



AN INTERVIEW WITH KATE HINDLEY

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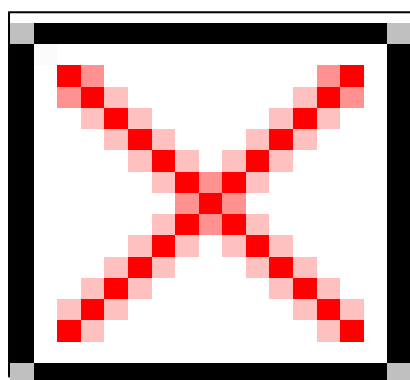
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A trip down **Treacle Street** with author **Kate Hindley**

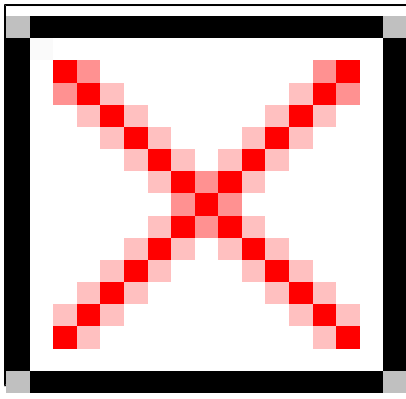


Kate Hindley's first book appeared in 2012 when she illustrated **The Great Snortle Hunt** for Claire Freedman. She quickly became a sought-after illustrator creating illustrations for picture books by Michelle Robinson, William Bee, Sean Taylor and Simon Philip amongst others, and very successfully bringing Santa Montefiore's **Royal Rabbits of London** to life in her charming, lively, black and white drawings. Summer sees publication of the first book she has written as well as illustrated: [Marcel's Parcels](#) [3] is the first in a new series of board books featuring the animal residents of a busy little street and aimed squarely at pre schoolers. Kate talked to **Books for Keeps** about this new venture.

After illustrating a dozen picture books for other people, and almost as many chapter books, the **Treacle Street** series is Kate's first solo project. What sparked it, and what's it been like to create words *and* pictures?

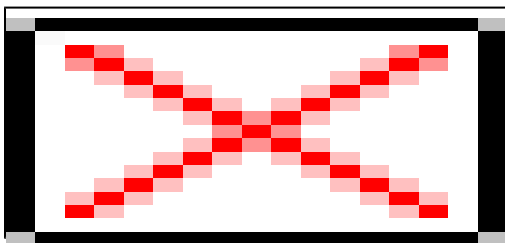
It was really good fun actually. I've been wanting to do something for quite a while and talking to my publisher Simon and Schuster about it, but as I already had my fiction illustration on the go, and some nice partnerships with picture book authors, I wanted to create something different that would sit alongside my other work. Jane Buckley, Simon and Schuster art director, suggested she think about novelty. I said I'd quite like to have a go at doing a flap book and I worked quite closely with Jane and Helen (Mackenzie Smith, S&S editorial director) and developed the concept.

All sorts of different people live in Treacle Street, and there are a lot of different little businesses there, from Prima Pavlova's dance school to William's pie shop, all with their own frontage and doorway. While Kate is a whizz at busy, packed street scenes, it still proved more complicated than she'd anticipated: I thought this would be a nice, fairly simple thing, but when you get into the nitty gritty, especially with the first book, I got very stressed about all the different windows and doors and brickwork - I realized I'd made myself a lot of work.``



Nonetheless she enjoyed the process, and you can tell. The characters are particularly appealing, and the first in the series stars ebullient elephant postman, Marcel, as he delivers intriguingly shaped packages to the residents of Treacle Street. Marcel wasn't always going to be a postman however: 'Originally, the book was called Marcel's Motorcar and Marcel owned an antique Rolls Royce. The idea was that you would open flaps to reveal all the different parts of the car and discover a little monkey inside, which was why the car wasn't working.' She laughs: 'It didn't really make any sense but my editor really liked Marcel and the monkeys, and they liked the idea of a garage so I carried on doodling characters, coming up with the jobs they could do, and a drawing up a list of independent businesses. Then it dawned on me: 'We could call that Treacle Street.''

The **Treacle Street** books are large format board books with sturdy flaps, aimed at a really young audience. Kate worked hard to keep them as simple as possible, while creating a proper narrative, and slipping in enough of what she calls 'cheekiness' to keep adults entertained as they read them over and over. 'My Mum always told me I was really obsessed with **Where's Spot?** when I was a diddy one, and I demanded it over and over again, so if there's more to spot, it makes it more interesting for both parties. Those little things you can point out and have a chat about are really important.' Studying **Treacle Street** brings all sorts of pleasures 'the little bunny pupils of Prima's Dance School pirouetting under a giant disco ball, the menu at Tripehound's Pie Shop which includes hot spam barm.



She names Richard Scarry as an influence too and there's certainly something of **Busy Town in Treacle Street**. Was she conscious of that while working on the books? 'I grew up with Scarry and I think his style is very ingrained in my brain, something that's always there. I don't look at my work and think 'Oh it's very Scarry?', I think it's just animals and what they do all day. But then you look at it afterwards and think 'Oh yes, I've definitely been influenced there, haven't I.' His work is so timeless, it's amazing when you actually look at the publication dates and see how old the books are.'

The illustrations are all pencil drawn and then scanned in and coloured. 'I like pencil because it's how I start in my sketchbook and whenever I go to ink, I always tighten up a little bit. It's like being back at school, thinking 'Oh I'm doing it in proper now.' And occasionally I'll have bits and bobs, characters and other things in my sketchbook, where I think I don't really need to re-draw this, I'll probably just use that, and I can scan it in and crop off the bits I don't need. And if it's all in pencil it's quite easy to piece together.'

Marcel's Parcels will be followed by **Prima's Missing Bunnies** in January 2020, and Kate has already started on the third book. She's very much enjoying developing the series: 'I'm definitely going through a big animal phase at the moment, and **Treacle Street** has the most detailed clothes and costumes I've done. I'm really enjoying that!'

Inspiration comes from surprising places: 'I was trying to think of what to do for the next spread - I'd been thinking

about it for a week in fact, huffing about with it ? when I saw a DHL man pulling up to the house opposite. They people who live there are always tinkering with cars and things, and the DHL man was rolling a parceled-up wheel to their front door. I thought, 'I'll put that in!'

Congratulations to Kate on opening up Treacle Street for all of us.

The **Treacle Street** books are published by Simon and Schuster and book one, [Marcel's Parcels](#) [3] is out now, £6.99.

Andrea Reece is managing editor of **Books for Keeps**.

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