

Pony Club Team, by Josephine Pullein-Thompson



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Welcome to the much-delayed Fidra newsletter. I'm very sorry that you've had to wait so long for this update on our publishing schedule but, as some of you will know, in October 2007 we opened a specialist children's bookshop in Edinburgh and whilst that is going very well we have been incredibly busy and 'added extras' such as the newsletter have become casualties of that. However, we're now settled in, and have taken on a manager, Gill, to help us run the bookshop and an assistant, Becky, to help on the publishing side so we have the opportunity now to really stretch our wings!

2008 wasn't without its moments of sadness though. In May we lost Elinor Lyon, an author who was with us from the very beginning and who was always such a joy with her warm, dry humour and, as my son Magnus would remind us, tremendous skill as a cake-maker! We will miss Elinor very much.

This year's titles are an interesting selection. We will be beginning during May with *The House in the Hills* by Olivia FitzRoy, where we revisit the Stewart family; *Pony Club Team* by Josephine Pullein Thompson, one of my favourite pony books and an absolute treat and *Easter the Showjumper* by H M Peel; the first title we will be publishing by Hazel whose work many of you enjoy.

Later in the year we shall be publishing *Ghostly Term at Trebizon* and the long-awaited *Unforgettable Fifth at Trebizon*, together with *Lost Lorrenden* by Mabel Esther Allan, *I Wrote a Pony Book* by Joanna Cannan and *Four Plus Bunkle* by M Pardoe. One of the highlights of the year will be the publication of the previously unpublished *Shores of Darkness* by Elinor Lyon. This manuscript was handed to me by Elinor with a typically self-deprecating 'it's probably not up to much but you did ask' and I loved it from the first sentence.

We will also, after a few hiccups and a little nervousness, be launching a list of titles in a more mainstream, inexpensive format this summer beginning with the first three titles in Ruby Ferguson's Jill series: *Jill's Gymkhana*, *A Stable for Jill* and *Jill Has Two Ponies*; then a new edition of *The Winter of Enchantment* by Victoria Walker which has been one of our best-selling titles.

We hope that these books will be widely stocked in bookshops as well as in the specialist bookshops and on-line stores that currently hold our titles. As well as

the rest of the Jill books, we have more titles planned for this more mainstream list such as *The House Called Hadlows*, Caroline Akrill's eventing trilogy and *Unquiet Spirits* by K M Peyton, a ghost story for young adults. It's a new venture and requires a different kind of marketing but the feedback we're getting so far has been very positive.

In other news, we're delighted that in only our second year The Children's Bookshop has been short-listed for the Booksellers Association's Independent Bookshop of the Year award – we really didn't expect that and it's been very exciting. Additionally, this summer, we're branching out and will be opening a gallery in the centre of Edinburgh during July and August where we shall be selling original artwork and limited edition prints by some marvellous illustrators including Shirley Hughes, Simon Bartram, Quentin Blake and Catherine Rayner. All in all, 2009 looks as though it will be an exciting year for Fidra Books, and we will have more time to devote to our core activity of reissuing fantastic children's books which deserve to be available and enjoyed once more.

Thanks again for your custom and I hope you enjoy this year's books.

If you would like to receive our email newsletter, please email us at info@fidrabooks.com. If you are already on the mailing list and haven't received any emails recently, please let us know at becky@fidrabooks.com, or vanessa@fidrabooks.com.

Elinor Lyon

Sadly, in May last year, Elinor Lyon died. Elinor was one of our first authors; she wrote more than 20 children's books, three of which - *The House in Hiding*, *We Daren't Go A'Hunting* and *Run Away Home* – are currently published by Fidra Books.

Elinor was born in 1921 in Guisborough in Yorkshire; she was educated in Edinburgh and Oxford, before spending time in Switzerland and reading English at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. She left university during World War II to join the WRNS, however, because 'with many of my friends in danger, or indeed killed, I couldn't stay there reading Milton'. She met her husband Peter Wright, when he taught at Rugby, where her father was headmaster; they were married in 1945. They had four children. Elinor and Peter remained in Rugby until he retired in 1975, when they moved to a cottage in the countryside near Harlech, Wales. She passed away on 28th May 2008.

Elinor 'always had a nostalgic affection for the Highlands' and spent many holidays there. It's no surprise, therefore, that apart from one book, *The Golden Shore* (1957), her 20 published books are adventures set in Wales, near the home that she and Peter shared, or Scotland. She wrote the first of her Scottish books, *The House in Hiding*, because she disliked the characters in *Swallows and Amazons*, 'who are so good at everything. I thought I'd have children who got things wrong but somehow still survived.' The escapades of Ian, Sovra and Cathie eventually spanned ten books.

'I know the view by heart' comments Sovra in *The House in Hiding*; Elinor Lyon's books are appealing not only because of the children's exciting exploits, but because of her evocative and thrilling landscape descriptions. Ian, Sovra and Cathie's adventures take place in caverns, on mountaintops, in boats and at cliff edges, often in a setting of treacherous weather. Not only this, but they portray a post-war era where the children were allowed far more freedom than exists today: however dangerous the obstacle, the children fearlessly take it on, without any adult interference. Also notably, girls in Elinor's books share equally in adventures.

Over the years Elinor Lyon's characters and settings have enchanted many thousands of child and grown-up readers; she will be greatly missed at Fidra Books. Her papers, illustrations and manuscripts have been donated by her family to Seven Stories in Newcastle, where they will be a wonderful new addition to their archive.

Latest News

Since the last newsletter, Fidra has had some exciting developments. We opened *The Children's Bookshop* in October 2007 and have been thrilled by its success so far. We were named one of *The Bookseller's* top ten bookshops to watch in 2008, and have recently been nominated for a British Book Award for the best independent bookshop in Scotland. We are Edinburgh's only independent children's bookshop and pride ourselves on hand-picking quality books we feel passionately about. If you find yourself in the Bruntsfield area of Edinburgh, please come and visit!

We also have a very exciting venture planned for July and August this year. During the Edinburgh Book Festival, there will be a Fidra Gallery of original works and limited edition prints by our favourite illustrators. We've had an excellent response so far and we hope to feature work from artists such as Sarah Garland, Catherine Rayner, Shirley Hughes and Edward Ardizzone.

On the publishing side, Fidra very pleased to announce that Ruby Ferguson's *Jill* series will be published in Summer 2009. Ferguson was a prolific author who wrote for both children and adults; her most famous book for grown-ups, *Lady Rose and Mrs Memmary*, was listed as one of *The Spectator's* Books of the Year when it was republished by Persephone Books.

Ruby Ferguson is best known for her books about Jill Crewe and her ponies which she wrote for her step-grandchildren. There are nine titles in the series; Fidra will be publishing three this year. The first book, *Jill's Gymkhana*, introduces eleven-year-old Jill and her mother, who move to the country when her father dies. Lonely, Jill makes friends with a neglected pony. She decides to buy Blackie, but there's only one problem: she can't even unsaddle him, let alone ride him! However, she makes friends who show her the ropes, and encourage her to ride in the local gymkhana.

These books are so appealing because of Jill's independence and irrepressible sense of humour; they are long overdue for a reissue!

Other forthcoming books for this year include *The House in the Hills*, by Olivia FitzRoy, in which we revisit characters from *Orders to Poach*, *Easter the Showjumper*, by H.M. Peel, *Shores of Darkness* (previously unpublished), by Elinor Lyon and *Pony Club Team*, by Josephine Pullein-Thompson.

Forthcoming Titles

Jill's Gymkhana, by Ruby Ferguson

Lonely Jill Crewe makes friends with a neglected pony. She decides to buy Blackie, but there's only one problem: she can't even unsaddle him, let alone ride him! And girls such as Susan Pyke are very scathing that she doesn't have the right riding clothes. But her friends show her the ropes, and encourage her to ride in the local gymkhana, where she has a few surprises for the unpleasant Susan Pyke...



A Stable for Jill by Ruby Ferguson

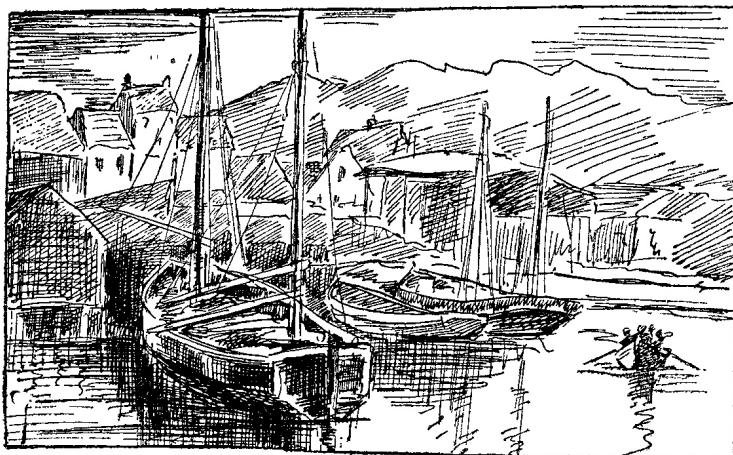
Jill is forced to spend her summer holidays with Aunt Primrose and her drippy cousin Cecilia. Luckily she meets fellow horse lovers, Pat, Mike and Bar Walters who have their own pony. They're miserable though, because she costs too much to keep. Jill's got the perfect plan: horses for hire! But the Walters' father is away, and when he returns he's not too happy to see the Vicarage land turned into a riding school. Now what will happen to the horses?

Jill has Two Ponies by Ruby Ferguson

Jill has a new pony, Rapide, who was mistreated by his previous owners. As a consequence, he's unfriendly and uncooperative, so the owner of the local stables, Mrs Darcy, suggests that Jill sell him. But she's determined to connect with Rapide and jump him. When Mrs Darcy has to go away for a few weeks, Jill and the others at the school step into the breach, dealing with spoilt children, pushy parents and nervous new riders with remarkable aplomb. She's also worried about how she and Rapide will fare at the notoriously difficult Hunter Trials...

The House in the Hills by Olivia FitzRoy

Fiona, Ninian and Hugh from *Orders to Poach* find a dilapidated old croft in the wild hills of West Scotland; they paint and repair it to make a wonderful home for themselves. Of course it is the perfect place for adventures too: they stalk deer, they sail in the 'Black Swan', and with the help of the mysterious Fergus, search for a legendary cave.



Shores of Darkness by Elinor Lyon

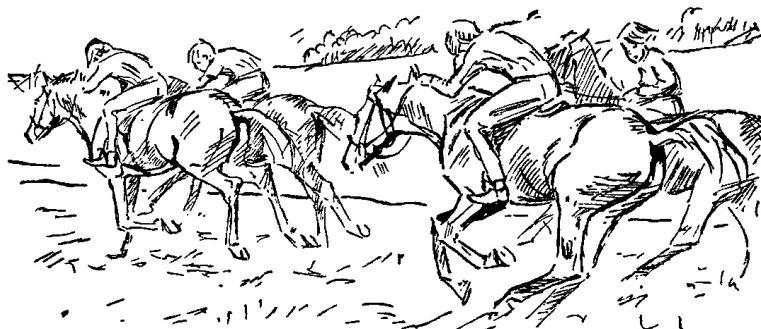
Ellen Salter is worried she'll be lonely on holiday in Wales with her family, but she quickly makes friends with Jenny Ash and the Meredith family who live in the Glaslyn Valley. When Mr Meredith tells them about the Glaslyn caves, which are joined to the valley by an underground tunnel, the children are intrigued; little do they guess that two of them will soon be engaged on a dangerous rescue underneath the valley floor.

Easter the Showjumper by H.M.Peel

Ann Henderson and her husband Jim believe their beautiful mare, Easter, has show jumping potential which would establish them as breeders and trainers of champions. But trouble follows when they find that their newly-acquired Shetland pony can open gates. Easter has a colt which is stolen and Ann and Jim embark on a nerve-wracking pursuit...

Pony Club Team by Josephine Pullein-Thompson

In *Pony Club Team*, we revisit many of the people and ponies whom we first met in *Six Ponies*. They are all a little older now, and some of them have new mounts. There are also some new characters who are just as keen on riding. The team have adventures, pleasant and unpleasant during the two weeks they spend with Major Holbrooke schooling their ponies for a dressage competition, but meet all that comes with infectious good humour.



Recent Titles

Bunkle Scents a Clue by M Pardoe

In *Bunkle Scents a Clue*, Bunkle and his family go to Somerset, where they make friends with the pony-mad Sally. When Sally is thrown off her horse by a speeding Jaguar, they encounter a mysterious scientist who seems to have a secret. Colonel de Salis tells the children to keep out of it, but Bunkle and his cousins have other ideas!

Alison's Christmas Adventure by Sheila Stuart

Alison and her brother Niall are back at Clarig for the Christmas holidays. It's not long before they stumble across another mystery: Alison catches the end of a puzzling phone conversation and the cottage is burgled. Does it have something to do with the enigmatic Professor? And why do both Alison and her uncle have a feeling that they have seen him before?



Far-Distant Oxus by Pamela Whitlock and Katharine Hull

Pamela Whitlock and Katharine Hull met whilst taking shelter from a storm when they were 14 and 15 respectively. They discovered shared interests in ponies and adventure, and proceeded to plan a book. In *The Far-Distant Oxus*, a party of children stay in a farmhouse on Exmoor, and have all sorts of adventures, mostly on horseback but also on a raft. They sent *The Far-Distant Oxus* to Arthur Ransome who read it 'with a great deal of amusement and profound respect'; this edition has reprinted the preface by him.

Dragon Castle, by Elinor Lyon

Martin in spending his holidays in Wales with his cousins; whilst out exploring he follows the peculiar-looking Burnet children to a ruined castle. But why do they want to keep the castle a secret? And why are they so interested in the dragon sword in his cousin's house?

The School on Cloud Ridge by Mabel Esther Allan

Following the success of *The School on North Barrule and Chiltern Adventure*, Fidra is delighted to publish *The School on Cloud Ridge*. When Pussy and Collie Alleyne go to a boarding school in the Cotswolds, Pussy is thrilled when she is elected to the first School Council, but she soon realizes that it is going to be a difficult position. But she makes friends with the Kavanaghs from Ireland, with Myra Drury from Lancashire, and with a boy called Hugo, who is instrumental in starting them off on a very original treasure hunt...

Alison and the Witch's Cave by Sheila Stuart

Sheila Stuart is best known for her series of books about Alison and her brother Niall, based in Clraig, in north-west of Scotland. *Alison and the Witch's Cave* concerns a loch with an ancient legend about a witch. One day Alison and her friends go to the loch for a picnic and to explore the witch's cave but while there they see a man acting in a very suspicious manner. Alison and her brother Niall decide to find out what is going on, especially as their uncle is also behaving rather oddly. As they uncover the truth, they discover that there is an unexpected connection between the mystery and the witch's cave.



Fifth Year Friendships at Trebizon by Anne Digby

Should Rebecca Mason she go for a career in tennis or stay on at Trebizon school and move into the Sixth Form with her friends? An agent has seen her play tennis on TV in the documentary that was made about Trebizon school and thinks she is the could go far in tennis. Rebecca isn't sure. And what about her boyfriend Robbie? Things aren't going so well there. Does Robbie only like Rebecca because of her tennis?



Other Available Titles

All of these can be ordered using the order form towards the end of the newsletter or via our website at www.fidrabooks.com.

The School on North Barrule by Mabel Esther Allan

Voirrey and Andreas Qulliam react very differently when told that they are going to a co-educational boarding school on the Isle of Man. Voirrey is thrilled that she will be living in her father's native island; Andreas hates the idea of boarding with girls, and is in no way mollified when he discovers that Barrule House does not play cricket or 'footer'. Mabel Esther Allan's descriptions of Barrule House were heavily influenced by AS Neill's Summerhill School; as such, this book is very different from the traditional school story setting.



Chiltern Adventure by Mabel Esther Allan

The children of the England family were upset when learning that their summer holiday was to be spent in the heart of the country. Francesca, the youngest and completely crazy on ballet, is quite irreconcilable. Almost at once the three elder children come under the spell of the lovely Chiltern country, but Francesca remains a problem.

We Met Our Cousins by Joanna Cannan

John and Antonia are sent to spend the holidays with their cousins who live with in the Scottish Highlands. Despite a prickly start, the cousins get on well, with the Scottish children learning to tolerate their cousins' namby-pamby ways and John and Antonia toughening up a good deal. The four cousins also manage to solve the mystery of Mrs Creach's stolen jewels and to discover the truth of the MacTavish and MacAlister feud.

London Pride by Joanna Cannan



In the sequel to *We Met Our Cousins*, the cousins come to London for Christmas. The adventure starts when they get up at dawn to fight a duel in the Square gardens and catch the burglar who is stealing State papers from Lord Peveril's house. Then they spend all their Christmas money on buying a pony out of an old rag-and-bone-man's cart, and christen her London Pride. But can they keep her hidden in the summer house in the Square without anyone knowing?

Silver Snaffles by Primrose Cumming

Silver Snaffles is the magical story of Jenny, who longs to learn to ride and has her chance when she follows the instructions of Tattles, the pony that she visits every day. After uttering the password, Jenny finds herself in a parallel world where ponies can speak. She meets ponies Cock Robin, Shannon and Jasper who teach her to ride and to look after them before she goes through the mist with another boy, Peter, to rescue Pippin, a lost Snaffles pony.

Secret Letters at Trebizon by Anne Digby

Rebecca Mason is in the 5th year at Trebizon School and working hard for her GCSEs. However, someone takes some of her revision notes and then it seems that her locker has been ransacked and her letters from her boyfriend and her French penfriend have been read – who would do such a thing?

Steer by the Stars by Olivia FitzRoy

In the sequel to *Orders to Poach*, the Stewarts have returned to the west coast of Scotland for another summer holiday, and this time they have a boat of their own, the *Fauna*. Naturally this adds to their fun enormously, and they have a wonderful time sailing, camping and fishing together besides having some very exciting and unexpected adventures...

The House in Hiding by Elinor Lyon

Ian and Sovra make plans to cross the loch near their home on the west coast of Scotland and explore Castle Island, where they discover the abandoned village of Kindrachill. There is a legend that when the village is left empty, the heir of Kindrachill will only return when a fire is kindled in the hearth of his own house. But the last heir, Alistair, was reported killed in the Far East some years before...

We Daren't Go A'Hunting by Elinor Lyon

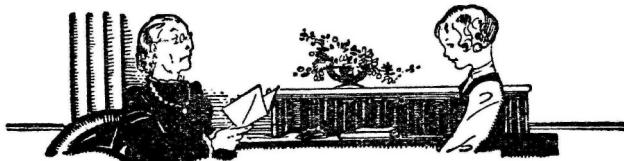
On the shores of Loch Fionn, a chance remark overheard one winter afternoon arouses Ian and Sovra's suspicions and sets them on the track of a gang of sinister deer-poachers. With their friend Alastair Gunn, now living at Kindrachill, they plan to outwit the gang and soon find themselves in a pursuit packed with adventure.

Run Away Home by Elinor Lyon

In this, the third Ian and Sovra story, the pair discover that life in Edinburgh can be as thrilling as life in their own Western Highlands. For there they meet Cathie, who's escaped from an orphanage. They smuggle her out to a secret hut on the coast, where she's only too delighted to enjoy the free outdoor life of her new friends, while Ian and Sovra do a spot of detection for her...

The Far Island by M Pardoe

Dick and Jane Fraser, newly orphaned, are sent by their great-grandmother to live on an island in Orkney. Used to spending their holidays in luxurious foreign resorts, the isolation of Mora is a shock for the children but soon they learn how to entertain themselves, culminating in the discovery of the secret of the island. Dick and Jean later reappear in the Bunkle series of books for which the author is best known.



Bunkle Began It by M Pardoe

Bunkle (so named by his older siblings because he talks a lot of bunk), Robin and Jill help their father, who is in the British Secret Service, to round up a German spy in Devonshire. Bunkle is also suspicious of the sinister Mrs Wetherby when he sees some very curious things through a crack in the floor of his attic bedroom...

Bunkle's Brainwave by M Pardoe

Bunkle is looking forward to a rather dull summer holidays at home, because his sister Jill is now married and his brother Robin is on military service abroad. Instead, however, a chance encounter with a Scottish cousin leads to surprising developments, and once more Bunkle gets involved in an amusing and exciting adventure in which he and three young Scottish cousins play a major part.



Fly-By-Night by KM Peyton

Fly-by-Night was not the best choice for an eleven-year-old girl who had never ridden before; but as soon as Ruth Hollis saw the sturdy, lively pony, she knew that he was the one she wanted. But having taken possession of Fly-by-Night, Ruth found that her troubles had only just begun.

The Team by KM Peyton

Ruth Hollis, heroine of *Fly-by-Night*, finds that she has grown too large for her beloved 'Fly' and must seek a replacement if she is to continue with her chosen sport. Her new acquisition is really 'a boy's pony' and, in the eyes of those who know, no more suitable for Ruth than was Fly-by-Night. The Area Trials are also fast approaching...

Six Ponies by Josephine Pullein-Thompson

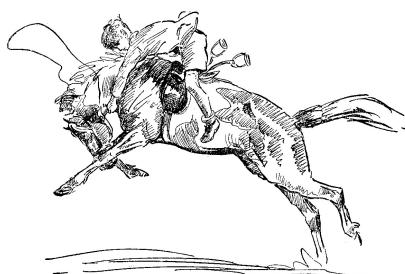
Six New Forest ponies are given to six children for a year. During that time they have to break them in, and at the end of it there is a competition to see who has done best. But who will win? June Cresswell whose mantelpiece is stacked with silver cups; John, whose mother comes gallantly forward; the Radcliffes who shout and quarrel; Susan from the ugly red house on the hill; or scruffy, self-conscious Noel?

The Winter of Enchantment by Victoria Walker

This was a childhood favourite for many fantasy book lovers, including writers Neil Gaiman and Garth Nix. It tells the story of Sebastian who travels back from his Victorian world to a magical world of Melissa and her cat, Mantari, who have been trapped by a wicked Enchanter. Sebastian vows to rescue her, even if this means doing battle with the Enchanter himself.

The House Called Hadlows by Victoria Walker

Sebastian and Melissa receive a warm welcome from their aunt and uncle at the house called Hadlows, but it seems that other elements in the house are not so glad to see them: the neglected park, the house's 'thousand windows' looking down and the great hall, empty but for the pale-faced portraits covering the walls. The children embark on a quest to release the house from the Evil One.



Ordering

Titles which have already been published can be ordered using the form over the page, with payment, sent to:

Fidra Books, 219 Bruntsfield Place, Edinburgh, EH10 4DH, UK

The *House in the Hills*, *Easter the Show Jumper*, *Shores of Darkness* and the *Jill* series can be pre-ordered.

You can also through our website, www.fidrabooks.com. Click on the Publishing tab: you will then see an Online Shop link on the left. The website will be updated regularly as new titles are released.

Our prices are as follows:

UK customers: £12 per book.

European customers: £13.50 per book.

Rest of World customers: £15 per book.

All prices include postage and packing. UK books will be sent second class, overseas orders will be sent Airmail. We are currently running an offer whereby customers ordering three books will receive a £5 discount.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us on 0131 4471917, or through the Contact Us section on our website.



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