

We were all struck by how middle class all the children's books we came across were. But all delivered something familiar, however remote their setting: a sense of adventure and the ups and downs of getting on with the rest of the family.

It is when our readers became adults that their reading tastes began to differ quite a lot from their friends' tastes. So much depended on where you went on to live and work. Those, like Terry, who did National Service in Germany came across the racy novels of Hank Janson. You were unlikely to find these in Stocksbridge. Roger went into farming so during his twenties he was keen to read about agriculture. Chris became an avid reader of science fiction. He moved from H.G. Wells to Asimov. He joined a library in his thirties. One book led to another: *The Hobbit* then Philip Pullman's *Dark Materials Trilogy*.

The journey from one author to another never ends. The number of books mentioned on that Friday morning at the drop in session, seemed almost countless. This was Reading Sheffield's first visit to Stocksbridge. Huge thanks to David Owen and to the Stocksbridge readers who shared memories about how we became readers.

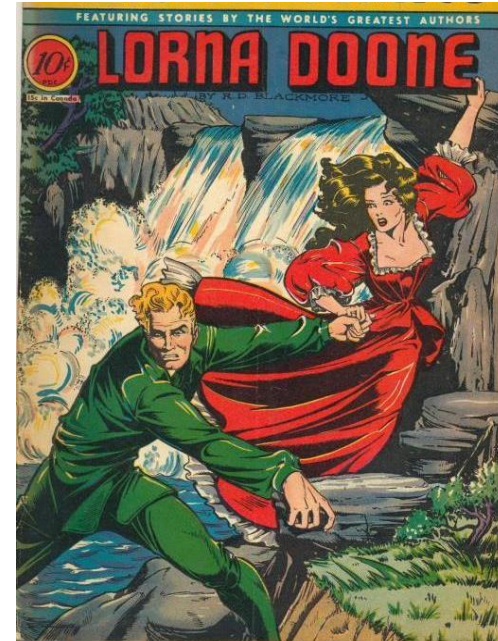
*Mary Grover and Sue Roe*

*readingsheffield.co.uk*

## A Short Story of Readers in Stocksbridge

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Everyone at the Venue in Stocksbridge on the 31st May came to reading in different ways. For children growing up in Stocksbridge in the 1940s and 50s getting hold of books was not easy. Stocksbridge Library was not built till the 1960s. Before then, Marilyn remembers borrowing books from the British Hall on Hope St or winning them as Sunday School prizes. One of the prizes was the story of smugglers in the West Country: *Lorna Doone*, won for 'Endeavour'.

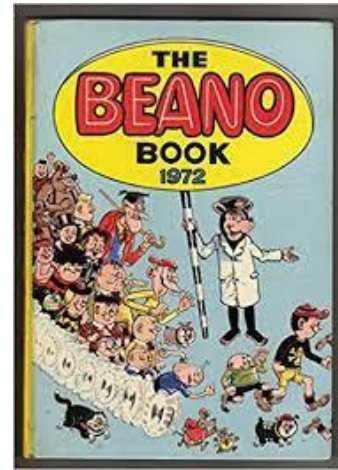


Chapel and Sunday School played a big part in the reading of many. Sunday School prizes were often the only books that children owned. The Bible featured frequently in the memory of Stocksbridge residents. There were chapels up and down the valley. Somebody described the pattern: pub, chapel, pub chapel right through the town and into the country.

Frank pointed out the fact that the word Bible simply means 'book' and this book itself is a compilation of a huge amount of stories. He remembers Methodists in particular as reading the Bible out aloud, as a family. Your religion could affect the books around you in the home. A copy of 'the Mass book' was mentioned. Sometimes the only book in the house was the Bible.

If you or your parent was after light reading there was also at least one twopenny library in Stocksbridge. Gloria remembers a tuppenny library where Lidl is now. She used to go and get love stories and Catherine Cookson books for her mum who wouldn't go near the place. 'She didn't like the woman who ran it. She was abrupt, very sharp. All she wanted was your tuppence'.

Some readers from towns where there were public libraries weren't able to use them because they weren't allowed out on their own and their parents were too busy to take them. A few were given books as gifts or saved up their pocket money to buy them.



The *Dandy*, the *Beano* or perhaps the more serious *Eagle* could be bought if you got a bit of pocket money

Enid Blyton was a part of nearly everybody's reading life but each reader had her favourite series. One reader read and reread the poetic *The Faraway Tree*. *Just William* books came a good second.



**RICHMAL CROMPTON**

Just William

Like Blyton, Richmal Crompton delivered a long run of titles to keep you reading until you moved on to something else: *What Katy Did*, Gerald Durrell's *My Family and Other Animals* or Arthur Ransome's books about children's sailing adventures.