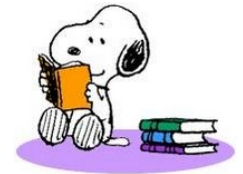




# RGS: Bonkers About Books!

February 2023



Hello,

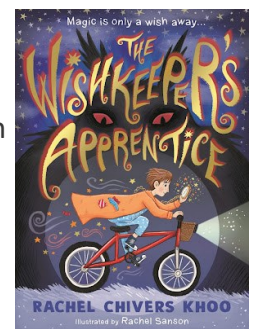
I'm just managing to sneak February's edition in in time! I hope everyone had a good half-term and managed to enjoy some good books. I had a very bookish week as I was lucky enough to have been invited to the launch for Jennifer Killick's third book in the Dread Wood series, Flock Horror (you'll find my review for it below). It was wonderful to be there and I was delighted to be able to celebrate with Jennifer & hand over some of the messages 6N had created for her - she was absolutely thrilled to receive them. It was also lovely to see Elle McNicoll again. Whilst down in London, I went to the British Library & I can highly recommend a visit to the exhibition they have there that contains the Magna Carta, the Lindisfarne Gospels, original works by Wilfred Owen and Charles Dickens, notebooks from Leonardo da Vinci and Shakespeare's first folio. It's a stunning collection and entry is free. I also managed to fit in a bit of reading. Read on for this month's recommendations.

**Mrs Wall**



## The Wishkeeper's Apprentice - Rachel Chivers Khoo

Felix is feeling fed-up: his football match hasn't gone well and his older sister has forgotten to pick him up, meaning he's had to walk home in the rain. With only a penny in his pocket, he makes a wish, but doesn't quite expect what happens next: he meets Rupus Beewinkle who is a wishkeeper, and one who is in need of some help, so he offers Felix a job as his apprentice. Rupus is having trouble keeping up with the wishes that are coming in to him so Felix agrees to help him, but he also discovers that there is a wishsnatcher in town. Can Felix do enough to help Rupus before the wishsnatcher changes the town of Whittlestone forever?



**The Wishkeeper's Apprentice** is a wonderful read and one that I know children will enjoy, there is a magical quality to it and one that feels like it will be a book that will still be being read in many years to come. Felix is feeling very down on his luck and absolutely nothing seems to be going right for him so he is rightly dubious when he meets Rupus, but then he discovers things that mean that he has no choice (I won't spoil anything for you!). Although he feels rejected, there is a resilience that grows as the book progresses until he becomes a character that you will be rooting for.

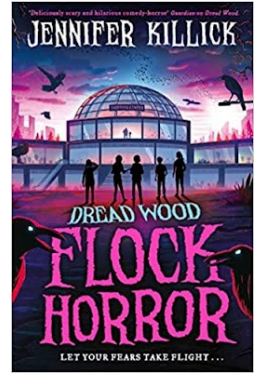
Rupus is a wonderful character and one readers will enjoy getting to know: he has clearly been bumbling along on his own for far too long and doesn't quite know what to do. He is a kind old man that you just want to hug and make everything better for him - he very much reminds me of a classic character and one I would love to see more of again.



**The Wishkeeper's Apprentice** was the perfect Saturday read for me: full of warmth and charm, with just the right amount of adventure sprinkled in to keep me enchanted. This is a book that will delight readers when it is released on the 2nd March, and, with wonderful illustrations by Rachel Sanson, I know that this book will be adored by all who read it.

## Flock Horror - Jennifer Killick

Angelo and his friends are back and, despite their greatest wishes, things are about to get scary again! It all starts when Angelo's dad is called to help an elderly neighbour who has fallen. Leaving Angelo and his brother with instructions to lock the door behind him, he heads out to another flat in their block. Moments later, Angelo's brother is shouting about a monster outside the window - their flat isn't on the ground floor. Joining his brother, Angelo hears loud tapping on the window and finds shadows and a round hole in the window when he investigates. The following day, things get weirder with darkening skies and a bird attack on the school's wellbeing pigs, with birds seemingly arriving from the Dread Wood (some of which being incredibly blood-thirsty). Fearing the worst, Club Loser decide that it is up to them to discover what is going on before things get too bloody.



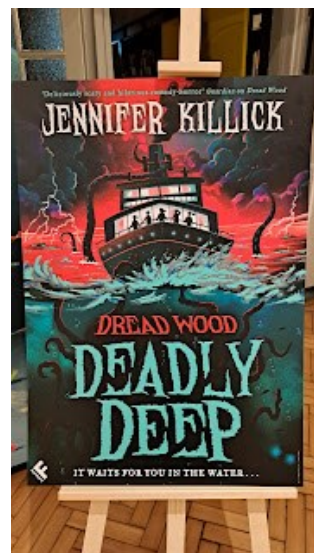
I have been a big fan of the Dread Wood series since book 1 (you can read my reviews here: [Dread Wood Fear Ground](#)) and so I was absolutely thrilled to have been invited to the launch of **Flock Horror** last week. Whilst catching up with Jennifer, I was also fortunate enough to get my hands on an early copy of the book. It took me seconds after the event to dive in, deciding I was absolutely brave enough to read it alone in a hotel room - I ensured the hotel room door was locked, I curled up in bed and I went for it.

The book is creepy from the start with tapping at a flat window that isn't on the ground floor, cryptic messages being left in various places and birds that seem to gather in their hoards. It's safe to say that the friends suspect that the Latchitts are involved somehow but they just can't figure out how. Club Loser are clearly more concerned about the safety of everyone around them than they are about themselves; however, the group are growing ever-closer and we also get an insight into home backgrounds a little more in this book. I have to mention Mr Canton who is one of the best teachers in fiction ever! Cool in his uncoolness, he is always there for Angelo and his friends - I don't know how anybody could turn down his offer of hot choccie!

Jennifer is absolutely the queen of MG horror and **Flock Horror** is a master-class in scaring readers in the best way! Action-packed and utterly unputdownable, this is a book full of frights, friendships and feathered predators.

... and just for the record, the TV in my hotel room switched itself back on after I'd turned out the lights the night of the book launch and then a something kept banging through the night (I'm telling myself it was a door!) so I read the rest of the book the following day whilst it was still daylight!

I can also reveal the cover of  
**Dread Wood book 4**  
**Deadly Deep**  
which is due for release in August.



## Into The Faerie Hill - H. S. Norup

Twelve-year-old Alfred has spent much of his life moving around for his dad's job. This time, they are heading to his granny's, a place he hasn't been to since he was only a few months old. Alfred is going to stay there whilst his father is working nearby as part of a team who are intent on building a tunnel through a near by hill to provide easier access to the city. As Alfred settles in, he gets the feeling he is being watched but puts it down to the numerous carvings of animals his granny seems to be very protective of. When his dad leaves, he heads out to the car with him where he meets Saga, the daughter of an old friend of his dad. The pair quickly become friends and Alfred begins helping her in her efforts to stop the construction of the tunnel.

Whilst all this is going on, Alfred discovers that he can see and speak to faerie creatures. Mr Tumbleweed is Saga's faerie creature friend, a tree sprite, most people see as a toad, but Saga - only Alfred can understand what he is saying.

As the campaign to save the hill intensifies, Alfred realises that he is connected to the faeries and this may be the key to finding out about his mother (somebody he never knew and somebody his dad and his granny refuse to talk about). He determines to enter Faerie in search of answers; however, it seems that the creatures need help from Alfred and Saga as much as he needs help from them. Can they work together to stop construction of the tunnel and will Alfred get the answers he is so desperately seeking? This is Helle's third book and, having loved *The Missing Barbegazi* and falling completely under the spell of *The Hungry Ghost*, I was very excited to find an early copy of **Into The Faerie Hill** waiting at home for me.

Alfred is a character I warmed to quickly. He really doesn't want to be at his granny's but simply can't persuade his dad to change his mind. He is a strong swimmer but struggles, at times, with the fact that one of his legs is shorter than the other. It certainly doesn't define him and doesn't stop him doing anything - I love this and I know it will send a strong message to readers. I also found Saga a captivating character: where Alfred is determined to hide in the shadows, Saga is happy to stand out and, at times, actively seeks to be different. She is fiercely determined to protect the hill in any way she can and her eco-warrior fierceness will appeal to readers.

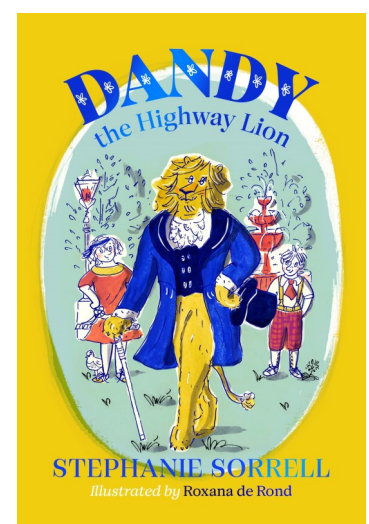
**Into The Faerie Hill** is a wonderful mix of magic, mystery and folklore that weaves in respecting the environment and the world around us. Family and friendship are strong themes in the book and the message to be proud of who you are sings out of the pages. This is a story that will lull you in and cast a spell over you so you won't want to leave the village and Faerie. You'll be torn between gobbling the book in one go and languishing amongst the pages to savour every moment for as long as possible.



## Dandy The Highway Lion – Stephanie Sorrell

When Ben and Hattie move to London due to their parents' jobs, they feel lonely; that is until they meet Dandy Paws, a rather dapper lion who befriends them in the park. As well as being perfectly well-mannered and impeccably dressed, he is also a highway lion, who steals from the rich to give to poor animals, his aim being to right wrongs that have been done to them.

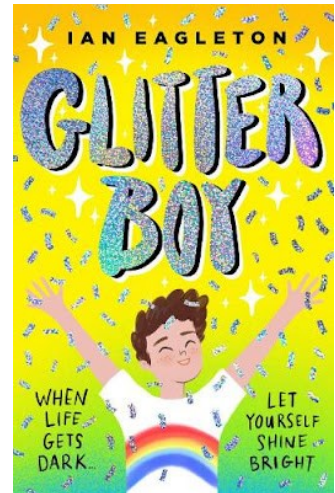
With a host of simply wonderful characters and a plot that will keep readers thoroughly entertained, Dandy The Highway Lion is a delightful book with a classic feel to it; it's full of warmth and touches of humour but also incorporates some important messages about looking after animals. I know that this book created interest in school before half-term and I predict that it will be a popular loan from my trolley.





## Glitter Boy - Ian Eagleton

Jamie is in Year 6 and loves Mariah Carey, he enjoys dancing in choir and he loves to write poetry; what he doesn't like is being bullied by Paul who mocks his voice and calls him \*that word\*. At home, things are tricky since his mum left and his dad seems to be distant (and terrible at cooking). He is worried about his nan after her recent fall and so goes to her place every evening after school to check-in on her - he feels he can be himself around her. When his teacher, Mr Hamilton, announces that he is marrying his boyfriend, the school choir plan to surprise him but James' dad seems reluctant to sign the consent form but Jamie doesn't understand why. With everything going on, Jamie is beginning to question himself and who he is.



I'd heard so many good things about **Glitter Boy** so I was absolutely thrilled when a copy arrived through the post for me, and my goodness it's fabulous!

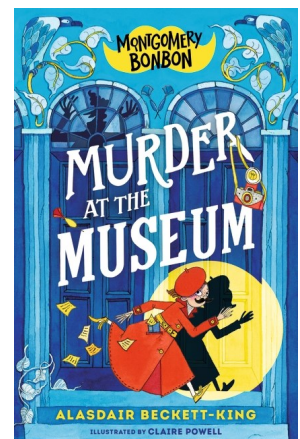
Jamie is a truly wonderful character: he prefers to dance than play football and knows the words to every Mariah Carey song. He is clearly having a difficult time at home with his mother's departure and worrying about his nan. He has so much on his shoulders and is finding it difficult to talk to his father (who seems to be struggling to talk to Jamie too). Readers will find that they warm to Jamie immediately and I wanted to reach into the hug on so many occasions and hug him.

I don't want to give anything away so am finding there is much I want to say that I can't so as not to spoil it for those who have yet to read the book. What I will say is that **Glitter Boy** is a book that needs to be in schools; it's a brilliantly written story full of important messages about friendship, bullying, section 28 and sexuality at an age appropriate level. It's about learning about who you are and being happy with yourself.

I read **Glitter Boy** in a day: it was unputdownable and, the more I read, the more I knew that it is a book that needs to be shared. It made me cry (have tissues ready) and made me hug it at the end; it's a book that people will talk about for years to come and one that will help children in many different ways. Thank-you Ian for writing this - you are a *Hero*. **Glitter Boy** will help reader begin to understand that they shouldn't be afraid of their *Emotions* and *When You Believe in Yourself* then *One Sweet Day* and *Against All Gods*, they will learn to love who they are... too many Mariah references? I couldn't help myself but I feel Jamie (and hopefully Ian) would approve!

## Montgomery Bonbon Murder At The Museum - Alasdair Bekett-King

Montgomery Bonbon is known as a brilliant detective; what people don't know is that Montgomery is actually Bonnie Montgomery, a ten year old school girl with an old raincoat, a stick-on moustache, a beret and a mysterious foreign accent, and only her grampa knows! Whilst visiting Hornville Museum, a murder occurs and Montgomery Bonbon is determined to get to the bottom of things.



I love a good detective story and this is a great one! Montgomery is a wonderfully vibrant and quirky character who is full of confidence. Unafraid of being herself (or himself!), she will delight readers as both Bonnie and Montgomery. With a plot that will keep readers guessing, and humour woven into the action you will be hooked until the end. And I have to mention that illustrations by Claire Powell - the perfect accompaniment.

Watch out Agatha Christie, Montgomery Bonbon is in town and I can't wait to see what happens next.