



Sterlington Stairlift Stories For Children

JUST JACK

Chapter One

The boy was named Jack and as he grew up he heard about lots of other people named Jack in stories, films, pantomimes, nursery rhymes, and other things.

There was Jack and The Beanstalk, then Jack Frost, Jack Wild, Jack Black, Jack O'Lantern, Jack Spratt, The House That Jack Built, and ... well the list goes on and on and on.

So, we'll just write about this particular Jack and we'll just call him Jack.

When Jack was small he lived in a town named Croydon. It was soon after a war when bombs had been dropped around Croydon and London, which wasn't far away.

Some bombs dropped from aeroplanes make holes in the ground and the holes are called "bomb craters".

Not far from Jack's house was a park with two big bomb craters near the middle.

Children loved running down to the bottom of a crater then up the other side, and into the next crater, and up the other side of that, then back again.

Jack was in the park with his dad one day when he saw a man marking a white line on the grass for the side of a football pitch.



He walked up to the man and said "Excuse me sir, how do you get the lines straight?" Jack was a very polite young chap.

The man, who was called a groundsman, looked at Jack and said "Ah, well, I've got a secret method, you see, but not many people know about it.

If I tell you, can you keep the secret and not tell anybody else?"

"Of course I can", said Jack.

Just then Jack's dad walked up to them and said "I hope you are not annoying this busy man, Jack, he's got an important job to do!"

"It's OK, sir", said the groundsman, "Your lad here was asking how I get the line straight and I was just going to tell him my special secret as long as he promised not to tell anybody else".

Please carry on", said Jack's dad. "This is my son Jack and his mother and I have told him it's important to keep promises we make to other people and not to give away secrets, so I think you can trust him".

"That's alright with me, then", said the groundsman, "I've got this long piece of string, you see. I stretch the string along the ground, fix it in place with wooden pegs, then push my line painting machine along the string. As long as I follow the string the line will be straight enough".

"Do you mind if I ask a harder question?", said Jack's dad.

"As long as it's not too hard for me to answer", said the groundsman, grinning.

"How do you get the corners square?", asked Jack's dad.

"I use other bits of string and something called a 3-4-5 triangle", said the groundsman. "Hang around for a bit longer and I'll show you".

So they did.

It was quite simple really but very clever.

After watching, Jack and his dad knew how to mark square corners on just about anything. The groundsman also told them about a hosepipe level and they found that very helpful and interesting too.

Chapter Two

Watching the groundsman in the park made Jack wonder about other lines for other games.

He now knew a little bit about marking lines for a football pitch, but what about all the others?

There were games like cricket, rounders, netball, lacrosse, and so many others. Jack had seen all sorts of games on television and the lines looked very complicated.

Long jump, high jump, shot put, javelin, running races, and most of them have lines of some kind.

Then there was his mum's favourite game, tennis. Jack had heard his mum talking to their doctor about it.

His mum and dad gave the doctor the nickname "Lance" and Lance was mad about tennis, just like Jack's mum.

Tennis is played in an area called a court and the ground has to have lines in the right places.

Where do you start marking them? How long do they have to be?, How wide are they? What colour should they be? What happens if you get them wrong?

So many questions!

Another question. How do you find answers to all the other questions?

Chapter Three

In a book Jack read that a man who was born in 1905 said to his little boy one day "It's good to learn how to read. If you can read you can do anything because you can read how to do it!"

Jack didn't think that everybody would really be able to do everything by reading about it but he did think reading was a good idea and he certainly wanted to learn how to mark the ground for sports and games.

While he was thinking about all these things another question popped into his head.

Some games are played in water but how do you mark lines on water?

Jack had been to a school swimming gala in the town and knew that with swimming pools or swimming baths you can hang ropes from the ends to make line or "lanes" along the water.

But what happens at the seaside where there are miles of water and nowhere to hang ropes or anything else?

So many questions!

Jack decided to ask his dad. "How do people mark lines on water?" he asked.

"On Saturday, let's get Mum then go and find out", said Dad.

As you can imagine, Jack was quite looking forward to Saturday and rather wished it could come a bit quicker so he could find the answer to his latest question.

Jack's mum was also looking forward to Saturday because she knew it would be a day out somewhere interesting and she loved going out to somewhere interesting.

Chapter Four

Saturday came along and they went on a train to a place called Felpham.

It was right by the sea and some of the homes people stayed in were old railway carriages which had been made into something like bungalows. There was no upstairs but lots of rooms and most of the carriages had flower baskets outside. They all looked very nice and the people staying in them seemed very happy.

Railway carriages as homes, what a good idea, thought Jack.

Out on the water people were racing speedboats around things like big plastic balls.

What are those things dad?" asked Jack.

"They are buoys" said Dad.

"They don't look like boys to me" said Jack. "They don't look like girls either. Are you joking with me?"

"No, I'm not joking", said Dad. "They really are called buoys. The word is spelt differently B-U-O-Y but in this country it is said the same as B-O-Y. It comes from the word buoyant, which means it can float.

"Why don't they float away into the sea, then, instead of staying where they are?", asked Jack.

"Because they are fixed to the sea bed with cables" said Dad.

"How did they do that?" asked the ever curious Jack.

"Two ways I know", said Dad. Someone dived down and tied the cable to a rock or something first, or they tied a weight to one end of a cable, tied the buoy to the other end of the cable, and dropped it all off a boat.

"So", said Jack, "There is a weight at the bottom of the sea with a rope or something tied to it and a buoy on the other end floating on top of the water!"

"Yes!" said Dad.

"Well done!", said Mum, "I can understand that too, isn't your dad clever!"

"Sure is!", said Jack,

Then Jack thought a bit more and asked "Dad, what about the lines on the water?"

"Well", said Dad, they could fix ropes between the buoys like the ropes at the swimming baths, but a boat could get caught on a rope. So they put the buoys quite close together and imagine there are lines between the buoys.

It's a bit like those puzzles in the books where you join the dots, except here you join the dots with your eyes instead of with a pencil".

Jack thought about that for a while then put his hand over his eyes to shade them from the sun, looked from buoy to buoy and imagined he was joining the dots with lines.

"It actually works", said a delighted Jack. "It's a bit like that man at the park painting his football pitch line with a bit of string on the ground. I pretended there was a bit of string on the water between the buoys and it was easy to think there was a white line there.

"Good thinking", said Dad. "You just worked it out and now you understand it all.

If you can't have real lines on water you can have imaginary lines and they don't even have to be painted!"

During the train ride home Jack was very quiet thinking about all the things he'd seen and worked out at Felpham.

Chapter Five

A few miles from Jack's house was a place called Croydon Sports Arena. He went there with the school one day and was amazed at all the lines that were painted on the ground. His mind was racing trying to work out how anyone would know where to start and how they painted all the curved lines.

A bit further away was a place called Crystal Palace which has a big swimming pool with a very high diving board and a sports ground that had even more lines than the Croydon Sports Arena.

"Wow, am I lucky or unlucky to have all these lines near where I live!", thought Jack.

Another good thing about Croydon was its library. Jack's mum took him there one day and he asked if they had any books about marking sports grounds.

"Hmmm, that's an unusual one", said the man at the library, "Let's go and have a look".

Jack and Mum followed him and patiently waited whilst he looked through a few shelves until he found a book that looked as though it might help.

"How about this one!" he said.

Jack's face was beaming with delight. He only had to see the picture on the front of the book to know it was exactly what he needed.

"Thank you sir, so much!", said Jack.

"You are very welcome, young fellow", said the library man, winked at Mum, smiled, then walked back to his desk.

Mum borrowed the book from the library for three weeks so Jack had plenty of time to read through it when he wasn't at school or doing other important things like cleaning his teeth or washing behind his ears.

His dad and mum noticed that Jack's nose was hardly ever away from the book and they thought he must have read it from start to finish at least ten times.

Chapter Six

Jack found out that things aren't always as easy as they seem at first and to be good at marking lined for a football pitch, a cricket table, a tennis court, or most other types of game or sport you need to know a lot more than bits of strings, 3-4-5 triangles, or imaginary lines between buoys at the seaside.

Later on when he did something called Maths at school he realised that some of the things he learned there were exactly what he needed to understand how to work out line markings.

Mum and Dad didn't need to moan at Jack to do his school work. He wanted to learn things and find out more.

Every year the school had tests and Jack passed them all.

His dream was that one day he would become a very good groundsman.

Some years later he did.

Jack joined something called the National Association of Groundsmen which later was called the Institute of Groundsmanship.

When the Olympic Games were held in London in the year 2012 a lot of people went to see Jack to ask how to mark this, how to mark that, and so on.

He became one of the best groundsmen in the country, all because he happened to see that chap with the string in Lloyd Park, Croydon one day.

As Jack got older he retired and started playing bowls.

He didn't mark the lines, he let someone else do that for a change.

Something which amused him about the game of bowls is that players roll a coloured ball called a bowl toward a white ball which is called ... you guessed it, a Jack!

The End

Note: This story is dedicated to a doctor who works very hard to help keep people alive and well. Her name is Helen. The author and his family thank that doctor for the wonderful contribution she has made to the wellbeing of people in the local community.

Just Jack Copyright © Philip W Baker 2013