



the yellow nineties online

edited by Dennis Denisoff and Lorraine Janzen Kooistra

Alice B(OLINGBROKE) WOODWARD (1862-1951)



*Alice Woodward. Circa 1899.
Promotional photograph. Blackie &
Sons. Private collection.*

Alice B. Woodward was a British illustrator best known for *The Peter Pan Picture Book* (1907), the first illustrated version of the story of Peter Pan, the boy who never grew up. Retold by Daniel O'Connor (1880-1951) from the play by J. M. Barrie (1860-1937), *The Peter Pan Picture Book* proved popular and remained in print in various forms until 1982. Woodward was the fourth of seven children, two boys and five girls, and from their earliest childhood the girls all wanted to be artists. They drew pictures to all their games and the stories they read or invented.

Their father, Henry Woodward (1832-1921), became Keeper of Geology at the natural History Museum in London and the

daughters also drew diagrams for his lectures and made scientific drawings for him and his friends. There is an archive of Alice Woodward's technical illustrations, including beautiful watercolours of shells, at the Natural History Museum in London.

Woodward spent her early years in Chelsea, training at the Westminster School of Art, where she studied under Professor Fred Brown, and the South Kensington Schools (which later became the Royal College of Art). She also spent three

months in Paris at the Académie Julian studying under the symbolist painter Edmond Aman-Jean. In 1885 Woodward exhibited a picture at the Manchester City Art Gallery, and from 1886 until 1890 she exhibited one or two pictures each year at the Royal Institute of British Artists. The pictures ranged from watercolours of domestic scenes and of Dial Yard, Norwich, to illustrations and designs that were described as “for reduction by photography,” i.e. for reproduction by process engraving.

In June 1894 the *Studio* magazine reported an exhibition called “The '91 Art Club At Home” held near Woodward's home in Chelsea. The '91 Art Club, which had about 100 members, was established in 1891 to “promote the intercourse of women artists and to give exhibitions of members' works.” Fifty pictures were shown along with some sculpture. The magazine commented that “the modernity of the work was very striking” [anon]. The article was accompanied by two invitation cards by Alice and one by her sister Ellen, designed for process engraving. In December 1894, at the same venue, Alice had a solo exhibition consisting mainly of sketches in watercolour and pen-and-ink drawings made for reproduction. The watercolours included studies of Norman peasants and landscapes from Gloucestershire.

Joseph Pennell, whom Alice Woodward had met while at Westminster, helped her to take her first steps as a commercial artist. Pennell got her a small commission with the *Daily Chronicle* to contribute two illustrations to a series of articles on life in London, working alongside artists such as Walter Crane, Edward Burne Jones and James McNeil Whistler. Pennell also secured her an invitation to contribute to *A London Garland*, an anthology illustrated by members of the Society of Illustrators who included Aubrey Beardsley, Robert Anning Bell, Crane, Whistler, and Jack B. Yeats. Woodward also contributed two drawings to the first volume of *The Quarto*, an artistic, literary, and musical quarterly to which both Fred Brown and Pennell contributed.

Following Beardsley's death in 1898, Woodward succeeded him as the illustrator

of the last two titles in J. M. Dent's *Bon Mots* series. She also illustrated *Banbury Cross & Other Nursery Rhymes*, the title volume in Dent's "Banbury Cross" series. She was one of the young artists to benefit from the introduction of process engraving and designed a series of striking and original children's books with black and white illustrations for Blackie and Son and other leading publishers. These included such classics as *To Tell the King the Sky is Falling*, *Princess of Hearts* and *Adventures in Toyland*. She was always willing to experiment, and *The Elephant's Apology* was illustrated entirely with fine pencil drawings which were beautifully reproduced in half-tone. For John Lane, in 1902, she illustrated a collection of children's stories by Evelyn Sharp called *Round the World to Wympland*. Surviving correspondence suggests that it was Woodward's striking cover design for the book that prompted its title.

Woodward was also an inventive and talented illustrator of books and stories for adults when given the opportunity, with a particular affinity for the macabre. The best example of this is the edition of Edgar Allan Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* with its beautiful art-nouveau binding design, which she illustrated for the New York publishing house of Howard Wilford Bell in 1904.

Eight of Alice Woodward's works, including a coloured wood-engraving, were included in the English room at the Fifth International Art Exhibition in Barcelona in 1907. From 1907 she worked primarily in colour for George Bell and Sons, following the *Peter Pan Picture Book* with *The Pinafore Picture Book*, and *The Story of the Mikado*. She illustrated a number of titles in Bell's "Queen's Treasure Series" including *Alice in Wonderland* and *Black Beauty*.

During WWI she was tutor to the artist Cicely Mary Barker. After a short period working for Naval Intelligence she went to live in Bushey, where she occupied a studio formerly owned by Hubert Herkomer and where she remained for the remainder of her life.

A completely separate strand of Woodward's work stemmed from the technical

illustrations she had made for her father. In 1895 she was asked to make drawings of the skeleton of an iguanodon and of a reconstruction of the living creature for *The Illustrated London News*. In 1905 she was asked to contribute illustrations of prehistoric creatures to a book called *Nebula to Man* by Henry Knipe and she contributed similar reconstructions to other books and to the *Illustrated London News*, the last of them appearing in 1938.

As an illustrator, Woodward was noted for her graceful and economical line and for her drawings of lively and attractive children. Her illustrative work was signed with a stylised monogram, which she frequently integrated into the drawing, for example as a carving on a tree or piece of furniture or as a design on the hem of a garment.

© 2012, Geoffrey Beare

Geoffrey Beare is a freelance writer and researcher in the history of book illustration. He is chairman of the Imaginative Book Illustration Society and a trustee of the William Heath Robinson Trust. He is author of *The Art of William Heath Robinson* (Dulwich Picture Gallery, 2003), and has published a biography of Alice B. Woodward. His most recent research, on the children's stories and illustrations of Edith Farmiloe, was published in *Studies in Illustration* (45:2010).

Selected Publications with Illustrations by Alice B Woodward

Anon. *Banbury Cross & Other Nursery Rhymes*. London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1895.
Braine, Sheila E. *The Princess of Hearts*. London: Blackie & Son Ltd., [1899].
Braine, Sheila E. *To Tell the King the Sky is Falling*. London: Blackie & Son Ltd., [1896].
Carroll, Lewis (pseud.) *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd., 1913.
Fortescue, Hon. J. W. *The Three Pearls*. London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1916.
Gilbert, W. S. *The Story of the Mikado*. London: Daniel O'Connor, 1921.
Hall, Edith King. *Adventures in Toyland*. London: Blackie & Son Ltd., [1897].
Hendry, Hamish. *Red Apple and Silver Bells*. London: Blackie & Son Ltd., [1897].
Jerrold, Walter. *Bon Mots of the Eighteenth Century*. J. M. Dent & Co., 1897.

- Jerrold, Walter. *Bon Mots of the Nineteenth Century*. J. M. Dent & Co., 1897.
- O'Connor, Daniel. *The Peter Pan Picture Book*. London: George Bell & Sons Ltd., 1907.
- Poe, Edgar Allen. *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*. New York: Howard Wilford Bell, 1904.
- Sharp, Evelyn. *Round the World to Wympland*. London: John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1902.

Selected Publications about Alice B. Woodward

- Anon. "The '91 Art Club at Home". *The Studio*, 15 Jun 1894, 3:96.
- Beare, Geoffrey. "The Life and Work of Alice Bolingbroke Woodward (1862-1951)". *IBIS Journal 1: Aspects of Illustration*. London: The Imaginative Book Illustration Society, 1999, 70-144.
- White, Gleeson. *Children's Books and their Illustrators*, London: *The Studio*, 1897.