

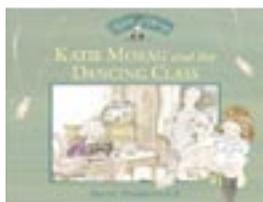
A Sense of Place

Many stories have emerged from real-life places, often providing rich and dramatic backcloths. Sharing these as a family can be a wonderful experience. The *Carousel* editors would like to recommend some favourites with a real 'sense of place' which would make ideal visits if you are staying at home this year.

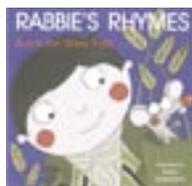


SCOTLAND

Katie Morag was a child of the Sixties, created when Mairi Hedderwick was living on the island of Coll, off the north-west coast of Scotland (she's still there!). Now twenty-six years and seventeen much-loved stories later – "the Struay of the books still has Village Bay, but that's as close as it gets." says Mairi. "Katie Morag and Grannie Island would find the concept most disturbing. You will still find a house here, a beach there and, most definitely the row of whitewashed cottages by the old jetty of ferryboat days. Now the 'ferry' translates into floating cafeteria and car park." The latest title is *Katie Morag and the Dancing Class* – try ballet wearing wellies! Go to www.visitcoll.co.uk for a look at this magical place.



If the new guidelines for GCSEs in England are implemented, Scottish writers will not be required reading. So read Burns now to young children and see how they respond to his language – whatever the nationality! The enterprising publisher Itchy Coo specialises in Scots language titles and has a delightful board, lift-the-flap title, *Rabbie's Rhymes: Burns for Wee Folk*. Find the 'wee, sleeikit, cowrin, tim'rous beastie' (mouse) or 'ca the yowes' (sheep). Children will love the sounds – don't worry about the meaning! And you can visit the excellent website of Burns National Heritage Park or visit the Park itself – a great family day out. www.burnsheritagepark.com



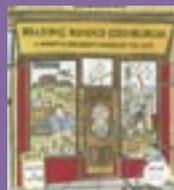
One of our finest historical novelists, with much work shamefully out of print, Mollie Hunter's *Escape from Loch Leven* tells the extraordinary story of Mary, Queen of Scots' daring escape with young Willie Douglas from imprisonment on the island in the middle of the Loch. No-one has captured Scottish history as evocatively, and although the Queen's escape is well-documented, this title brings fresh life to an amazing story. Take the boat trip yourself, too, as the ferry runs from the shore to the Castle. Check this website for times and prices, www.historic-scotland.gov.uk



And with Edinburgh bursting with writers from Joan Lingard to Keith Gray, *Reading Round Edinburgh* is an invaluable guide to exploring the city, or simply for dipping into. Discover where Nicola Morgan did gruesome research for her book *Fleshmarket*, in the Royal College of Surgeons' Museum (strong stomachs needed!) Or walk down the High Street, background to many books by writers including John Fardell's *The Flight of the Silver Turtle*.

Katie Morag and the Dancing Class by Mairi Hedderwick
Random House £6.99 ISBN: 978-1862302211

Rabbie's Rhymes: Burns for Wee Folk
Illustrated by Karen Sutherland
Itchy Koo £6.99 ISBN: 978-0440864653



Escape from Loch Leven by Mollie Hunter
Floris Books £4.99 ISBN: 978-086315140

Reading Round Edinburgh
Edited by Lindsey Fraser & Kathryn Ross
Floris Books £5.99
ISBN: 978-0863155932

The Flight of the Silver Turtle
by John Fardell
Faber £5.99
ISBN: 978-0571226917

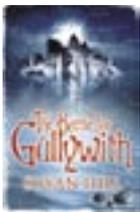
Fleshmarket by Nicola Morgan
Hodder £5.99
ISBN: 978-0340855577





NORTH WEST ENGLAND

The Tale of Peter Rabbit was written in 1902 and is as popular with children today as it has ever been. It was written as a letter for the son of her former governess. From his reaction to the story of the rabbit that ignores his mother's advice and goes into Mr MacGregor's garden to steal lettuces, Beatrix Potter was convinced the story would be popular with all children. With the money she received from publication she bought land – Hill Top Farm at Sawrey in the Lake District. It was to provide her with more books, including *The Tale of Tom Kitten* and *The Tale of Jemima Puddleduck*. Today the house is a museum where visitors can see the rooms as they would have been when Beatrix lived there. There are many different presentations of these stories – board, hard and paper backs, pop-ups – but this boxed miniature collection of twelve titles is a family favourite.



Leaving London to live in the north west, at Gullywith Farm, filled Oliver with a terrible apprehension – as if a bit of him had been cut out. He senses another world in the unnatural chill of the old house and from the small, strangely marked stones that keep appearing. A new friend, KK, along with her dog, Jinx, help him to make contact with a mysterious local man. Together they become involved in an exciting, magical adventure inside the surrounding hills and discover ice-caves, a great Castle rising from the Mere, and the Stone Army, determined to win back Olly's new home. A great story, *The Battle for Gullywith* written by Susan Hill, will tempt your family to pull on their walking boots to tramp over the hills of the Lake District – but without supernatural intervention! Let your imagination take over – inspired by Gullywith and Withern Mere.

Joseph Delaney, author of *The Wardstone Chronicles*, affectionately known as *The Spook Books*, lives in Lancashire in the middle of boggart territory. The stories are based here and although the place names might, at first, appear unfamiliar it is not difficult to work out where they could be. Chipenden, where the Spook has a house is based on Chipping where Lancashire cheese is made and Preston becomes Priesttown. In Delaney's first book, *The Spook's Apprentice*, we are introduced to the Spook who has been keeping the County free from evil for many years. Now he is reaching the twilight of his life he needs to find an apprentice who can be trained to replace him. Unfortunately, many of the apprentices he has begun training have tried hard but have been unsuccessful. Eventually he discovers Tom Ward, the seventh son, of a seventh son. Will he succeed where the others have failed? There are witches, evil spirits, ghosts and boggarts with which to do battle and each of the six books, so far published, is exciting, fast-moving and accessible, leaving the reader desperate for more – www.spooksbooks.com.

The Miniature World of Peter Rabbit
Written and illustrated by Beatrix Potter
Frederick Warne £16.99 ISBN: 978-0723257851

The Battle for Gullywith Written by Susan Hill
Bloomsbury £6.99 ISBN 978-0747594772

The Spook's Apprentice Written by Joseph Delaney
Red Fox £5.99 ISBN: 978-0099456452



NORTH EAST ENGLAND

Hadrian's Wall is a symbol of Roman occupation, the barrier between the warring peoples of Scotland and England. No-one recreates their story better than Rosemary Sutcliff whose *The Eagle of the Ninth* is a dramatic description of the Ninth Legion when they vanished into the mists surrounding the Wall. Marcus, a young Centurion, lost his father in the mysterious disappearances. Sutcliff gives an astonishing description of the hardships endured by the Romans on this bleak outpost. If you want to see for yourself, visit Vindolanda, a mixture of museum, original excavations and modern interpretations for an astonishing look at life on the Wall. Information on: www.vindolanda.com

Make your way down the coast and find Whitby, home to the haunted Abbey, Dracula and the Crows' Nest Hotel, the setting for Robert Swindell's scary *Room 13*. Will Fliss's nightmare come true? She'd dreamt of a staircase that led to doors 10, 11, 12 – and 13! When this last door opened ... read and find out. A great thriller for young readers.



En route south to Newcastle, you follow young Harry Bagguley's journey in reverse, with Robert Westall's great story, *The Kingdom by the Sea*. Bombed out from home in Tynemouth, young Harry takes his precious attaché case and leaves, thinking his parents killed in the air raid. He journeys from Tynemouth along the coast to Lindisfarne and beyond, meeting some strange and sometimes sinister characters along the way.

But he does have Don, the dog who adopted him and the two continue their journey along the coast with unexpected results. A true classic, the route of which can still be retraced today.

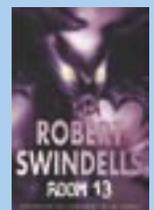
Finally, visit wonderful *Seven Stories, the Centre for Children's Books* – www.sevenstories.org.uk – in Newcastle upon Tyne. A treasure house for children's book lovers with exhibitions, original artwork and manuscripts, activities for the youngest to adults and all situated in a building part new-built and partly the remains of an old print mill. Exactly like the one in David Almond's *Heaven Eyes*. On visiting the building before parts of the mill was demolished, David said the hairs on the back of his neck stood up as here was the mill in which the strange girl Heaven Eyes lived with her Grampa! The mill had been unknown to him when he wrote his story of another journey, that of two children from a local Home attempting to sail down the Tyne. Mystery, excitement and beauty – all woven into a magical story.

The Eagle of the Ninth Written by Rosemary Sutcliff
OUP £6.99 ISBN: 978-0192753922

Room 13 Written by Robert Swindells
Corgi £4.99 ISBN: 978-0440864653

The Kingdom by the Sea Written by Robert Westall
Harper Collins £5.99 ISBN: 978-0007301418

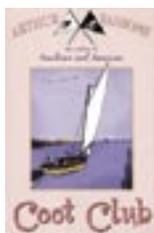
Heaven Eyes Written by David Almond
Hodder £5.99 ISBN: 978-0340944974





EAST ANGLIA

There's no better companion to a Norfolk Broads holiday than Arthur Ransome's *Coot Club*. At once a gripping, down-to-earth tale of children roaming and fending for themselves and a guide to the flora and fauna, customs and rituals of that accumulation of waterways. Following the children's navigation of, first, the northern and then the southern waters, the reader should gain enough knowledge to distinguish a reed pheasant from a bittern, a spoonbill from a greenshank and identify parrels, gaffs, quants and rond anchors – to say nothing of Hullabalooos. Ranworth Broad is a particular pleasure with the floating Broads Wildlife Centre and extraordinary views from the top of the church tower. There are sometimes too many Hullabalooos on the water but watch out for the Vintage Wooden Boat Association events.



Lowestoft was in the front line during World War 2. Bombing raids, fires and trips to the air-raid shelter became almost daily events for the young Michael Foreman growing up in nearby Pakefield. Life during wartime is vividly depicted in this kaleidoscope of childhood memories – *War Boy: a wartime childhood* – from conversations in his mother's shop to playing in bombed-out ruins and the excitement of the arrival of the American soldiers. Orford Ness (twenty odd miles down the coast) was a secret military test site from 1913 until the mid-1980s but is now a fine nature reserve run by the National Trust. Accessible by ferry and with tractor-drawn tours it illustrates clearly the triumph of nature over man.

North Norfolk is special and is the setting of many novels and the subject of many paintings – a goodly range can be seen in Norwich Castle Museum. *Storm*, which won for Kevin Crossley-Holland the Carnegie Medal, is set in the village of Waterslain on that coast. It is a wonderfully atmospheric and gripping ghost story – good to read aloud for any age and perfect for those just gaining confidence in their reading ability. Visit the marshes, see the flint churches, take the ferry to Blakeney Point, travel on the steam train, eat fresh crabs and walk the long stretch out to the sea at Holkham. Perfect.

The Manor House, Hemingford Grey, was recreated and made famous as the house of Green Knowe in the series of books by Lucy Boston. Her son Peter depicted many of the items in the house and garden in his illustrations for the books and these can still be seen. A magical moated house surrounded by four acres of garden. The attic even contains the toys used by the children in the books. A real stepping back in time. The house is open throughout the year but you need to book – ring Diana Boston on 01480 463134.

Coot Club by Arthur Ransome Red Fox £7.99 ISBN: 978-0099427186
War Boy by Michael Foreman Pavilion £9.99 ISBN: 978-1843650878
Storm by Kevin Crossley-Holland Egmont £3.99 ISBN: 978-0749746988
The Children of Green Knowe (and others in the series) by Lucy M Boston Faber £5.99 ISBN: 978-0152024680



THE MIDLANDS

Most young readers will instantly welcome a book by Allan Ahlberg – a child of the Black Country. And his book, *The Boyhood of Burglar Bill*, oozes with the poignant, industrial, atmosphere of the 50s in this area of the country. Part story, part autobiography it explores his childhood – mainly during the last year in primary school. The local authority has organised a football tournament to mark the Coronation – but the boys from the bottom pitch are excluded. Both comic and serious, they pool all their resources and field a successful team against all the odds. If you would like to share a taste of those days when 'everything was urgent – outlined in fire at times,' spend a day soaking up the past at the Black Country Museum and glimpse this vanished world.
www.bclm.co.uk



A Traveller in Time by Alison Uttley is a good companion book for anyone visiting old houses in the Peak District. Penelope is staying with her aunt in just such a house and when she opens doors, they sometimes lead her into the past. The book is packed with effortless historical detail but at its heart is Anthony Babington and his doomed attempt to rescue Mary, Queen of Scots. The story is made deeply moving by Penelope's knowledge of what will inevitably happen.

A Warwickshire story reflects the calmer countryside of the more southern Midlands where the interest is not in rugged hills but in detail of woods and streams. There is a kind of reader who is entranced by books about British flora and fauna but there are fewer books like this than there used to be. *The Little Grey Men* by BB is for such readers. Using as characters "the last gnomes in England", BB recreates the intimate countryside he had known from boyhood. Enjoy it while it is still there.



The village of Eyam in Derbyshire is well worth a visit because of its special, and inspiring, association with the Plague outbreak of 1665-66. Berlie Doherty has written a story, *Children of Winter*, which puts three children into the situation that many suffered then; the need to be isolated in order to escape the deadly infection. It is a time slip story and three modern children, about to visit their Grandmother, pass a barn which invokes in Catherine echoes of events which took place there in the seventeenth century. At once a survival adventure and an historical novel, as the children shelter in the barn, we see them become the children who survived the winter of the plague year.

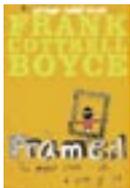
A Traveller in Time by Alison Uttley Jane Nissen £6.99 ISBN: 978-1903252277
The Little Grey Men by BB Oxford Modern Classics £6.99 ISBN: 978-0192719461
Children of Winter by Berlie Doherty Catnip £5.99 ISBN: 978-1846470264
The Boyhood of Burglar Bill by Allan Ahlberg Puffin £4.99 ISBN: 978-0141321424





WALES

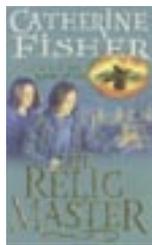
For all the family, *A Child's Christmas in Wales* by Dylan Thomas is too good to save just for Christmas. The reader is immediately plunged into the music of language and the comedy of family relationships. Snowballing and carol singing we expect but there are also firemen and hippo footsteps. There's the masterly distinction between Useful Presents – 'balaclavas for victims of head-shrinking tribes' and the Useless Presents – 'a celluloid duck that made, when you pressed it, a most unducklike sound, a mewing moo that an ambitious cat might make who wished to be a cow.' This suits a surprisingly wide age range, even the very small being caught in the rhythms. Try to get the edition illustrated by Edward Ardizzone. It's a family heirloom.



Framed by Frank Cottrell Boyce is a contemporary view of a Welsh family. As floods threaten London, pictures from the National Gallery are going to be hidden in the heart of a Welsh mountain to keep them safe. At the foot of the mountain is a little village without a lot going for it. People are leaving and the Hughes family need to make some money

before their garage fails. The children have a brilliant idea. They will kidnap the priceless paintings. Both serious and funny, we have a lot of family comedy and comic crime adventures but, gradually, the pictures are changing people. A wonderfully lively story set in the Wales of small communities and high mountains. Look out for it later this year when it will appear as a BBC family drama.

Some of Catherine Fisher's fantasies are set more specifically in a particular region of Wales but all are informed by a Welsh past. It is therefore in the reference to Celtic myths and legends, in the names and in the passages describing details of the countryside. *The Relic Master* is the first volume in the sequence called *The Book of the Crow*. We meet the failing Galen, keeper of the ancient relics and his apprentice Raffi on a dangerous journey to the City of the Crows where The Makers live. Who is the girl, Carys? Will they survive the attentions of The Watch? The story is continued in *The Interior* and *Flain's Coronet* – and there is more to come.



The Owl Service by Alan Garner won both the Carnegie and the Guardian Award in 1968 and still has an unsettling power. At its heart is an ancient legend which works out its tragedy, generation after generation. Three young people are staying in an old house in a Welsh valley. Alison hears a scratching in the attic above her room but finds only an old dinner service there. The decorative border could either be

interpreted as fiercely styled owls or more gently abstract flowers. Alison is changed by the discovery and the owl motif becomes more threatening. The local boy, Gwyn, learns the story of an ancient love triangle and the frightening consequences seem to echo still. It seems that Alison, Gwyn and Roger are likely to repeat the old tragedy. The tensions come from a clash of class, outsider versus insiders and the heightened feelings of adolescence. Behind all this lies the power of the past, charging inexplicable events.

There's something about Plynlimon Mountain that draws both Welsh and English writers towards it. For the last ten years Pauline Fisk has been inspired to write three books, *Sabrina Fludde*, *The Red Judge* and finally, *Mad Dog Moonlight*. Each stands alone, but all are mystery novels about trauma and hidden pasts, and each is deeply rooted in the myths and legends linked to life-giving rivers – Severn, Wye and Reidol – whose sources can be explored, within a mile of each other, amidst wonderful mountain scenery. Out of this mysterious landscape comes *Mad Dog Moonlight*, the boy with an inexplicable name and the unfathomable past, carrying a baby in one arm and a walking stick with a silver top on the other. The imagery and symbolism of the mythical mountain and the silver river that connects it to the stars above linger in the mind, as does the story of the boy, at first withdrawn and reclusive, but who eventually learns something about his own destiny and his place in this complex world. Hilltop walking and reading – what could be better!



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A Child's Christmas in Wales by Dylan Thomas
Orion £4.99 ISBN: 978-0460027724

Framed by Frank Cottrell Boyce
Macmillan £5.99 ISBN: 978-0330452922

The Relic Master by Catherine Fisher
Red Fox £3.99 ISBN: 978-0099263937

The Owl Service by Alan Garner
HarperCollins £5.99 ISBN: 978-0007127894

Sabrina Fludde by Pauline Fisk £6.99
Bloomsbury ISBN: 978-0747576556

Red Judge by Pauline Fisk £6.99
Bloomsbury ISBN: 978-0747571605

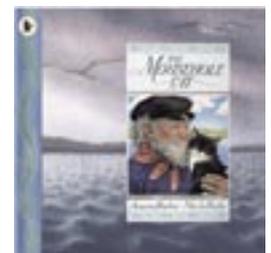
Children of Plynlimon: Mad Dog Moonlight
by Pauline Fisk £6.99 Bloomsbury ISBN: 978-0747594079



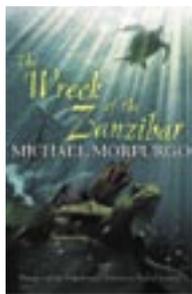
SOUTH OF ENGLAND

Landlocked in the Midlands for most of the year, our instinctive thoughts about the South are 'the sea and the seaside'.

What better evocation than *The Mousehole Cat*, written by Antonia Barber and illustrated by Nicola Bayley, to capture the salty essence of an old fashioned Cornish community. The pictures glow like jewels – cottages, fishmongers, cobbled streets and lobster pots – all picked out in minute detail. The sea squeezes between the narrow headlands and life is tranquil enough until the day of the storm. Then, trapped in their tiny village by huge waves, everyone fears starvation. Accompanied by his faithful pet Mowzer, Old Tom bravely sets out alone on the fierce sea in a quest to find food. It is Mowzer who calms the legendary Great Storm Cat and eventually they return with fish

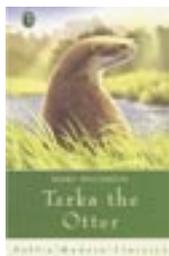
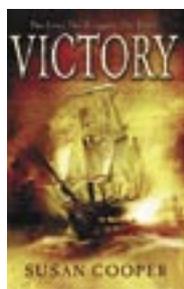


to feed everyone. Share the story and enjoy a family visit to the village with 'look-alikes' round every corner. Don't leave without sampling the bounty of the seas!



Michael Morpurgo's *The Wreck of the Zanzibar* has the sound of the sea in it. Laura's story of survival, set in the Scilly Isles at the beginning of the twentieth century, is told through a long-lost diary. It is a piece of history as well as a glorious work of fiction. You could have a holiday there and take a boat to Bryher to explore the beaches where Laura found a dying turtle, or wander along the footpaths around Samson Hill and discover Rushy Bay near Birdman's Cottage. The hardships and the joys of living by the sea in the past are powerfully expressed in the story and made all the more poignant by being linked to a story teller in the present day.

A similar timeslip ploy has been used by Susan Cooper in *Victory*. This celebrates the bicentenary of Horatio Nelson and the famous Battle of Trafalgar and invites both boys and girls to board ship and become powder monkeys. Desperately homesick in America, modern, English city-girl Molly is enabled to experience the horrors of Sam Robbin's life in 1805 after a chance purchase of a second-hand copy of Southey's *Life of Nelson*. This had a secret hidden inside which served as a means of bringing the two strands of the story together. A lovely family read, enhanced by a visit to Portsmouth historic dockyards to soak up our maritime heritage – easily arranged after browsing www.hms-victory.com.



For families who enjoy sharing stories about the countryside *Tarka the Otter* paints an unforgettable picture of the birds and beasts around Dartmoor and Exmoor. This modern classic by Henry Williamson, who was passionate about life in the wild, is a true story that captures the atmosphere and detail as seen through the eyes of the central character. And it's still there – the Devon landscape has changed little since Tarka had his adventures. If your family are keen cyclists, they can follow a thirty mile north section – easily broken up into more manageable rides – from the coast and inland, past old oaks and bridges, all with a sweeping view of the Taw estuary. From Bideford, following the River Torridge to Torrington, the trail takes the route of a disused railway line and is particularly suited for both cyclists and walkers.

The Mousehole Cat by Antonia Barber/Nicola Bayley
Walker Books £4.99 ISBN: 978-0744523532

The Wreck of the Zanzibar by Michael Morpurgo
Egmont £4.99 ISBN: 978-1405233361

Victory by Susan Cooper
Bodley Head £5.99 ISBN: 978-0552554152

Tarka the Otter by Henry Williamson
Puffin Classic £5.99 ISBN: 978-0140366211

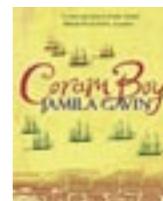


LONDON

So many books to choose from, so little space available. So here in no particular order are four books which all give a particular view of a particular part of London. All are imbued with the sense and smell of the city. And all provide the reader with an opportunity to visit some of the settings.

In Eleanor Updale's *Montmorency*, Joseph Bazalgette's newly installed sewer network provides the perfect *modus operandi* – literally undercover - for the eponymous hero and his *alter ego* to move about Victorian London and facilitate his thieving forays to all parts of the capital: the Docks, Billingsgate, Trafalgar Square, Mayfair, even Hampstead. And although, for us, there is no public access to London's sewerage system, another subterranean network is available: the tube. It (or, alternatively, buses: cheaper and you can see where you're going) will speed readers to all relevant locations cased by *Montmorency/Scarper*.

From Gloucestershire, Jamila Gavin's *Coram Boy* moves to London, a terrifying, rambunctious place in the 18th century; in particular, to Thomas Coram's Foundling Hospital. Its former site, Coram Fields, is now a children's playground, amidst the city's northerly sprawl. At the time of the novel, however, the location was largely pastoral and the inmates were sent about 'Milking ... feeding chickens ... collecting eggs ... leading goats to pasture'. Handel, a governor of the hospital, did indeed conduct Messiah there. The Foundling Museum is a small, fascinating place with an excellent café and many family days. Children and school parties are free. 40 Brunswick Square, London WC1 open daily except Mondays.



The projected six book series by Alan Gibbons *Hell's Underground* is a roller-coaster series of terrifying adventures. The first, *Scared to Death*, set in Jack the Ripper time, the second, *The Demon Assassin*, during WW2. Both are set in the East End and both have short walking guides at the back of each book. They are an intriguing way of bringing history to life but not, perhaps, for the faint-hearted.

Twelve year old Alice is growing up in the grey world of 1950s London surrounded by bomb sites. The strong bond between Alice and her friend Reggie is something readers of any age will recognise from their own childhood. The author, Alan Shea, grew up in Stepney immediately after WW2 and he creates in this most atmospheric of novels the sense and smell of that time. The East End of London is a constantly changing, lively place and to get a sense of the current East End visit Brick Lane and don't miss the friendly independent Eastside Bookshop halfway down the street where doubtless you can buy a copy of *The Amazing Mind of Alice Makin*.

Montmorency by Eleanor Updale
Scholastic £5.99 ISBN: 978-0439943017

Coram Boy Jamila Gavin Egmont £5.99 ISBN: 978-1405212823

Scared to Death Alan Gibbons Orion £4.99 ISBN: 978-1842556665

The Demon Assassin Alan Gibbons Orion £4.99 ISBN: 978-1842551806

The Amazing Mind of Alice Makin by Alan Shea
Chicken House £5.99 ISBN: 978-1904442325