

SET 1

Jack and Ben have set off to go fishing. The sun is shining and the air is warm. They choose a good place beside the brook where the bank is not very steep.

This time they are hoping to get a good catch.

After a long time they still have no fish, so they begin to chat.

'I think this is the wrong place,' says Jack. 'Just down there where that tree trunk sticks out over the water looks much better. That's the sort of dark place where the fish will breed.'

Then he gets up and goes to have a look.

'No thanks,' says Ben. 'Remember last time when I tried to stretch out too far and fell in. I got very wet, and my rod was broken. You can stick your neck out and be brave if you want to. But don't blame me if you fall in. Have a look at those black clouds. There's a breeze coming up and it will start to rain soon.'

SET 2

The streets of the town seemed very still. There were lights here and there but no noise at all. They went right at the next corner, hoping they might see the shop lights on in front of them. The sight of the bright lights shining out at them made them pleased. Now they knew it was fish and chips for supper tonight. They had to wait a long time for the chips. At last they got what they had come for.

Out they went again into the black frosty night. It did not seem so bad this time. Somehow they got home in much less time than it had taken before.

SET 3

'You can enjoy yourself with an old bike like this. It's the same as those stock car races where they have cars as old as they can.'

'But they smash all the cars up in races like that!'

'Yes, I know they do but they smash the cars up because they want to. They mean to do it.'

'Well, I'm not setting out to smash my bike up. There's no sense in doing that is there? Anyway you go down the hill, and watch me as I turn into that field at the bottom. I bet I'll be doing about forty as I'm passing you.'

'OK Jack, but wait a bit. I'll go and give you a wave from the bottom of the hill, to tell you when to start.'

Ben goes down the hill, while Jack waits at the top.

'The gate's open, so that's all right. But just a minute, somebody's put a stack of bales of hay just inside the gate. Jack can't miss them if he's going fast. If he hits them at forty he'll finish up with egg-shaped wheels. And he'll take off like a rocket as well!'

'Why is Ben just standing at the bottom of the hill? Well, anyway, I'm not waiting any more. He's going to get the biggest shock of his life when I go past him at forty into that empty field.'

SET 4

Robin Hood saw that Friar Tuck was very much awake. He put his sword at the big man's neck. 'Now, Friar, you will take me over the river here.'

So Robin got on Friar Tuck's back, and gave him a sharp smack with his sword. They went on into the water.

When they were some way across, Friar Tuck gave a jerk. Robin fell into the water. When he got up, he found Friar Tuck had his sword out. 'Now, my cheeky chap,' said the Friar, 'It's your turn to carry me the rest of the way.'

So the Friar made Robin take him across the rest of the river on his back. Friar Tuck was a big man, and Robin fell down when he got to the bank. Friar Tuck also fell. Soon they got up and were fighting each other. The swords rang out, clang, bang, smash, clash.

All at once they saw other men coming at them with swords. Friar Tuck turned to fight them off, while Robin got out his hunting horn. With that he sent out a call to his men to come and help him. Soon the wood was full of men in green coming to help Robin Hood. The other men ran off as fast as they could go.

SET 5

I like coming to visit Uncle Alan. What I like best is getting away from town, with all its crowds and noise. All those cars, buses and trucks make noise and smells. They'll knock you down as well if you don't get out of the way as quick as you can. But here its nice and quiet, and nothing happens at all.

That's good, Uncle Alan's left his ladder out. Now I can get up that tree, like I've been wanting to for ages.

Up here I can see everything. I can see right to the main road, and that must be two miles off. What a lovely afternoon it is. I can see people playing cricket over there.

Well, I've been up here at least a half of an hour. I'd better go down and see if tea's ready yet. Now, which branch did I lean the ladder on? Where's the ladder gone? Somebody's taken the ladder away! It's a five metre drop down to those roots. If I jump I'll have a broken leg or something! Uncle Alan! Help! Help!

SET 6

Tom and Mike reached the camp site quite late. Tom stopped his motor bike about ten metres from the camp fire.

'You're later than we hoped you would be,' said Jack.

'My headlight packed in, that's why,' said Tom.

'But that's not all,' said Mike, grinning. 'Go on, Tom, tell them what happened.' Tom didn't want to, but the others shouted at him so much that he had to tell them.

'Well, you see, we met a cow. There we were, coming slowly down the road at about twenty miles an hour. The bike's light was a bit weak, and I saw a cow standing in the middle of the road. I thought to myself, "Tom, you must be very tired.

Everybody knows there isn't a cow round here for miles, so you must be seeing things". Then suddenly we hit the cow – thump!

'Did you knock it down?'

'No we didn't. It was the biggest cow I've ever seen. The bike went under it, and carried on, leaving me hanging over its back. I saw Mike sail over its rear end into some bushes. Then I fell off backwards and lay in the road looking up at it. It looked round at me sitting there and then walked slowly away into the darkness.'

SET 7

It was autumn and Sally was on a visit to friends in the country. Every year she and her brother Martin had these few days away at the very end of the summer. There were clear skies, but the air was quite cold.

Sally and Martin were down by the river. As they walked they were talking about what they could do to pass the time that night.

All at once there was a shout from further up the river. 'What was that?' asked Martin.

'I don't know,' said Sally. 'Let's run further up and see if anyone is there.'

They soon saw the boy in the water. 'What a silly thing to do!' yelled Sally. 'Fancy swimming in a cold river on a day like this!' Luckily she had jeans on and strong boots. Martin held a big branch across the river just downstream. Sally half-jumped and half-swam the few metres to the boy and then tried to get back to Martin with him. She missed the rock she was hoping to grab, but held on to the branch which Martin swung round for them. She gave a pull and a push and got the boy on to the rocks at the river side. He was gasping, panting and shivering, and so was Sally.

SET 8

Ben had given his neighbour a promise. Yes, he would keep an eye on her house while she was away.

When he went there that night with Jack it was dark and rather cold, with a nip of frost in the air. Inside the house was cold too, but everything was all right.

Suddenly the boys heard a funny noise outside. 'What's that?' said Jack.

'I don't know,' said Ben, grabbing a stick. 'But you go out that way – and I'll go this way.'

After waiting a bit, Ben went out into the darkness. He went very slowly and carefully round the end of the house. Then he heard Jack give a quiet laugh and say, 'Here, Ben, come and have a look at this.'

Ben took a few quick steps towards Jack. All at once something bumped into Ben's leg. There was a shrill cry and Ben could not help stumbling. As he fell forward, he put his arms up. Ben's hands, and his stick, hit Jack right in the face and they both fell down. They yelled, and got to their feet as quickly as they could to get away from the stinging nettles.

'You idiot!' shouted Jack. 'I only wanted to show you where the cat had put her kittens. Now I'll have a black eye. Ow! These nettle stings hurt!'

SET 9

In 1933 two airmen flew over the top of Mount Everest. They were the first men to see the top of the mountain.

Mount Everest is nearly 9,000 metres high. It was finally climbed for the first time in 1953. Before that there had been seven groups of climbers who had tried to climb it.

The 1953 party set up eight camps in all, each of them nearer to the peak of Everest. Camp 8 was the last one before the big effort to reach the top. Two climbers set off from this last camp on 28 May 1953 to try to climb the last 1,000 metres to the top. They had to carry a big load of climbing kit and they wore masks to help them breathe and to keep them alive.

At about 8,000 metres they found a flat place. There they set up their tent for the night. Someone once made the remark that this tent was 'the highest house in the world'.

They started climbing at 6 o'clock next morning. By 9 o'clock they were in sight of the summit. They had to cut steps along the edge of a narrow ridge. But at last they struggled to the top, which was a sharp, pointed spike of frozen snow. It was half-past eleven in the morning.

To mark the 50 years since 1953, 50 groups set off to climb Everest in 2003.

SET 10

I was just a boy when the great Spanish Armada came. I helped with the guns on our ship, bringing powder when fighting started. I've seen a lot of fighting since then but I remember that first day best.

The great tall ships of the Spanish lay there ahead of us. They were watching a few English ships sailing beyond them, so they didn't see us at first.

When we got closer they suddenly saw us. Their ships were full of soldiers in suits of armour, with helmets and great long pikes.

They looked a grand sight, and they frightened me, I must admit. Then, as we went past them, they started to shoot. Our gunners cheered, because the enemy shots just splashed into the sea. Their guns were too small and weak to hit us hard.

We carried on across the Spanish rear to reach their left wing.

The ships here were stuck out on their own. The wind was against any others who might have wanted to help them.

Then we ran out our heavy guns. We cheered Queen Elizabeth as we opened fire, but we gave blessings to old King Harry. He was the man who had ordered these ships to be made. Our guns roared out together and taught the Spanish what real guns were. They couldn't touch us, but by heaven they were brave.

I've never seen braver men.

SET 11

China has far more people than any other country. She claims, with good cause, to have the longest history in the world.

In the England of King Alfred, men could write and copy books.

They did this by hand with pen and with paint brush. In China, at the same time, they could print books by using wood-cut blocks.

Long before the birth of Christ the Chinese had trade-routes to Tibet and India.

Then for hundreds of years China and her rulers had little contact with the rest of the world. Right across the north of their land they still had the Great Wall of China. This had been built almost two thousand years ago. It is roughly 10 metres high, and 5 metres wide at the top. It crosses hills, valleys, rivers, rocks and sand. Its total length is about one thousand five hundred miles.

However, things have now changed. China has become a world power. She has many new factories, roads, bridges and dams.

More and more tourists are visiting China and learning about the history of the Chinese people.

SET 12

Mike and Tom were resting on the hillside on their way home from fishing.

Tom suddenly pointed down the valley. 'Look at that idiot with that bus. Fancy bringing a coach that size down a country road. There's no room for it. What if something comes the other way?'

Just then they saw a car coming in the other direction. The coach and the car went to meet each other without either driver knowing it.

The high walls and the trees blocked off their view. The coach and the car almost hit each other at a sharp bend. The car turned right, and smashed partly through a gate and partly through the wall.

Mike tried to phone for help, but there was no signal for his mobile phone in such a remote area.

Mike and Tom ran faster than they had ever run before. Tom remained by the crash, while Mike sprinted down to the village. In the telephone box he rang 999.

'There's been an accident about a mile out on the moor road. A coach and a car are both off the road and some people are hurt.'

The voice on the phone said, 'Can you tell me where the crash happened?' Mike told him and the emergency operator said, 'Help will reach you shortly'.

'I'll go back straight away then,' replied Mike and he was off like a shot, back up the road.