

The early edition of *The Day of the Triffids* that is not so early.

by Neil Pollard



Of all the numerous editions of *The Day of the Triffids* that have been published, it is this edition that is most often mis-described on eBay and second-hand book sites such as AbeBooks.com. It is regularly listed as having been published in 1951. But was it?

John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* was first published in 1951 as a five-part serial in the US magazine *Collier's*, with the first part appearing in the 6 January edition and the last on 3 February. Not long after, on 22 March 1951, the New York based publisher Doubleday and Company, Inc. released a full length version in the US as a hardback edition. Since that date *The Day of the Triffids* has never been out of print.

In the UK, Michael Joseph Limited published a hardback edition on 22 August 1951. Pre-publication sales were so strong that the initial release included a second impression before publication.

In March 1952, Popular Library released a US paperback edition under the title of *Revolt of the Triffids*. However it wasn't until January 1954 that a paperback edition appeared in the UK when Penguin Books released their first edition of *The Day of the Triffids* which has become a cornerstone of their catalogue. A 1976 copy carries the line on the back cover 'Just on half a million copies sold in Penguins' whilst a copy from 1981 proudly proclaims 'Over One Million copies sold in Penguins.' The fifty-fourth impression of *The Day of the Triffids* was released by Penguin in 1989.

In March 1953 Doubleday launched their Science Fiction Book Club. In addition to the specific title made available each month the book club made an initial offering of twenty trade edition titles which included *The Day of the Triffids*. The main differences between original editions and Book Club editions were evident

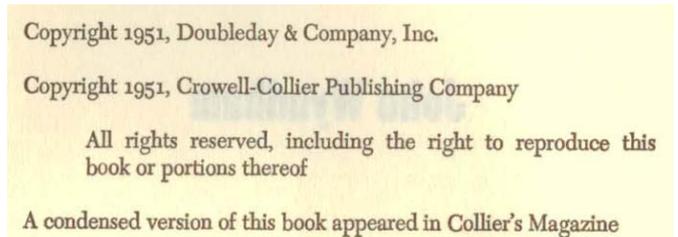
on the dust jacket. The book price, which appeared on the front flap of the trade edition, was omitted and the short identification 'Book Club Edition' appeared at the bottom of the front flap. Otherwise the Book Club dust jackets were the same as the trade editions. The Book Club edition of *The Day of the Triffids* also varies from the trade edition as it is bound using a grey stippled paper material rather than the original grey cloth. However the text blocks of both editions are the same.

The Science Fiction Book Club is still operating although the company name behind it has changed over the years. Initially the books offered were reprints of Doubleday publications. From 1970 to 1989 the Nelson Doubleday name was used and then GuildAmerica Books until 1998. From that date The Science Fiction Book Club has been used as the imprint. A comprehensive history of the Book Club is available at the Internet Speculative Fiction Database website.¹

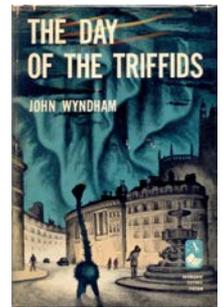
The Day of the Triffids was released as a Book Club edition in April 1979, again as an alternative selection.

The dust jacket illustration for this Book Club edition was produced by Gary Viskupic. He studied art at the University of Illinois and became the chief illustrator of the New York based *Newsday* newspaper. As well he produced a number of covers for Doubleday's Book Club editions. He lost his job at *Newsday* in 2004 when the paper's owners instituted a cost cutting drive and made forty-six members of staff redundant. Since then he's taught illustration at the New York Institute of Technology.

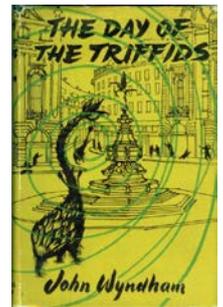
The confusion over the publication date of this edition is not helped by the copyright details printed in the book.



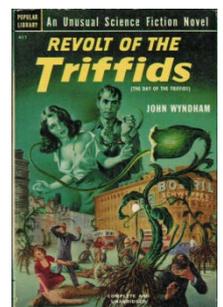
However it can be established that the edition was not a 1951 printing. Overlooking the fact that most copies of



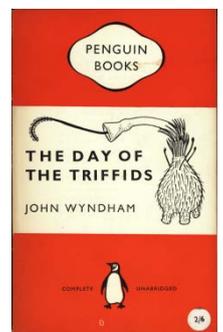
Doubleday and Co



Michael Joseph



Popular Library

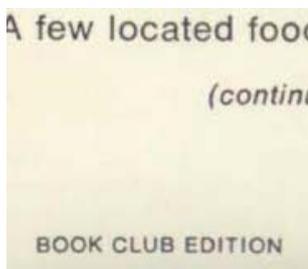


Penguin Books

¹ http://208.100.59.10/wiki/index.php/Publisher:Science_Fiction_Book_Club

this edition are in far better condition than would be expected of a nearly sixty-five years old book, the following points demonstrate that this Book Club edition was printed much later than is often stated.

1. The Science Fiction Book Club was not launched until March 1953 and this edition is clearly a Book Club edition. However if the dust jacket is missing this wouldn't be obvious, as the book itself is not otherwise identified as a Book Club edition.

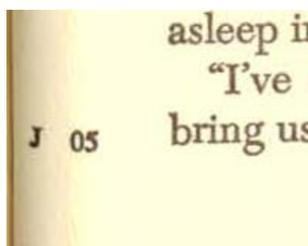


2. The dust jacket illustration, as has already been mentioned, was designed by Gary Viskupic who was born on 9 February 1944. He would only have been seven or eight years old in 1951. Again if the dust jacket is missing then the illustrator would be unknown as the credit only appears on the dust jacket itself.



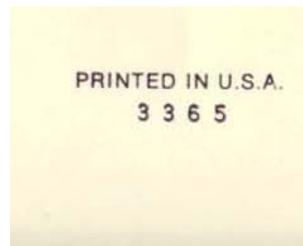
Jacket painting by GARY VISKUPIC

3. From mid-way through 1958 Science Fiction Book Club editions included a gutter code near the last page of the book which provides the printing date. Collectors have deciphered these codes and determined that they identify the year and the week of printing.² This edition of *The Day of the Triffids* has the code J 05 which decodes to the fifth week of 1979 or a January/February 1979 printing.



4. The dust jacket also carries a Science Fiction Book Club ID Number. These numbers are not sequential, but again collectors have been able to establish lists of editions.³ *The Day of the Triffids* is book number

3365 and is included in the published lists as an alternative selection for April 1979.



Hopefully, one day soon, sellers of this edition of *The Day of the Triffids* will consistently provide the correct publication date for this edition.

² "Gutter code", [Internet Speculative Fiction Database](http://208.100.59.10/wiki/index.php/Gutter_Codes), accessed 4 Jun 2015, http://208.100.59.10/wiki/index.php/Gutter_Codes

³ "Publisher: SFBC 1975-1979", [Internet Speculative Fiction Database](http://208.100.59.10/wiki/index.php/Publisher:SFBC_1975-1979), accessed 4 Jun 2015,