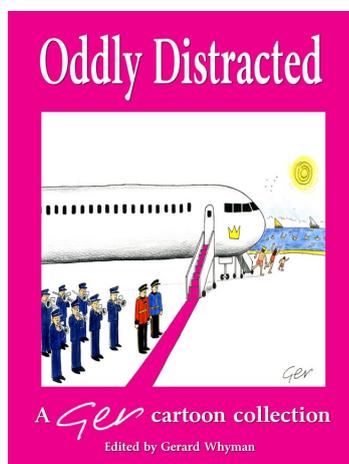


Pay attention at the back

Book Review



Oddly Distracted

By Gerard Whyman

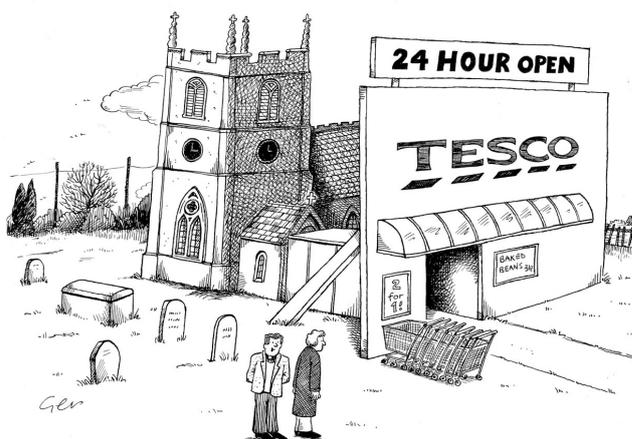
THE cartoons in this book are the product of a distracted mind, Gerard Whyman tells us in his introduction, by way of an explanation for the title. Of course, for the gag cartoonists among his readership, no explanation is required – we all know that feeling of feeling slightly removed from a situation, staring in to space while you think, “There’s got to be a gag in this”.

Ger has put this constructive mind wandering to good use over the past 15 years, coming up with a steady stream of gag cartoons that have seen publication in *Punch*, *Reader’s Digest*, *The Spectator* and *The Oldie*.

The CCGB member has collected the best of his magazine cartoons together for this 112-page book, also throwing in work for trade magazines, calendars and the like, plus a few of his personal favourites from the “I can’t believe they rejected it” file.

The book is packed with gags, often with several on a page. There are almost 190 in total and the laughter hit-rate is high. The cartoons are not rigidly divided into categories, as you see in some cartoon books, but they are loosely themed, so there is a nice flow to them. You’ll find a group of business gags together, a group of car jokes etc.

It’s difficult, and slightly pointless, to single out any favourite cartoons in print, but I do love the one with the guy in a bric-a-brac shop called Serendipity, who tells the assistant, “You haven’t



“It’s the only way I can get people in on a Sunday.”

got what I’m not looking for”. And there are plenty of other corks.

As you’d expect from a book like this, countless topics are explored, though a few crop up time and again. There are quite a few religious jokes, though as Ger admits in the intro, that is less likely to be a result of his Catholic upbringing than a love of Dave Allen’s 1970s TV show. Not unlike the humour of Allen, the tone of the jokes throughout the book is more silly than cynical. If you put *Oddly Distracted* on anyone’s Christmas list, you’d be unlikely to cause offence.

The book is self-published – Ger used the website Lulu.com, which keeps your costs down by printing only those books that have been ordered. Self-

publishing used to have a bad name but it seems to be increasingly the way to go, thanks to “print on demand” deals.

Anyway, I heard a programme on Radio 4 today which pointed out that long-winded French writer Marcel Proust’s epic *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* was self-published, and that went on to great critical acclaim. Not from me, I haven’t read it, but I bet it hasn’t got as many funny gags in it as *Oddly Distracted*.

Royston Robertson

Oddly Distracted is priced £7.95. You can see a preview of Ger’s book and order copies at: www.lulu.com/content/3625147