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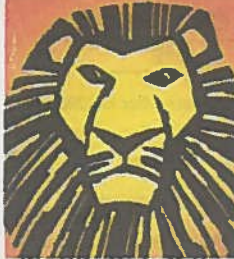
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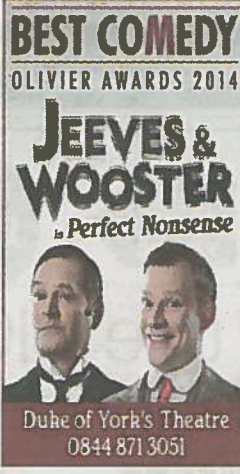
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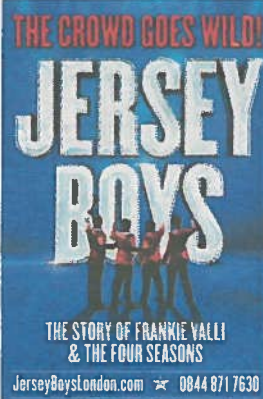


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Weekend Books

Blood lines and growing pains

COLD BLOOD: Adventures With Reptiles And Amphibians ★★★★★
by Richard Kerridge
Chatto & Windus £14.99
(RRP £16.99)

RICHARD KERRIDGE may have given his memoir the title *Cold Blood* but there's a warm-blooded feeling in this perceptive and original piece of writing.

It goes a lot deeper than the dirty puddles and ditches the writer spent his formative years delving around in, hunting out newts, frogs and toads.

A child of the 1960s, the title Kerridge has chosen could equally refer to the awkward and difficult relationship he had with his dad.

His father Paul was a complex and troubled character. We learn later that he was a tank gunner in France in the weeks after D-Day, wounded in the leg by shrapnel. The strange night-time noises his son hears are his father's nightmares of being shot at again.

They clash over his choice of friends, his school, the heavy expectations father has for son. Tension is in the air, arguments, rage. It's partly what drove the young boy towards his special relationship with nature and to become a small game hunter.

He writes: "When I was young my love of expeditions into wild nature - my love of the thought of wild nature being out there - was an escape from a home where I knew I was loved, yet



SEARCHING: Kerridge also examines his hidden depths

where I was often frightened and angry."

His escape is to go to catch things. Young boys in the 1960s are able to net newts, capture frogs and trap toads. The countryside is their playground and species such as the great crested newt - today the subject of massively strict conservation laws - are fair game for Richard and his equally reptile-crazy pals as they create their back garden zoos.

However they don't just want to collect them, the young Richie and his pals Micro, Ade and Phil aren't a real-life *Just William* and his gang. Learning about the creatures they have captured is important to their adventures. It means the adult Kerridge

writes with understanding gained over the decades.

He takes us on a modern day tour of our islands, peering in ponds and scouring the sand dunes to uncover hidden nat

It's a world constantly under threat from man and Kerridge passionate about the need to protect the dwindling habitats creatures such as the natterjack toad. You feel his pain when describing the mass destruction of toads flattened by motorists as they cross roads on their way to breeding grounds.

The author weaves his stoic conservation, of natural history and of his growing pains skillfully and seamlessly together.

Kerridge writes vividly of the natural world: the savage drama of mating toads, the dangerous dark charisma of the adder.

Milestones along his journey adulthood are also chronicled in his compelling, poetic style.

Young Richie gets a sex education lesson stumbling across young lovers hidden in the sand dunes, is approached by what appears to be a paedophile on one of his animal hunts and snogs a girl at a party.

Eventually he finds love with a girl who accompanies him on one of his expeditions.

There are losses along the way. One of the gang dies tragically young in a motorcycle accident.

However the biggest loss is his father who also dies suddenly in a car crash. Father and son become closer in the days before his death finally enjoying each other's company. Truces call in their battles as blood proves thicker than water.

GERARD HENDERSON

THE PICK OF THIS WEEK'S PAPERBACKS

HOW TO ENJOY THE WORLD CUP ★★★★★
by Chris England
Old Street, £7.49
(RRP £7.99)



The essential guide to next month's football festivities from an appropriately named guru.

This book is packed with all things football from classic tricks to amaze your friends to quizzes, wallcharts, recipes (piranha soup anyone?), movies, star-gazing and the enemy-smashing Voodoo-teo.

UNDER A SILENT MOON ★★★★★
by Elizabeth Haynes
Sphere, £6.99
(RRP £6.99)



Taking her place in the crowded

world of police procedurals is newcomer DCI Louisa Smith. Early one morning she finds herself involved in two murder investigations. What is the link between the two women that resulted in their deaths?

Haynes has worked for the last seven years in a police intelligence unit and her experience ensures the book oozes authenticity.

THE A-LIST FAMILY ★★★
by Christina Hopkinson



Hodder & Stoughton, £6.99 (RRP £6.99)
Enter the world of the rich and very famous with Anna, a nanny employed to look after the daughter of a super-wealthy power couple.

This hilariously lifts the shades on an über-glamorous world where the paparazzi turn

up for the school run, everyone knows your name and your bikini body has to last all year.

When she was on the outside Anna longed to be on the inside. Now she is, she wonders if she can ever escape.

THE FAITHFUL EXECUTIONER ★★★★★

by Joel F Harrington
Vintage, £9.99
(RRP £10.99)



This biography of 16th-century executioner and torturer Frantz Schmidt opens a window on a gruesome world. Schmidt performed 394 executions in his 45-year career before retiring to concentrate on what he'd always regarded as his true calling: medicine.

Harrington examines the paradox of a man who could be cruel and compassionate.

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