titles as *Magnet* (Billy Bunter) and *Union Jack* (Sexton Blake), retired in 1961. Reginald T. Eves, another long-time editor who was at the time responsible for the successful girls' comic *School Friend* and boys' titles *Lion* and *Tiger*, retired in 1959.

Ted Holmes had also departed for pastures new when he was offered the editorship of the famous magazine, *Everybody's* in 1957. With Holmes' departure, Leonard Matthews found himself with an even greater number of comic papers under his control. Within a few years, and once the dust from the turbulent changes in ownership that the Amalgamated Press had gone through had settled, he found himself appointed to the board of directors of the newly renamed Fleetway Publications.

One of the innovations Matthews had been responsible for setting up was the Experimental Art Department, a think tank for brainstorming ideas for new titles and assisting where old titles were being revamped. The department had two heads: David Roberts (small, portly and curly haired—"Imagine one of Michaelangelo's cherubs gone to seed," says one former colleague) in charge of editorial and Trevor Newton (tall, lanky, well-dressed) in charge of art, with veteran freelance artist Eric R. Parker taken onto the staff to produce layouts and designs. Experimental Art created dummies for a number of new comic titles that Matthews proposed to his bosses. The group's first success was the launch, on Monday 25 January 1960, of *Princess*, a new paper for girls printed in full colour gravure on the front, rear and centre pages.

Experimental Art also took over a dummy that was already in preparation for a new humour comic along the lines of *Knockout*. At the request of "Monty" Haydon, *Knockout* editor Arthur Bouchier and scriptwriter Ron "Nobby" Clark had already begun putting the dummy together before Leonard Matthews took charge. All new titles had to be approved by the senior directors of the company, now headed by Mirror Group chiefs, and it was Matthews' suggestion that the title should feature Buster, the son of the *Daily Mirror's* famous Andy Capp. The idea was taken up and the paper given to Jack Le Grand to edit; *Buster* followed *Princess* onto the newsstands in May 1960.

During 1961, the Experimental Art Department were busy on a new project. This was another Leonard Matthews conception: an educational weekly for children unlike anything the market

had seen before. The idea was one Matthews had been toying with for some years, having first approached the board of directors at Amalgamated Press with the concept as early as 1958. The model Matthews proposed was based on *Conoscere* and *La Vita Meravigliosa*, two hugely popular educational magazines published in Italy. The board turned the idea down, fearful that a new weekly would be damaging to *The Children's Newspaper* and the *Children's Encyclopaedia*, which had seen its 27th edition printed only a few years before.

Three years later, Matthews tried again, prompted by the success rival publisher Purnell was having with *Knowledge*, a British edition of *Conoscere* launched in January 1961. Like Arthur Mee's famous publication, *Knowledge* built up week by week into an encyclopedia with the added attraction of colour. "To everyone's surprise except mine, it was a tremendous success," Matthews recalled.

Matthews reassessed his original proposal and took it to the board once more. This time he was given the go-ahead to produce a dummy and the Experimental Art Department found themselves with a new project.

One of the talented group of people helping to put this new paper together was Jack Parker. Parker had begun his career in Fleet Street at the offices of *Everybody's*, a general weekly magazine that had begun life as *Competitor's Journal* in 1913. It had been taken over by Amalgamated Press in 1950 but retained its independence for several more years under editor Greville Poke, son of the founding editor, Frederick Poke. *Everybody's* was based at an office in Fleet Street but eventually was given an office at Fleetway House. Parker, unhappy to discover that a colleague was earning a vastly inflated wage for doing a lesser job, had a "falling out" and left to work in women's magazines at Newnes. "I was about to get married—that was 1960—and I had a call from Leonard Matthews who was the great man at Fleetway. Leonard said that he was interested in me going back to Fleetway to work in the Experimental Art Department under Trevor Newton. The idea was to go back and become involved in producing new publications, which I did.

"One of the things we produced was *Look and Learn* and when it was coming to fruition, Leonard said, 'I'd like you to be the art editor,' and I thought it sounded like a good opportunity."

This was six to eight months before the magazine was first released. Parker said 'Yes,' and was to work on *Look and Learn* until its demise in 1982, for the last five years as editor.

Another important figure in the early history of *Look and Learn* was David Stone, also an émigré from *Everybody's*. Born in Westminster, London, in 1929, Stone had been a sergeant in the R.A.F. during his National Service before attending Queen's College, Cambridge, where he earned his M.A. in 1953. He joined *Everybody's* as a sub-editor the same year and worked on the paper as a department editor and feature writer. He also freelanced for the *Sunday Graphic*

and *Evening Standard* as well as compiling books. After *Everybody's* folded, he joined Fleetway where he became involved in putting together dummies in the Experimental Art Department. He was involved with *Princess* as the writer of the series 'When You Grow Up...' and was tasked with preparing features for the new *Look and Learn*, although his byline only appears twice in the early issues. Stone was named as editor on the contents page of the first seven issues before the editorial staff listing was dropped.

Stone's tenure on the paper was short-lived, and although he was credited as launch-editor in the first few issues, by the time the magazine hit the shelves he had already departed. In his place was John Sanders, who had previously worked on the *Daily Sketch*—"the youngest features editor in Fleet Street"—who had come to Fleet Street to work on *Reynolds News*, later moving to *John Bull* and thence to the *Daily Sketch*.

"I had produced a dummy for a woman's weekly paper," he recalls, "and, after a lot of lunches at the Savoy, I was hired by the Board to edit at."

A boardroom debacle led to the new magazine being abandoned. "I was on ice for six months and very happy with it because I was freelancing like crazy. They'd hired me and taken me out of Fleet Street and I was waiting for the appropriate moment to go to Leonard and say 'Now it's time to pay.'

"It was at that point he showed me the first issue of *Look and Learn* and asked me to take a look at it. I read it and said to him, 'This is a good idea but it's so badly packaged that it can't survive.' It looked like the old *Everybody's Weekly* because David Stone and Jack Parker were both from *Everybody's* and were producing a children's paper that was a carbon copy of a magazine that died because it looked so tired.

"I said to Leonard, 'I'll do it for you if you let me take it away and redraw it which I did over a period of about three days. You will notice, I would hope, an enormous difference between the first four or five issues of *Look and Learn*—which were already in the pipeline—and, say, issue ten. And that, I think, kept the paper going. It would not have survived otherwise."

There then followed what Sanders called "the classic Fleet Street coup."

"My dummy was quite different to the dummy that had been worked on for months and months. Mine was accepted within about three days and I was given an office to occupy. This was on the Friday. David Stone had gone away for a long weekend and when I got in on the Monday, David said 'Oh, I hear you're joining us. How nice. Bring your stuff in when you're ready.'

"'No, David,' I said. 'You bring your stuff to *me* when *you're* ready.' And there was this very polite—because he was a very urbane man—confrontation. I went to Leonard and said, 'Either he goes by mid-day or I go. As far as I'm concerned I'm now appointed as editor of *Look and Learn*. You've got two editors and you're going to have to get rid of one.' It was quite a drama."

Sanders returned the next day as editor. "The important thing to remember is that *Look and Learn* was already in a terribly perilous position. It was running about three weeks late and David Stone had gone off on a long weekend leaving the magazine in this dreadful state where it might not have come out because it was so late."

"They shunted David over onto the comics," recalls Noreen Pleavin. "He was furious about being moved from *Look and Learn* to something that he thought was beneath him. They were very keen on status in those days."

His problems at Fleetway aside, David Stone's career as a novelist was just about to take off. His first novel, *All the Loyal People*, had appeared from Peter Davies in 1960 and was picked up in America by G. P. Putnam's. His next (and probably his best) novel was an international espionage thriller entitled *The Tired Spy* published in 1961. A third novel, *A New Friend*, followed in 1963, by which time Stone had left Fleetway and joined Albion Film Distributors to write the screenplay for *Hide and Seek*, adapting a novel by Harold Greene. Stone went on to write seven episodes of *Danger Man*, starring Patrick McGoohan, and a *Wednesday Play* for the BBC. His blossoming career as a screenwriter was cut short in early 1966 when he went into hospital for an operation and died unexpectedly, aged only 36.

Other members of the early *Look and Learn* staff included picture editor Lyn Marshall, chief sub-editor Olive Hawker, sub-editor Noreen Pleavin and deputy editor Freddie Lidstone. Lidstone had been with Amalgamated Press for many years and had been a sub-editor on *Modern Boy* until it folded in 1939. He later transferred to Stanley Gooch's group and worked as a sub on *Radio Fun*, where he was one of the writers of the adventures of 'Inspector Stanley, the Man with a Thousand Secrets!'. In the 1950s he had worked on one of the Amalgamated Press's prestigious women's papers and finding himself 'demoted' to a children's paper was something of an affront to his dignity as he now had to share a room with other staff rather than enjoy the comforts of his own office. "Intellectually unsuited for comics," as one of his fellow editors described him, it was his addiction to amateur dramatics that helped him fit in; as a playwright, Lidstone had at least one of his plays broadcast by the BBC and two others published by Samuel French's famous 'Acting Editions' in 1952.

Lidstone found his new surroundings a little more agreeable with the arrival of David Le Roi, who had joined the Amalgamated Press in 1945 to work as an editor in their encyclopedia department. The son of an Indian Army officer, Le Roi had travelled widely as a boy, being educated in Edinburgh, Scotland, and Sydney, Australia, before joining the local Sydney *Daily Guardian*. He came to England in 1927 and joined the *Daily Chronicle* as a reporter, freelancing features for Australian and English newspapers over the next ten years. He had worked briefly as an assistant technical editor for Waverly Educational Book Co. before joining the R.A.F. in 1939.

Now, in 1961, he arrived at *Look and Learn* as their science and technical editor. "What we first saw was this vast pile of books on everything from medicine and jet aircraft to keeping hamsters and guinea pigs, all written by David," recalls Noreen Pleavin, "and then this tiny man came in. David was great. Because he had worked on Arthur Mee's encyclopedias he had an encyclopedic mind so he could answer almost anything. Most of the time he was right but occasionally he'd get something wrong and he'd be about a thousand years out—when he was wrong he was magnificently wrong!"

It was this team of talented creators (not forgetting Ron the office boy) that put together the first issue of *Look and Learn* although, as Jack Parker says, "It was absolutely Leonard Matthews's baby. Nobody can take more credit for it than Leonard. He was the driving force behind the whole thing. In some ways he was a bit of an old-fashioned man but with *Look and Learn* he had his finger on the pulse."

Matthews admitted at the time that "It wasn't easy. I had to go one better than my original idea. But the result is that *Look and Learn* will be one hundred percent British in conception and execution. Sometimes the fact that *Knowledge* is translated from the Italian does seem rather obvious."

Trade journals carried news of the new paper in mid-December 1961 when Fleetway Publications announced their plans for promoting the new title. This was to include 30-second TV adverts on Sunday, January 14, the day before the paper was launched, national advertising in the *Sunday Express*, *Sunday Times*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Herald*, *Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Times*, promotion in all of Fleetway's juvenile and women's magazines and full colour brochures distributed to the public and heads of schools. Issues two, three and four were also to be heavily promoted. It was to be the most extensive launch ever given to a juvenile paper.

4: "The most happy medium"

The cover of *Look and Learn*'s debut number teamed up the young Prince of Wales with one of his famous forebears, Charles Stuart emphasising the paper's twin interests in the modern and the historical. Choosing Charles Stuart was almost certainly the suggestion of Leonard Matthews: the cover image (by D. C. Eyles) had previously illustrated a reprint of Matthews' own comic strip 'The King's Captain', drawn by Sep. E. Scott for *Comet* in 1951.¹⁷

The paper's first feature was about the World Wildlife Fund, whose patron was Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. The British National Appeal for the World Wildlife Fund had been launched on 28 September 1961 during *Look and Learn*'s lengthy gestation and within two months had raised some £40,000 from 30,000 subscribers.

Keeping up the connection with royalty, the President of the Appeal was the Duke of Edinburgh and its chairman Peter Scott. A meeting of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature at Geneva, Switzerland, had pinpointed a number of desperate problems such as the threatened extinction of both white and black rhinoceroses caused by poachers in East Africa. Money from the fund was used to purchase a farm adjoining the Ngurdoto Crater in Tanganyika, then recently declared a National Park; more money was used to buy a reserve in the Marismas, the last home of the flamingo in Spain. Wide publicity in magazines like *Look and Learn* helped propel the fund to £78,000 by the end of its first year.

This opening spread included the first illustration to appear in the paper, drawn by the renowned wildlife artist Raymond Sheppard. The second artist was none other than Vincent van Gogh. One of van Gogh's famous 'Sunflowers' paintings was one of the illustrations used to accompany an article on his life entitled 'The Painter Who Loved the Sun'.

¹⁷ The picture was reprinted from *Thriller Comics Library 116*, published Feb. 2, 1956, where the strip was entitled 'The Cavalier and the Crown'.

'From Then Till Now' was one of *Look and Learn's* longest-running series. Each episode (some published in two or three parts) consisted of nine or twelve small captioned illustrations showing how fashions in architecture, clothing, toys and any one of dozens of other subjects had changed over the years. The first episode, drawn by Eric R. Parker, covered the history of houses from A.D. 200 (when Roman villas had furnaces to provide under-floor heating) to today (when, the editor informed his readers, "New, labour-saving materials have been developed. Full use of light is made, and central-heating, no longer a luxury, often installed.").

'Easy Experiments You Can Do At Home' was an illustrated feature of small, fun experiments that could be done with everyday materials, starting with 'The Flying Matchstick'... not so much an experiment as a test of one's skill with a sharp knife to cut slots into the matchstick and cut thin cardboard into wing- and tail-shaped pieces about 1/8th of an inch wide.

The first episode of a series on the history of Rome was written by Leonard Cottrell, a well known historian and author of children's history books. This was followed by an abridged serialisation of the famous *Three Men in a Boat (not forgetting the Dog)* by Jerome K. Jerome, originally published in August 1889, about an accident-prone rowing holiday on the Thames. This was the first of two serials to begin in this issue, the second a more modern book—albeit a true-to-life historical novel—entitled 'The Children's Crusade' by Henry Treece, with illustrations by Fortunino Matania.

'We Ask—You Answer' was the hopeful headline to one feature consisting of three sets of puzzles. The first was a series of questions based on the contents of this issue of the magazine. The second was a crossword which children might not have found so easy (25 across: "Who was the King of the Fairies, married to Titania, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?, 6 letters") and was obviously designed to be completed with the assistance of a parent. A picture quiz completed the page.

A full-page colour illustration introduced the story of 'Sinbad and the Giant Roc', from the famous *Tales of the Arabian Nights* and its translator, Sir Richard Burton. This was the first of a series of biographies of famous authors which were usually accompanied by a spectacular colour page illustrating a scene from one of their best works.

A panoramic colour illustration by Peter Jackson told the story of 'The Houses of Parliament' across the centre pages. Jackson was one of the key contributors to the early *Look and Learn*, writing and drawing the back cover serial, 'The Dover Road', as well as the magnificent aerial view of Parliament, a style he had developed in illustrations for the *Evening News* where he was a well-known contributor. Jackson, born in Brighton in 1922, had left school just in time to be called up for war service but was declared medically unfit due to his short-sightedness. Instead, Jackson joined the Civil Defence as an Air Raid Warden. He made good use of his service grant attending Willesden School of Art. His first illustration was published in 1945. Soon after, he

began drawing comic strip versions of classic novels for syndication in newspapers, adapting *Treasure Island*, *Ivanhoe*, *The Three Musketeers* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (the first of these was also collected as a book, published in 1949). Jackson heard through his agent that the *Evening News* was looking for a weekly cartoon feature about the history and curiosities of London along the lines of Ripley's 'Believe It or Not', which was running in the *Sunday Express*. When asked by the editor what he knew about London, Jackson candidly admitted "Not much," but was still offered the job.

Jackson earned his reputation as a skilled artistic draughtsman through the 'London is Stranger Than Fiction' strip and his knowledge and love of London grew as he researched each episode. Eventually, he built up a vast collection of maps, prints, engravings, glass negatives of photographs, playbills, advertising and other ephemera from which he drew inspiration to write other strips for the *Evening News* ('London Explorer', 'Somewhere to Go', 'There is a Tavern', 'This Day in London's Past') until the paper's demise in 1980.

It is no surprise that Jackson came to the attention of Leonard Matthews; one of his first commissions on taking over *Thriller Comics* in 1952 was to hire Jackson to retell the story of 'Ivanhoe', published in issue 29 in January 1953. Jackson's main outlets over the next few years were the large gravure comics *Mickey Mouse Weekly*, *Eagle* and *Swift* where his colour artwork had room to shine, as it did during Jackson's long association with *Look and Learn* and its companion paper, *Treasure*.

Next up for the first issue was a miscellany page, offering such interesting items as an extract from 'Sea Fever' by John Masefield, a 'Thought for the Week' from John Whitley (Vicar of St. Mary's, Ware) and a map of the world, showing how broadly *Look and Learn* was covering subjects from around the globe. This was certainly true of the next few pages which included photo features on the Grand Canyon, the first example of 'Wonders of Nature and Mankind', a family tree based on the royal heritage of Prince Charles and the story of Charles II's fight for the crown. 'Your Very Own' introduced the Basset hound as the first of a series of favourite pets. Young readers who fell in love with the cute photographs of Basset pups and had their pleas dismissed by parents may have wished they were living in Japan thanks to the 'Our Colour Camera' feature a few pages earlier, which looked at 'The Children of Tokio' (*sic*) and painted (in photographs) a colourful and rather rosy picture of life for Japanese children. Readers are informed, for instance, that "The carefree youngsters have nearly everything they want—sweets, presents, attention. And they have the seats in crowded trains while grown-ups stand."

'The Story of a Seed' was one of careful design, from ways to distribute themselves—feathery parachutes, stiff wings and hooks or sticky casings which become attached to birds—to protecting themselves on the ground against the elements.

'The Quest for Oil' was illustrated with a fabulous photograph of an oil 'blow-out' with a column of oil and sand blasted hundreds of feet into the air.

'Eyes on Outer Space' explored the worlds beyond our planet through the giant bowls of radio telescopes and the tiny Pioneer V space probe, which was launched in March 1960 and transmitted data back to scientists at the then newly-created NASA for 15 weeks before the 22 million mile distance became too much for the weak signal.

'The Dover Road' was, like the centre pages, compiled and drawn by Peter Jackson. Rather than concentrating on one building, Jackson followed in the footsteps of travellers on the road from London Bridge to the port in Kent, regaling readers with historical snippets about the villages and towns the traveller would pass through on his way.

'The Dover Road' neatly summed up the premise of *Look and Learn*: an educational feature that was also entertaining. Its comic strip layout was attractive to young readers who would soon find themselves immersed in the varied history of the route which, in one episode, might briefly relate the Peasants' Revolt and, a few frames later, the story of Sir Hiram Maxim and his attempts to create an aeroplane in 1894.

Jackson followed up his trip to Dover with an exploration of the Cinque Ports and, when this came to an end, a new series was launched following the route of 'The Bath Road', written and drawn by Ron Embleton. Embleton, then in his early thirties, had already made his name as a superb comic strip artist, having sold his first work while still in his teens. His story-telling ability and use of vibrant colours were perfect for *Look and Learn* and 'The Bath Road' gave him the opportunity to draw everything from Roman soldiers to highwaymen to steam trains.

Over the years, the rear cover contained some of *Look and Learn*'s best strip work. Following in the footsteps of Peter Jackson and Ron Embleton, Ferdinando Tacconi, an Italian artist, made the back page very much his own for the next twenty months with a series of diverse strips ranging from 'The Route to the Moon' and the story of the Trans-Siberian railway to the epic story of the River Nile and a biography of explorer David Livingstone.

Some of the finest illustrations could be found alongside the weekly feature on authors and their books. Chief amongst the artists was John Millar Watt, whose famous cartoon strip 'Pop' had run in the *Daily Sketch* for 28 years. Millar Watt was also a painter of extraordinary ability, a one-time poster artist with a fine eye for colour and detail. At the time of *Look and Learn*'s launch he was producing a series of colour biographical strips for *Princess*, 'Royal Daughters', and would, soon after, produce a delightful adaptation of Baroness Orczy's 'The Scarlet Pimpernel', which he also illustrated with a fine full-page colour painting in *Look and Learn* issue 11. Some of his *Look and Learn* artwork reprinted covers from *Thriller Comics* (for example, his splendid rendition of Robin Hood in issue 10) but in the main was original to that paper.

Of all the artists whose work graced the pages of *Look and Learn*, the biggest name was that of Fortunino Matania. Leonard Matthews had been a great admirer of the artist's work for many years and had reprinted some of his illustrations whilst editing the comic *Sun* in the 1950s. As the concept of *Look and Learn* developed, Matthews was very keen to get Matania to draw new illustrations for the paper. The first issue began the serialisation of Henry Treece's 'The Children's Crusade' and the black and white illustration accompanying was the only one to run an explicit credit: "Illustrated by Fortunino Matania."

New illustrations by Matania were certainly something to boast about. Born in Naples in 1881, Matania followed in his father's artistic footsteps and was a child prodigy, designing advertising at the age of 9 and exhibiting his work at Naples Academy at 11.

British audiences first discovered his work in *The Graphic*, for whom he covered the coronation of Edward VII. Many readers' only experience of royal events between 1902 and the 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth were through Matania's illustrations and portraits; he brought to life the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, the horrors of the Western Front during the Great War and many other momentous events from history. Matania's quest for authenticity led to occasional problems, such as when, in 1937, he borrowed machine-guns, rifles and ammunition from the War Office in order to paint propaganda posters, only to then be summonsed to appear in court for not having a firearms certificate.

For many years, Matania maintained a studio in Kilburn and was approached to provide illustrations for the new magazine: "Leonard Matthews knew Matania," recalls Jack Parker. "He had been a great admirer of Matania for years and when the paper started, Leonard said he would like to get Matania in and commissioned a series of illustrations. I was fortunate enough to go over to see Matania in his studio and we became quite good friends."

One of Matthew's suggestions was a series on the kings of England for which Matania began producing full-page colour illustrations in 1962. He continued to work on the series until his death on 8 February 1963, aged 81. The series began running the following July and continued into 1964, with later episodes drawn by C. L. Doughty.

The series was written by Alfred Duggan, a widely-travelled author of historical novels. Duggan did not start writing until late in life, producing his first novel, *Knight In Armour*, at the age of 43. It was published four years later in 1950, after which Duggan wrote prolifically, publishing a further 14 novels, 7 biographies and 5 children's books before his death in 1964. From the first, Duggan's novels often presented the unromantic underside of history: the first Crusade portrayed in *Knight In Armour* was full of battles and sieges for its idealistic hero but also exposed the squabbling amongst the leaders and the deprivations and suffering—from corns and dysentery to near starvation—of the soldiers in this 'holy war'.

Duggan brought this same realism to his work in *Look and Learn*. Always historically accurate, Duggan never descended into the kind of outrageous melodrama and xenophobia that typified so many histories aimed at young readers in the 20th century. *Look and Learn* celebrated world achievements, rather than limiting itself to achievements of the British Empire. Editor John Sanders also encouraged his authors to tackle thorny subjects and questions within their features: "Are men and women equal? Should they receive equal pay for equal work? Should girls have the same opportunities for education and training as boys?" begins one 1963 article on 'The World's Thinkers', seven years before parliament partly answered the question by making the Equal Pay Act law in 1970.

Authors for *Look and Learn* came from diverse backgrounds. Duggan had been born in Buenos Aires of mixed Argentinean/Irish and American parentage, although he was brought to England at the age of two and considered himself an Englishman. John Prebble, another early author, was born in Middlesex but raised in Canada whilst Graham Montague Jeffries was able to use his success as a hugely popular novelist (as 'Bruce Graeme' he was the creator of gentleman-thief, Richard Verrell, by day a respected mystery writer but by night a black-garbed burglar known as Blackshirt) to indulge his hobby for travel—to America, Europe (especially France) and North Africa—which in turn allowed him to pen a series of articles for *Look and Learn* on the history of Paris.

Leonard Cottrell was another widely travelled author. He first became interested in history travelling around the English countryside by motorcycle, visiting prehistoric stone circles, burial mounds and ancient monuments and writing up his experiences for motoring magazines. Rejected by the RAF on medical grounds, he joined the staff of the BBC and concentrated on writing and producing documentaries about the war. Once peace was declared, he began reporting on the expansion of civil aviation which led to wide travel and his first book, *All Men Are Neighbours*. One trip to Egypt inspired a successful series on great archaeological discoveries and a series of popular books, amongst them *The Lost Pharaohs*, *The Bull of Minos* and *Life Under the Pharaohs*.

Cottrell himself claimed, "I have never pretended to be an archaeologist though nowadays I am often regarded as one. I am essentially a writer about archaeology and travel. My function, as I see it, is to act as a kind of middleman between the pure scholar and the educated layman or, in some cases, the child. Having much of the child in myself I find it easy and enjoyable to write for young people."

It was this talent for bringing both a scholarly expertise and a tremendous enthusiasm to the subject that made Cottrell's articles on history so fascinating and it could be said that all the authors employed by *Look and Learn* were similarly gifted. Some, like Allen Andrews, were newspaper journalists with an interest in history; in Andrews's case his pleasure, he once said,

was "to get tangled, but not drowned, in a morass of facts and to discipline them into understandable order." This he managed to do, along the way producing some hugely popular books, two of which—*Those Magnificent Men In Their Flying Machines* and *Monte Carlo Or Bust*—inspired successful movies.

Maurice Burton was another enthusiastic writer and broadcaster who, for many years, had worked in the zoological department of the British Museum of Natural History. Burton had begun researching animal behaviour in 1928, producing his first book that same year, and had since written dozens of other books on natural history which were well received by young and old alike.

Whilst Burton's background was in animal research, Maxwell Knight, another prolific contributor whose 'Pet Talk' column began in 1963, had a rather different background—as a spy! Knight had begun broadcasting regularly on natural history programmes on the BBC in 1946 and was, at the time his column began, a council member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. This was a world away from his earlier life when, as a young man about town who had recently taken up a post at a preparatory school in Putney teaching Latin, he was recruited to MI5. His tasks included surveillance of extremists and recruiting agents. With others, he was responsible for breaking up a spy ring operating in Woolwich and the arrest, early in WW2, of Tyler Kent, an American cipher clerk responsible for leaking telegrams between Churchill and Roosevelt to Anna Wolkoff, the daughter of a Russian Naval Attaché who was attempting to communicate information to William Joyce ("Lord Haw Haw") in Germany. Knight remained with MI5 until 1956, although few—if any—readers of *Look and Learn* or listeners to the BBC broadcasts of "Uncle Max", as he was known, would be aware of the author's secret past until the publication of a biography, *The Man Who Was 'M'*, in 1984.

The writers on *Look and Learn* shared a common talent for being able to make education entertaining, by engaging the reader's interest with a well thought-up opening paragraph which, coupled with the superb quality of the illustrations, would keep them reading. Articles tended to be relatively short (although never short of facts) and usually contained on a single page or double-page spread. Only later would readers find themselves turning a page to continue an article—and then only because much of the opening spread was taken up with an eye-catching painting and title.

The combination of art and text made *Look and Learn* an instant success in the eyes of parents. From the very first issue the paper was able to boast a number of high-profile fans who had seen the publication ahead of its release. This meant a promotional brochure published in the centre pages of the first issue could boast quotes from such luminaries as the author Norman Collins, television star Eamonn Andrews and speed record-holder Donald Campbell. "I cannot imagine a better project, from every point of view, than *Look and Learn*," Lord Boothby was

quoted as saying. "I have long believed that, while television provides an invaluable stimulus for young enquiring minds, it can also discourage reading by taking up too much time and making things too easy for them. It is of vital importance that our children should want to find things out for themselves, and not be content to have them presented in a way that demands no effort on their part. This magazine will encourage them to do just this. It will fill a gap which badly needs to be filled; and I send my warmest congratulations and good wishes."

Here, Lord Boothby pinpointed one of the worries of parents that *Look and Learn* hoped to counter. London ITV had begun broadcasting in September 1955, the first of a number of commercial television stations that would eventually cover the whole of the UK. By 1961, 80% of the country could receive two television stations. TV was broadcast in black and white until 1967 and it was to the credit of the creators behind *Look and Learn* that they made full use of colour printing, also making the magazine an attractive alternative to most school text books, which had black and white illustrations at best. This advantage was highlighted in another letter of praise published in the first issue, from Hugh Gaitskell: "If this magazine is as lively and colourful and informative as it appears to be in this first issue, it should be a really stimulating publication for young people and a worthwhile contribution to their general knowledge and education. I don't think there has been anything like this since the *Children's Encyclopaedia*; the profusion of colour is especially attractive."

When *Look and Learn* was launched in 1962 another important factor was its price. 1/- (5p) may sound like a bargain today but at the time it was very expensive compared to the price of children's comics. *School Friend*, the biggest selling of Fleetway's comics at the time, was priced 5d, the same as *Eagle* and *Girl*, both of which had a similar mixture of colour and black & white pages to *Look and Learn*. If you were fortunate enough to be getting a shilling pocket money a week, most canny youngsters would buy a 5d comic, leaving themselves enough for a penny sweet a day for the rest of the week. Increasingly, pop records were taking over from toys and sweets as the thing to buy for early teenagers, another distraction from buying magazines... unless that magazine was *Pop Weekly* which was also launched in 1962 or the hugely popular *Valentine*, a comic which created stories around current pop record titles as well as offering the latest pop gossip.

Look and Learn was not expected to be bought by its target audience of 10 to 15-year-olds. It was always intended that it would be bought by parents or grandparents. "Parents saw it as a good read for their children," recalls Jack Parker, who was able to confirm that it was a 'parent buy' in later years when he became editor.

Despite its high price, *Look and Learn* was a tremendous success from the moment it was launched, much to the delight of the people who put the magazine together. The first issue sold about 700,000 copies. "It was unbelievable, really," recalls Parker. "In the third week we hit a

million copies, which was outstanding for a paper of that type. I think it was the most successful launch they'd ever had and it got all its development and launch costs back in about seven weeks, which was unheard of. It was quite phenomenal the way it took off."

5: Rivals—Home Grown and Otherwise

The window into any magazine is its cover: a cover must inspire readers or parents to pick up a magazine. Nowadays, magazine covers are crammed with text (known as cover lines) giving the readers a line-up of this latest issue's contents, hoping that one or other of up to a dozen items will catch the eye of passers by. Cover lines themselves are nothing new, although today's proliferation owes much to *Look and Learn*'s editor John Sanders and one-time *Look and Learn* layout artist Doug Church. Both had moved on from *Look and Learn* by the early 1970s; Sanders was now publisher of the Juvenile and Practical groups at IPC Magazines (as Fleetway Publications was to become) and Church was now primarily involved in creating dummies for new titles.

In 1972, pop stars like David Cassidy, the Osmonds and the Jackson Five had led to a boom in pop music magazines and the phenomenon of 'teeny-boppers'. Although IPC was already running a number of magazines, new launches were coming thick and fast. One was based on a Dutch magazine discovered by Sanders. "It was full of pop pictures and little articles in little boxes and John said, 'We could do something like that,'" recalls Church. "So we produced this thing called *Music Star*, a pop magazine in full colour and black & white with flashy features and pop pictures. I did the original and then made a run for it because it was a weekly and I knew it was going to be a nightmare production-wise. But on the dummy we had all these masses of cover lines and everybody copied the idea. Every magazine you see now has hundreds of cover lines on the front, but you look back before 1973 at any women's magazine and it probably has a big picture and one little line at the bottom. Now they're smothered with lines and swashes of colour and yours truly had something to do with that."

By comparison to modern magazines, *Look and Learn*'s covers were incredibly sedate. Early covers were a collage of two or three images but, from issue 20, editor John Sanders chose a single, striking photograph or painting based on some aspect of that week's contents. Some

covers were reprints (by Sir Alfred Munnings, Frederic Remington, Louis Laluze, amongst others) but the vast majority were the work of *Look and Learn's* talented team of artists, including Fortunino Matania, J. Millar Watt, Ron Embleton and Ferdinando Tacconi. From 1963, James E. McConnell became one of the chief cover artists on the paper. McConnell, the son of a policeman, had established himself as a skilful advertising artist in the 1930s (his clients including Reeves, the artists' materials company) and as a book jacket artist. After the war, McConnell concentrated on the burgeoning paperback market, becoming one of the most sought-after cover artists of the era, especially noted for his Western covers. His work was spotted by Leonard Matthews, who employed him to produce covers for *Thriller Comics* in the 1950s. On *Thriller* and *Look and Learn* he proved he was incredibly versatile and could tackle anything from a historical scene to a nature page.

Many of the features created for the first issue continued to appear for many months. Six months into the paper's run, you could still find the photographic features on the animal kingdom, wonders of nature and 'Our Colour Camera', which travelled to many parts of the world; the centre pages were still dominated with the life stories of historical buildings and the back page was concluding the story of 'The Bath Road'. Not that *Look and Learn* was ever dull—the nature of its features meant that it could cover any event in history, visit any part of the world or discuss any aspect of nature the editor chose.

Like the treasure house it was, there were gems aplenty and not only in the content. In issue 27 the publisher offered two readers the chance to win an all-expenses paid trip to Cape Canaveral in Florida. The competition was being run through the *Daily Mirror* to coincide with the Boy's and Girl's Exhibition at Olympia in London and the winners were to be flown by B.O.A.C.'s latest luxury jet liner, the 707, to Nassau, then on to Florida; the trip would also include the chance to visit an Indian village, watch divers feed sharks and turtles at the Miami Seaquarium and much more. Worried parents would have their expenses paid to deliver and pick up their children from the airport and were assured in the small print "Our successful readers will not be allowed to go up in a rocket." Twenty years later, *Look and Learn* was still sponsoring trips abroad, although most were on a smaller scale, such as 1974's trip to Jersey conducted by the paper's sub-editor Jim Storrie, with the occasional major prize, such as the 1980 'Operation Drake' trip to Kenya conducted by Jack Parker.

As the paper progressed, new series began: the story of 'Historic Europe' was heralded with a masterful cover by Eric R. Parker depicting Joan of Arc; 'The Golden Age of Greece' written by Leonard Cottrell; 'Other People's Countries' (starting with a look at Australia); 'Great Beginnings' of inventors and inventions; and the series 'John and Jane Citizen', which looked at how governments were created and how changing laws of the land affected everyday life.

The remit of *Look and Learn* to educate as well as entertain was well fulfilled and it was only very occasionally that the paper slipped-up. In one of the earliest issues, when the paper was under the editorship of David Stone, a map of central London was accidentally printed back to front. "I think they'd printed five or ten thousand copies before somebody at the printers noticed that it was the wrong way round," recalls Noreen Pleavin. "David Roberts was furious but, in the middle of telling us off, he suddenly stopped, burst out laughing and said, 'We'll send the bloody lot off to Australia.'

With such a wealth of feature material to collate every week it is no surprise that the occasional wrong date was printed and the odd picture mis-captioned, as Pleavin recalls: "I remember proofreading one of the issues and thinking 'doesn't Charles II look like his father?' Of course, when the issue came out we were torn off a strip because it *was* Charles I."

Once the initial fanfare was over, the magazine settled down to a very comfortable circulation. Indeed, it never dropped below 300,000 copies a week under the editorship of John Sanders.

The huge, immediate success of *Look and Learn* inspired Leonard Matthews to put together a companion paper within weeks of its launch.

Treasure hit the newsstands on Monday, 14 January 1963 (dated 19 January). The new 1/- paper was aimed at children between the ages of 5 and 9 and was in essence a junior *Look and Learn*, to which paper children were expected to grow into as their schooling progressed. With its second issue it adopted the sub-title "early steps to looking and learning," cementing the connection with its older sibling.

"I hope it is going to help you all to enjoy learning and finding out things for yourselves," said Mr. Answers in the first issue. Mr. Answers was a key contributor to *Treasure*, always ready to answer questions which puzzled the young readers: in his first piece he tackled the colourful question of why leaves fall off trees in the autumn and went on, over the next few weeks, to reveal why Tower Bridge was designed to open, how big Goliath was, what a parable was and when the first horseless bus was invented.

'Mr. Answers' was really a member of the Fleetway staff called Edward Northcott, who had joined the firm in 1925 as a junior on the staff of Arthur Mee's *Children's Newspaper*, where he remained for most of that paper's lifetime, rising to sports editor before decamping to *Treasure*. Northcott looked nothing like the smiling, bespectacled gentleman in the illustration; in fact, the illustration looked more like *Children's Newspaper* editor John Davies.

Treasure was a beautifully illustrated paper with the same, broad remit as *Look and Learn*, the first issue alone covering such topics as 'The Friendly Hedgehog', 'Seven Sorts of Wild Cats', Bible stories, fairy stories (beginning with 'Cinderella') and brief examples of verse—mostly

classics for young children by the likes of Rose Fyleman, Christina Rossetti and Robert Louis Stevenson.

Learning puzzles—dot-to-dots, drawing puzzles, observation puzzles, quizzes and counting games—were also a major part of the magazine, encouraging children to observe and think out problems for themselves.

However much fun the quizzes and puzzles may have been, the early years of *Treasure* were most fondly remembered for a number of series that began in the very first issue. The first was a colourful feature on the history of Britain written by Noreen Pleavin which began in the stone age and carried the story through in weekly parts to the middle-ages. 'The Wonderful Story of Britain' was illustrated in the best *Look and Learn* traditions by Peter Jackson, with some episodes drawn by other artists of almost equal calibre (Stefan Barany, Michael Godfrey, Alex Oxenham and others).

Perhaps the most memorable series of all was the world-spanning adventures of Wee Willie Winkie. The name was taken from the famous rhyme ("Wee Willie Winkie runs through the town") by William Miller first published in 1841, written to teach children about everyday tasks (the Willie of the poem was a town crier). The Wee Willie Winkie of *Treasure* also had a similar task: to teach children about the different countries of the world. To this end he was sent a magic ticket which would allow him to travel on any bus, train, ship or aeroplane in the world. Not surprisingly, Willie rushed off to the train station—still in his stripy pyjamas—and set off for London. A few weeks later he was in Spain, where he met up with a baby elephant called Hannibal who was to be his constant companion for years to come.

The series was delightfully illustrated for many years by John Worsley, perhaps best known for his famous 'Adventures of P.C. 49' comic strip in *Eagle*. Worsley, born in Liverpool in 1919, became famous for his wartime exploits when, as a prisoner of war, he helped a fellow P.O.W. escape by creating a dummy, dubbed Albert R.N., to take the prisoner's place during roll call. Back in England he returned to his career as an artist, painting portraits and, later, drawing comic strips, illustrating books and helping the police with their enquiries by producing over 1,000 sketches based on eye-witness descriptions. Wee Willie Winkie's travels took him to a number of countries that Worsley knew well, adding to the authenticity of the illustrations.

As delightful were the delicate watercolour illustrations produced by Philip Mendoza for a series of bedtime tales, beginning with the famous *The Borrowers* by Mary Norton and continuing with *The Wind In The Willows*, *The Water Babies*, *Pinocchio*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Alice Through the Looking Glass* and others.

Princess Marigold was the star of an enjoyable fairy-tale comic strip set in a faraway kingdom where the wicked Wizard Weezle was responsible for dozens of fiendish plots against King

Florian's Royal Palace. Created by David Roberts, some 350 episodes appeared in all, some of which were later reprinted in the *Treasure Book of Princess Marigold*.

Whilst Princess Marigold may be forgotten nowadays, one character in *Treasure* has remained a cultural icon for over forty years since his first appearance. Tufty was created by Elsie B. Mills, who worked for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), after she had seen a young squirrel scurrying up to a kerb, looking right and left to make sure there was no traffic, and then continuing across the road. Mills was inspired to use the squirrel, which she dubbed Tufty Fluffytail, as an emblem for road safety on 30,000 booklets issued by RoSPA in 1961. The Tufty Club was launched by RoSPA that same year and Tufty began appearing in episodes of *Small Time* on ITV in January 1962, helping swell the ranks of the club to over 60,000. By 1966 there were over 2,000 Tufty Clubs in Great Britain and the success of the character was no doubt aided by the appearance each week of Tufty and his furryfolk friends in new stories with half-tone—later colour—illustrations in *Treasure*.

The magazine was a huge success from the beginning, carefully compiled by Arthur Bouchier, a former Commander of a minesweeper during WW2, who had been an editor at Fleetway since the late 1940s, when he worked on tuppenny funnies *Comic Cuts* and *Illustrated Chips*. He had moved to *Knockout Comic* in the 1950s and in 1959 was working on the dummy that would emerge from Experimental Art as *Buster*. Once Leonard Matthews had taken over that project, Bouchier was transferred to the pocket libraries department under Alf Wallace and took over the editorship of *Air Ace Picture Library*. It is difficult to imagine a comic that could be more different to *Treasure*, which he began working on two years later, yet Bouchier discovered a natural talent for writing for younger children and penned most of the episodes of Wee Willie Winkie's adventures.

Bouchier, like Matthews, brought together a team of illustrators who might have been considered old-fashioned but whose work was perfect for *Treasure*. Where Matthews had encouraged book illustrators like H. M. Brock and Sep E. Scott in the pages of *Knockout* and continued to use the likes of Scott and J. Millar Watt in *Look and Learn*, Bouchier turned to their contemporaries Edward Osmond, Jack Mathew and the prolific Clive Upton to spearhead the artistic team on *Treasure*. Upton was originally Clive Upton but had spotted the signature of an artist of the same name the day he arrived in Fleet Street at the age of 19. Upton was able to draw on years of wide-ranging experience as an illustrator in magazines and advertising to produce some fabulous work for *Treasure*, often providing both front and back cover paintings as well as illustrating the weekly bible story.

Treasure's most famous artist was probably C. F. Tunnicliffe, who produced dozens of carefully crafted wildlife covers for the paper. Tunnicliffe is now recognised as one of the best

illustrators of British birds this country has produced, his sketchbooks on permanent display in Anglesey where he lived for many years.

Other artists who helped make *Treasure* such a visual feast included David Rook (who later wrote *The White Colt* and *The Ballad of the Belstone Fox*), Eric Tansley, Arthur Oxenham, Wilf Hardy, L. Field Marchant and dozens of others.

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Look and Learn and *Treasure* were not the only educational weeklies on the market but they were certainly the most successful. As previously mentioned, Purnell & Son had launched *Knowledge* ("The new colour magazine that grows into an encyclopedia") on 9 January 1961, based on the Italian magazine *Conoscere*, published by Fratelli Fabbri Editori in Milan. In the wake of this success, Purnell launched *Finding Out*, subtitled "A modern library of education in weekly parts", and, through their Sampson Low imprint, *Understanding Science*. Both *Knowledge* and *Understanding Science* were aimed at an older age group to *Look and Learn* but would have been attractive alternatives for parents who were thinking of buying their sons and daughters an educational paper.

Another credible rival from City Magazines entitled *How and Why*—described as "a very good coloured information periodical for the upper junior children"—lasted only 13 issues before it folded due to poor sales, leaving the newsstands relatively free of children's educational magazines other than those aimed at children interested in animals (*Look About*, *Animal Life* and *Animal Ways*).

As well as being the best-selling of the educational papers available, *Look and Learn* was also by far the most popular, according to the results of a study published in 1964 which counted the number of children who named various papers amongst their favourites:

	Age aimed at	Primary Boys	Primary Girls	Sec. Mod. Boys	Sec. Mod. Girls	Grammar Boys	Grammar Girls
(sample size)		625	589	549	467	246	250
<i>Look and Learn</i>	10-15	30 (5%)	23 (4%)	18 (3%)	15 (3%)	24 (11%)	35 (14%)
<i>Knowledge</i>	12-18	7	5	7	5	13	26
<i>Understanding Science</i>	12-18					3	9
Junior Science Club	10-15						4
Children's Newspaper	10-14	6	3	1	2	12	7
<i>Finding Out</i>	6-12	3	3				3
<i>Treasure</i>	6-9	8	23				

Source: George H. Pumphrey, *What Children Think Of Their Comics*, London, Epworth Press, 1964.

As can be seen from the above table, educational weeklies did not form the major part of children's favourite reading (although the compiler, George H. Pumphrey, admitted that the figures "probably do not indicate how widely they are read"). *Look and Learn* topped the chart for educational magazines by some margin in every age group, although in comparison to other comics and magazines aimed at children it was low in the popularity stakes. 60% of junior school age (8 to 11-year-old) boys named *The Beano* and 59% of girls named *Judy*, while only 9% and 7% of the same sample named *Look and Learn* amongst their favourites. Amongst 12 to 15-year old secondary school girls, the most regularly named title was *Boyfriend* (60%), with *Look and Learn* only named by 4%; it fared better with grammar school girls: 35% named *Boyfriend* and 15% named *Look and Learn*. Boys in the same age group at secondary school preferred *Victor* (40%) to *Look and Learn* (trailing badly at 5%), although there was more positive news with grammar school boys of the same age: *Look and Learn* was actually the top title for 14-year-olds (named by 27%), although not one 15-year-old named the paper as a favourite, preferring *New Musical Express* and *Football Monthly*.

It is worth noting that, in this respect, *Look and Learn* was popular with a very similar demographic to *The Children's Newspaper*. A study published in 1940 showed that the paper was most popular with 12 to 13-year-old boys at secondary schools. Interest in the title waned rapidly between 14 and 15 years of age, although this would be expected in an era when many children left school at the age of 14. The paper was also popular with 12 to 13-year old girls but, unlike boys, they were still reading the paper at 15; *The Children's Newspaper* was also read by girls in senior schools, although it fell far behind such adult papers as *John Bull*, *Everybody's*, *Passing Show* and *Picturegoer*.¹⁸ As with *Look and Learn*, children themselves were not the main purchasers, as one-time sub-editor Bob Bartholomew admits: "Kids would never have been seen dead with *The Children's Newspaper* but parents thought it was worthwhile."

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"Worthwhile" might also describe *Look and Learn's* second companion paper, *The Bible Story*. *Look and Learn* had been carrying a small number of religious features for some years written by the Rev. James Moulton Roe, who had been involved with the British and Foreign Bible Society—one of a number of voluntary societies set up in the early 19th century to circulate copies of the Bible—since childhood. Roe concentrated on retelling Bible stories, as well as longer pieces on the Holy Land which concluded in the Christmas (1962) number with the story of 'Bethlehem'. (It is interesting to note that editor John Sanders, in his 'Between Ourselves'

¹⁸ See *What Do Boys and Girls Read?* by A. J. Jenkinson, London, Methuen & Co., 1940.

editorial, pointed out that many people were talking about the commercialisation of Christmas, a far from modern complaint.)

Roe penned the opening feature in the new title when it was launched in 1964, the first issue dated 7 March. It was produced in exactly the same format as *Look and Learn* and *Treasure*, the first issue featuring articles on various aspects of the Bible, from the Garden of Eden to the story of Noah. A number of pictorial features related famous excerpts from the Bible and the stories of various Saints, illustrated by *Look and Learn* stalwarts Peter Jackson and Fortunino Matania. Hugh Ross Williamson, a former schoolmaster, politician, editor, actor (under the name Ian Rossiter), clergyman and author, began a series on 'Great Cathedrals', which was later written by a young former Fleetway editor, Michael Moorcock, now a well-known novelist. An abridged version of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* was serialised in 11 parts.

The second issue added George Cansdale to the line-up. Cansdale had been appointed superintendent of the London Zoo in Regent's Park in 1948 and became well-known as TV's "The Zoo Man" through shows like *Looking at Animals* in the 1950s. Cansdale's contribution was a study of animals in the Bible, a series that ran through to the final issue.

The Bible Story's contributors were as diverse a group as could be found on *Look and Learn*: Alexander Barrie, who had trained as an architect but turned to editorial work on leaving the Architectural Association School of Architecture—after some years in Canada, he had returned to England to take up freelance writing; Donald George Macintyre's background was as a career officer in the Royal Navy, retiring as a Captain before turning to writing; Wolf Mankowitz was the famous author of novels (*Make Me An Offer* and *A Kid For Two Farthings* were both made into popular films) and screenplays (*Expresso Bongo*, *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*, *Casino Royale* and many others); and authoress Josephine Kamm, one of the writers of the 'Everyday Life in Bible Times' series, was soon after to produce her controversial novel of teenage pregnancy, *Young Mum* (1965).

Bible Story included a fine series of biographical strips, including 'The Story of Abraham' illustrated by Patrick Nicolle (later episodes by Robert Forrest) and, from issue 23, 'Herod the Great', adapted from *The Life and Times of Herod the Great* by Stewart Perowne and sumptuously illustrated by Don Lawrence, who was soon to become one of *Look and Learn's* most famous contributors.

For all the quality of its contributions, *The Bible Story* failed to catch on. Knowing that such a focused paper would have a limited market, the publishers priced it accordingly and 1/6d. proved too much for parents to afford and it folded after only 29 issues. In its last issue (dated 19 September 1964) readers were urged to place a regular order for *Look and Learn* incorporating *The Bible Story* from the following week.

Curiously, the merger caused barely a tremor in *Look and Learn*. Issue 140, published the same week as the last issue of *Bible Story*, gave it no mention and, as it turned out, only a couple of truncated *Bible Story* features found their way into *Look and Learn*.

Issue 141 did see a number of changes for the paper. The most obvious was the change in cover design. Gone were the full-page illustrations and, in their place, was a picture quiz with nine illustrations, each accompanied with a question ("answers on page two"). The cover quiz was accompanied by a free gift: 'The Wonders of the World Quiz Wheel', which was filled with intriguing questions, the answers to which could be found by twisting the cardboard wheel.

Other exciting new features starting that issue were a series of instructions on how to make your own electric motor, the thrilling adventures of Marco Polo and the story of the Wild West. There was also bad news from the editor who was forced to reduce the page count of the title from 28 pages to 24¹⁹, although the price of 1/- remained the same. The pagination was, however, soon back up to normal.

One more innovation was soon to come to *Look and Learn*: its first comic strip. 'The Last of the Mohicans' by James Fenimore Cooper was adapted by artist Eric R. Parker over a period of weeks but was not replaced when it came to an end.

The years had seen a number of changes to the colour pagination, reduced from 12 pages to 8 as early as June 1963. The centre pages were still in colour for another year until it was decided to share out the colour differently, allowing two full-colour spreads to be produced rather than just one; the decision was occasionally reversed when the centre pages especially benefited from colour.

As *Look and Learn* entered 1965, a number of new features began. 'The Story of the Crusades' (illustrated by Dan Escott), 'Epic Stories of the Iron Road' (illustrated by Neville Dear), 'Signposts of Science', 'Country Notebook' and others continued the policy of keeping the paper as diverse as possible. 'Men of the Jolly Roger' made fine use of the two colour pages available to it in issue 161 (13 February 1965) before moving to the back page. Unfortunately, rising production costs meant that *Look and Learn* also had to raise its cover price to 1/3d. with that issue.

Issue 173 (8 May 1965) was also a 'merger' issue that went completely unnoticed by readers. *The Children's Newspaper* had finally come to an end after 46 years and 2,397 issues. For readers, though, the big news that issue was the free gift, *The Look and Learn Book of 501 Questions and Answers*. A few might have noticed a new comic strip adapting Shakespeare's 'King Henry the Fifth', drawn by Dino Battaglia, but the chess problem and C. W. Hill's 'World of Stamps' may have escaped their attention.

¹⁹ The pagination had risen to 32 pages with issue 73 (8 June 1963) before dropping down to 28 with issue 93 (26 October 1963). Apart from the brief drop noted, *Look and Learn* remained 28 pages until June 1966.

Also unnoticed was a change in the editorship of *Look and Learn*. John Sanders had been editor since shortly before the paper hit the newstands, although he had almost left within a few months to take over another Leonard Matthews' creation, *Junior Geographic*, which was put together in the wake of *Look and Learn*'s immediate success. His replacement was to have been Bob Bartholomew from *The Children's Newspaper*, who recalls: "Leonard sent for me one day and said 'I want you to take over *Look and Learn* because I want John Sanders to go off and do something else.' So I said 'OK, fine.' I went down and saw John and said 'Look, John, I don't know anything about colour printing so what I suggest is that we share an office and for one week I'll watch you work and for one week we'll work together and for one week you'll watch me work,' and he said 'That sounds fine to me.' But when it came to the third week, Leonard again sent for me and said the board have turned down the new magazine."

Junior Geographic was shelved and, soon after, Bob Bartholomew was offered the editorship of *Eagle* and moved over to Longacre. John Sanders stayed with *Look and Learn* for another three years until his ambitions told him it was time to move on. "I had always had a view in journalism that you shouldn't do the same thing for too long, and also because I wanted to get to grips with picture strip stories which were the company's essential business. Truth to tell, I had my eye on running the show from the top and I knew I couldn't do that without an understanding of comics."

Elsewhere within the firm, *Look and Learn* was seen as Matthews' favourite. "It was perceived very much as the company's pet prestige project at the time," recalls Keith Chapman. "Those of us who worked on the short thriller novels (Sexton Blake), the war comic books and the comic/adventure weeklies were kind of second-class by comparison."

Such envy did not extend to the management, some of whom felt that they could make a better job of editing the magazine. According to Sanders, "I have to say that by and large Leonard didn't criticise the magazine, but he allowed his acolytes, the inner circle of managing editors, to do so. Against that criticism the critics had to measure the fact that it was selling 300,000 a week and was a huge cash cow. They realised that any changes might actually reduce the profits, so they kept their actions to mere words.

"*Look and Learn* was the top-seller, but Leonard showed me the dummy of the new paper he had on the drawing board and although I had reservations I thought it looked quite interesting, so I left *Look and Learn*. Now I come to think about it, I should have had my head examined, although in the long run it was a good move because I became the Group's Publisher in 1969."

Sanders left in the spring of 1965, little knowing that his new paper was soon to greatly benefit the magazine he was leaving behind.

6: The National Boys' Magazine

One of the most popular elements of *Look and Learn* for many years was its comic strip 'The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire'. This sprawling epic ran in the pages of *Look and Learn* for sixteen years and came to the paper via a merger with John Sanders' new colour weekly, *Ranger*.

Ranger was not intended to be an educational magazine. If anything, it was hoped that *Ranger* would emulate the success of *Eagle*—and perhaps replace it. For some years that famous comic had been going through a number of changes: the take-over of Odhams in 1961 which had helped Leonard Matthews' rise to power at Fleetway Publications also meant that Matthews was now in charge of *Eagle* and its sibling comics, *Girl*, *Swift* and *Robin*.

All four titles had already seen a number of changes since their original publisher, Hulton Press, had been taken over by Odhams in 1959 and renamed Longacre Press. Founding editor Marcus Morris had left, passing the papers into the hands of his former deputy Clifford Makins; Frank Hampson, the creator of Dan Dare, had left the strip that made *Eagle* famous in order to research a new strip retelling the life of Jesus, 'The Road to Courage'. His replacement, Frank Bellamy, was asked to bring his own interpretation of Dan Dare which proved too radical and the character was redrawn by Hampson's former assistants to make him recognisably the old Dan Dare.

Now, two years later, Matthews put a new manager in charge of the new group of titles and installed new editors who began making more changes. Sales began to drop: both *Eagle* and *Girl* shed 85-90,000 readers in a year and Alf Wallace was recruited to replace Matthews' first choice of manager; Bob Bartholomew, the former sub-editor of *The Children's Newspaper*, was offered the post of *Eagle* editor and was happy to accept.

One of Alf Wallace's first moves was to hire an American writer, Jim Kenner, to create a new paper to be called *Boy's World*. Unfortunately, Kenner's ideas proved too ambitious (one was to

give away an aeroplane as a competition prize!) and, being new to Fleet Street, he knew very few writers and artists. Bob Bartholomew was rapidly drafted in to put *Boy's World* together.

Despite its classy look—it was printed in gravure colour by Eric Bemrose who had been the *Eagle's* printer since its launch—the paper never achieved the circulation that the publishers had hoped for. "The idea was to produce an *Eagle* for the 1960s and it just didn't work," recalls Bartholomew. When the publisher realised sales were poor, attempts were made to rethink the strips and content and boost sales with free gifts. Unfortunately, the paper had gotten off to such a poor start, nothing could save it and *Boy's World* folded after 89 issues, the last dated 3 October 1964.

Although Longacre Press and Fleetway Publications were owned by the same company and Leonard Matthews was on the board of directors of Longacre, the editorial offices were considered to be two separate entities and a certain rivalry was evident between the two. As *Boy's World* went into terminal decline at Longacre, Leonard Matthews was able to approach his bosses at Fleetway Publications to suggest his own "*Eagle* for the 1960s"—*Ranger*.

Preparation on the new paper began in 1964 and it was very much another of Matthews' creations. Far from being the new *Eagle*, *Ranger* was a mixture of his two most successful titles, combining the photographic features of *Look and Learn* with the kind of adventure strips that had made *Knockout* so popular in the 1940s. John Sanders, although nominally the editor, soon discovered that he had little control over the content.

"Leonard Matthews kept the editing close to his chest—it was his baby," recalls Sanders. By the time Sanders was brought onboard, most of the content had already been set. This included a Western serial by John Hunter, an adaptation of Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' which would not have been out of place in the latter-day *Children's Newspaper*, stories of pirates and treasure troves adapted from Capt. W. E. Johns' book *The Biggles Book of Treasure Hunting* (1962) and, amongst the picture strips, an adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*.

"Leonard was the man in total charge. I simply put the paper to bed," says Sanders. "For me this was an excellent learning curve, and it allowed Leonard to indulge all his fancies. He wanted to turn the clock back 30 years to the Wild West, highwaymen, all the things of his boyhood. In the 1960s *Ranger* was out of date before it started—it was doomed from the start."

There were concessions to the 1960s. Science fiction had grown in popularity during the 1950s, in part thanks to Dan Dare but also on radio (where *Journey Into Space* had been very popular), in books (through the popularity of John Wyndham, Arthur C. Clarke and others) and on television (*Quatermass*, *Dr Who*). However, Mike Butterworth's 'Space Cadet' was little more than naval cadets battling pirates with Nelson's famous flagship the *Victory* a key element of the first story.

A similar accusation of being old-fashioned could have been levelled at Butterworth's second science fiction yarn for *Ranger*. 'The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire' was primarily based on the Roman Empire with Greek architecture and elements of Egypt and feudal Britain thrown in for good measure (and as the stories required them). The title was inspired by Gibbons' *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and related the story of three brothers—Trigo, Brag and Klud—who led a nomadic tribe through the desolate land of Vorg on the planet Elekton. Trigo was a visionary leader and, in his mind's eye, imagined uniting all the tribes of Vorg and building a fabulous city on the hilly coastlands. The idea did not take root easily until the neighbouring—and technologically more advanced—Lokans began to expand beyond their borders and turned their attentions to Tharv, another highly civilised country noted for its wealth.

The Lokan advance drove Tharv's citizens into Vorg, amongst them a noted scientist, Peric, who was to become the architect of Trigo's dream city.

When the Lokans attack Cato they do not find them such an easy target but it is only a matter of time before they turn their attentions to Vorg. The tribes swear allegiance to Trigo as sole ruler of Vorg, much to his brother Klud's dismay; Klud poisons Trigo and escapes into the desert, joining up with the enemy to plan the invasion of Vorg. Things do not go as they plan and, just as Trigo recovers from the poison, the Vorgs fight back and capture much of the Lokan air fleet intact, using which they are able to destroy the Lokan navy and any further plans of conquest for the evil King Zorth.

Although derivative, 'The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire' was unlike any other comic strip before it. It was truly an epic; the action was on a grand scale and its characters heroic. Its author, Mike Butterworth, was able to draw on his many years of experience writing historical strips featuring everyone from Robin Hood to Rob Roy; sweeping, extravagant battle scenes were nothing new to him.

What was new was the grand scale of the artwork. At 10" x 13", *Ranger* was larger than all of Fleetway's other comics (although still a little smaller than *Eagle*) and the oversized pages showed off the sumptuous artwork to their best effect.

The artist was Don Lawrence, whose work on the strip was to earn him a position alongside Frank Hampson, Frank Bellamy and Ron Embleton as one of Britain's finest comic adventure strip creators.

Lawrence, then aged 36, had had a chequered career in comics up to that point. After graduating from a boarding school in London, Lawrence had joined the Army for his National Service and was eventually posted to Liverpool as a teleprinter operator. Army discipline did not suit him and he had his service extended by six months, most of it spent peeling potatoes and sweeping the parade ground. To his great relief he was finally released in 1949 and used his

gratuity to study art at Borough Polytechnic. He grew bored after two years but stuck it out for the full four-year course, only to fail the final exam.

Shortly before his final exams, a former student had visited the school to show students the work he was doing on black & white comic strips for the Amalgamated Press. "I'd seen comic books when I was a kid but one was not encouraged to read them. It was regarded as a shameful thing to do," Lawrence later recalled. "I liked the comic strips he showed me because they were full of life and they told stories. It was then that I realised I wanted to draw comic strips."

He visited Ted Holmes at the Amalgamated Press to show him specimens of his artwork. Unimpressed, Holmes suggested he try Mick Anglo's studio, an agency which was packaging dozens of western and superhero comic books for distributor Len Miller. Lawrence did a sample page of superhero Marvelman and was soon producing ten pages a week for the various comics Anglo edited.

After four years, Lawrence fell out with Anglo over the question of pay. "I asked him for a raise. I knew Mick would never agree to it. He said that the standard of my work was falling and I told him that even at my worst I was still better than anybody else he had working for him. I must have felt that it was time to go and, subconsciously, I was burning my bridges and forcing myself to find other work."

In 1957, Lawrence went to Odhams Press where he spent three years drawing the Western 'Wells Fargo' before he found work with the Amalgamated Press on 'Billy the Kid' in *Sun*. The ailing *Sun* was promptly merged with *Lion* and it was here that Lawrence found his niche in historical adventure strips like 'Karl the Viking' and 'Maroc the Mighty'.

Memorable as these were, it was in fully painted colour that Lawrence was to find his forte, although Lawrence admitted that his first attempts had been a disaster: "I was asked to paint an illustration of hordes of Assyrians fighting hordes of Egyptians or something similar. I just opened the paint box and used every colour I could find. It looked dreadful, so my editors said that I couldn't do colour work." By choosing a more refined colour palette for 'Karl the Viking and the Ghost of the Tideless Sea' (*Lion Annual 1965*) Lawrence showed that he was more than capable of producing colour strips. This led directly to his work on 'Herod the Great' for *Bible Story* and, in 1965, 'The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire', a strip he was to paint for the next 11 years.

Mike Butterworth, the strip's author, was Leonard Matthews' former sub-editor in the early 1950s and the two had dreamed up the strip content for *Ranger* before John Sanders was brought on board. It was Sanders who had to cope with the results. "Mike Butterworth was a brilliant talent but at one time he was doing 14 scripts a week for Fleetway, six of them for *Ranger*. Sometimes every picture-strip in the title was written by him and he was going so fast

that he got the characters mixed up from one story to another. A brilliant man but he was doing too much too quickly and treating all the story lines in the same way."

Sanders was not even privy to the storylines of the various scripts, saying of 'Trigan Empire': "I didn't know anything about the future of the story—I got the script every week from Mike after he had discussed future ideas with Leonard, not me. I didn't hire Don Lawrence to draw the script—Leonard did."

Lawrence recalled the meeting he had with Matthews, whom he visited with his agent Danny Kelleher: "I was asked to appear at the top floor of Fleetway House which was a God's Domain. The carpets were so thick you just sank into them. Up to that point they were very dubious about my colour work because they thought I wasn't any good at colour—I was a black and white artist. But I think the 'Karl the Viking' I did in colour was quite successful and they thought, 'OK, give him a go.'

"I dropped everything I was working on. It was mostly based on Roman and Greek architecture and clothing. Somehow I thought of empires and anachronisms and 'let's have Roman-type clothing.' I did a lot of sketches which I submitted and they said 'Yes, we like this', 'we like that' and that was how we got something together and off we went."

Lawrence was not the only talented artist to work on *Ranger*. Curiously, a Frank Hampson illustration found its way onto the back cover of the first issue, originally drawn for a proposed series for *Eagle* but used here for the first time. The early issues also included John Millar Watt (adapting *Treasure Island*) and Michael Hubbard (who adapted H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and *Allan Quatermain*). For all their quality as artists, the strips were text heavy and moved too slowly when compared to the modern comic strip of the mid-1960s, adding to the paper's old-fashioned feel.

The price also worked against the paper. Where parents might spend 1/- on an educational paper, *Ranger* was clearly a comic. It may have been well-illustrated, but compared badly to the recently launched *TV Century 21* which was based around a number of hugely popular TV puppet series produced by Gerry Anderson—*Supercar*, *Fireball XL5*, *Stingray* and 'Lady Penelope' from the soon to be launched *Thunderbirds*; the rear cover featured 'The Daleks' from *Dr Who*, the biggest merchandising phenomenon of the era. The paper played up to its futuristic settings by dating issues 100 years ahead and treated stories as if they were real news items from 2065. All this, plus strips based on 'My Favourite Martian', 'Get Smart' and 'Burke's Law' for 7d.

Ranger could not compare. "I knew nothing about picture strips and even I knew it was all wrong," says John Sanders.

Due to the way comics were produced, *Ranger* struggled on for 40 weeks, although its lack of success had been known months earlier. *Ranger*, like most British comics, was published on a "sale or return" basis during its launch period, which meant that newsagents could return

unsold copies for credit. It therefore took around eight weeks to get accurate sales figures so that, by the time the first month's sales figures were available, the paper was already at least 12 weeks old. Adding to the problem was the length of time it took to produce a weekly comic: at least four issues were already at the printers or on their way.

If sales figures were not up to expectation, it would take at least a month to consider ways of boosting sales by changing the content or reducing costs. For *Ranger* this meant a reduction in the number of colour pages from 18-20 to 12-14 with issue 22. A week later, a number of new strips debuted ('Rip Solar', another SF strip, and 'Dan Dakota—Lone Gun', a Western) and a new text serial, 'Tanker Trap' by Arthur Catherall.

The process would then begin all over again but without the initial period of sale or return. Unfortunately for *Ranger*, the results were discouraging despite promoting the new content on the cover and in other Fleetway titles. With issue 26, the price was pushed up to 1/3d. and the colour content again reduced with issue 27. This may have staved off the inevitable "great news pals" message that always accompanied the closure of a paper but only briefly; a few weeks later Sanders was given the news that the paper was doomed and should be prepared for a merger. Text and picture serials had to be tied-up quickly and a decision made as to which stories and features would be carried over in the merger.

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In the case of *Ranger*, the merger was with *Look and Learn*, though, unlike the earlier mergers with *The Children's Newspaper* and *Bible Story*, *Ranger* made a major impact on its new parent paper. A number of *Ranger*'s comic strips were imported, including 'Rob Riley', 'Dan Dakota', 'Rodney Stone' (adapted from the novel by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle), 'In the Days of Good Queen Cleo' (better known as 'Asterix and Cleopatra'), 'Jason January Space Cadet' and 'The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire'.

New features included cartoons by Roland Fiddy, a new science feature by Charles Hatcher, 'Top Twenty Sports' and, continued from *Ranger*, 'Into the Blue', drawn mostly by Wilf Hardy, and 'My Scrapbook of the British Soldier'.

This last feature was drawn by Eric R. Parker, who had been associated with the paper since its first issue as one of the artists working in the Experimental Art department. Parker was one of the company's longest-serving artists, having started freelancing after being demobbed from the Bucks Hussars at the end of the 1914-18 war. Even before the war, Parker was considered something of an artistic prodigy; as a schoolboy at the Norwold Road School in Stoke Newington his talent left the local council wondering what they could do with him as there was no local school advanced enough to give him the further training he required. Eventually the Education

Committee decided to award him a special art scholarship covering his costs to attend an art school outside the area.

In the 1920s, Parker established himself with the Amalgamated Press's juvenile group, particularly as an illustrator for the detective adventures of Sexton Blake; Parker began illustrating issues of *Union Jack* in 1922 and took over the cover artwork for the *Sexton Blake Library* in 1929, producing between two and four covers a month until 1953 and occasional covers after that until 1959.

During the early years of the Second World War, when many of the magazines he illustrated were folding or appearing less frequently, Parker turned to comic strips. He drew many of the classic novel adaptations in *Knockout* and produced numerous strips for newspapers (*Evening News*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Globe*) in the 1940s. His best work was probably the 87 episodes he drew of 'Max Bravo, the Happy Hussar' for the centre pages of *Sun* in 1954-57. Many episodes were reprinted in *Swift* in 1961-63 where Parker was able to paint the pages in full colour, replacing the old-style colour tints it had originally used.

The strip, about a cheerful young trooper with the 9th Hussars of the French Army under General Napoleon Bonaparte, was a fine example of Parker's skills at portraying old-time military scenes. When he wasn't drawing, Parker would spend many hours in museums examining uniforms to add to his knowledge about military history; when drawing strips like 'Max Bravo', every button was accurate.

He brought this same accuracy and flair for design to the pages of *Look and Learn*. Freelance for many years, Parker joined the staff when the Experimental Art Department was set up and was one of the main visualisers for pages on both *Look and Learn* and *Ranger*, his influence shining through even when another artist produced the finished artwork used in the paper. Parker would also make changes and additions where necessary to artwork when it was too late to return to the original artist (for instance, adding in a figure to an illustration depicting the history of 'Holy Island' in *Look and Learn* issue 14). "Eric Parker was doing visuals for lots of things," recalls Jack Parker—no relation, incidentally. "If we wanted a special page or a cover, he would draw something out."

His work was not limited to visualisations: Parker wrote and drew three major series during the late 1960s. 'Scrapbook of the British Soldier' had begun in the first issue of *Ranger* (as 'The Story of the Soldier') but transferred with the merger, taking over the prime position of rear cover strip for six weeks before moving to an inside page where it ran for the next fourteen months. Three months later, Parker launched into a second fourteen month, rear-cover series with 'Scrapbook of the British Sailor'. This was followed some months later by 'For Valour', detailing the histories of various medals and awards, which ran for six months. Parker was working on a new series, entitled 'A Thousand Years of Spying', when he died in March 1974.

Parker's style was unlike any other artist working on *Look and Learn*. His figures were drawn in rough strokes but were never incomplete or abstract. This sketchy quality had been developed from his earliest days as Sexton Blake's chief illustrator; a slash for a mouth and only rarely more than two smudges for eyes. Yet in this minimalist style, he could convey everything he needed and his illustrations are incredibly atmospheric and dynamic. Nothing more needed to be added.

Parker's influence on both *Ranger* and *Look and Learn* cannot be measured as, even where his artwork was missing from an issue, the layout and design of a page may have been his concept.

7: "In Pro, In Position"

The arrival of *Ranger* coincided with a major change for *Look and Learn*. *Ranger* had been printed by Eric Bemrose, the famous Liverpool-based printing company. In 1950, Bemrose had installed new photogravure printing presses to produce *Eagle* for Hulton Press but the process—which involved photographically etching the plates used for printing—had a number of limitations that artists on *Eagle*'s colour comic strips had to quickly adapt to. Bemrose supplied a list of specific coloured inks that could be used and they had to be used as supplied; you could not mix in any black and any impurities caused problems.

When *Eagle* was absorbed into Odhams and then Fleetway, the practise of using pure colours continued and art editors were all aware that mixing would produce muddy results. "That was a problem," says Jack Parker. "You could only use a black line and then a blend of three primary colours in order to produce colour pages. It was all very tricky but we used some artists who had worked on *Eagle*, *Swift* and others that had been produced this way, and our other artists adapted very quickly."

For a year, *Look and Learn* artists who had not learned the technique on *Ranger* had to adapt to these new restrictions. Until, that is, Jack Parker, Ken Roscoe (the paper's assistant editor who had joined from *Ranger*) and artist Wilf Hardy went to visit Bemrose in Liverpool, a trip Hardy recalls well:

"We mentioned this very, very restrictive use of inks and they looked at us and said 'Oh, no, it's no bother. You can use paint. What's the problem?' It was entirely incorrect. I cursed it because for at least a year I had been forced to slow down and use this ink technique which was somewhat alien because you had to learn entirely new skills—and it was entirely unnecessary!"

The processes used by Bemrose had moved on but news had not filtered down to the artists who were still working to the limitations established in 1950.

"One of the things about *Look and Learn* was that it pioneered a few things at Fleetway," recalls Jack Parker. "They brought in electronic scanning and it was our department who developed the system of making black masks for photographs.

"The paper went through lots of different processes of reproduction. We started off with gravure at Odhams (Watford). With a print run of 600-700,000 copies you needed those sort of rotary presses.

"When we went to Bemrose in Liverpool, one of the problems was that we couldn't just give them transparencies to scan. We had to give them a single page to be scanned. The trick was, if you had four 35mm pictures and two at 2¼ inches, you had to divide the page in such a way that those pictures could all be mounted and everything else was reduced down so that when the page was blown up to its final size everything was in the correct proportion.

"We started off by producing mounts out of thin black cardboard, cut to size. The trouble with blowing up a page from, say, 4 inches by 3, is that the edge of the card you've cut is not clean and this 'furry' edge is also blown up so all the pictures had a raggedy edge.

"Our photographic department did a lot of work reducing things down so we could produce our pages and they came up with the idea of cutting out the mask from a type of film that was like a red Clingfilm over a clear base. If you cut out the shapes of the pictures and peeled that away you were left with a red outer mask. That was given to the photographic department and exposed onto film which resulted in a black mask with a white window.

"So it was all very tricky because we also had overlapping pictures and different sized transparencies, but somehow we managed."

Photographs were a vital element of *Look and Learn* from the very beginning. For over a decade, the picture editor was Lyn Marshal, who had previously worked on *The Children's Newspaper*. "She was a wonderful lady. The most skilled picture editor I've known in the business," recalls John Melhuish, who became her assistant in 1971. "She was a second mother to most of the staff, like a mother hen. You just don't get the breadth of experience nowadays that Lyn had.

"She worked on everything that you can think of. It wasn't just for *Look and Learn*, it was for the whole group and it was providing a picture and illustration research facility and editing facility, although not so much of that, across the whole group. And that could be a picture for actual use in the magazines or just as artists' reference. Nine times out of ten you were doing artists' reference because everything was art led. So you were providing references to the artists and for the art editors of various publications across the whole group."

Marshal had built up a library of photographs over many years, housed in some 50 filing cabinets, which she obtained from agencies, embassies, tourist boards and organisations like the National Trust as well as up to date pictures of politicians and pop stars of the time. The files

expanded almost daily: "Two or three times a week, salesmen from Associated Press or the Press Association would come around and we'd select pictures that we thought could go in various magazines or we'd keep stuff just for a stock library," says Melhuish. "Obviously some we had to pay for but the artists would just take them away to use as reference and then return them."

Artists would usually paint artwork one-and-a-half times up or twice up—twice the size of the printed version—in order to put in the minute detail that became a trademark of many of *Look and Learn's* best artists. A typical full-page illustration would likely be painted 18" x 13", which would then be shrunk down to fill a *Look and Learn* page, which itself had shrunk down to 12¼" x 9" with the move to Bemrose.

As art editor, Jack Parker was responsible for guiding the look of the magazine for most of its lifetime, although other designers joined the team over the years. In 1965, a new arrival was Doug Church, a former merchant seaman who had previously worked on cover designs for Fleetway's war picture libraries and headings for strips in *Lion* and *Tiger*.

Church came to the paper fresh but inexperienced. "When I started I didn't know anything about type layout. I didn't know how to cast off copy and Jack Parker had to teach me the nuts and bolts," he recalls. "I had to learn it quick because Jack was a busy guy and he didn't have time to babysit a newcomer. I got stuck in and within six months I was able to run the magazine while he was on holiday.

"Jack did all the colour pages from slides and transparencies and, because he had worked on *Everybody's* some years before, everything had a traditional look to it. Although I knew nothing about type, I was impressed by the layouts of certain magazines. The *Daily Telegraph* had just launched a free weekend magazine which I really liked and there was a weekly gravure magazine produced by Associated newspapers called *Weekend*. It had beautiful, punchy layouts with big photographs and sidelines and sub-lines. I wanted to do that on *Look and Learn*, so I started doing very graphic type layouts, aided and abetted by Freddie Lidstone, who was associate editor under John Sanders when I joined. Freddie had a journalistic background and could see what I was trying to do. Jack was very encouraging; whenever there was a photographic feature he let me do what I wanted. So, instead of a small picture and a lot of copy on a page, I would blow the picture up large on a white background with a heading and an introductory paragraph, which was very different to Jack's style.

"It was very time consuming compared to what you can do today with computers. If you want to alter the size of the type in a panel you can do it at the touch of a button, but we were getting everything typeset. John Sanders would get all the copy for big features set in galleys—long strips of type that Jack and I would stick down onto layouts.

"Sometimes we would cast off from the original typed copy supplied by the author. You would get the copy and there would be, say, 70 characters across per line of an A4 sheet, and you've got

to decide how to have that typeset so it fits into a panel: if the standard width of a column in *Look and Learn* was 35 characters and you had the text set in 9 point type, you could work out how big the panel needed to be. It was very hit and miss and didn't always work out exactly. Sometimes you would have a bit of space left over or you would need to cut some of the text. When I started I was always making mistakes.

"Once you'd decided that your text was going to be 9 point Times Roman 12mm—which was the width of the column—it would all go off to the printers along with the artwork. The artwork was always flat and in the right proportions to everything else in the page when it was sent and, because the artists would draw their illustrations half up or even twice up, we would be sending boards that could be two and a half feet wide sometimes. We had to do everything camera ready—"in pro, in position." They should have called it "imposition" because of the work we had to put in to get everything the way we wanted it. But I can assure you that the people who worked in the juvenile group instead of moaning about it, they gloried in it.

"You lived in another world when you did that sort of thing because you were absolutely immersed in it and the staff who worked on *Look and Learn* were craftsmen. If Jack was doing a feature with transparencies they would all have to be sent to the studio downstairs to get them to the right size and then positioned on the board and someone would draw and cut out a black mask for them all.

"Chas Betts, Jack's art assistant, was another craftsman. When *Look and Learn* was running the quiz pictures on the cover, Chas used to do the page. He'd rule off the panels around the pictures and then airbrush the background—red or blue or whatever Jack had decided on. He wouldn't use red paper; it was all airbrush and done at least half up, minimum. He would then draw all the borders in by hand using a ruling pen before sticking the pictures down with cow gum. I suppose there were other people in the firm but I used to wonder how he did it. Everything was so exact. He was wonderful at doing that, a craftsman."

Despite the technical problems faced every week by the staff, the 36 pages of *Look and Learn* (rising to 40 in 1967) were completed over a period of seven days and large parcels of artwork, most nearly twice the size they were to be printed, were packed into what were known as Lally Bags and sent down to the printer each night.

Overseeing all this was John Davies, the former editor of *The Children's Newspaper*, who had taken command of *Look and Learn* when John Sanders left to launch *Ranger*. Davies was already in his early fifties and had spent his early career as an English teacher before joining the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in 1941.

Originally trained as a wireless telegraphist, he was offered a commission as an officer candidate and, like other candidates, received much of his training as part of the lower deck crew on board British destroyers. Davies joined *H.M.S. Sikh* in early 1942, a Tribal class

destroyer, had been involved in North Sea patrols and convoy duty and was witness to the sinking of the German destroyer *Bismarck* in 1941.

Davies joined the crew as a forward gunner and saw action as the *Sikh* protected convoys around Malta and Alexandria. In August 1942, off the coast of Africa at Tobruk, German shells hit the gearing system and the ammunition locker of the forward gun, crippling the *Sikh*. In range of the German coastal batteries, shells continued to hit the ship and, despite attempts by *H.M.S. Zulu* to tow the ship out of danger, the *Sikh* was scuttled. Davies was one of the survivors picked up by the *Zulu*; many others who reached the shore were taken prisoner.

Shortly after this ordeal, Davies was awarded his commission and, in early 1943, went to Washington as a technical officer attached to the British Admiralty delegation.

Returning to England, Davies made his various ordeals the subject of his first book, the semi-autobiographical *Lower Deck*, which was submitted to a centenary competition run by Macmillan & Co. The book won £500 for best work of non-fiction and was published in 1945 with an introduction by Admiral Sir James Somerville.

After a second semi-autobiography, *The Stone Frigate*, Davies took up writing short stories for *Courier*, *Boy's Own Paper* and other papers and joined the staff of *John Bull* as fiction editor, where he worked alongside *Look and Learn's* first editor, John Sanders. Davies joined the staff at Fleetway to take over *The Children's Newspaper* in 1961.

As a person, Davies was urbane, calm and private but inspired confidence. Stan Macdonald, who worked with Davies on *The Children's Newspaper*, regarded him as "a very relaxed person. He used to take me out sometimes to nice restaurants and functions. I remember he once introduced me to Alistair MacLean... he [Davies] used to mingle a lot with those sort of literary people. He tried to encourage me to write a book on photography." Noreen Pleavin recalls Davis as "not the type who'd muck in. John Sanders had been a superb editor. He knew what he was doing and what he wanted and, being a newspaper man, he'd bring us all the hot news on the Christine Keeler scandal. John Davis was dignified and very nice but he didn't have John Sanders' get up and go."

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The effects of the merger with *Ranger* echoed across the next few months. The original merger interleaved the new material with the old—almost certainly because of the way the colour pages fell in the magazine. *Look and Learn* had been increased to 36 pages with four of the ten colour pages now available taken up by the comic strips 'Rodney Stone' and 'Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire'. Seven issues after the merger, the comic strips from *Ranger* were moved to the centre eight pages with the concluding episode of 'Rodney Stone' elsewhere in the issue. It was replaced

in issue 239 with the first episode of 'Kidnapped', adapting Robert Louis Stevenson's famous novel; the rear cover feature strip returned that same issue with 'The Story of Perseus'.

"Incorporating RANGER Magazine" was emblazoned underneath the logo on the cover from issue 248.

Issue 250 arrived with something of a fanfare. Although there was no self-congratulatory announcement, it marked the beginning of a new cover feature, a 12-part series on famous horses in fact and fiction especially painted for the paper. This marked the beginning of a particularly good era for *Look and Learn* covers as one series of 12 was followed by many others on diverse subjects: 'Famous Ships', 'Famous Dogs', 'Famous Couples', 'Animal Heroes', 'Famous Partnerships', 'Famous Firsts', 'Who's Who at the Zoo', 'They Lived Their Books', 'Roll of Honour' and 'When They Were Young', the series finally coming to an end in 1969.

Another major new feature launched in issue 250 was 'Around the World with Peter Duncan'. Duncan was a well known writer and BBC Producer (of *In Town Tonight* and *In Town Today*) and his arrival was something of a coup for the paper. Duncan penned a regular feature for 35 weeks and visited America, Japan, South Africa, Hawaii, Hong Kong and elsewhere around the globe. He later returned in February 1969 for two further series, 'People and Places' and 'Wings Over the World'.

F. St. Mars, the author credited with a series of nature stories, was the rather odd pen-name of Frank Howard Atkins, whose tales about animals were hugely popular in the 1920s; he could even count American President Theodore Roosevelt as a fan. Artists contributing illustrations included some of *Look and Learn's* finest wildlife artists: David Nockles, G. W. Backhouse and Kenneth Lilly.

Although the features in *Look and Learn* were traditionally anonymous, new editor John Davies often ran bylines on notable series. Thus we find Mary Cathcart Borer, an artist and writer who had been a member of the Egypt Exploration Society's archaeological expedition to Luxor in the 1930s, writing 'Mankind in the Making' about man's distant ancestors. Dr. Maurice Buxton was the regular author of the 'Wonders of Nature' features, with Robin May, an actor and artists' agent, writing the 'True Adventure' feature. May (real name Robert Stephen May) turned full-time freelance in 1966 and later joined the staff of *Look and Learn* as a feature writer and sub-editor in 1970.

Other authors who began working for *Look and Learn* during this period included notable historian Eric R. Chamberlin, whose interest in the subject was sparked whilst serving in the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean during the war; Alan Villiers, author of 'The Seafarers', a history of sailing which began in issue 262 (21 January 1967), had a long career on the ocean, having run away to sea at the age of 15; novelist Angus Hall became *Look and Learn's* regular book reviewer, whilst prolific authors Rupert Butler and Marc Alexander were regular

contributors of 'True Adventure' stories. Perhaps the name best remembered today is that of Patrick Moore, who related 'The Astronomy Story' for *Look and Learn's* readers.

With issue 281 (3 June 1967), the old Purnell title *Finding Out* was incorporated into *Look and Learn*, although with far less fanfare than the amalgamation with *Ranger*. Purnell's children's educational magazines had been suffering from falling sales—almost certainly because of the strong rivalry offered by *Look and Learn*. The company had merged *Knowledge* and *Understanding Science* in 1965 as *New Knowledge* but this lasted only briefly. *Finding Out* struggled on until 1967 and was sold to Fleetway, who quickly folded the title into *Look and Learn*, adding a few readers and removing a rival paper from the newsstands. The only feature to make the transition was one on 'Festivals and Customs'.

Bigger changes were in store in September when the magazine was promoted with a free gift and added 4 pages, making a grand total of 40 pages, 10 of them in colour. The free gift was a 32-page booklet, the *Look and Learn Pocket Picture Encyclopedia* which contained 250 alphabetical entries.

A second innovation was the 'Look and Learn Card Index of Knowledge', which was to run in the centre pages for many months. Eight colour pictures were published per page on subjects ranging from biography and history to nature and religion; on the back of each picture were a few paragraphs of information and the cards were designed to be cut out and kept. The publishers even provided a box-file made out of thin card for the cards to be kept in (price one shilling, post free) with special dividers to keep each subject separate.

The series ran for 74 weeks, coming to an end in March 1969 and was so popular that a second series of 'cards' was launched the following October.

With the arrival of the cards, the former *Ranger* comic strips were pushed to the back of the paper. The new 'Ranger Section' was led each week by the colour feature 'Into the Blue' drawn by Wilf Hardy. Hardy was a young commercial artist who had broken into illustration in the early 1960s. "Originally I worked on *Treasure*, the paper for very young children," he recalls. "I fell into doing very detailed illustrations of things like 'Building a Motorway' or 'The Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race' where you had a distant view of an enormous event and then you had little close ups around the edge.

"I was very lucky. I think I arrived there at a very good time because it enabled me to become a freelance and work consistently. I had to meet all these deadlines all the time and get the stuff in but I was working regularly every week."

Having started in *Treasure* in 1963, Hardy soon found his forte drawing machinery and, especially, aircraft. "Aviation has always been my first love," he says. "It was a very enjoyable part of my life and went on for many years. One was always working right up to the hilt; you

were doing everything against a deadline but you spent so long working under such pressure it just became second nature and you made the best out of it.

"You were covering every aspect of painting and illustration. You were finding the subject matter—not in all cases but a lot of cases. You were doing your own layouts and then doing the finished painting and delivering it. You were covering all the bases."

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Around this time, *Look and Learn* was attracting between three and five pages of advertising per issue, the number rising towards Christmas. Advertisers included Airfix, Scalextric, Triang-Hornby, Mamod Steam Models, X-acto hobby tools, Petite typewriters, Platignum pens; in early December it was not unusual for a major company like Waddingtons to boost the magazine with an extra four pages.

Each year there were also adverts for a variety of *Look and Learn*'s own spin-offs. For some years, the *Look and Learn Book*, launched in September 1963, was the one annual spin-off, having started a year earlier as two books—*The Look and Learn Book for Boys* and *The Look and Learn Book for Girls*, put together by David Roberts and Norman Fletcher Jones. In 1966, *The Book of 1001 Questions and Answers* was added and the *Look and Learn Book of the Wonders of Nature* followed a year later. *Look and Learn Book of Pets* and *Look and Learn Young Scientist* both first appeared in 1969 and a variety of one-off titles would appear over the years, such as the *Look and Learn Book of Railway Wonders of the World*, the *Look and Learn Book of the Trigan Empire* and the *Look and Learn Finding Out Annual*.

Artwork from *Look and Learn* appeared in dozens of annuals published by Fleetway and even books produced by other publishers (e.g. *They Amazed the World*, Beaver Books, 1977). Two slim but highly illustrated softcover books also came out under the *Look and Learn* banner, *The Story of the Princes of Wales* (1969) and *The Vatican* (1970).

'The Story of the Princes of Wales' was based on a series that appeared in the magazine in 1969. Another book that derived from *Look and Learn* was *Special Correspondent*, based on stories told by BBC commentators including David Attenborough, Raymond Baxter and Judith Chalmers to authoress Jean Stroud.

Other major features during the late 1960s included 'Famous Lives', starting with Franklin Delano Roosevelt in issue 316 (3 February 1968), written by Dennis Bardens and Angus Hall, 'The Story of Africa' by Mary Cathcart Borer and illustrated by Angus McBride who had by this time become one of the paper's major illustrators. 'Grand Prix Racing' (illustrated by Wilf Hardy) was written each week by Rex Hays of the BBC's *Tom-Tom* programme and 'Britain's

'Heritage' was a pictorial look at some of the notable places of historical interest in various areas around the country.

'Voyage to the Spanish Main' by Hugh Graham & G. Trevor Vine-Lott (illustrated by Wilf Hardy and Angus McBride) followed the exploits of the Commonwealth Islands Expedition which travelled to the Caribbean in 1966 to study the lives of inhabitants of the smaller islands, some of which are only a mile across.

With issue 345 (24 August 1968) the "Ranger Entertainment Section" moved to the centre of the magazine, allowing 'Trigan Empire' to take pride of place in the centre pages, a position it maintained for just over a year.

The biggest shake-up in contents occurred with issue 403 (4 October 1969), which boasted a major competition with 1,000 prizes to be won and the return of the 'Card Index of Knowledge'. New features included 'Millions of Years Ago' (about dinosaurs), 'Appointment with Danger' (a continuation of the true life adventure series), 'Focus on...' by C. Gordon Glover which took readers around the world, starting with Switzerland, 'In the Days of our Forefathers', focussing on the middle ages, 'History of Cinema', 'The Story of Soccer', 'The Making of America' by Robin May and 'Men and Motors' by Rex Hays. The comic strips were shuffled to the back of the magazine again with the back page dedicated to Eric Parker's 'For Valour' series. After three years and three months on the masthead, "Incorporating *Ranger*" finally disappeared from the cover logo.

8: Worlds of Wonder

Two sets of events behind the scenes had led to the relaunch of *Look and Learn* in 1969. The first of these was the arrival of two rival publications. The second was a change in the management.

Taking the last first, *Look and Learn* had lost its creator in December 1968.

Since rising to become head of Juvenile Publications in 1961 and the founding of *Look and Learn* in 1962, Leonard Matthews had overseen the launch of dozens of titles, including *Serenade*, *Valiant*, *Treasure*, *Teddy Bear*, *Poppet*, *Hurricane*, *The Big One*, *Ranger*, *Champion*, *TV Toyland*, *Tina*, *Giggle*, *Princess Tina* and *Jag*, as well as marshalling many other long-lived (and very profitable) comics like *Lion* and *Tiger* for boys and *School Friend* and *June* for girls. The juvenile department was also responsible for hundreds of pocket libraries, summer specials and annuals each year. In 1968, Matthews could boast that he had been responsible for more new magazines than any other person in the country.

Matthews had also seen the juvenile department through other changes. The Fleetway juvenile department was already divided into a series of fiefdoms—boys' adventure, girls' adventure, nursery, libraries—as well as encompassing on-staff artists (Juvenile Art Department), scriptwriters and letterers. The task of getting a weekly paper 'put to bed' required anything up to a dozen staff. *Look and Learn*, for instance, comprised editor John Davies and his secretary, Maggie Meade-King, assistant editor Ken Roscoe, art editor Jack Parker, picture editor Lyn Marshall, an art department consisting of Doug Church, Chas Betts and Alan Walton plus sub-editors/feature writers Betty Clowes, Malcolm Chamberlin and Jack Sutter.

Leonard Matthews was still in charge when it was decided to bring together all the various departments that had been created some years earlier with the acquisition of Odhams and Newnes.

The International Publishing Company (IPC) had been formed in 1963 in order to merge Daily Mirror Newspapers (the owners of Fleetway Publications) and Sunday Pictorial Newspapers Ltd., publishers of the *Sunday Pictorial*, which was renamed the *Sunday Mirror* that same year. The new department was to be known as IPC Magazines and Arnold Quick was named chairman and chief executive. Under Quick, it was announced that the Juvenile Department was to be reorganised with Ron Phillips as Chief Executive, Leonard Matthews as Editorial Director and John Sanders, *Look and Learn's* launch editor, as Publisher.

Fourteen weeks later, Leonard Matthews left the company he had served for almost thirty years to set out on various new ventures.

One of the last titles he had ushered through at Fleetway was a joint Dutch-English venture along the same lines as *Look and Learn* entitled *Tell Me Why*. Subtitled "The World of Adventure—In Living Colour," *Tell Me Why* was even more visually oriented than *Look and Learn*.

The first issue, launched on 31 August 1968, contained 24 pages of pictures, every one in full colour, which meant a price of 1/6d. when *Look and Learn* was still priced 1/3d. (although the price was to rise to 1/6d. with issue 373 six months later). The debut issue answered such questions as "Which is the world's biggest hovercraft?", "Who were the first man and first woman to be launched into space?" and "When was the first airmail service started?" A comic strip adaptation began of *The Last of the Mohicans*, drawn by *Look and Learn* veteran Ruggerio Giovannini, and the issue also contained the first part of a free full-colour presentation pictorial wall-map of the British Isles. Other major features in the early issues included the story of Vincent Van Gogh, the story of the Kon Tiki, a trip to Venice, a variety of life stories of famous people and articles about animals, famous moments in history and great scientific inventions.

Unlike *Look and Learn*, articles in *Tell Me Why* were usually limited to half a page at most or a series of extensive captions. The layout of the paper was very carefully prepared with spaces left for text boxes on illustrations so that all the text could be put on an overlay. This text could then be easily replaced in any language the publisher required, whether Dutch, French or Italian.

The publisher of the paper was Dutch. N.V. Uitgeverij de Spaarnestad was based in Haarlem, nicknamed "the flower city of Europe" and a short journey west from Holland's capital city, Amsterdam. However, in keeping with the international flavour of the paper, *Tell Me Why* was produced in London by an Italian.

Velio Vuolo had met and married an English actress who was touring Italy. The newlyweds moved to England in 1954, where Vuolo's contacts amongst the Italian artistic community led to his first dealings with Amalgamated Press. After working as a translator for Italian comic artists employed via agencies, Vuolo teamed up with Enzo Plazotta, whose Cosmopolitan Artists

represented some of the first to break into the British market. Financial problems led to a split and Vuolo founded V.V. Artists in 1958. In the early 1960s, he began packaging pocket libraries from Spanish and Italian series for publication in the UK. When these came to a sudden end when their distributor went into liquidation, Vuolo teamed up with Leonard Matthews.

Tell Me Why was the first fruits of their collaboration, heavily reliant on the European and South American artists represented by Vuolo with a dash of British and Spanish talent thrown in for good measure. Mike Butterworth, still writing regularly for *Look and Learn*, was involved on the text side and travelled over to Haarlem regularly to see the Dutch backers of the title.

Having departed from Fleetway Publications, Leonard Matthews set about forming his own company, which he did by taking a controlling interest in Martspress, a company Vuolo had set up in 1962. With Vuolo, Matthews began packaging new titles, the first being *Once Upon a Time* for City Magazines Ltd., launched on 15 February 1969.

Although they were packaged for different publishers, *Once Upon A Time* was almost a junior companion to *Tell Me Why*. At 10" x 13", it was larger than *Look and Learn* (*Tell Me Why* was larger still, at 10½" x 13") but contained only 20 full colour pages for 1/3d.

The contents were built primarily around fairy stories and tales that would attract the same audience as *Look and Learn's* junior, *Treasure*. Cinderella, Pinocchio and Aladdin all featured in the early issues, alongside text stories starring Brer Rabbit and 'The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse', written by editor Barbara Hayes (Mrs. Leonard Matthews). Brightly coloured educational features and puzzles helped *Once Upon a Time* live up to its boast that "All in Colour—Makes Learning a Joy."

With four quite similar colour educational weeklies now on the market—*Look and Learn*, *Treasure*, *Tell Me Why* and *Once Upon a Time*—it is little surprise that some began to falter. Even the long-established *Look and Learn* started to suffer, with sales dropping below 200,000 for the first time.

The first to fall was *Tell Me Why*. Given the European origins of its packager and the wider audience it had to satisfy, it had a much broader outlook than the rather more British-oriented historical approach of *Look and Learn*. This can be seen most clearly in the choice of stories it translated into comic strips. Where *Look and Learn* adapted Shakespeare, Robert Louis Stevenson, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and H. Rider Haggard, *Tell Me Why* included serials and short stories by Miguel de Cervantes, Anton Chekhov, Joseph Conrad and Guy de Maupassant. The feature material also had a wider, European bias and this may have worked against it when it came to parents choosing a title for their child to read.

Dispensing with a packager from outside the firm, it was decided to create a new title in-house which could then be repackaged throughout Europe. *Tell Me Why* was therefore replaced

by *World of Wonder*, launched on 29 March 1970, published by Oberon BV of Haarlem and distributed by IPC Magazines—the newly branded company's first major educational launch.

For its editor, Bob Bartholomew, the paper brought back memories of his sudden arrival on *Boys' World* seven years before. When the new title was proposed, Jack Sutter, a sub-editor on *Look and Learn*, was brought in to put the magazine together. "Talk about *déjà vu*," recalls Bartholomew. "Suddenly, out of the blue, John Sanders sent for me and—this is exactly the same as what happened before—he said, 'I want you to take over *World of Wonder* straight away. I've told Jack Sutter that I'm not happy with what he's doing and that you're to take over.'

"So I went upstairs, introduced myself to the staff and said, 'I'm sorry, guys, but I'm your new editor.' Jack and I were great buddies and he stayed on the paper and we worked together. But there was no escaping this strange sense of *déjà vu* being called up to take over a new paper and start from scratch."

Like *Tell Me Why*, the paper was to have been distributed throughout Europe but putting the concept into practise proved tricky. "It was a truly international magazine, produced in England and printed out in Holland. The original idea was that it would be sold in Germany, France, Yugoslavia and Italy," says Bartholomew. "In fact, I went over to Yugoslavia and met the people there but they decided that the dummy was really a bit too advanced for them and the French decided it was not advanced enough. So we ended up with just the Dutch and ourselves."

Despite this minor glitch, *World of Wonder* was given a strong launch in the UK. With 32 pages, full colour throughout, it was essentially an update of *Look and Learn* in a slightly smaller 8½" x 11¼" format. The first issue offered a diverse set of features including the story of big cats and little cats, great battles, the story of Piltdown Man and Viking warrior Leif Ericsson. The Concorde was the first of a series of Marvels of the 20th Century, whilst 'A Picture to Talk About' reproduced a famous painting, the first being St. Francis of Assisi by Giotto. The launch issue also contained a 20" by 30" colour wall chart of 'Great Explorers of the World' as a free gift.

As with most of the new educational weeklies, much of the artwork for *World of Wonder* was produced abroad. "Fabulous, wasn't it?" recalls Bartholomew enthusiastically. "I used to get most of my artwork from Italy. Piero D'Ami was the agent and I got to know him quite well. Most of our artists came from D'Ami, which meant going to Italy quite frequently to see him and talk about commissioning new series or whatever. They were certainly wonderful artists."

Most of the staff had experience of educational and other Juvenile Department titles. Many were drafted in from *Look and Learn*: apart from Jack Sutter, the staff also included Quentin Robinson, the son of artist W. Heath Robinson, as editorial consultant, Colin Gibson as art editor and Doug Church on layouts.

"I was on that for roughly two years and really put a lot into it," recalls Church. "Because it all went through Holland I could do a bit of freelance. I used to do an opening page which was a collage of various illustrations. Colin would say, 'Do you want to do this? We need it tomorrow,' it was all done in half-tone and myosotis blue [*pale blue, like a forget-me-not*]."

"He was a wonderful fellow, was Doug," says Bartholomew. "He was always working on something. Quite extraordinary. He always seemed to be popping up in the women's department or the girls' department or whatever. He was so talented. I had tremendous admiration for Doug's abilities. He was a great fellow."

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Less than a year after the demise of *Tell Me Why* and the launch of *World of Wonder, Treasure*, the long-running junior companion to *Look and Learn* also folded. In April 1969, after 325 issues, *Treasure* had been relaunched as the 'new' *Treasure* with an extra eight pages. There was also a change in emphasis; the paper began to mirror its closest rival, *Once Upon a Time* by adding more comic strips to its line up. This was, in part, a reflection of changing ideas of how to educate the young as it was believed that children growing up on television in the 1960s were more receptive to learning visually through comic strips than through reading articles. The later issues featured comic strip adaptations of popular novels ('Swiss Family Robinson' and 'The Incredible Journey', for example) and fairy stories where the early issues had text versions with illustrations.

The move to more comic strips could not save the paper; steadily declining sales of comics in the latter half of the 1960s meant that expensive photogravure titles like *Treasure* were often the first to suffer and, after 418 issues, the paper finally came to an end, its last issue dated 16 January 1971, where it was announced that it was to be absorbed into *World of Wonder*.

Once Upon a Time was left with the field to itself for a while. Unfortunately, its publisher, City Magazines, was hit badly by strikes at printing firms and divested itself of a number of titles. With no magazine into which *Once Upon a Time* could be merged, it was instead sold to IPC Magazines, who acquired the title on 18 March 1972, and, a month later, merged it with *Disneyland Magazine*.

IPC then planned a relaunch of the title to fill the gap left in the nursery market by the closure of *Treasure* and the then recent merger of *Pixie* into *June*. *Once Upon a Time* was given a major send-off with an initial print order of 300,000 for its first issue, dated 24 February 1973.

Unfortunately, the changing market meant that the young female audience that might have been expected to pick up—or ask their parents to pick up—the title were now obsessing over pop stars. This was the era of David Cassidy and Donny Osmond and 'teeny-boppers'. IPC had

watched sales of *Fab 208*, *Mirabelle* and other titles aimed at young girls soar and began launching more and more titles to capitalise on their success: *Music Star* in January 1973, *It's Here! And Now!* and *Pop-Up* in April and *Hit!* in June. With so many titles clamouring for the attention of young girls, *Once Upon a Time* failed to find an audience and folded after only 18 issues.

The sale of *Once Upon a Time* to IPC Magazines severed the connection between IPC and Leonard Matthews. Matthews' replacement had been John Sanders, whom Matthews had hired to edit *Look and Learn* in 1961 and who, in 1968, became Publisher at IPC Magazines. "Leonard was a tremendous character, a man of exceptional talent, who understood certain aspects of the children's market more than anyone before or since, but he was guided purely by his personal whims, and what Fleetway produced in his time was a mirror image of what he was," says Sanders. "Because some of what he was was perfectly pitched at children he was an immense success, but some of what he was was also alien to them and old-fashioned, and in those areas he bombed out. *Ranger* was an example of the latter."

Sanders made few friends in his new role as Editorial Director as one of his first jobs was to purge the management side of the Juvenile Department. "I was under instructions from the Managing Director to get rid of them. We were a new regime and we wanted to expand quickly and these were not the people that you could do it with.

"It was curious, but when I took over, the first person I went to, oddly enough, was Leonard, who was then on the outside with Martspress and full of good ideas which he'd had before he left and hadn't published and I saw publishing opportunities in them. That's how we got *Disneyland Magazine*, which was a huge success, and that's how we got *Bobo Bunny*, which was created by Leonard. Leonard made a great deal of money in the first years after he left by selling me his stuff."

9: Into the new decade

The shake-up at IPC Magazines had also seen the departure of *Look and Learn's* editor, John Davies, who left to take over the editorship of *Argosy*, a monthly fiction title that had been published since 1926.

"He was a nice chap," recalls Jack Parker. "A very literary man. I don't think he enjoyed *Look and Learn* all that much and I suspect he wasn't terribly sorry when he left. I don't think he was terribly enamoured of Leonard who, of course, was a very forceful, go-ahead character and John was a very quiet man."

Davies, perhaps not surprising for an ex-Naval man, was happiest when he was sailing. A keen yachtsman, he often sailed off the coast at West Mersea and entertained friends at The Little Ship Club near London Bridge. Eventually he departed from IPC Magazines, but continued to write, most of his books concerning sailing and the sea.

New editor Andy Vincent was in sharp contrast to Davies. "Andy was a good writer," recalls Jack Parker. "He wrote a book called *The Long Road Home* about his years as a P.O.W. during the war. You would expect it to be awfully grim but it was funny. His exploits were very humorous and when you knew him as a person you could see how he would have got through those years. He had an indomitable spirit. "

Although his given name was Adrian, Vincent was always known as Andy. Born in London, he was the son of a stage actress who placed him in an orphanage. It was some years before his grandmother, an ex-circus bareback rider, discovered his fate and had him immediately released into her care. Grandma had set up a boarding house in Ramsgate and it was here that Vincent was raised.

He was working as a clerk when he received his call-up papers in January 1940 for training with the Queen Victoria's Rifles. The regiment was ordered to Calais but, after only five days on French soil, the port was overrun by Germans. Vincent was one of the few survivors and spent

the next five years in various camps in Upper Silesia, Czechoslovakia and Southern Germany before being abandoned in Bavaria to be picked up by advancing American forces.

Returning to civvy street, Vincent found work with the publicity department of Columbia Pictures and began writing stories for the Amalgamated Press. He was employed by Ted Holmes as a sub-editor on *Super Detective Library* in 1953, becoming editor in 1957 when Holmes left to edit *Everybody's*. He also freelanced stories elsewhere and some of his experiences as a P.O.W. were broadcast by the BBC, based on a journal he had kept from 1941 onwards. He was approached by a publisher and invited to turn the broadcast into a book, *The Long Road Home*, which was published to good reviews in 1956. Two novels followed in 1958 and 1962.

During his time working on comics he edited *Eagle* briefly, *Fleetway Super Library* and *Jag* before taking over *Look and Learn*.

Under Vincent, the magazine continued in very much the same vein as before. Two memorable features from early in Vincent's reign as editor were 'Rogers' Rangers' drawn by Ron Embleton, which began on the back cover of issue 420 (31 January 1970), and one of the most fondly remembered of all features in *Look and Learn* which debuted in number 437 (30 May 1970), when Mike Butterworth began 'The Story of World War One', illustrated by Frank Bellamy.

Other interesting series that appeared in 1970 included the highly colourful 'Great Cities of the Past', 'The Story of Australia', 'The Story of the River Thames' by Allen Cameron, 'Music of the Seventies' by Howard Jones, Peter Duncan returned for more world travelling in 'Ports of Call' and Dan Escott looked at 'Historic Castles of the World'. Later in the year, 'Men and Machines', Wilf Hardy's follow-up to 'Into the Blue', began in full colour, and both Peter Duncan and Dan Escott launched new series, 'Flying Into the Future' and 'The War-Lords of Japan' respectively.

While the contents continued to cover the traditional subject matter of *Look and Learn*, the new decade was to see some radical changes in how the magazine was produced. Since the first issue, *Look and Learn* had been a photogravure paper. The web offset process had begun to impact the printing industry in the early 1960s as it was able to produce papers and magazines in high quantity runs relatively cheaply. The process itself was known as 'offset' because, unlike photogravure where the printing plate came into contact with the paper, the new process transferred the image of the page from a plate onto a rubber roller or blanket which was then applied to the paper. The 'web' refers to the paper, which is fed continuously into the printing machines from huge rolls; the rolls are so vast that they can print many pages at once, which are then folded and trimmed at the end of the process, usually in 16 page or 32 page 'signatures'.

Look and Learn used a combination of heat set (for colour pages) and cold set (for black and white pages) web offset printing. In the latter days of photogravure, the 40-page paper had

consisted of 30 black and white pages and 10 full colour. The new, slightly slimmer *Look and Learn* that emerged with issue 502 (28 August 1971), had only eight pages of full colour and was two new pence more expensive but compensated by adding another eight pages to the total, making a total of 48 pages, 32 printed cold set and 16 heat set (the backs of the colour pages being printed in black and white).

The switch to web offset also meant a complete change in the way the magazine was put together. Jack Parker recalls, "Web offset was all cut and paste. The text was typeset and the finished copy would be printed on wax paper and stuck down on boards using wax. You'd leave blank areas on the board for the pictures to be dropped in by the repro house. It was very straightforward in many ways; you just had to be accurate. Unfortunately, the wax wasn't very sticky and sometimes you'd be looking through the first copies in the office and there would be a caption missing. When we passed it, it was perfectly all right. You'd ring up the printer and say, 'Where's the caption gone?' and they'd say, 'It fell off!'"

These changes were made in response to the sharp decline in sales. In 1970, *Look and Learn* had been selling 150,000 copies a week, a figure that fell by 23,000 in the first half of 1971. This was not a unique situation to *Look and Learn*—*Treasure*, its junior companion, was folded in January 1971 and all comic titles published by IPC were battling against declining circulations. Where sales of 400,000 or 500,000 were once the norm, by the early 1970s not one of IPC's Youth Group titles was selling more than 250,000 copies a week once the initial few free gift issues came to an end. Only one title bucked the trend: *Tammy* was launched in February 1971 with an initial circulation of 400,000 and, three years later, could still boast sales of 250,000-300,000 a week. In 1974, girls could buy two 40-page comics for the same price of *Look and Learn* which had, in early 1974, also dropped to 40 pages per issue.

This is not to say that the contents of *Look and Learn* were any poorer. The 'baby-boomer' children born in the early 1960s who were now of an age to become the latest generation of *Look and Learn* readers had been raised in a very different fashion to their parents. Television was now a major part of most children's leisure time, with three channels being broadcast regularly. The impact of *Look and Learn*'s extensive use of colour in its early days had been lost at a time when colour television, first regularly broadcast on BBC2 in 1967, was becoming more widespread. Pop music was exploding in dozens of directions and the teenybopper craze was in full swing in the early 1970s. *Look and Learn* had also created its own nearest rival: *World of Wonder*. In the months following its amalgamation with *Treasure*, *World of Wonder* was actually outselling *Look and Learn*, albeit only by six or seven thousand copies a week. However, given their relative high price of 10p it is unlikely that parents were buying both titles, effectively dividing the audience into two at a time when *Once Upon a Time* was also on the market.

Despite its reduced use of colour, *Look and Learn* still managed to produce some remarkable series. Peter Jackson was still one of the title's major artists, producing series like 'Life With The Victorians' and 'The Defenders' (the story of fortification) in 1972. Dan Escott and Ron Embleton were both regularly given pride of place on the rear cover, with delightful series ranging from Escott's 'Swords That Tell a Story' to Embleton's long-running series of colourful legends from around the world, which included 'Legends of the Rhineland', 'The Legend of Gudrun', 'The Legend of Tannhauser' and 'Tristan and Isolde' during 1972-73.

Once a year, in the autumn, the magazine was given a general freshening up and promotion. The promotion was more often than not a special pull-out feature that would run for four weeks in the centre pages and which could be removed by lifting the staples, slipped together, trimmed and folded to become a free booklet. 1971 saw the 96-page 'Look and Learn Book of Records'; 1972 included a free Map Chart in two parts, with a further few weeks of giveaways as readers could collect flags to place on their map; in 1973, readers were offered the 16-page 'Spotter on the Move' booklet.

This latter promotion coincided with a change in look for the magazine. Issue 606 (25 August 1973) had seen an experiment carried out when the cover was given a red border surrounding the usual full colour illustration. Normally the cover was 'full bleed'—covering the entire front page—but the red border was obviously considered an improvement and returned with issue 613 (13 October 1973).

Inside, new series were created to hook readers initially attracted by the offer of a free gift, some of the best including 'Mighty Monarchs', illustrated by Peter Jackson and C. L. Doughty, 'The World's Great Civilisations', 'The History of the Motor Car', 'The Invaders', illustrated by Angus McBride in 1971; 'Modern Marvels', illustrated by Wilf Hardy and Gerry Wood, 'Mightier Than the Sword', 'Tales of the Track', illustrated by Graham Coton, and 'History's Heroes' in 1972; and 'The Glory That Was Rome', 'Science Survey', 'In the Pilgrims' Footsteps', 'Islands in the Sun', 'Forgotten Discoveries', 'The Story of Armour', 'The Scene of the Crime', 'The World's Toughest Sports' and 'Britain Under the Swastika' in 1973. There was still room for the occasional experiment, such as 'Britain Before the Conquest'—a light-hearted look at life in Britain before the days of the Norman conquest, told in a series of humorous cartoons. 1974 saw a follow-up to the 1971 series about the Great War when 'The World in Conflict' began in issue 646 (1 June 1974). Illustrated by Gerry Wood, the series ran for 17 episodes.

Although many of the most popular artists of earlier years—Peter Jackson, C. L. Doughty, Ron Embleton and Angus McBride, for instance—were still drawing and painting illustrations for *Look and Learn*, new artists were also making their mark. Graham Coton, a veteran of twenty years drawing comics for Fleetway, was to become one of the most prolific artists to work on the magazine in the 1970s. Coton was a devotee of classic racing cars (he owned a four and a

half litre Bentley) and aircraft and, for many years, was one of the leading cover illustrators for Fleetway's *Air Ace Library*.

Richard Hook was another relative newcomer to *Look and Learn*. He had previously worked as art editor on *Finding Out*, which had been amalgamated with *Look and Learn* in 1967, and subsequently worked as a freelance artist. His style was a perfect match for the paper and some of his best work could be found on series like 'The Edwardians' in 1974 and various series on legends.

Editor Andy Vincent added something of an international flavour to the paper with the addition of a number of Italian artists represented by Piero D'Ami. The series 'People and Places' ran on the rear cover for some ten months in 1973-74, drawn by Juan Gonzalez Alacrego and Agustin Navarro amongst others.

Vincent was also something of a traveller himself and working on *Look and Learn* gave him the opportunity to send himself on assignment to America, South America and Europe on various occasions. "He went everywhere," recalls his wife, June. "He went to America to write about zoos and I've a photograph of him tickling a white rhino's stomach. He visited an incredible number of countries. Japan, Hawaii... On one occasion when there was a bit of a crisis at home I couldn't get hold of him and we eventually tracked him down to Ischia, the Italian island in the bay of Naples. He spent his 61st birthday up the Amazon and I've still got a necklace made from porcupine spines that he bartered from one of the tribesmen in the Amazon."

Vincent's travels usually resulted in various pieces of on-the-scene reporting such as his articles on 'African Safari—Californian Style' (issue 602, 28 July 1973) and 'Wonders of the Deep—On Land' (issue 605, 18 August 1973), both based on his trip to America.

The free gift for the autumn of 1974 was a large, pull-out Wildlife Poster produced in association with the World Wildlife Fund. As usual, there were a host of new features: 'The Undersea Adventurers', 'Retreat!', 'The Story of France', 'Made in Britain', 'The House of Windsor', 'The Miniature Countries of Europe' (starting with Monaco) and 'The Georgians'.

Bigger changes were in store when, a few months later, *Look and Learn* changed printers and once again found itself with a new format. The change, with issue 673 (7 December 1974), brought the size of the paper down to 8³/₄" x 11¹/₂", matching that of *Look and Learn*'s latest semi-companion, *Speed & Power*. The usual batch of new features began ('The Dark Continent' (about Africa), 'First in the World', 'Our Expanding Universe' (illustrated in colour by Gerry Wood), 'Novelties of Mobility', 'The 'Thirties' and 'Civilians Into Soldiers'). Soon after, a couple of old favourites, 'From Then Till Now' and 'Our Colour Camera' were revived, the latter on the rear cover between runs of various strip features which, in 1974, included 'The Legend of

Rodrigo of Vivar' and 'The Legend of Ilya', both illustrated by legendary Spanish artist Jesus Blasco.

And still more changes were to come when, with issue 686 (8 March 1975), *Look and Learn* was amalgamated with *World of Wonder*.

World of Wonder was very much in the same mould as *Look and Learn*, sharing many of the same artists (Richard Hook, Roger Payne, Dan Escott, Wilf Hardy, Graham Coton) and it is perhaps the very similarity of the two titles that was dragging sales on both papers down. The decision was made to merge one into the other. Another factor was that the Dutch publishers with whom the paper was produced decided that they would prefer to produce a new paper.

"I'd run it for about five years and they'd taken it quite happily," recalls editor Bob Bartholomew. "Then, they decided they knew enough about that sort of thing to do their own title. But it was a very happy five years.

"Andy [Vincent] and I were great buddies. He was doing *Look and Learn* when I was doing *World of Wonder* and at one stage it was a question of which packed up, whether *Look and Learn* would pack up and go into *World of Wonder* or vice versa. In the end *World of Wonder* folded into *Look and Learn*. *Look and Learn* had the reputation, plus the fact that the Dutch wanted to do their own version of *World of Wonder*."

"*World of Wonder* was a concerted attempt to get the educational idea across Europe and it worked very well," says John Sanders. "We produced a magazine that could be printed centrally in Europe but was sold in Yugoslavia, in Turkey and elsewhere. It was the first attempt at a pan-European educational paper and parts of that idea were enormously successful, although ultimately it only had any long-term success in Holland."

Sales on *Look and Learn* were hovering around 100,000 copies a week and the decision to amalgamate the two papers came at a time when *Look and Learn* was already committed to running various series—it took time to write and illustrate a series of articles. 'Warriors of the World', for instance, was a new series that had only just begun in issue 685. Newcomers to the line-up the following week included 'They Went to America' (about people who crossed the Atlantic seeking fame and fortune), 'Meet the Family' (about different species of animals) and 'Wonder World of Science' (about possible great discoveries of the future). Unfortunately, there was a feeling of *déjà vu* in some of the new features. To take one example, the first subject of the all-new series 'The Story-Tellers' was Walter Scott, who had starred in a feature only a matter of months before.

Not that the next few months were a wasteland. Art editor Jack Parker made the most of his few colour pages with some excellent features, notably 'Flying Firsts', illustrated by Wilf Hardy, and 'The Time and the Place', illustrated by John S. Smith.

These and other ongoing features gave the paper a boost during the next six months, with average sales up 25,000 to 129,000 a week, but it would be true to say that *Look and Learn*, at fifteen years old, was looking rather tired and it would take the arrival of yet another magazine to give *Look and Learn* the jolt that it needed to bring the magazine back some of its former glory.

10: "Speed and power"

In early 1974, IPC launched a revolutionary new paper for boys of a kind that had not been seen since the 1930s. Originally published in 1937, *Modern Wonder* had contained a mixture of science news, text stories and the comic strip adventures of 'Flash Gordon'. It was heavily illustrated with photographs and drawings of up-to-the-minute advances in technology—the new £8 million Mersey Tunnel, speculation on the future of locomotives, the latest cars to challenge the world land speed record and aeroplanes that would make commercial flights from London to New York a reality.

Modern Wonder boasted four pages of full colour and its centre spread was dominated by cut-away drawings of the latest marvels of transport, a concept adopted by the *Eagle* in the 1950s (indeed, the most famous of *Eagle*'s cut-away artists, Leslie Ashwell Wood, had earlier worked for *Modern Wonder*).

Thirty-five years after *Modern Wonder*, *Speed & Power* revelled in many of the same subjects. As editor Ken Roscoe said in his opening editorial, "the first issue is packed full of thrilling and fascinating things from the world of 'speed and power'—all those wonderful man-made things that move: ships, cars, aeroplanes, space vehicles, motorcycles, speedboats. We will tell you what is happening about them today, what happened in the past and what may happen in the future."²⁰

Speed & Power delivered on its promise with articles on fast cars, big ships, supersonic planes, high-speed trains, get-up-and-go hovercraft. The first issue included a cut-away drawing of a Jaguar XJ13, articles on the new breed of Mach-3 fighters, the giant C-5A cargo plane and the development of the Surface Effect Ships (fast, manoeuvrable hovercraft). Many of the articles speculated on the future of transport, whether in space or under the sea, and could

²⁰ Ken Roscoe, 'A Letter from the Editor', *Speed & Power* #1, 22 March 1974, p.3.

almost have been science fiction, although all were grounded in current developments in technology. In 1974, less than five years since Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon, *Speed & Power* was running articles about the Orbital Shuttle and the TGV high-speed train, both of which eventually became reality in 1981.

Where *Modern Wonder* had run stories of racing cars, scientific detectives, adventurous aircraft pilots and even a science fiction serial by John Wyndham, *Speed & Power* turned to modern SF authors, Arthur C. Clarke and Isaac Asimov, firing the imaginations of its readers even further with tales of far-off Venus or Jupiter. But it wasn't all science fiction... if flying to Jupiter seemed like a pipe dream even to a ten-year old, there were other ways you could work at the cutting edge of speed: as a racing car driver or test pilot; or as a scientist developing a new breed of super airships; or driving one of the new breed of tanks in the service of the Royal Artillery. *Speed & Power* no doubt fired up many aspirations in its readers.

The new title was produced by IPC Transport Press, a division of the Business Press division of IPC who were responsible for such titles as *Autocar*, *Motor*, *Classic Cars*, *Yachting World*, *Railway Gazette*, *Aeroplane Monthly* and *Flight International*. Some of these titles were pioneer magazines in their field—some had been running for over fifty years—and *Speed & Power* was able to draw on the vast range of illustrations, photographs and cutaway drawings available from these titles to keep the paper bang up to the minute on the fastest, toughest, biggest, smallest, oldest and oddest vehicles on land, on water and in the air.

Ken Roscoe was approached in 1973 to put together a team to produce the new paper. Roscoe had worked for the *Daily Mirror* in the 1950s where he was assigned to the 'Ruggles' comic strip, gathering interview material for writer Ian Gammidge and artist Steve Dowling to translate into strip form during a 'meet the people' experiment. Roscoe had joined Fleetway as an assistant editor on *Hurricane* before moving onto *Ranger*, working under former *Look and Learn* editor John Sanders. He had joined *Look and Learn* when it absorbed *Ranger* in 1966.

Roscoe did not have far to look for the ideal art editor for the new paper. Alan Kirkham had replaced Doug Church as art editor on *Look and Learn* in 1969 when Church left to take responsibility for *World of Wonder*. Kirkham had previously worked in the Experimental Art Department and spent some years producing rough layouts for comic strips. "A lot of the old illustrators had problems laying out the pages in a modern style," he recalls. "They were still doing it in an old fashioned way, so my job was to prepare 'scamps' which would then be sent off to different artists who would then draw the finished page. It just gave it a bit more of a modern feel to what they had been drawing for so many years."

This experience paid dividends when it came to creating layouts for features in *Look and Learn* and *Speed & Power*. "I think of it as my publishing honeymoon," Kirkham fondly recalls. "It was a great magazine to work on. There was some rivalry between IPC Magazines and IPC

Business Press because all kids love bikes, planes and everything like that. *Speed & Power* was started up to try and wean young readers onto the adult magazines produced by Transport Press but it was also rivalling *Look and Learn*."

Launched on Friday, 14 March 1974, IPC Transport described the new paper as "the first magazine for technological whiz-kids," and heavily promoted it to newsagents. The print order of the first issue was increased from 315,000 to 350,000 ahead of publication, of which around 70%—245,000 copies—were sold.

Over 200 letters from fans swamped the office and the paper was seen as an instant success. The sales of the second and third issues were even better. John Sanders, at the time editorial director of IPC Magazines' General Magazines Group, based in Farringdon Street, readily acknowledges, "*Speed & Power* was spot-on." Although Sanders had been the *prima facie* editor of *Ranger*, he is the first to admit that the content was old-fashioned, even for the mid-sixties. The various educational titles that were launched in the late 1960s had all grown out of the success of *Look and Learn* and its rival *Knowledge* and were still aimed at parents with aspirations for their children. In contrast, *Speed & Power* was a science and technical magazine that hit the right notes for the modern (mid-seventies) audience of young boys who were not relying on parents but were spending their own pocket money on the new paper.

Speed & Power had a higher mix of photographs than most of the other educational weeklies but, given its fascination with futuristic transport, there was still room for some stunning illustrations, often given pride of place on the colour pages. Wilf Hardy was, perhaps, the star of *Speed & Power*, with his sleek, streamlined fighter craft and action-packed scenes of past stars of the air in series like 'Fighter Aces'; Hardy illustrated everything from rocket-sleds to Harriers and could always be relied on to bring even the oddest subject—like slant-winged planes—to life.

Alongside Hardy and other *Look and Learn* regulars like Gerry Wood, Graham Coton, John S. Smith and Dan Escott, *Speed & Power* found its own group of artists. Michael Whittlesea became one of the most prolific illustrators associated with the magazine, producing most of the story illustrations. Oliver Frey was another artist who came to the fore in *Speed & Power*. Since 1969, the Swiss-born artist had been producing 8-page back-up strips and covers for *War Picture Library* whilst attempting to set up a film production company with a film school colleague, to produce industrial films for major companies in Switzerland. When this came to nought, Frey returned to England in the autumn of 1973 and signed up with Temple Art Agency, who were soon able to find him regular work with IPC. Keith Fretwell was a newcomer discovered through the magazine.

"Ken Roscoe wanted Alan Kirkham because he did all the artwork commissioning for *Look and Learn*," says Phil Gorton, who joined the paper from pop magazine *Music Star*. "I was supposed to be assistant art editor. Alan handled all the artwork because *Look and Learn* had

been so artwork oriented. I used to do most of the transparency work and photographic features including the covers because it was usually all transparencies. Photographs rather took over because we had such a massive selection at IPC Transport of all the autocar tests and that sort of thing. Although there was some commissioning done for new projects by people like Laurie Hammond, who was the transport man of the paper and would write features on motorbikes, motor racing, cars and all that sort of stuff, most of the pictures you saw in *Speed & Power* were from the archives."

Laurie Hammond was just one of the team who worked on *Speed & Power*. As chief sub-editor, he was responsible for writing most of the features on cars, bikes and motor racing. Sub-editor Jerry Scutts was the aeroplane correspondent; Bob Barton, another sub, wrote articles on trains and model making.

Assistant editor Ray Bonds was an expert picture researcher. "He could get hold of pictures that nobody else could get hold of," says Gorton. "He was very, very good at it. He did an enormous amount of work and a lot of the historical illustrations you see, he found.

"Bonds basically ran the magazine. Ken Roscoe was a real, old-style, died-in-the-wool journalist who was obsessed with going to lunch at the Press Club. He was prone to walk into the office and ask, 'What issue are we doing?' Ray Bonds did the pagination and organised everything with the printers.

"The guy who was in charge—the publisher over Roscoe—was called John Croockshank. Croockshank famously came into the studio one day when we were working on an issue and there was some artwork on the table for a front cover and there was a sheet of tracing paper over it. Just to protect it. And his comment was: 'Will it photograph OK through the tracing paper?'

"*Speed & Power* was a magazine that was produced in spite of the management rather than because of it. The amount of work that went into it, *Speed & Power* should have been a really successful magazine and really good. But all it was in the end was a bit of a struggle. We did the best that we could.

"It was always a bit of a bug-bear the amount of space that had to be left for captions because all the pictures were technical. You couldn't really get away with a throwaway caption because the writer of the piece wanted to put into the caption what the picture was. And quite often you would end up with a ten-line caption which rather restricts your layout. You've got to have a structure to the whole piece and it's supposed to be educational so you had to have fact boxes and things like that so it gets quite complex. And, therefore, expensive.

"It was the expense that killed it. Had they been able to sell three-quarters of a million a week—which they *should* have—it would have been a roaring success. But the management had no idea what to do with it.

"Sales declined fairly rapidly. But they could have made a lot of money out of it had they known what they were doing. As far as the circulation goes, it sort of peaked in the first ten or so issues and then you had that gradual decline that you get when it needs boosting up with free gifts and all that sort of stuff."

The decline of sales was reflected in the quality of the magazine. When it was launched, *Speed & Power* had 32 pages, 16 of which were in colour. With issue 40 this dropped to 12 and, two issues later, the price rose from 10p to 12p. The colour pagination declined steadily: with issue 63 to 10 pages, 9 pages from issue 65 and 7 pages from issue 70. The title was switched to cheaper paper with issue 77 and eventually fizzled out ten issues later on 14 November 1975, by which time it could only sustain 4 pages of colour.

In the editorial for the final issue, Ken Roscoe acknowledged the reason for the paper's demise with surprising honesty: "Unhappily, there are not enough readers to enable us to go on publishing without a big increase in the price."²¹

Accompanying this editorial was a set of small photos of the *Speed & Power* editorial team with the message "...That's All Folks!" Whilst even the youngest fans would recognise the famous sign-off from old Warner Bros. cartoons, not one of them suspected that it was also the editorial staff's way of taking a sly and sarcastic dig at IPC Transport chairman George Fowkes, who was responsible for the paper being cancelled.

* * * * *

Speed & Power initially became an eight-page (separately numbered) supplement in the centre of *Look and Learn*, continuing the long-running 'Planes from the Past' series and including the usual mixture of trains, planes and automobiles. The supplement bumped up the pagination of *Look and Learn* to 48 pages for a couple of weeks, but articles quickly became interleaved with the rest of the magazine and the pagination dropped back to 40 pages.

Look and Learn dropped its red border in favour of full-page images once again, the first a futuristic train (painted by Gerry Wood). The rest of the magazine was instantly recognisable to readers who had been with the paper before the amalgamation. 'Top Secret', 'The Warrior Monarchs', 'The Human Machine', 'The Dawn of Civilization', 'Can You Solve This Mystery', 'The British at Play' and 'Gateway to Adventure' covered familiar ground. 'The Author and His Works' revised material that had appeared in *Look and Learn*'s first few months (and would be revised again for 'Masters of Make-Believe' a couple of years later).

²¹ Ken Roscoe, 'A Letter from the Editor', *Speed & Power* #87, 14 November 1975, p.2.

Some of the best new series over the next few months included 'The Oregon Trail', superbly illustrated by Oliver Frey, launched in issue 741 (27 March 1976), 'Dynasties of Destiny', illustrated by Roger Payne, launched in issue 751 (5 June 1976), 'The Pageant of London', illustrated by Peter Jackson, launched in issue 760 (7 August 1976) and 'Rails Across the West', launched in issue 774 (13 November 1976). These colour features had all the impact of the old *Look and Learn*.

Unfortunately, *Look and Learn* suffered a major loss in the summer of 1976 when Don Lawrence quit, leaving the long-running 'Trigan Empire' strip which he had started back in 1965.

Behind the scenes, Lawrence had been through a number of personal problems during the early 1970s. Lawrence had met Julia Wilson whilst they were both students at Borough Polytechnic and the two married in 1954. Their first child was born in January 1955 and four more children followed. Supporting a family of five was a struggle and Lawrence would often be working on a second strip on top of the two pages a week he painted for *Look and Learn*. In 1972, he had found himself in the enviable position of finding well paid work producing another colour strip—'strip' being the apt phrase as the simple premise of each month's episode was for his young heroine 'Carrie' to lose all her clothes over two pages.

In 1973, Lawrence met Elisabeth Clunies Ross, whom he was to marry in 1979, and, with 'Carrie' providing a financial safety net, he decided to take a break from 'Trigan Empire' in order to sort out his personal life. Ramon Sola, who had previously painted a fill-in episode in 1972, repeated the same task in early 1974. With issue 635 (16 March 1974), a new artist arrived in the shape of Philip Corke and the strip was retitled 'More Adventures of the Trigan Empire'.

Corke had been a prolific illustrator for Nelson Young World's series of 'Young Tripper' books, drawing everything from trips to a castle or a concert, to a TV studio or the Grand Prix. Although a capable artist able to tackle most subjects, his cartoon-like drawing style was something of a culture shock to anyone used to Lawrence's realistic style and the change did not go down well with fans. Lawrence was welcomed back a year later with issue 690 (5 April 1975) but was soon to make a discovery that changed his attitude to the strip entirely.

In March 1976, London's Mount Royal Hotel hosted Britain's first comic convention. The weekend event attracted dozens of professionals in the business, Lawrence amongst them. One of the highlights was the Saturday evening Ally Sloper Award Dinner where comedian (and former comic artist) Bob Monkhouse presented the first Ally Sloper Awards. IPC sponsored their own special award to recognise the talents of an artist in their own publications. This went to Lawrence for his work on 'The Trigan Empire'.

Lawrence was delighted, but his delight was tempered with the discovery that 'Trigan Empire' was being syndicated widely throughout Europe without his knowledge. Although he was aware

that IPC had published its own 72-page collection, *The Look and Learn Book of the Trigan Empire*, in August 1973, he was unaware that the strip had been appearing in the Dutch weekly comic *Sjors* since 1968 and that the first story had been reprinted in an album published by Uitgeverij Amsterdam Boek in 1973. In Italy, the strip took pride of place on the cover of *L'avventuroso gigante* when it was launched in January 1974 and appeared as a hardcover volume, *Tutto l'avventuroso gigante* that same year.

Lawrence was receiving no extra payment for any of these reprints and, on returning home from the convention, he contacted his agent, Danny Kelleher of Temple Art, and demanded that Kelleher negotiate a higher rate of payment for the strip.

"I'd met Ervin Rustemagic at the convention and he'd explained how the strip was being sold all over Europe and how much I should be receiving in royalties," Lawrence later recalled. "I told Danny that I wanted £100 a page and a percentage of the syndication and album sales."

The average payment at that time on *Look and Learn* was around £60 for a page, with some artists receiving less. Very few artists worked direct for the paper and were therefore also paying 10% of their earnings to agents. Lawrence was offered £10 more per page than he had been receiving and a small royalty, an offer he felt was desultory.

He quit, a decision he instantly regretted as he had then recently also stopped working on the 'Carrie' strip for *Mayfair*. Lawrence, approaching 50 years of age and with 30 years as a comic strip artist, found himself unemployed; worse, he was unlikely to be offered any more work by IPC, the biggest UK comic publisher.

He need not have worried. Because of the popularity of the 'Trigan Empire' in Holland, the Dutch publishers Oberon immediately invited him to work for a new weekly comic they were planning, to be called *Eppo*. After an abortive start on a strip entitled 'Commandant Grek', Lawrence co-created 'Storm', another science fiction epic, featuring a spaceman whose spaceship plunges into the red spot on Jupiter, flinging it far into a future where Earth's oceans have disappeared. Over the next twenty years, Lawrence produced some of the best work of his career and, although the strip was barely known in his native country, Lawrence continued to be recognised by his peers, winning the Society of Strip Illustration's Lifetime Achievement Award in 1980 and multiple awards in Europe. A retrospective exhibition of his work at Breda, Holland, in 1994 attracted over 10,000 visitors.

The loss of Lawrence on the strip was a blow for the paper, recognised by art editor Jack Parker. "A lot of people only bought *Look and Learn* for 'The Trigan Empire'!" he says.

Lawrence had agreed to complete his latest storyline before departing, allowing Jack Parker time to find a suitable replacement. The artist chosen was, coincidentally, a long-time follower of Lawrence's work. "I was actually a fan of Don's early work in *Swift* (Pony Express) and even

sent him some samples when I was about fourteen or fifteen on which he commented quite favourably," recalls Oliver Frey.

"Living in Switzerland at the time and having *Eagle* and *Swift* posted to me by family friends, I was quite unaware of *Look and Learn* and 'Trigan Empire' but I was put forward by my agent to replace Don (who was also with Temple Art) when he left the strip over remuneration problems. For quite a while I suffered from 'we want you to look like Lawrence' syndrome but this died away." Jack Parker had obviously learned from the reaction that had greeted Philip Corke when he had taken over the strip in 1974-75.

Frey took over from issue 753 (19 June 1976) and remained on the strip for 18 months before departing. "The strip's author was Mike Butterworth, who was an old hand and fairly self-opinionated. The one time I met him was at the farewell drinks do for Don Lawrence held at the top floor reception area of King's Reach Tower. I made the mistake of taking an active interest in Trigan Empire's storyline development only to be told not to teach him how to suck eggs. I think Butterworth thought I was a young whippersnapper. I also think he lost interest in the strip and the stories became more fatuous as they went on. Because of this, and other more personal factors, I got to the point where I decided to stop drawing the strip."

"Butterworth decided that he'd had enough and that created all sorts of problems," recalls Jack Parker. "We couldn't find anybody to take it over and we had a number of people try. I actually wrote one myself. Not terribly successfully, I have to admit. It was one of those 'mysterious presence aboard a spaceship' stories and I got myself into a corner because I couldn't think how to finish it. It was probably 'With one bound he was by her side.'

"It was a bit up and down, unfortunately, and never as good as when Don did it because he and Butterworth were the great originators."

Parker eventually found himself a new creative team in the shape of artist Gerry Wood and writer Ken Roscoe. Wood took over the strip with issue 834 (7 January 1978) and, apart from the occasional break when reprints were used, remained with it until the very end. "Gerry Wood did a very good job," says Jack Parker.

Strips had been an important element of *Look and Learn* since its amalgamation with *Ranger* in 1966. Schoolboy 'Rob Riley' illustrated by Stanley Houghton, another survivor from the merger, had attended Westhaven School for some years until becoming a junior partner in a firm of private detectives shortly before his adventures came to an end in 1971. The cowboy adventures of 'Dan Dakota—Lone Gun' had run for thirty-two months between 1966 and 1969. The vast majority of the strips, however, had much shorter runs. Many continued the tradition for adapting classic novels, with Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Kidnapped', Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 'Sir Nigel', 'The Lost World' plus two of his Sherlock Holmes novels 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' and 'The Sign of Four', Alexandre Dumas' 'The Three Musketeers', 'The Count of

Monte Cristo' and 'The Man in the Iron Mask' and Sir Henry Rider Haggard's 'Montezuma's Daughter' being amongst the best.

C. L. Doughty produced a string of superb adaptations in the 1970s, including 'Oliver Twist', 'Treasure Island', 'Ivanhoe', 'King Solomon's Mines', 'Three Men in a Boat' and 'The Last of the Mohicans'.

Bill Lacey, on the other hand, was given a variety of new strips to illustrate, ranging from the futuristic adventures of 'The Space Rangers' to 'The Man Who Searched For Fear'. The latter starred Hugo Masterman, a former high adventurer now confined to a wheelchair, who offered £1,000 to anyone who could come to his castle in the Hebrides and strike fear into his heart by relating a thrilling tale. The idea was based on the series 'House of Thrills', which had appeared in the 'tuppenny dreadful' *Bullseye* in the early 1930s. Lacey's best work, however, was probably the World War One flying escapades of Harry Hawkes in 'Eagles Over the Western Front', which ran for over 100 episodes.

11: "A thousand reasons to celebrate"

In February 1976, *Look and Learn*, along with all other Fleetway comics and magazines, moved from their old home in Farringdon Street to new premises on the South Bank of the Thames. King's Reach Tower soared 30 floors into the sky. IPC's chairman claimed that "The move to King's Reach and the surrounding area will, I believe, enable us to organise ourselves in a better way to meet the problems and opportunities of the future."

This was not a sentiment shared by many of the staff. "I suppose, in a way, part of the character of *Look and Learn* died when we moved into King's Reach Tower," says John Melhuish. "We were spread out more. I was on the floor above *Look and Learn* editorial and it was never quite the same. It felt more corporate: you really felt that you were part of an international publishing empire where the old Fleetway building had been a maze of corridors and basements and when you went into an office it felt more like you were going into someone's front room."

Fleetway House in Farringdon Street had been joined to neighbouring New Fleetway House by a corridor linking the fifth floor. As Melhuish recalls, "People were spread out all over the place in little offices and it took half a day to get from one end to the other. But you'd see all these people on the way."

"The character kind of went," agrees Sue Lamb. "One of the very first IRA bombs in London went off near the [Fleetway House] building, so instead of people just wandering in and sitting around chatting, suddenly security guards came in. Then, when we moved over to the tower some people didn't want to work in that atmosphere. It was totally, totally different."

"*Look and Learn* had a central office in the old Fleetway building but in the King's Reach Tower we were on the outside of the building in a semi-circle round the outside," adds Melhuish. "I think the highlight of our time there was when the Duke of Edinburgh came. The Duke

mistook the picture library office for *Look and Learn*'s office. He stopped and picked up some issues and looked at them: "Oh, *Look and Learn*."

Other changes were in evidence in the early 1970s. "For one thing, you couldn't sit down at a desk without being a union member," says Lamb.

"I can't tell you what a laugh it was working at IPC at one point in time," echoes John Melhuish. "Towards the end it became not so nice because there were too many union disputes. I've never worked anywhere where there were so many disputes. The union, the NUJ, was quite strong at IPC so we had really lengthy disputes. One lasted eight weeks and we were all sacked. It led to a lot of bitterness. After that it was never quite the same."

Printers' strikes had removed many IPC titles from the newsstands in 1970 and 1974, a situation avoided by *Look and Learn* because it was not printed by an IPC-owned press, despite the fact that Doug Church was Father of the Chapel, a position later held by *Look and Learn* production-editor Peter Wrobel.

The unions were gradually broken down, as they were elsewhere, and IPC would regularly go through shake-ups amongst the various groups within the magazine departments. One such occurred in the summer of 1977 when Andy Vincent was made group editor and Jack Parker, after fifteen years on the paper, was made editor of *Look and Learn*.

"Andy was leaving and they were going to appoint a new editor and I thought to myself, 'I've got to make a move here,'" recalls Parker. "I went to see John Sanders and said 'Look, if anybody's going to be editor of this paper it should be me. I've been with it from the beginning, I know it inside out,' and, to my surprise, he said, 'Yeah, OK.'"

Bob Bartholomew, the former editor of *World of Wonder* had been a likely candidate for the post, but the changes in management had partly been made in order to launch another educational title which Bartholomew was to edit.

Parker's elevation to editor meant that Sue Lamb now became art editor. "I must say that I haven't got much of a claim to fame because *Look and Learn* was so well established by the time I started there," she recalls. Although there was little change initially, one innovation Lamb introduced was credits for many of the illustrators. Although one or two artists had signed their work since the earliest issues, this was the first time that *Look and Learn* had attempted to actually credit the dozens of artists who helped create the magazine every week. Names like Severino Baraldi—an Italian artist who illustrated many historical colour features in the 1970s—appeared for the first time.

"I thought it was a good idea," recalls Jack Parker. "Some of these people were a bit unsung and a lot of these guys produced absolutely excellent work. None of them was earning a fortune."

Spiralling inflation in the 1970s brought its problems to the freelancers who worked on *Look and Learn*. "A lot of the artists just used to amble in or phone up and if we didn't have any work they'd just sit around until the next script came in two or three weeks later," says Sue Lamb. "Suddenly they couldn't live like that anymore. It became much more cut-throat and imperative that we found more work for them because it was imperative that they found weekly income.

"It was awful because I made friends with people like Roger Payne and Ron Embleton and all of them. And we had some truly great artists working on the paper."

"It was a great paper to work for and I used to get work usually once a week, sometimes once a fortnight," agrees Roger Payne. "It was a great source of income and it was fun to work for. It was a guaranteed source: if I didn't have much work on I'd phone up Jack and he'd say, 'We've got such and such.' It was a considerable loss to all of us when that came to an end. But there you are. That's the way of the world."

"*Look and Learn* was a family," says John Melhuish. "All the *Look and Learn* staff went out socially. We all put away a pound a week and we'd go out to a nice restaurant once every three months. Everybody really looked after everybody and there was nobody who worked there that you didn't like."

"Lyn Marshal used to do these amazing lunches," recalls Sue Lamb. "She'd take Friday off and you'd go there for lunch on Sunday and they'd go on all day. Five courses, starting with champagne in the garden.

"At King's Reach Tower there was a lift shaft going up near the *Look and Learn* offices. Lyn was on a different floor to us so she'd call up the lift shaft for anyone she wanted and it would echo around the corridors. She was a complete character."

"*Look and Learn* was made up of lots of eccentrics," says John Melhuish. "Even Sue Lamb, who became my sister-in-law. When I first met Sue her hair was multi-coloured. She was just out of art school and this was the early seventies, before that kind of thing was done. She looked like some kind of brightly coloured bird."

Chas Betts, the long-serving art assistant was another character. "The art people had one big room at one point. Later Jack Parker had his own office, but up until then Jack had one end of the art room that was screened off. Whenever he was commissioning an artist or whatever, Chas could overhear what Jack was saying and if he overheard a word, he would sing something with that word in it. Jack used to find it quite embarrassing."

"We had some top government minister being shown round *Look and Learn* one evening," adds Doug Church. "Leonard Matthews was the director then and, after lunch, he bought the minister down to *Look and Learn*, obviously to show it off. Jack Parker was sitting at a light box looking at some transparencies for a feature to do with kids going to Russia on a school holiday

and was explaining this to the minister. And there was Chas, leaning over his board opposite, singing 'From Russia With Love'. It was hilarious."

It was not all play. Maggie Meade-King, a *Look and Learn* reader as a child who later became a feature writer on the women's magazine *Nova*, recalls spending most of her time as John Davies' secretary dealing with payments and typing up features and scripts written by the staff. "In stark contrast to today's publications, there was quite a large staff of designers, a picture researcher, writers and editors. At 19, I was the youngest person there so they all seemed very ancient to me."

The team-spirit may have spilled over into fun and games occasionally but it should not be forgotten that the main aim of the office was to put together a weekly magazine and in its twenty years, *Look and Learn* only missed eight weeks, lost through company-wide strikes by N.U.J. journalists in 1978 and 1980. "It was fun," recalls Jack Parker, "but it was hard work as well."

* * * * *

It was under Jack Parker's stewardship that *Look and Learn* underwent a major facelift. With issue 844 (18 March 1978), the cover was completely redesigned; the red banner behind yellow lettering disappeared forever, replaced by an updated red logo on a white background which extended around the border of the cover. The central globe grew in size and the whole effect certainly made the name of the magazine leap out.

Multiple cover lines were used for the first time, letting readers know what to expect from the latest issue. Perhaps more importantly, the paper quality was better and the amount of colour in the magazine doubled from eight pages to sixteen.

The relaunched paper was seeking a target circulation of 185,000 ten to seventeen-year-olds, according to IPC, and the launch issue was given a good send-off with the announcement of a competition to win a trip to Canada.

Competitions had become an important annual event in *Look and Learn*. In September 1974, issue 661 had run a competition to win a trip to Jersey to see Gerald Durrell's famous zoo. In August 1975 (issue 709), *Look and Learn* announced a Heritage Project Competition, tied in to the European Architectural Heritage Year promoted by the Council of Europe to highlight the fact that many fine buildings of architectural interest were falling into disrepair.

Perhaps the biggest event in the magazine's history occurred in late 1977, when HRH Prince Charles, star of the paper's first ever cover, helped judge a new National Handwriting Competition which Andy Vincent had revived from the pages of *The Children's Newspaper*. Held in the year the Queen celebrated her 25th anniversary, the Silver Jubilee Handwriting

Competition winners and runners-up were introduced to Prince Charles on board H.M.S. Belfast.

As Charles strode into the wardroom of the famous World War Two cruiser, then moored near the Tower of London, to meet the thirteen children and their parents, he was greeted by John Sanders and Andy Vincent. "I was the host because, although he was the managing editor, Andy didn't want to host the party and asked me to do it," recalls Sanders. After being introduced by Sanders, the Prince gave a speech in which he mentioned that he was very familiar with *Look and Learn* as he had seen many copies around the Palace since it was a favourite of his younger brother, Andrew.

One by one, the winners and runners-up were presented to the Prince and received their awards. "The winners went with their parents and he knew every one of them when he greeted them," recalls Sue Lamb. "He was very impressive and very easy to talk to. In fact, I got chatting with him for so long that they had to move him along."

Charles singled out a number of the winners' essays for particular comment. "The children were bowled over—and so were the parents," says Lamb. "It was a great location, chosen by the Prince himself. We were all amazed that he agreed to do it."

Photos of the event, not surprisingly, made excellent copy for the magazine when they appeared in issue 837 (28 January 1978).

Eighteen months later, Jack Parker found himself flying out to Kenya as part of a competition tied in with Operation Drake. The project was the idea of Colonel John Blashford-Snell, a Royal Engineer who had been selected to lead the first expedition down the Blue Nile in 1969. Inspired by its success, Blashford-Snell co-founded the Scientific Exploration Society and, with Prince Charles, launched Operation Drake in 1978. The two-year project was designed to develop self-confidence and leadership in young people through their participation in challenging and useful scientific exploration and community work. Over 400 people participated in a round the world voyage on the *Eye of the Wind*, following Sir Francis Drake's epic route, and on land-based projects in 16 different countries.

Four winners from *Look and Learn* and two additional winners who were members of the British Airways Junior Jet club flew from London to Nairobi Airport.

"Andy and I were due to take these six kids off to Kenya for a fortnight with the Operation Drake organisation led by this outward-bound type called Blashford-Snell, who was like a big boy scout. Just before we left, Andy turned around and said 'I'm moving house so I can't go with you.' I thought, 'Oh, Christ. Me and six kids...' You need a bit of support so we tried to get the then art editor Fred Boyce to take over and he was all for it but British Airways wouldn't allow it. They said the ticket was designated to Andy Vincent and they wouldn't exchange it. So that's

how I ended up taking six kids on my own. I should have put my foot down, really, because I was taking two kids who had won through British Airways."

For two days, the competition winners stayed at the British army barracks at Kahawa, just outside Nairobi, and visited the National Park game reserve, a snake park which housed some of the deadliest reptiles in Africa and the National Museum. A variety of expeditions followed, the first to the Aberdare region where young explorers from Operation Drake were rebuilding a walkway at the Ark, a unique game lodge in the Aberdare Game Reserve. Here, large blocks of salt were hung out each night which attracted even the shyest of jungle creatures and allowed them to be seen at close quarters. A TV crew joined the winners at Aberdare to film the prize-winners at work for the new ITV children's show, *Ace*.

"The one big surprise happened in a little village," recalls Parker. "The houses were mostly concrete blocks and the villagers must have had a pretty poor standard of living. There was a little general store which I went into to buy some sweets for the kids and there, on the magazine rack in this tiny African village in the middle of nowhere, was a copy of *Look and Learn*."

* * * * *

A management reshuffle in the summer of 1979 saw the paper become part of the Youth Special Interest department, itself part of the Youth Magazines Group at IPC Magazines under the watchful eye of John Sanders. 'Youth Special Interest' covered all of IPC's educational and activity titles, ranging from *Shoot!*, the famous football paper, to *Puzzle Time*.

Despite the attractive new look of the paper, *Look and Learn* was still struggling. In the latter half of the year, average sales slipped below 80,000 a week for the first time. Not that circulation woes were unique to *Look and Learn*: IPC's latest educational launch had failed after only a year.

World of Knowledge was originally to have been launched in February 1979 but was prevented due to a work to rule by the National Union of Journalists, caused by a dispute that had begun in 1978 over pay. It was rescheduled to appear on September 22 but was postponed a second time following production delays at Liverpool Web Offset, which began when the owners announced their intention to close down the plant. IPC Magazines' attempts to switch the printing to another firm were thwarted when print unions threatened to black the paper.

Unable to change printers, there was nothing to be done but to delay the launch again. *World of Knowledge* finally arrived on the newsstands on 23 January 1980. In charge, as managing editor, was Bob Bartholomew, who, following the demise of *World of Wonder*, had become group editor of IPC's boys' adventure magazines as well as writing for *Look and Learn*. The

magazine was art led, with Phil Gilles (*ex-Treasure* art editor) as editor and Norman Fletcher Jones as art editor.

World of Knowledge was a throwback to the era of *Finding Out*, published almost twenty years earlier, and the *Children's Encyclopedia*. Each issue contained ten sections: 'Our Island's Story' (the story of Britain and the English-speaking world); 'Great Men and Women' (the heroes and heroines whose achievements made them famous); 'The Mysterious Earth' (science and geography); 'Finding Out' (a different subject explained each week); 'This Modern Age' (achievements in technology); 'Other People's Countries' (facts about the world's nations); 'Nature's Kingdom' (natural history); 'The Arts' (books, music, plays and other leisure activities); 'Great Beginnings' (discovery and invention); and 'Our World in the Making' (landmarks in world history). Each "essential stream of learning" (as the editorial described them) was covered by a two, three or four-page "picture-essay" each week.

Like some earlier titles, *World of Knowledge* boasted an editorial board of advisors, including historian Lord Asa Briggs, educational psychologist Nicholas Tucker, physicist Sir Denys Wilkinson and zoologist Professor Garth Chapman.

The contents were heavily illustrated, explaining each subject clearly through the use of diagrams. Biographies were more akin to comic strips, a style refined a decade earlier in *Tell Me Why*. Most of the artists were European and South American, notably Italians Severino Baraldi, Gian Battista Bertelli and Argentinean Jose Luis Salinas. Dan Escott and Mike White were amongst the British artists who also worked for the magazine.

"It was a hellishly expensive magazine to produce," recalls John Melhuish. "It contained lots of classical paintings that we had to get the rights to and we had to pay quite a lot of money to do so. There was a lot of paperwork involved, a lot of correspondence with agents and families and the Picasso Foundation and the people who looked after the rights, French art agents and people like that. It was quite a complicated magazine to work on. More complicated than *Look and Learn*."

Despite a promotional budget of £225,000, *World of Knowledge* never found its audience. With issue 23 (28 June 1980) the price was pushed up from 30p to 40p and, six months later, it was announced that the paper was to merge with *Look and Learn*, the last, fiftieth, issue dated 3 January 1981.

"People were no longer interested in educational magazines. They were a thing of the past," says Bartholomew. "The reason why *The Children's Newspaper* lasted so long was that it was bought by parents. The idea was that a good magazine would be a substitute for the good school that some could not afford. Papers like *Look and Learn*, *World of Wonder* and *World of Knowledge* were a continuation of that same idea but, by the time we got around to *World of*

Knowledge, which was basically an encyclopedia, parents were no longer buying them. They were saving their money and sending their children to better schools."

The merger of *World of Knowledge* with *Look and Learn* took place with issue 983 (10 January 1981) and the paper was given another makeover. The magazine was given a new, bolder, brighter logo which branded the paper *The New Look and Learn with World Of Knowledge*. Behind the scenes, art editor Sue Lamb had departed some years earlier, having decided to go freelance after the birth of her son; she had been replaced by Fred Boyce and his assistant Terry Caleno, who were to remain with the paper until its end. The art department also included production editor Peter Wrobel, layout artists Sue Shand and artist Dave Spencer and the editorial department also included assistant editor Ron Cooper and sub-editors Steve Roxborough and Teresa Magee; Quentin Robinson remained editorial consultant on the paper.

It was this team that put together the milestone 1000th issue (8 May 1981), for which Jack Parker penned a special editorial, 'A Thousand Reasons to Celebrate', briefly looking back over the previous nineteen years and thanking readers who had supported and encouraged the magazine over the years. Appropriately, Prince Charles again starred on the cover and featured in an article on his life, 'Born To Be King'. That issue also launched another National Handwriting Competition with Parker noting that, when *Look and Learn* took over the competition from *The Children's Newspaper* in 1964, it had attracted over 240,000 entries.

Sadly, the 1,000th issue sold only a fifth of that number. Although *Look and Learn* still contained some remarkably well illustrated features on a wide variety of subjects—'Hardy's Drawing Board', illustrated by Wilf Hardy, 'The Golden Cities', illustrated by Roger Payne and Andrew Howat, 'Our Islands' Story', illustrated by Clive Upton, and 'Women and the Vote', illustrated by Ken Petts, to name just a few—sales continued to fall.

To be viable, *Look and Learn* needed to sell over 60,000 copies a week, but had slipped to 45,000 in the spring of 1982.

The steady decline in sales throughout the 1970s was reflected elsewhere in the youth market and not solely the problem of *Look and Learn*. World politics had their part to play, in particular the 1973 oil crisis which caused manufacturing costs to soar. Even an expensive production like *Look and Learn* had managed to survive the 1960s with only two price increases (from 1/- at its launch to 1/3 in 1965 and 1/6 in 1969). In 1974 the price rose to 12p and increased almost annually from thereon: 15p in 1975, 18p in 1976, 20p in 1977, 25p in 1979 (doubling the price in only five years), 30p later that same year, 35p in 1980 and 40p in 1981.

Inflation in the UK peaked in the mid-1970s but unemployment was rising (eventually peaking at over 3 million in 1982). With the country tightening its belts and costs rising, it is only to be expected that a 'parent buy' magazine like *Look and Learn* would suffer.

IPC Magazines had its own problems inside the firm. When radical measures were called for, the management were stifled by the strength of the unions. "The grip the unions had on the company was enormous," says John Sanders. "Nobody would believe it today. I actually spoke to Margaret Thatcher about it when she came to the Press Club. I told her that wonderful magazines like *Look and Learn* were being strangled because of the unions.

"The unions would target the Youth Group. If they wanted to try anything, they would do a dry run on the Youth Group. I was under pressure from the Board of Directors not to rock the boat and to keep everything going because if things went wrong the unions would move on to the women's magazines, which was the company's big cash cow. It was my job to stabilise things but really the whole thing was a complete and utter shambles. The Youth Group had a lot of potential and a magazine like *Look and Learn* could have been prosperous if we'd been allowed to bring on board some new blood. We were fighting to make changes in the face of huge union resistance."

In 1980, the Youth Special Interest department became part of the Specialist, Educational and Leisure (or Seal) group of titles under managing director Edward Shaw and assistant managing directors David Beattie and Francis King.

Francis King was the son of Cecil King, the former chairman of IPC Magazines who had been chairman of Mirror Newspapers when the company had purchased Amalgamated Press twenty years earlier which, indirectly, had led to the founding of *Look and Learn*. It was to Francis King that Jack Parker now had to report. "One of the things under King's umbrella was *New Scientist* and I suggested to him that he should get the people from the *New Scientist* advertising department to add *Look and Learn* to their portfolio when they were going around selling advertising," says Jack Parker. "*Look and Learn* had never carried much advertising but I thought it could be a real money-earner and maybe that would keep the wolf from the door.

"I used to have very good relations with many PR companies because they were always very supportive in giving competition prizes so I'm sure we could have engendered some interest on the advertising side or with sponsorship of a feature: Tetley's World of Adventure or whatever. You see that sort of thing a lot these days and it wouldn't have been the first time it had been done in a children's magazine. Walls Ice Cream had sponsored a page in *Eagle* years before.

"Unfortunately, there was a resistance to doing anything."

King no doubt felt a need to make his own mark on the group he had under his wing, as Leonard Matthews and John Sanders had before him. Instead of protecting what he saw as an old-fashioned and ultimately unsalvageable paper, King decided to read *Look and Learn* its last rites. "This type of parent purchase title no longer has the support, or provides the success, that it did 20 years ago," he told *IPC News* when it was announced that the paper was to fold. "I

think the children themselves play a much bigger role in choosing their own reading material these days, despite very considerable parent approval for the title."

It was left to Jack Parker to make the announcement to his readers, which he did in a special message written for the final issue, dated 17 April 1982.

This is issue No. 1049 of *Look and Learn*. I am sorry to have to tell you that it is also the last issue of the magazine.

Although we sell several thousand copies each week throughout the world, we simply do not sell enough to meet the very heavy cost of producing a magazine of the quality of *Look and Learn* and we are therefore unable to continue publication.

Since *Look and Learn* was first published over 20 years ago, we have made many friends both in Britain and around the world. Many of them have written to say how much they enjoy their weekly issue. From overseas we have received thousands of requests for inclusion in our pen friends column. Many firm friendships have been established through this popular feature. There are many requests which will not now be published and I apologise to those disappointed readers.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of myself and the staff of thanking all those writers and artists who have contributed so brilliantly to the magazine. And, finally, a big thank you to the readers who have obviously gained so much enjoyment and pleasure out of LOOKING AND LEARNING.²²

²² Jack Parker, 'A Special Message', *Look and Learn* #1049, 17 April 1982, p.3.

12: Envoi

Francis King had plans to launch a new title to replace *Look and Learn*. "It will be a very different styled publication aimed at boys and what they want, rather than both boys and girls as in *Look and Learn*."

Look Alive was given a huge send-off by IPC Magazines, backed up by a £250,000 launch campaign. The first issue, dated 18 September 1982, and on sale September 16, was advertised nationally on TV with 30-second spots as well as in IPC's other juvenile, specialist and women's weekly titles. Issues 2 to 4 were also promoted through 10-second spots on Thames TV.

Shortly before the launch, managing director David Beattie claimed, "The magazine is a new concept in juvenile publishing. We think the market is ready for a really modern weekly magazine, not a comic, but a publication that is full of the things boys are keen on: Hi-tech hardware such as video games and personal computers; modern sports like sail boarding, BMX and rallying; the latest machinery—aircraft, cars, weapons, space-craft; plus of course some traditional favourites like music, wild animals and picture stories."

Publicity material made much of the magazine's other promotion which said that *Look Alive* "will be packaged in a way that will catapult boys' juvenilia into the '80s...and beyond, for the first of *Look Alive*'s innovatory free poster mags will be the 16-page all-colour "Shapes of Things to Come"—visions of futuristic hardware by top designer Luigi Colani.

"Poster mags will form a unique part of *Look Alive*'s £1/4 million launch campaign. There will be 16-pagers for the first four weeks followed by eight pagers for the next four. All poster mags will be in full colour and in addition to the main 32-page magazine (16 in full colour), price 40p.

The initial print order of 300,000 not only reflected the size of the campaign but also the kind of circulation the paper hoped to achieve in the wake of another then recent launch. The new *Eagle* comic had been launched in March 1982 with a similar promotional budget and a print

order of 340,000. Thanks to the revival of 'Dan Dare', the 20p *Eagle* had been guaranteed acres of free publicity from newspapers.

Look Alive, at twice the price, could not have been expected to have made anywhere near the same impact. Indeed, the review it received in *The Times* was quite the opposite to the joy that greeted Dan Dare some months earlier. "This magazine, a 40 penny dreadful, is called *Look Alive*," reported Susan Marling. "It is not so much a title as a challenge once you have begun leafing through its "dynamic", "data-filled" pages. It is a glossy, fragmented dolly mixture of scantily written features."

Marling continued her damning appraisal in similar vein, taking an obvious delight at poking fun at the language the magazine was written in:

Between the Ripoff Report (for budding consumers) and Chip Shop page (video games) there is an unspeakably coy piece called Are You Neat on the Street? in which several whey-faced teen boys are invited to comment on their "clobber". Dave of Surrey makes his own trousers and is, apparently, a funkster. He is the kind of chap who would do well in the quiz designed to help a young man discover if he is a "Disco Dinosaur".

If you are unlucky enough to wear a vest, if you don't streak your hair or black your eyebrows, *Look Alive* has some stern advice for you: "Dear oh dear, you certainly are a loser in the fashion stakes. You should get rid of that Wally image and start working on a new you."²³

Unfortunately for IPC, the target audience of 10 to 13-year-olds were similarly unimpressed. The first six issues were to be offered on full sale or return. The new magazine did not even last that long. Issue 5 (dated 16 October 1982) was the last.

"*Look Alive* was supposed to be of the time when it was launched in 1982," says Jack Parker. "They ditched *Look and Learn*, which was selling something like 40,000 copies a week, in order to launch this new paper and it was a tremendous failure. It lasted five weeks and cost several million pounds.

"I did rub my hands a little bit, I have to admit."

The disastrous *Look Alive* was the last of the educational weeklies. Although a number of papers along similar lines—mostly in the style of newspapers for children—have appeared since, this was the last paper from the line that directly descended from *The Children's Newspaper*. A planned magazine, *Quest*, based on the Dutch weekly *Kijk*, was mooted at one point but after a

²³ Susan Marling, 'Quannah, calling all 40p funksters', *The Times*, 18 September 1982.

year of preparation, it was decided that the market was not right and the project was quietly dropped.

Look and Learn continued as an annual until its 1986 edition, published in September 1985, outlasting its long-time companion, *The Look and Learn Book of 1001 Questions and Answers* by a year.

"One of the real tragedies was that when they folded *Look and Learn*, they brought Lyn Marshal out of retirement to come back and throw everything out," recalls John Melhuish. "They threw out the most valuable picture library that, from a reference point of view, probably anybody had. It had film stills going back to God knows when and engravings that were used to illustrate historical situations. It was just a crying shame."

What artwork that still remained from *Look and Learn* was bound in brown paper and put into storage. Former members of staff moved on to other titles or left IPC. Some, like Jack Parker, Fred Boyce and Terry Caleno, found work on newspapers. Others retired from the business altogether or went freelance.

* * * * *

It is now over twenty years since *Look and Learn* folded, yet it remains the benchmark for educational magazines and is still fondly remembered by two generations of readers who in many cases have passed on their treasured copies to children and grandchildren.

As the longest-serving member of staff and the paper's final editor, we should leave the last words to Jack Parker, who said recently, "I had a tremendous time on *Look and Learn*. I've never enjoyed myself as much as that since and I've done quite a few things. But that to me was the thing I enjoyed doing most.

"It was a great paper to work for and wonderful people to work with. In a way it's quite complimentary that Pat Nicolle, Peter Jackson, Ron Embleton, Wilf Hardy, Clive Upton, Gerry Wood and many other people like that were so tied up with the paper. I mean, people like Pat Nicolle used to love working for us and when *Look and Learn* packed up, so did Pat. He packed it in and retired. All the regular artists relied on *Look and Learn* and they were very good.

"I remember going to a presentation of some prizes for some kids who had won some Fisher-Technic toys and we went to the Toy Fair at Olympia and afterwards Fisher-Technic took us out for a nice lunch. So we collected these two kids and we went down to get a taxi and we'd got little name tags on and the taxi driver turned around and said 'I can't help noticing that you have *Look and Learn* on your nametag. Are you involved?' I said 'Yes, I'm the editor.' 'I would like to thank you very much and shake you by the hand,' he said, 'because my son was an absolute no-no; he didn't want to read, he didn't want to do anything when he was younger and we decided

we had to do something and so we took *Look and Learn*. And he was hooked on it and his whole attitude changed: he used to love reading and looking at the pictures and eventually he went to university and got a degree. And I thought, 'Well, in my career if I never do anything more than that, then I've actually achieved something.' And I was always quite pleased about that.

"I can truly say that I enjoyed going to work. You can't ask for more, really."

Appendix 1

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Colin Page
Theo Page
Eric R. Parker
Roger Payne
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Look and Learn was a British weekly educational magazine for children published by Fleetway Publications Ltd from 1962 until 1982. It contained educational text articles that covered a wide variety of topics from volcanoes to the Loch Ness Monster; a long running science fiction comic strip, The Trigan Empire; adaptations of famous works of literature into comic-strip form, such as Lorna Doone; and serialized works of fiction such as The First Men in the Moon.