

# The Magic Pudding

Watercolours by Norman Lindsay



State Library  
of New South Wales



# The Magic Pudding

Watercolours by Norman Lindsay

N.L.

A free exhibition from  
15 December 2008 to 29 March 2009



State Library  
of New South Wales

# Magic Pudding events for children



Treehouses (detail)

PXD 1019/20

## Storytelling and puppet activities

Dates: Wednesday 14 January with Richard Tulloch  
and Tuesday 20 January with Nina Rycroft

Time: 10.30 am – 11.30 am

Venue: Galleries, Mitchell Wing

Cost: \$8 per child (parents free)

Enjoy hearing some delightful Australian stories, colour in Norman Lindsay's endearing *Magic Pudding* characters and collect your pudding puppet to make at home. For pre-school children accompanied by their parents.

## Free *Magic Pudding* movie ABC, 2000

Dates: Wednesday 14 January  
and repeated Tuesday 20 January

Time: 12.15 pm, 75 minutes

Venue: Metcalfe Auditorium, Macquarie Street wing

Cost: Free

Meet the Magic Pudding, Bunyip Bluegum, Bill Barnacle and others as they fight off the bungled attempts of pudding thieves and solve mysteries together. Features the voices of Sam Neill, John Cleese, Geoffrey Rush, Jack Thompson, Hugo Weaving, Toni Collette and Mary Coustas. Suitable for all ages.

In association with ***Jumpin' in January – Children's writing and cartooning festival*** at the Library

Bookings on **(02) 9273 1770**

**[bookings@sl.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bookings@sl.nsw.gov.au)**

See **[www.sl.nsw.gov.au/events](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/events)** for the full program

COVER: **Bunyip Bluegum**

PXD 1019/24

TITLE PAGE: **Albert, the Magic Pudding**

PXD 1019/22

# Foreword



Norman Lindsay's cantankerous *Magic Pudding* is now so much a part of the Australian vernacular, we forget how groundbreaking his book was when it first appeared in 1918.

At a time when children's books were usually filled with fairy tales and whimsy, Lindsay's tale of a quarrelsome, endlessly renewable pudding marked a complete change of pace.

Lindsay complemented his playful use of Australian slang with over 100 distinctive *Magic Pudding* drawings. The original illustrations were bequeathed to the State Library of NSW by Sir William Dixson in 1952.

The success of *The Magic Pudding* did not end with Lindsay's book. In 1959 Lindsay produced a set of 40 watercolours in response to Peter Scriven's proposal for a *Magic Pudding* marionette puppet show. These drawings were recently acquired by the State Library, completing the record of Lindsay's enduring children's story.

This exhibition is a chance to look at the early illustrations from 1918 alongside Lindsay's puppet watercolours from 1959. Together with some of Scriven's *Magic Pudding* puppets, these artworks unveil the development of a classic Australian children's book.

Like *The Magic Pudding*, the State Library's extensive children's literature collection contains many surprises. Annotated manuscripts reveal the storytelling process of world-famous children's authors such as Ethel Turner, Ruth Park and *Mary Poppins* creator PL Travers. As well as Lindsay's masterpieces, illustrations for May Gibbs' *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie* and Dorothy Wall's *Blinky Bill* are preserved along with the work of more contemporary artists, including Pamela Allen, Julie Vivas and Rod Clement. The collection resonates with both children and adults.

**Regina Sutton**

NSW State Librarian & Chief Executive



# *The Magic Pudding*

## A classic revisited



*The Magic Pudding*, Norman Lindsay's hallmark children's book, was first published in 1918 by Angus & Robertson. With the larrikin exuberance of its language, its large format, and the special ingredient of Lindsay's distinctive illustrations, *The Magic Pudding* marked a new era in Australian books for children.

*The Magic Pudding* was Lindsay's first children's book. It was inspired by his belief that children preferred food to fairies when it came to reading matter. He reasoned that infantile concepts of happiness are based on the belly. Consequently, his main protagonist is a cantankerous pudding, which can never be eaten up and is constantly pursued by professional pudding thieves.

When his publisher released *The Magic Pudding* as a limited edition art book, Lindsay worried that parents would be discouraged from buying an expensive book for their children. He would have preferred a book 'sold at a price that would allow the kid to tear it up with a clear conscience'.<sup>1</sup> Despite the author's reservations, the book was an outstanding success.

In 1960, puppeteer Peter Scriven adapted *The Magic Pudding* as a marionette puppet show. When he submitted his ideas to Lindsay, the artist produced 40 drawings of his classic *Magic Pudding* characters as well as illustrations for background scenery. These became the design basis for Scriven's puppets, re-creating Lindsay's original characters for a new medium and a new audience.

Scriven's marionette puppets had first appeared on stage in 1956. The heavy puppets, on three to four metre strings, were manipulated by puppeteers from a platform high above the stage. Scriven's puppets became known generically as Tintookies after a character in a 1958 production. He apparently coined the term from an Aboriginal word meaning 'little people who live in the sandhills'.

**Bill Barnacle**

TOP: PXD 1019/16

LEFT: PXD 1019/40





In 1965, Scriven formed the Marionette Theatre of Australia. By then, Scriven and his Tintookies were household names in Australia.<sup>2</sup> As artistic director, he aimed to produce large-scale, elaborate puppet shows with Australian themes. The company operated for 20 years and toured Scriven's productions throughout Australia and Asia.

For Scriven, *The Magic Pudding* was like *Alice in Wonderland*:

Some of the best portions are in descriptive text, which we had to translate into dialogue in order to capture the spirit of the scene. In style *The Magic Pudding* is completely different from my previous puppet productions. Hitherto I have worked more on the lines of modern American musicals — everything snappy, everything fast. But *The Magic Pudding* calls for a combination of styles, to treat a period affair in a modern manner and know just where the point of balance lies.<sup>3</sup>

The show took three months to construct, rehearse and raise the curtain on the first production. Two hours in duration, with three acts and 12 major scenes, the curtain fell only at the end of each act. Scene changes were achieved by propelling scenery panels along grooves at the back of the stage. The characters appeared to run from scene to scene, but were in fact stationary against moving backgrounds.

*The Magic Pudding* opened at Her Majesty's Theatre in Brisbane on 3 June 1960 and a month later at the Elizabethan Theatre, Newtown, in Sydney. The puppet show was last performed at Sydney's The Rocks Theatre in 1988.

The character of the Magic Pudding is described in the original cast list as the 'Cut-and-Come-Again Pudding'. His snarling voice belonged to actor Gordon Chater. Rod Walker played Bill Barnacle. John Bluthal doubled as the two pudding thieves, Possum and Watkin Wombat. Beryl Marshall was the voice of Bunyip Bluegum, and Peter Carver played the Penguin. The show had 23 characters, and the minor roles were divided among these five principals.

Sam Sawloff

TOP: PXD 1019/14

LEFT: PXD 1019/37





The story opens when Bunyip Bluegum, fed up with his uncle's whiskers getting in the soup, leaves home to see the world. Along the way he meets Bill Barnacle, an ex-sailor, and his penguin shipmate, Sam Sawnoff. Their bad-tempered friend and perpetual food supply is the pudding, who constantly replenishes himself and takes on whatever flavour is desired.

The drama of Scriven's *The Magic Pudding* is centred on the chase. With the desperate pudding thieves in pursuit, the plots and counterplots to gain possession of the Magic Pudding spread chaos across the countryside.

On 30 September 1969, Scriven's Tintookies were destroyed in a fire at a Botany storage facility. The Marionette Theatre of Australia lost 350 puppets, including the original puppets for *The Magic Pudding*.

Peter Scriven, determined to build the puppets again, said, "it is not just a question of money. Some took me months to build and one tends to grow attached to them, almost as if they were animate."<sup>4</sup> The rebuilt *Magic Pudding* puppets toured South-East Asia and appeared at Expo 70 in Osaka, Japan. By the 1970s, Scriven was living in Asia and received his MBE in Singapore in 1970. He died in Brisbane in 1998.

Norman Lindsay's place in Australian children's literature has been secured by this one contribution, *The Magic Pudding*. His much-loved book won instant popularity and acclaim when published in 1918 and is considered an Australian classic. The success of Peter Scriven's Tintookie puppet version of *The Magic Pudding*, 40 years later, is testament to the book's status in Australian children's literature.

## **Louise Anemaat**

Curator

### **Possum**

TOP: PXD 1019/12

LEFT: PXD 1019/31

1. Letter from Norman Lindsay to Angus & Robertson, October 1918, ML MSS 314/52
2. Obituary, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 October 1998
3. Peter Scriven, quoted in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 July 1960
4. Peter Scriven, quoted in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 October 1969





# Item list

## The Pudding & Owners

1. **Albert, the Magic Pudding 1959**  
PXD 1019/22
2. **Bill Barnacle, 1959**  
PXD 1019/40
3. **Sam Sawnoff, 1959**  
PXD 1019/37

## The Cook & Thieves

4. **Possum, 1959**  
PXD 1019/31
5. **Watkin Wombat, 1959**  
PXD 1019/32
6. **Curry and Rice, 1959**  
PXD 1019/39

## The Koala Family

7. **Bunyip Bluegum, 1959**  
PXD 1019/24
8. **Egbert Rumpus Bumpus 1959**  
PXD 1019/36
9. **Uncle Wattleberry, 1959**  
PXD 1019/33

## The Legal Profession

10. **Constable, 1959**  
PXD 1019/34
11. **Court Usher, 1959**  
PXD 1019/35
12. **Judge, 1959**  
PXD 1019/25

## Landscapes

13. **Houses, 1959**  
Reproduction  
PXD 1019/17
14. **Township of Tooraloo, 1959**  
Reproduction  
PXD 1019/18
15. **Tree Houses, 1959**  
Reproduction  
PXD 1019/20

## Accompanying material

16. **Sketch for *The Magic Pudding* c. 1918**  
Pencil  
DL PXX 49 f. 5  
Display period: 15 December 2008  
– 9 February 2009
17. **Sketch for *The Magic Pudding* c. 1918**  
Watercolour wash and pencil  
DL PXX 50 f. 8  
Display period: 15 December 2008  
– 9 February 2009
18. **Sketch for *The Magic Pudding* c. 1918**  
Pen, ink and watercolour  
DL PXX 51 f. 1  
Display period: 10 February  
– 29 March 2009
19. **Sketch for *The Magic Pudding* c. 1918**  
Pen and ink  
DL PXX 56 f. 10  
Display period: 10 February  
– 29 March 2009
20. ***The Magic Pudding, being the adventures of Bunyip Bluegum and his friends Bill Barnacle & Sam Sawnoff***  
Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1918  
Bound volume  
MLQ A823/L749.2/1A1
21. Michael Creighton for the Marionette Theatre of Australia  
***A Puppet Pudding, c. 1980***  
16mm colour film  
B6275
22. **Albert, the Magic Pudding, 1970**  
Marionette puppet  
SBW 06/08/020
23. **Sam Sawnoff, 1970**  
Marionette puppet  
SBW 06/08/047
24. **Bill Barnacle, 1980**  
Rod puppet  
SBW 06/08/002
25. **Bunyip Bluegum, 1980**  
Rod puppet  
SBW 06/08/004

## Watkin Wombat

TOP: PXD 1019/15

LEFT: PXD 1019/32

All works on paper are by Norman Lindsay (1879–1969). Items 1–15 are watercolours purchased in 2008. Items 16–19 were received by bequest of Sir William Dixon in 1952. Puppets were produced for the *Magic Pudding* puppet show by Peter Scriven (1930–1998) and are kindly lent by SBW/NIDA Archives and Performing Arts Collection.

The Picture Gallery presents highlights  
from the State Library's collections.

The State Library acknowledges the generous support  
of the Nelson Meers Foundation and the assistance  
of the volunteer guides in the Picture Gallery.

A free exhibition from 15 December 2008 to 29 March 2009  
Exhibition opening hours: 9 am to 8 pm Monday to Thursday  
9 am to 5 pm Friday, 10 am to 5 pm weekends

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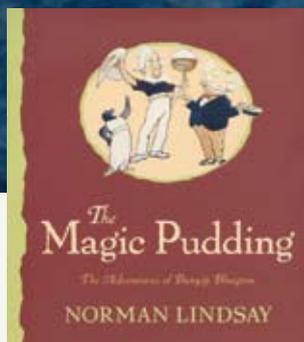
The puppets displayed in the exhibition are kindly lent by the Marionette  
Theatre of Australia Collection, which was transferred by the Australian  
Elizabethan Theatre Trust to the Seaborn Broughton and Walford (SBW)  
Foundation, and are now in the custody of the SBW/NIDA Archives and  
Performing Arts Collection.

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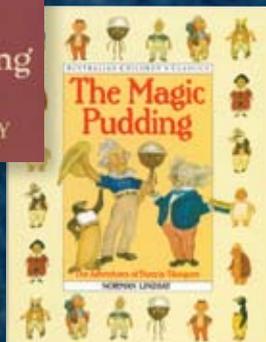
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*Magic Pudding* gifts now available

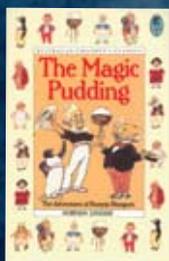
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