

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Jim Smith Rediscovered

**Oxford, 5 July 2011** – From doing sketches for extra rations from his WW2 Japanese guards, to illustrating children’s books, Jim Smith was a unique artist and storyteller. A forthcoming exhibition of his artwork re-launches three of Jim’s well-loved children’s books for a new generation.

Brilliantly illustrated throughout with Jim’s ingenious and highly-distinctive watercolour drawings, *The Frog Band and the Onion Seller*, *The Frog Band and the Mystery of Lion Castle*, and *Alphonse and the Stonehenge Mystery* are being re-published and will be launched at the exhibition, *Drawing on Salisbury: Jim Smith’s Frog Band Illustrations* at the Salisbury Museum on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

Jim’s imaginative and witty stories evolved from tales he made up for his children, and were inspired by Jim’s childhood in Salisbury in the 1920s and 30s. The books follow the adventures of a joyously eccentric cast of animal characters, including the merry Frog Band itself, led by the ever-cheerful Johann S. Frog; trench-coated castle-owner Brooker Lion; down-at-heel Duke de Buffo Buffo; and suave Alphonse le Flic, eminent detective.

Publisher Richard Wheeler said: ‘These stories were read to me by my father when I was a boy, and have stayed with me like no other books from my childhood. The illustrations were quite unlike anything I had seen before, and remain so. Looking at them again, as a father myself now, I appreciate what a beguiling and rare thing true originality is in a children’s book. It is thrilling for me to see these books re-published for a new generation of children.’

The books are being produced as paperbacks with flaps at £6.99 each, available from Fircone Books.

**For a review copy or more information please contact:**

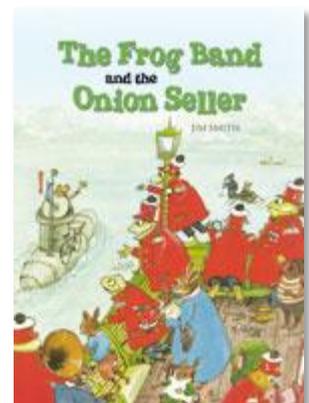
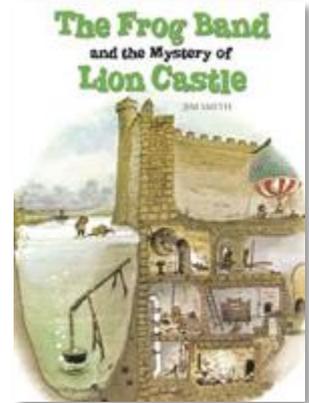
**Su Wheeler, Fircone Books Ltd**

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## Quotes

'I love these books ... they are brilliant works that deserve recognition.'

'The Frog Band Stories were tales [Jim] used to tell to his children as they were growing up and he wrote and illustrated all the books beautifully himself. ... They are a real treasure!'

## NOTES TO THE EDITOR

- Fircone Books Ltd is an independent publishing company on the Oxfordshire / Northamptonshire border specialising in covetable and nostalgic illustrated children's books and books on church art and architecture. Details at [www.firconebooks.com](http://www.firconebooks.com)
- **Jim Smith** was born in 1920. He left school at the age of 14, worked as a delivery boy and cinema projectionist before joining the RAF as a radar-technician. He survived three years as a Japanese POW (partly through his skills as a self-taught artist, by drawing and painting pictures for his guards), returned home and married Mary (who he'd known for just three days prior to the outbreak of war, and with whom he had three children), opened 'The Little Junk Shop' in Salisbury with Mary, and wrote and illustrated a series of children's books. Jim died in 1990.
- **Drawing on Salisbury: Jim Smith's Frog Band Illustrations at Salisbury Museum** runs from 1 October 2011 until 7 January 2012 and ties in with this year's Big Draw. More information at [www.salisburymuseum.org.uk](http://www.salisburymuseum.org.uk) or contact Kim Chittick, Exhibitions Officer, on 01722 820546 or [kimchittick@salisburymuseum.org.uk](mailto:kimchittick@salisburymuseum.org.uk)
- The theme for this year's October **Big Draw** is 'Drawing Age' which explores the importance of drawing in our lives. Details at [www.campaignfordrawing.org/bigdraw](http://www.campaignfordrawing.org/bigdraw)
- Images available upon request. Full cover images can be seen at <http://www.firconebooks.com/page11.htm> and uncorrected PDF proofs available upon request.

***The Frog Band and the Onion Seller***, Fircone Books

Jim Smith

ISBN 978-1-907700-01-9

(first published in the UK in 1976)

***The Frog Band and the Mystery of Lion Castle***, Fircone Books

Jim Smith

ISBN 978-1-907700-02-6

(first published in the UK in 1978)

***Alphonse and the Stonehenge Mystery***, Fircone Books

Jim Smith

ISBN 978-1-907700-03-3

(first published in the UK in 1979)

### Each title:

32pp fully illustrated, 286 x 208 mm, paperback with flaps

**Price:** £6.99 each

**Publication:** 1 October 2011