



The optimistically titled 'Life Membership Kit', I-Spy with badge and secret codes, a nice pristine piece of memorabilia.



Two Rupert Bear annuals, late 1960s and early 1970s.



W.L.O.G. ephemera, two greetings cards and membership book, hand written messages from Uncle Dick increase value.

Early Rupert annuals can fetch as much as £1,000!

## The 1920s to the 1960s - the golden age of newspaper strip serialised adventures

by Judith Clarke



Enamel Daily Express Rupert League badge, c£8-£10.



Teddy Tail League, coronation 1935 medal. Not a rarity.

Children's characters and clubs serialised and promoted through newspapers were a popular attraction in the period from the 1920s through to the 1960s. Editors were always keen to capture children's, and of course their parent's allegiance from rival papers. There's a lot of nostalgia as well as social and historical interest associated with this Golden Age and many very nice items can be picked up quite cheaply.

Many collectors are interested perhaps in just one famous character, most notably Rupert Bear whose popularity remains as strong as ever and who still appears in the *Daily Express* as he first did in November 1920.

Comic or newspaper strip serialised adventures not only guaranteed sales via the pocket of a pressurised parent but ensured loyalty from youngsters who remained faithful to their favourite character or characters at least until they grew too old for them.

Another ploy of newspapers was to have a children's column. This happened all over the country in small regional papers but most famously there were the I-Spy columns carried in the *News Chronicle* and later in the *Daily Mail*. These columns were built around the idea of the I-Spy Tribe and the small educational spotter books for children which had been the brainchild of Charles Warrell (first Big Chief I-Spy until 1957).

Born in 1889 Charles Warrell, a teacher, journalist and author self published the first of his Spotter books in 1948. Soon after publication passed to the *Daily Mail* and then in the early 1950s the *News Chronicle* and *Daily Dispatch* took over. Publication of these wonderful books went in tandem with columns in the newspaper and very soon the I-Spy mania was sweeping the country.

Back in the 1950s and 1960s membership of the tribe could keep a child very busy indeed. Whilst Big Chief sat in his Wigwam by the Water answering all those letters there were codes to decipher in the newspaper columns, prizes to win, including competitions which promised a family holiday for the winners, different honours to attain depending on your spotter's points total and of course the I-Spy badge to wear with pride.

The vastness of the organisation, some half a million members already by 1953, has ensured a high survival rate of memorabilia; there are the I-Spy membership packets, badges and code books, pens, notebooks - even wigwams (very rare) and not forgetting the different series of books themselves, still published today under the auspices of Michelin.

While Rupert remains the most popular of the characters by a long way, as reflected in prices for the very early and wartime annuals which can top as much as £1,000, there are a host of secondary supporting characters in this area of collecting. One in particular predated the introduction of Rupert and indeed was a major spur to his creation. This character was Teddy Tail (affiliated to the *Daily Mail*) who first appeared in 1915. Belying his name he was actually a loveable mouse and in time his popularity spawned a children's club called the Teddy Tail League.

Other famous characters in the newspapers included the Arkubs (The Noah Family) a series for young children begun in 1920 in the *Daily News*. The extremely collectable canine Bonzo created by George Studdy also appeared in the *Daily Sketch* as a cartoon strip and then there were Pip, Squeak and Wilfred dating from around 1920. This highly unlikely trio was very popular at the time. Pip was a dog, Wilfred a rabbit and Squeak was a penguin.



By the late 1920s they too had their own club watched over by the kindly Uncle Dick (Bertie Lamb who was children's editor at the *Daily Mirror*). The organisation was the ungainly sounding Wilfredian League of Gugnuncs or W.L.O.G for short and this children's club, with often a gentle hand written reminder from Uncle Dick on the back of a greetings card, was responsible for raising a lot of money for needy youngsters. In fact many of the children's clubs were well meaning and paternalistic giving money to charities, an emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge as opposed to material possessions, a bit like the Blue Peters of their day.

The first Pip, Squeak and Wilfred annuals came out in the 1920s but it wasn't until 1934 that Teddy Tail got his first annual and Rupert's first annual was only issued in 1936.

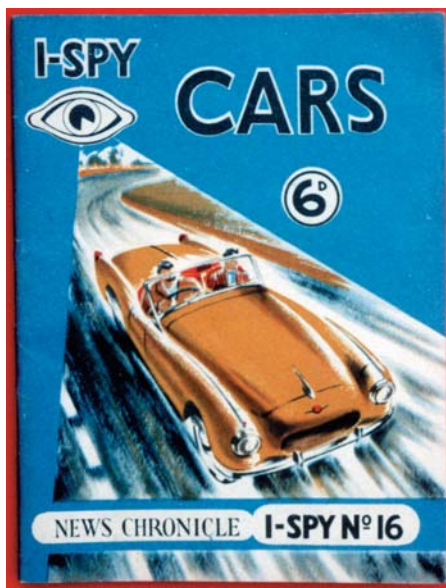
An early Teddy Tail or Pip annual in very good condition should command some decent money but they just don't have the appeal or the longevity of the bear in the funny trousers!

Nor do I-Spy annuals (of which the first of an occasional series came out in 1955) although the whole area of I-Spy collecting is beginning to take off and collectors particularly want to spot the very first books produced by Charles Warrell in the late 1940s which retailed through Woolworths originally (and later through Foyle's) and are notoriously difficult to find.

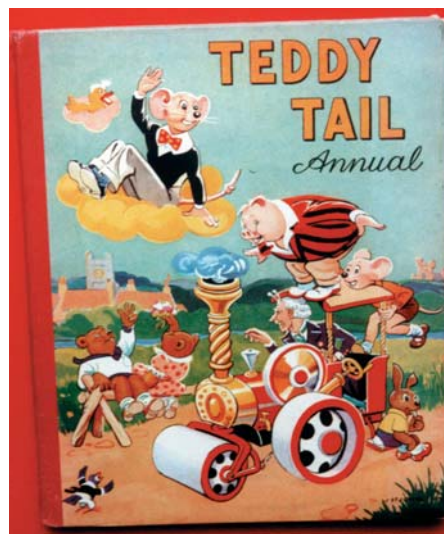
Children's characters and clubs popularised through the newspapers generated a lot of memorabilia. As well as the books, annuals and even the original cartoon strips or columns in the papers there are badges, Beswick Rupert figures, jigsaws, toys, I-Spy

trade cards issued with Priory Tea and Coffee in the 1950s, birthday cards, postcards, china items such as by Doulton for Pip, Squeak and Wilfred, membership packs, playing cards and so on to collect.

An extension of this kind of collection could be one that focuses on clubs in general for children and the associated memorabilia, putting aside obviously the vast area of collecting that is Scouts and to a lesser extent Guides. There were the Cococubs for Rowntrees, the Ovaltineys, the Saint club as organised by Leslie Charteris, Dan Dare of the Eagle, the Enid Blyton club, Robertson's golliwogs and Mickey Mouse as well as the many small clubs and characters connected with regional newspapers and publications such as women's magazines - for example Just William or even Larry the Lamb.



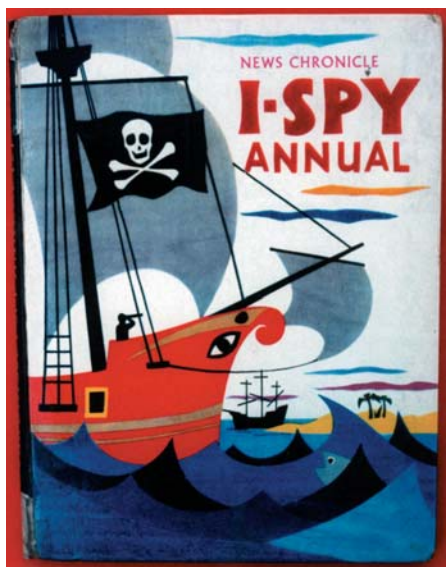
Typical 1950s News Chronicle I-Spy book with the beaming eye covers. £3-£5 each in very good condition.



Bright and cheerful Teddy Tail annual, £5-£10 depending on condition.



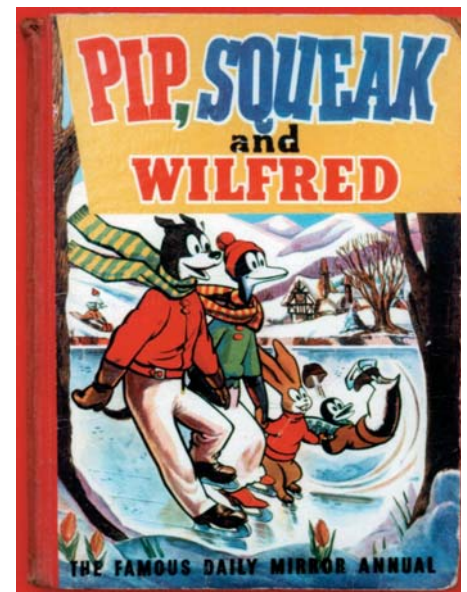
I-Spy sport, again very attractive 1950s publication.



1955 first I-Spy annual, £5-£10 in very good condition.



Arkubus / Japhet birthday greetings postcard. £2-£3.



Pip, Squeak and Wilfred annual, c1930s, depending on condition. £5-£10.