



Film Fun, 1951. The very first Film Funs starting in 1938 have sold for as much as a couple of hundred pounds each.

Collecting Children's Annuals

by Judith Clarke

Everyone remembers the joy of receiving a favourite book at Christmas but what used to be a yearly event has now become a daily fix for collectors of childhood annuals.

Such are the vast numbers of annuals produced over the years for the children's market that most collectors specialise. Some of the most popular areas are the *Beano*, *Dandy*, (and all the other D.C. Thomson character annuals), *Rupert Bear Daily Express* books, cowboy and western annuals, sport, the *Eagle* (including *Riders of the Range* and *Girl*), film and movie and the enormous number of annuals that were produced as television or pop music spin-offs, for example *Dr. Who*, *Star Trek* or even Cliff Richard.

Though the first annuals appeared as early as the 1820s many collectors concentrate on post Second World War examples, nostalgia being the main collecting spur as opposed to a desire to collect children's books per se. Many of the early annuals consisted of bound volumes of what had appeared previously in the year rather than new material. Some of the earliest annuals were *Chatterbox*, (which began in the mid - 1860s) the *Little Folks Annual*, the *Boy's Own* (1879), *Girl's Own* (1880) and the *Blackie Children's Annual* which first appeared in 1904.

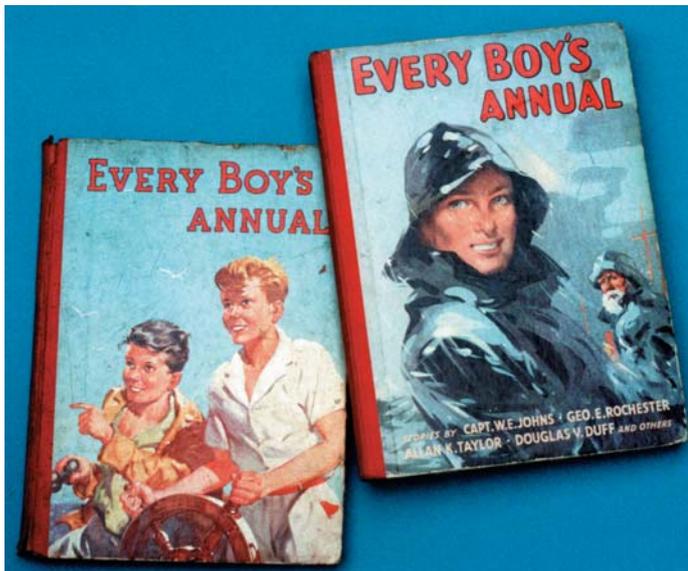
Very early annuals, in keeping with Victorian attitudes towards children, were moralistic and elevating in tone. However with time this emphasis changed and annuals produced specifically for the children's Christmas market became much more playful and entertaining. Moving into the twentieth century some of the annuals which became very popular with parents and children alike include *Playbox*, *Puck*, *Chicks Own* and *Rainbow*. (featuring the characters of *Tiger Tim* and the *Bruin Boys*) A lot of the annuals around at this time were spin-off from highly popular children's papers and comics.

Some of the earliest annuals that readers of *Antiques Info* might remember receiving include *Teddy Tail*, (first appearing in 1934) various Disney annuals published by Dean's such as *Mickey Mouse* and *Snow White*, *Rupert* (the first annual appeared in 1936 and modern facsimiles of the early annuals are popular with collectors) and the *Dandy* and the *Beano*. These began in 1939 and 1940 respectively and, as with the *Rupert* annuals, are still going strong today.

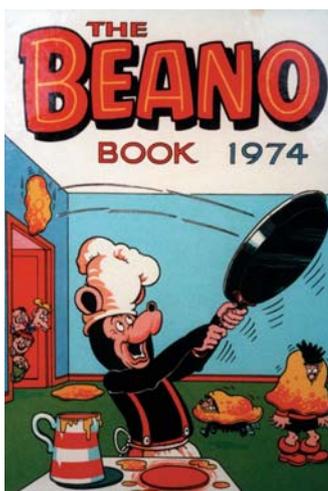
Collectors of older annuals are often attracted by the social, historical and illustrative value of the work within them. Many top artists worked partially or solely within the children's illustration field and top collectable artists include Walter Crane, George Studdy (of Bonzo dog fame), Arthur Rackham, Kate Greenaway, Cecil Aldin, Louis Wain and Mabel Lucie Attwell. (both of whom had their own annuals) Louis Wain annuals in particular can often make over £100 each in very good condition. These kind of annuals have a completely different appeal to those which are largely dependent on the recent nostalgia market for their, often, surprisingly high current values - for example early *Dr. Who* or the first *Blue Peter* annual dating from 1963 at around £50-£60 for a very good copy.

Price wise it is *Rupert*, the *Beano* and the *Dandy* that continue to command the highest sums. The very first *Dandy* annual in very fine condition has been known to fetch as much as £4,000 and a 1940 first *Beano* annual in very good + condition made £2800 at auction last year. Other *Beano* and *Dandy* annuals from the 1940s can be worth several hundred pounds each so long as condition is very good to fine. For a 1936 *Rupert* annual in very good condition it would be reasonable to expect a price of £600 - £800 though £2,000 has been known.

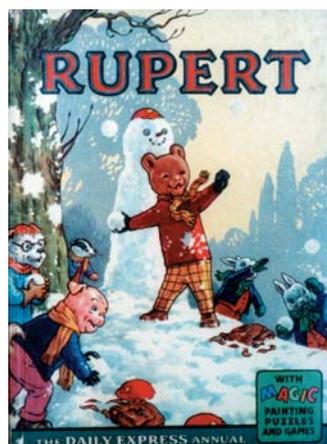
Currently there's a slump in the annuals market for many books for which, though in very nice condition and quite old, there's no nostalgia based demand. In this category might go the many annuals issued in the



Every Boy's Annual. Rip-roaring tales of a more chivalrous age, many featuring stories by the creator of Biggles, W. E. Johns.



Beano, 1974. Copies from the 1970s are no longer in demand as they were a couple of years ago. Most serious collectors have these copies so are only worth around £5 maximum in very good condition.



Rupert Daily Express Annual from the 1960s. These are worth a lot more if the Magic Painting Pages have not been used.

1950s which do not pay homage to any particular activity or are not film or radio related. Prices for very early copies of annuals such as *Film Fun* (beginning as an annual in 1938) or *Radio Fun* are high compared to many older annuals for characters such as *Teddy Tail*, *Pip*, *Squeak* and *Wilfred* or *Tiger Tim*.

However the reverse side of this is that there are a lot of very nice annuals around which can be picked up surprisingly cheaply considering their condition, quality and age. Current trends also indicate that women have moved into the collectable annuals arena and the neglected area of girl's annuals is beginning to take off.

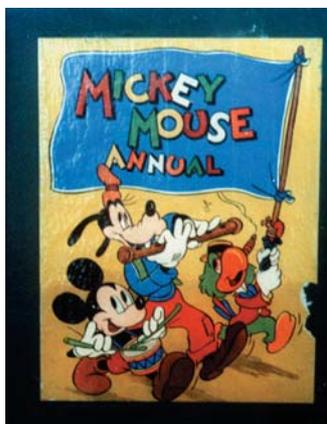
Unless very rare the condition of an annual plays a very large part in its value. Often read and loved to extinction the highest prices will be for books that have their dust wrapper (where applicable) in very good condition, no dedication inside, (unless by someone important) not price clipped and certainly not scribbled in and falling apart.

The name annual can be a bit of a misnomer for many of the books were only brought out on a casual basis or were merely bumper editions devoted to a particular character or activity. Space and storage can be a problem with a collection of annuals as can display. However they more than make up for this with their wonderful contents. Contents evocative of a gentler, less cynical age for children, thrilling stories of daring do, comic strips, lovely colour illustrations or dashing covers.

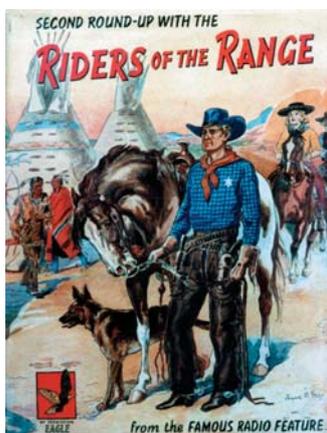
Annuals are such great fun because they're bumper editions, full of the very best of the year's stories and plots and characters, a treat for the holidays, an intense one-to-one experience. From a collectors point of view this staple of Christmas reading provides collecting passion and enjoyment throughout the year.

The majority of general or out of fashion titles from the 1920s through to the 1970s can be found for between £5-£20.

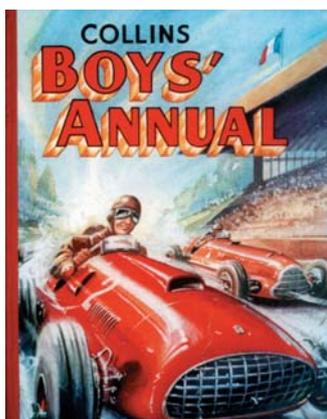
An esteemed authority on selling annuals and comics is Malcolm Phillips at Comic Book Postal Auctions, 40-42 Osnaurgh Street, London NW1 3ND. Telephone 020 7424 0007 www.compalcomics.com



Mickey Mouse Annual from the 1940s. Part of a whole range of Disney annuals published by Deans in this country.



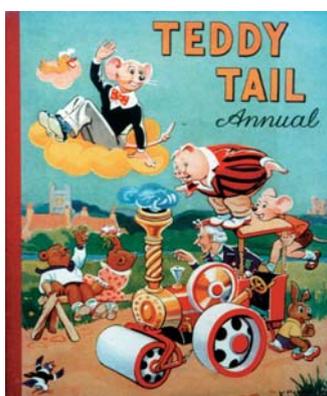
Attractively dustwrapped and in excellent condition, one of the many Eagle spin-off annuals Riders of the Range.



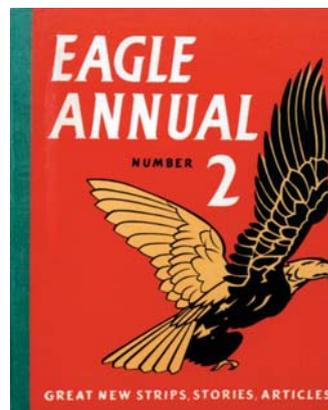
Collins Boys Annual. Typical covers and content of the 1950s, not in great demand in today's market. £3-£5.



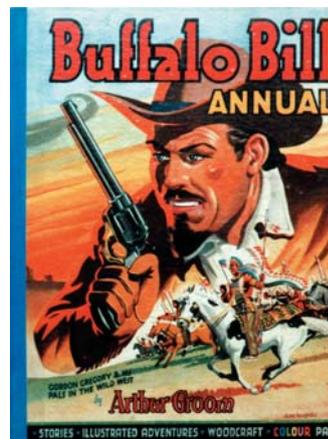
Collins Children's Annual. If from the 1950s this wouldn't be worth much but it dates from the early 1920s and is quite a desirable annual with its quality colour plates.



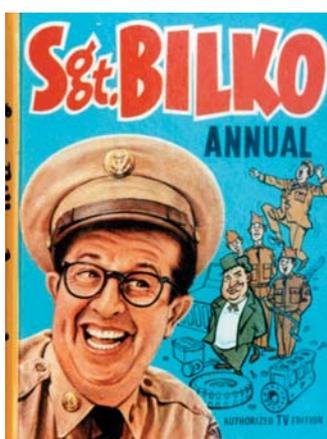
Teddy Tail. The first annual appeared for the year 1934.



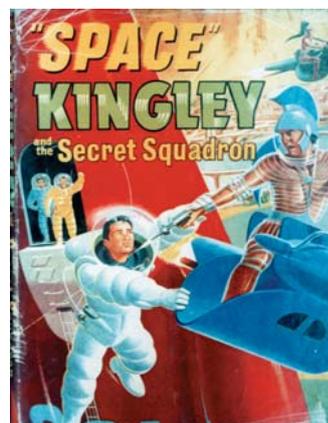
Eagle Annual No 2. (these annuals eventually ran to 23 in total) This example lacks the all important dust jacket, date c1952.



Buffalo Bill, 1949. One of the earliest B.B. annuals.



Sgt. Bilko. A nice early example of a television spin-off annual.



Space Kingley, 1950s. Not strictly an annual but with its dust jacket very popular with collectors of the space and science fiction genre. £20-£25.

In the next edition Judith Clarke will be looking specifically at children's characters such as *Rupert Bear*, and the clubs which were serialised and promoted through newspapers particularly in the 1920s to 1960s, the Golden Age of newspaper strip serialised adventures.