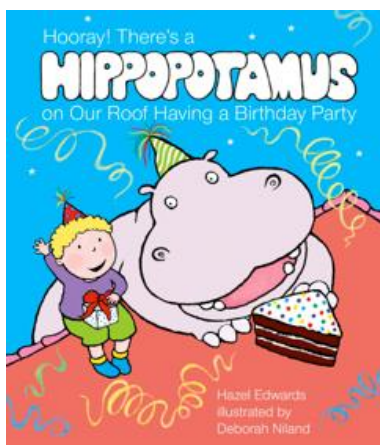


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THE INSIDE SCOOP



Interview with **Hazel Edwards**

I was first published when I was 27: I had my first book and first baby in the same year. That ex-baby, Kim, is now my marketing manager.

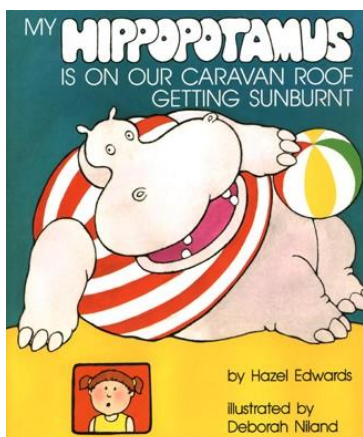
'*General Store*' (Hodder & Stoughton, 1977) was my first published book and that was translated into Finnish too. A great thrill. My third published book was '*There's a Hippopotamus on Our Roof Eating Cake*' (Hodder & Stoughton, 1980). Considering the number of times that title has been written on forms, I should have chosen a shorter one.

The latest '*Ho! Ho! Ho! There's a Hippopotamus on Our Roof Eating Christmas Cake*' (PenguinRandomHouse 2018) is my 213th book. But this is across almost 50 years of writing for adults, non-fiction, YA, junior readers, picture books plus translations and multi-media adaptations and some co-written projects. Not forgetting the rejections, too. Or the projects recycled into new formats. And I still have one Antarctic project in my bottom drawer.

To survive long-term as an author in the small Australian market takes consistent work, skills of 'authorpreneurship' and learning how to write in different ways.

There's a Hippopotamus on Our Roof Eating Cake is surely your most popular children's book.

Did you ever expect it to become as popular as it is? Why do you think it's so popular?

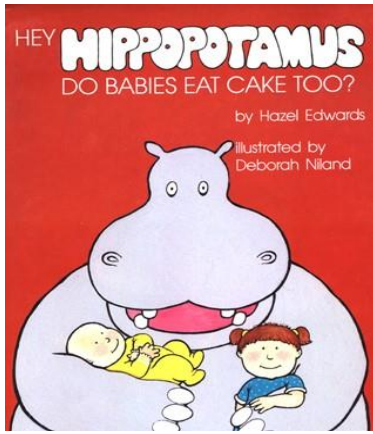


The cake-eating hippo offers reassurance, especially for apprehensive children experiencing a new challenge like starting school, going to hospital or even having a birthday party. We'd all like a big imaginary friend who solves our problems. Even adults. So it explores a universal feeling.

I knew the story had a rhythm and was choreographed emotionally, but I didn't expect it to be so popular.

Where did the idea come from for There's a Hippopotamus on the Roof Eating Cake?

First published in 1980, the original '*There's a Hippopotamus on Our Roof Eating Cake*' was conceived in 1978 after our new roof leaked. Deborah Niland's illustrations are now part of many children's imaginative history. The simplicity and reassurance of a big, colourful imaginary friend with all the answers, seems to reassure, especially children with special challenges.



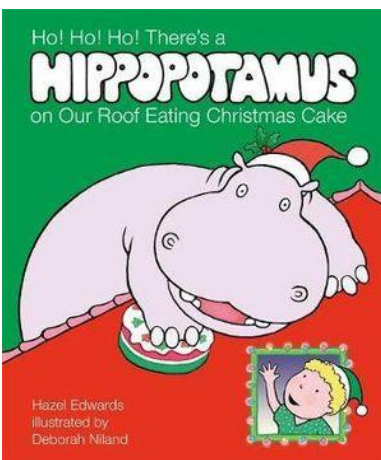
The hippocampus is the part of the brain where memory forming, organising and imagination resides. Mine is almost full, especially after 50 years of creating stories, but the cake-eating hippo is the character for whom readers have the greatest affection and which attracts the quirkiest anecdotes.

Can you talk about the submission process for the book and who picked it up?

Margaret Hamilton was the wonderful Hodder publisher and editor who accepted the ms and chose Deborah Niland to illustrate it.

How many books in the series? Seven picture books.

What are their titles and dates of publication?



Originally published by Hodder, and illustrated by Deborah Niland, all titles are now with Penguin Random House. In between there have been annual reprints and translations into Japanese and Chinese plus a Pocket Bonfire film and a touring musical with Garry Ginivan, so there are multiple ISBN numbers.

There's a Hippopotamus on My Roof Eating Cake 1980

My Hippopotamus is on the Caravan Roof Getting Sunburnt 1990

Hey Hippopotamus, Do Babies Eat Cake Too? 1992

Look, there's a Hippopotamus in the Playground, Eating Cake! 1994

Guess What: There's a Hippo on the Hospital Roof Eating Cake' 1997

Hooray! There's a Hippopotamus on Our Roof Having a Birthday

Party 2010

What is your most recent hippopotamus on the roof book?

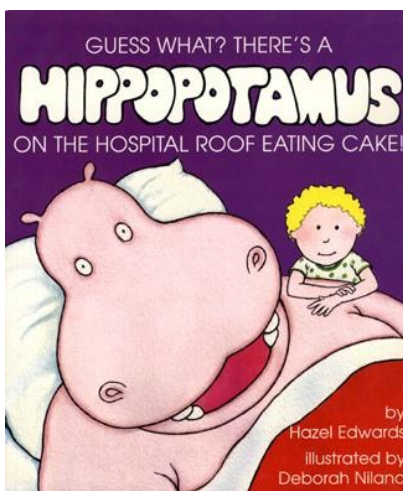
Ho! Ho! Ho! There's a Hippopotamus on Our Roof Eating Christmas Cake. Penguin have issued hippo biscuit cutters and gingerbread recipes and gift tags with the book.

Are you active on social media?

My website www.hazeledwards.com has direct links to my social media including Twitter and Instagram which are the most effective.

What are some of the most interesting things that have happened over the years with regards to

promotion of your hippo on the roof books? Have you had much fan mail?



In my memoir *Not Just a Piece of Cake; Being an Author* (Brolga 2015), a candid account of the workstyle of a long-term author who also has a family, I compiled 100 historic memories which related to fans and the joy of being involved with such a book. Here is a small selection:

1. Knock at my front door. Small child: 'Excuse me. Is this the house where the hippo lives on the roof?' Answer: 'Have a look.'
2. A Danish Palace note of thanks (with gold crown) from Princess Mary for autographed Hippo book Australia Government sent as official gift of the imagination for

the birth of her daughter.

3. Fan letter addressed to: The Hippo, Blackburn South, and delivered in person to author by the smiling mailman.
4. 'That was my favourite book when I was a child,' Bearded bikie with tats passing an autographing in a bookshop, while pre-schoolers listened wide-eyed. 'Reading's cool!'
5. Principal, an ex-rugby player, accepted challenge to eat cake on school roof, in hippo costume, and read the book aloud if his students surpassed their reading quotas. They did. And despite fearing heights, he kept his promise.

What has been your most satisfying moment as an author?

My most satisfying creative moment was watching the *Hippo the Musical*, with my 7-year-old grandson and surrounded by a packed audience of enthralled children and adults. His mother and uncle had inspired that story. And the Garry Ginivan production was so imaginative and fun. A wonderful experience.

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