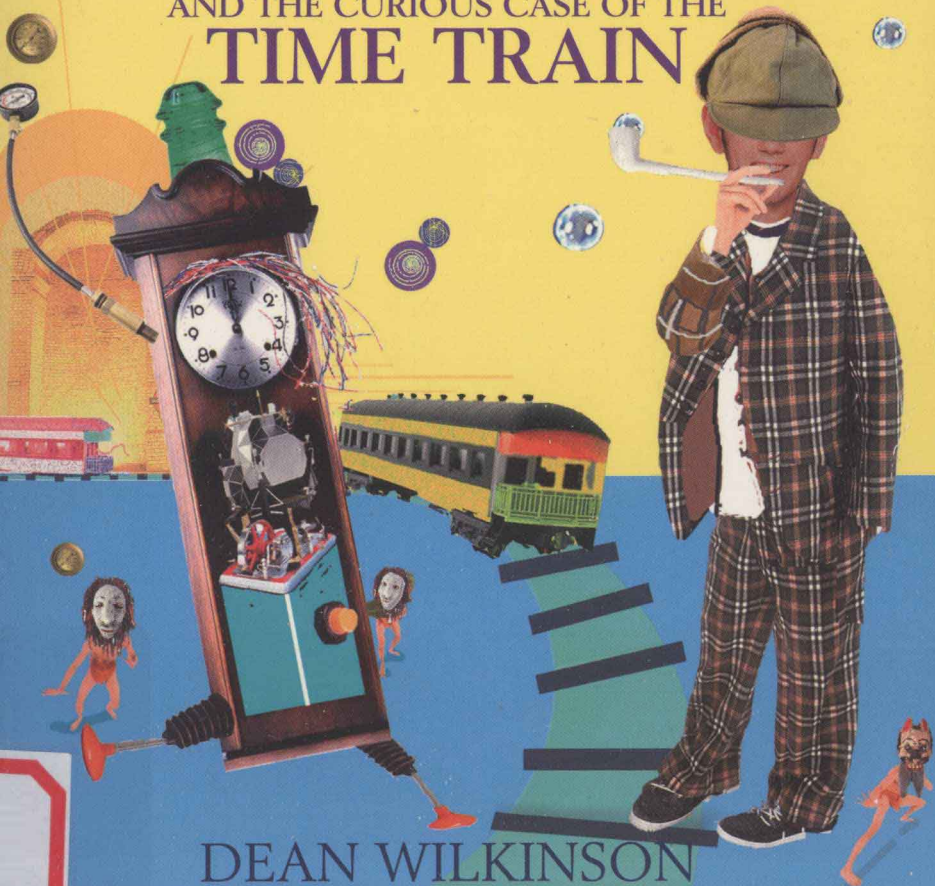


# ARTHUR KING

AND THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE  
TIME TRAIN



DEAN WILKINSON

CHOLASTIC

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AND THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE

TIME TRAVELER

江苏工业学院图书馆

藏书章

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Catch up on Arthur's first adventure:

# THE LEGEND OF ARTHUR KING



*"My noble lord," gasped the flabbergasted youth, "You are Arthur, King of the Britons! You are the reborn spirit of Arthur Pendragon!"*

*"Eh?" queried Arthur.*

*"You've found Excalibur! You have freed the sacred sword! You are King Arthur, you dozy twonk!"*

*"Oh," said Arthur dumbly. "Nice one."*

A series of astounding coincidences leads 13-year-old oddball Arthur King to believe he is the reincarnation of the legendary King Arthur, once and future king of England. With his equally impressionable new friend Lawrence, Arthur finds a sword buried deep in the condemned Albion Wood and what follows is a story – nay, legend – of bravery, honour and trying to get off with his mate's older sister.

Can Arthur. . .

*. . .defeat Barry "thicker than a giant's greenie" Guthries?*

*. . .save Albion Wood, home to a species of magical bird?*

*. . .win the hand of his Queen Gwen who would actually rather use that hand to punch him in the face?*

# ARTHUR KING



## AND THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE TIME TRAIN

"The Ghost Train legend is from the era that Holmes first appeared in the *Strand Magazine*. It's fate that we should realize who we are meant to be just as the Ghost Train returns. Arthur, we have a mystery to solve."

"Yes, and as soon as I prove that Mr Toppol is a pervert, unfit to teach in this school, we shall solve that mystery. Hmm, I shall put him under surveillance."

"No, Arthur, Mr Toppol doesn't enter into this. It's the Ghost Train that's the mystery."

"Then he's something to do with that very mystery and I shall not rest until I implicate him in the dire plot. Whatever that dire plot is, of course. Until the striking of the lunch-bell, Watson," said Arthur in his best upper-class English accent, striding proudly into school.

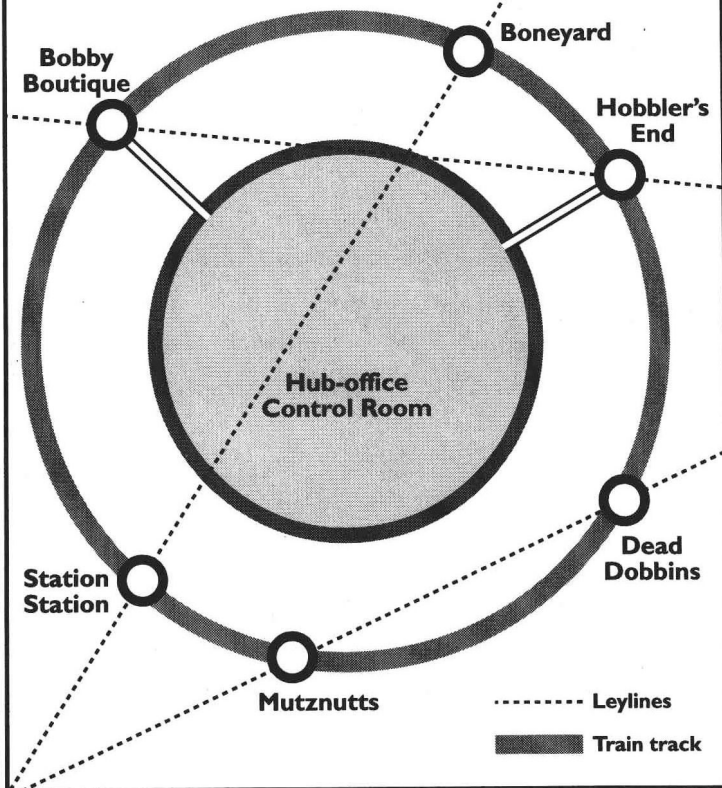
Look out for Arthur's first adventure:

## THE LEGEND OF ARTHUR KING

*For my other daughter,  
Alice Wilkinson*



## CIRCLE LINE



Manufactured by  
**TOPPOL TRANSPORT 1898**



# PROLOGUE

*If you see the tracks vibrating,  
The light approaching and ghosts all waiting,  
Don't be worried in your bed,  
'Tis only the ghost train – for you be dead.*

Thornaby children's rhyme from around 1900

**S**ome old nursery rhymes have a basis in fact. "Ring a ring o' Roses" is based on the bubonic plague.

*A-tishoo a-tishoo we all fall down.*

That refers to the symptoms of the plague and the eventual falling down is the agonizing death. Which is nice for kiddies to sing about.

The Thornaby Ghost Train rhyme was a warning to kiddies to go to sleep and stay asleep all night. Otherwise they might hear the fabled Ghost Train which came for people who'd died in their sleep to

take them off to the next world. If the people had been good, they got there straight away in first class, being served free tea and nice biscuits by resplendent angel trolley dollies. If they were bad people they had to sit in second class, in cramped smelly seats at the very back of the train so their journey took much longer.

It's interesting all our favourite nursery rhymes and fairy tales hark from times long gone. Perhaps in a few hundred years life and events of today will be remembered in such a way. Perhaps your descendants' kids will be singing. . .

***There's A Shopping Trolley In The Beck!***

(To the tune of "Three Blind Mice")

*Oh flipping heck!*

*There's a shopping trolley in the beck.*

*It's just there next to the burnt-out Mazda.*

*It's rusted and bent and I think it's from Asda.*

*Oh flipping heck!*

*There's a shopping trolley in the beck.*

Or telling fairy tales like . . . *Three Little Soap Stars Went To Town* (and disgraced themselves).

Or tongue twisters like . . . *Beckham Bounced And Booted His British Balls For Blighty.*

Perhaps.

So what has the old Thornaby Ghost Train rhyme have to do with anything today? What was it based on? Well, if you really want to know you're going to

have to read the whole book. So if you are reading this bit stood in some fancy bookshop, take it to the till and pay for it, damn you.

**The Lord of Time's Prayer**  
as offered by The Cult of Temporal Renewal,  
circa 1900

*Our father time, who art in perpetual motion,  
In decade and aeon be thy name,  
Thy moments come, tick-tock be done,  
In hours as it is in seconds.  
Give us thy days 24 – 7 – 365,  
Forgive not those who waste time unlike us,  
And lead us not into bad time-keeping,  
Deliver us from Newton,  
Never ever is for ever,  
Amen.*

# CHAPTER ONE

**T**he cat sat on the mat and wondered what the hell was going on. The black, middle-aged moggy usually had Sherwood Road to itself after midnight, even on a Thursday night – practically the beginning of the weekend. Apart from the occasional drunk, or taxi, or taxi full of drunks, or another cat from the really scruffy end of Thornaby looking for a fight, that is. Tonight was no exception. It was alone in the car port of number 55, but it sensed that things weren't right. There were strange vibrations coming from below the paths and road. The very ground seemed to resonate slightly and there was a low rumbling noise. The cat's hackles straightened, but it didn't know what it was frightened of. It walked out into the street and looked around. The rumbling died down and the cat felt braver. It slunk over to a gutter and peered down, seeing its own reflection gazing back up at it from the dirty water. It hissed at the wobbly moggy that lived down there which always responded at the exact same time. A few minutes later the

vibration returned and then went again. The cat walked over to a metal manhole cover, sat on it and listened carefully.

Nothing.

Nothing at all.

Then suddenly something.

The cover burst off the manhole and shot up into the night air taking the cat with it. A huge blast of twinkling static electricity billowed out of the hole and arced across the street, instantly clinging to the metal doorhandle of the nearest house. The electricity flickered and vanished, leaving what can only be described as a Rip, or tear, in the night air showing multi-coloured flashes inside it. The baffling enigma hung in the air until a breeze gently wafted it closer towards the house.

\* \* \*

Melvyn Havilland didn't live in a house any more. Since the 67 year old's young girlfriend moved in (Lynn was 61) his lonely old council house in Sherwood Road had magically transformed into a home. She'd turned his lonely world upside down and he was eternally grateful for that. Apart from filling a big hole in his life, he was seeing things he'd never seen before, or hadn't for some time. She cooked him three square meals a day and he saw what proper nutrition meant. (That it wasn't making sure you changed the flavours of the three Pot Noodles you had in any 24 hours.) When she

hoovered up Mel saw a need for pride in one's surroundings, not to mention the pattern on the carpet he hadn't seen in ten years. And when she cleaned his windows Mel saw the garden he'd forgotten about too.

More importantly he saw that no matter your age, you're never too old to fall in love.

He was in his kitchen slapping a radio clock that had gone silly. He had put the kettle on the gas and lit a match when he noticed the digits on the clock display flickering and changing rapidly, going first forward, then back, then forward again.

"Useless piece of junk," he said as he dropped it back on to the kitchen sideboard. He checked his wristwatch and it too was being daft, the hands whirring first forward then back. He slapped the face and gave up trying to find out the exact time. Besides, he knew it was just after midnight because that's when the ten minute Naughty TV free-view ended on cable.

The kettle was boiling so he turned off the gas and reached for two mugs. He smiled, as he always did when making late night cocoa, because he no longer needed one cup, he was a two-cup guy now. Glancing outside into the inky black night he thought he saw what looked like a cat land on his front lawn and scamper away. Then a metal manhole cover landed in the grass with a *shump* noise as it stopped dead, half embedded in the lawn. Mel blinked his eyes and decided he was more tired than he realized.

Then it happened.

His body jolted and froze. He dropped the cups, but they didn't immediately smash on the floor. They stopped dead and just hung in the air. Everything seemed to suddenly stop, even the sound of the kettle's gentle bubbling. Mel's eyes seemed to slam shut for a moment and . . . then it was over.

Smash went the cups.

He steadied himself on the fridge and wondered what was happening to him.

A stroke?

Heart attack?

No, just a dizzy spell and it was quickly subsiding. All he felt now was a tad breathless and light-headed.

"Morning, lover," said Lynn, entering the kitchen drying her hair with a towel. Mel swung round to see her and yelled. She pulled a puzzled face. "I never heard you come to bed last night. Or get up for that matter." Then she noticed the smashed crockery and the look of sheer panic on Mel's face.

He was trying to take in what she had said. He glanced out of the window and where, only seconds ago, he'd seen the dark, orange streetlamp-lit road, he saw a bright sunlit early morning view. He touched the kettle and it was stone cold. He looked at his watch: it now said 7:37.

Mel Havilland had just lost over seven hours of his life and he hadn't the faintest idea of how it had happened. He felt a fresh wave of panic wash over



him and he ran upstairs to his bedroom and sought out a cardboard box at the back of the wardrobe. He ripped open the lid and took out what was inside and gulped. It was a cat's head atop a rusty spike mounted on an old wooden board. The thing was long dead, half mummified, half decayed and its eyes were sewn shut. As keeper of The Grinning Cat's Head, Mel had seen this grizzly thing a million times, but even he was alarmed to see this barometer of evil smiling so widely. He knew that the bigger the grin the bigger the misfortune coming to the area. And he had never in his many years seen such a happy-looking thing of evil.

\* \* \*

Gwen Lott reached over and slapped the snooze button on her alarm clock for the fourth time. 7:40 a.m., it read. She knew she couldn't allow herself another ten minutes' snooze as she had to get ready for school. She got up, yawned, and stepped over to the window. She pulled back the curtains and instantly woke up fully with a scream. For outside her window was Arthur King, his nose pressed against the glass and smiling idiotically.

"Good morning, Gwen. Hope I didn't startle you," he said nicely. "I just wanted to show you something."

"Arthur! What are you doing outside my bedroom window?" she bellowed.

Then she suddenly realized something else. "My upstairs bedroom window!"