

The

# COLLECTORS DIGEST



(Vol. 3) No. 36  
December 1949  
Price 1s.1d  
Post Free

# I Owe an Apology to St. Jim's



LET me say here and now that I owe an apology. And I'm a scunner for paying my debts—at least, when they consist only of apologies. So I hereby apologise to Martin Clifford, Bernard Glyn and all old readers of *The Gem*.

The other day, in writing about the new automatic bowling machine which has been demonstrated at the Green Sanderson cricket school, I recalled that a similar invention appeared in the pages of *The Gem* about 30 years ago. I also said that it was invented by Kerr, who shared a study with Fiddler and Patsy Wynn in the New House at St. Jim's. How wrong I was!

It seems that practically all the middle-aged gentlemen now living in London were brought up on *The Gem* and *The Magnet* as I was. And most of them have written in to tell me that they, too, remember the story of the mechanical bowing machine at St. Jim's—and it was not invented by Kerr (the "crazy Scottish jumper"), but by Bernard Glyn (the "mechanical genius of the Staff").

## Dare-devil Gussy

ON the imposing letter-heading of the Old Boys' Book Club (about which I would like to hear a lot more), Robert H. Whittier writes, in copper-plate, to say:

"You have the name of the inventor wrong. Bernard Glyn, of the Staff, was the mechanical genius at St. Jim's. George Kerr, the canny Scot, was famous for his unperforated and disengaged, but not as an inventor. I thought the accompanying sketch would amuse you. Gussy was the only fellow who would face the 'bevelly' staff Glyn perfected at Poor D'Arcy had a hot time!"

"Putty thing, but as soon as the new invention was mentioned on the radio I turned to my father (who remembers Grace very well) and told him of the old Gem story."

The "accompanying picture" drawn by Mr. Whittier shows Arthur Augustus D'Arcy (as was the mechanical genius)—and here it is, with Gussy's machine still frisky in place, and the robot well stocked with ammunition; apparently actuated by the invisible blue hand!

by  
**BILL MCGOWRAN**

## The Robot Rhodes

A NOTHER old admirer of the St. Jim's saga is Mr. P. J. Edmondson, of New Malden, who writes me in verse, thus:

"When Clifford would bell cry out 'Shame',  
Frank Richards, too, will do the same.

What Kerr invented I don't know,  
Perhaps a Kerr that wouldn't go.  
Your story, sir, is much too thin,  
The Robot Rhodes was made by Glyn."

For the benefit of the ignorames perhaps I should explain that Martin Clifford, who wrote the St. Jim's stories in *The Gem*, and Frank Richards, author of the Greyfriars stories in *The Magnet*, were the same person.

## Fisher T. Fish

FROM South Harrow comes a man whose name might well have called "an interesting theory shedding a new light on our problem."

George Bristol writes: "When the other day, I was shown a picture of this machine in a newspaper, my memory immediately flashed back 35 years to when I was a reader of *The Magnet*. In this case it was Fisher T. Fish who invented a similar machine at Greyfriars. Things went wrong just the same way as at St. Jim's."

Well, he may be right. But I certainly never read that particular story. Fisher T. Fish (the "zealotting American Fourth-former" usually concentrated on money-

Gussy faces the Mechanical Scot at St. Jim's.

machine schemes. Get-Fish-Guss Wellington had pointing on Fisher T. Fish, who would lead you five bob (at 10 per cent) or sell you a penknife (over-price, of course) at the drop of a headscarf!

## A Pre-Spivs Spiv

WOULD FISH was a spiv born before his generation, but with his complete contempt for everything outside "the Yewnaised States of America," I can't imagine him dallying with such a non-profit making dumdumery as cricket.

And I certainly can't imagine such an accomplished and successful cricketer as Martin Clifford-Frank Richards using the same plot for two stories about the rival robots.

No, I think that reader Bristol's memory has slipped a little.

## Old Acquaintance

ANYWAY, I'm sorry I didn't give due credit to Bernard Glyn, who, if he is still alive, must be round about at these days.

If he should read this I invite him to call upon me at the office.

When he has established his identity, by sending his Old St. Jim's tale and that personal letter from Mr. Whittier, I'll be pleased to take him round to the Tuck Shop in Ballsbridge-square and stand him a ginger-pop, just for old times' sake.

Evening News, 24th October, 1949.

**WANTED:** Schoolboys Own Libraries featuring Greyfriars, 1/6 to 3/- each offered according to age. . . Bill Martin, 93, Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10. . .



(Vol. 1.3) No. 36

Price 1s. 1d.

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DECEMBER 1949

Next Issue January  
Editor, Miscellaneous Section  
Herbert Leckenby, Telephone Exchange,  
C/o Central Registry, Northern Command, York.

WISHING ALL OUR READERS AT HOME  
AND OVERSEAS A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS  
AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Sturdy Youngster: We have reached the end of Volume Three. It seems only a day or two since I was saying that about Volume Two, yet what a lot has happened in between. I ventured to suggest a year ago that I had an idea 1949 was going to be an eventful year, and indeed it has been so. Before the first month was out we had that memorable York Exhibition followed by the equally successful one at Islington; and the Maxwell Scott "scoop". Then time and time again there has been press publicity for our hobby, with the London Old Boys' Book Club particularly in the lime-light. And there's more to come, including

in all probability a fine article in the Christmas number of the "Leader" class 6d. weekly.

The go-ahead Old Boys' Book Club has had distinguished guests in Edwy Searles Brooks, Eric Parker, and Kenneth Brookes. The Club has grown in membership, and the links between it and the C.D. have grown ever stronger.

When I was with them in September I said it was a curious thought that if our good friend Bill Gander in far-off Canada had not fallen ill three years ago, there might never have been a Collector's Digest. As some of the older members know, Bill had to suspend the "Story Paper Collector" and there was even a possibility that it might die. We had looked forward eagerly four times a year to the coming of that delightful little mag, and the news that it may come no more came as a real blow. So my co-editor and myself resolved to try and fill the gap, and the C.D. was born. Right from the start it was a real success; what is more, Bill regained his health, and the S.P.C. again comes to cheer us.

Bill knows me well enough to know that I do not say gloatingly, "It's an ill-wind that blows nobody any good". Nevertheless, it is a fact that his illness led to the three happiest years of my life and the finding of more friends, more jolly good fellows than in all the rest of my existence. Yes, verily, it's strange how things work out.

The other evening I turned the pages of that modest No.1 and compared it with that record No.35. Progress indeed, yet my colleague and I will always think fondly of that first effort of ours just three years ago. In our letters and our chats on the 'phone we often recall those exciting days when we were exposing the swindles, the day during the York floods when I set off to the duplicating agency with my copy for one month's issue and found when I arrived there that I had lost the biggest part of it and had to sit up until dawn rewriting it; the birth of the Annual; the coming of the Old Boys' Book Club, and all the other events of those three thrill-packed, happy years.

And now I may say that with the end of Volume Three we have doubled the circulation; what is more, over half of that increase has come during the year just drawing towards its close.

By the way, we have received many plaudits over that 36-page number. We cannot promise to keep up with quantity (you don't want us to go bankrupt, do you?), but we will try and retain the quality.

So on to Volume Four.

That Spot of Bother: Just a word to say how touched I have been by the shoals of condolences and help I have received since our last issue. It's been real compensation for my losses. I won't mention any names, but they include jolly good sports of both sexes. My heartfelt thanks to all.

Tragedy: Members of our circle will read with deep regret a letter in the correspondence column telling of the death, under tragic circumstances, of an old friend, Joseph Baguley. When I received Mrs. Baguley's letter I turned up one I had received from him, and noted, with a shock, that it must have been written on the very day of his death. It was a long interesting letter telling of his arrival in Australia, his purchase of a poultry farm, his many activities, and his hopes for the future. Joe also said several trunks containing his books were on the way out to him, and how much he was looking forward to unpacking them and renewing acquaintance with the stories he loved. It brings a lump to the throat, doesn't it? Truly in the midst of life we are in death. It must have been a great ordeal for Mrs. Baguley to be left alone so soon after her arrival in a strange land.

Joe was a cheery fellow, with decided views on subjects he was interested in. He hit hard as his participation in controversies which raged in earlier C.D.'s proved, but he always hit straight. He was an authority on all kinds of literature. He was only 36.

All who knew him will deeply sympathise with Mrs. Baguley in her great bereavement.

Last Stages of the Annual: All goes well, and unless something unforeseen occurs the Annual will provide a companion for the Christmas fire-side. The orders already have exceeded last year's; there's only one little draw-back - some of the older members have not yet sent in their Questionnaires, but I hope they will have done so before these lines appear in print, for that "Who's Who" has come to mean as much to story paper collectors as Wisden's to cricketers.

And, as soon as the Annual is with you, we shall be planning next year's to keep busy.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

Annual Subscriptions are now due, please!

(Note: Since Peter Walker's first article appeared some months ago, we have often been asked for more from his pen. Well, here is one and a right seasonable one. Just the very thing for the Christmas number. - H.L.)

"I'LL HAVE A DOUBLE!"

By P. E. Welker

To the enthusiastic readers of papers like the "Gem", "Magnet", "Boys' Friend", "Nelson Lee", "Union Jack" and others, probably the most exciting feature was the emergence of the "magnificent Double Number". This occurred, of course, at Christmas, but there were several occasions when it was considered advisable to publish one in the middle of the summer, much to our delight. The joy of purchasing these fat gleaming issues, usually printed in red and blue, was something that cannot adequately be described.

We distinctly remember our first Magnet Christmas Double Number. It was a long thrilling yarn by Frank Richards entitled, "The House on the Heath", and dealt with the adventures of the Famous Five and a German prisoner. It opened, as all good Christmas stories should open, with the Famous Co. tramping homeward through the driving snow in the bitter winter's night. Frank Richards could always achieve the right atmosphere in his stories. The lights of Greyfriars gleaming through the murky mist and snow as the fellows tramped over the Common. The snug warm study with Bunter there, preparing the toasted crumpets. Old Gosling greeting the lads grumpily as he turned out into the winter's night to let the Famous Five into the school.

And we remember how we smuggled into the best easy chair by a roaring fire to soak ourselves in another feast of Greyfriars.

The sight of the two-colour cover after the monochrome printing of the regular issues was indeed a thrill. This was to a great extent a thrill which was lost when the papers eventually appeared week by week in orange and blue and red and blue. The familiar blue on white had gone, and green and red covers were a thing of history.

A double number which sticks in our memory was a Gem called "The House-master's homecoming". Mr. Railton returned from the Front with a damaged arm, which, we well remember, he

used to "glance down at".

The picture on the cover, drawn, of course, by R.J. MacDonald, showed the Housemaster's triumphant return to St. Jims, with a cheering crowd of schoolboys escorting him. If we remember correctly, this was a double number published in the Summer of 1915.

A curious Magnet Christmas Double Number appeared in December 1917. This was a story entitled "Four From the East", and introduced Wun Lung, Piet Delerey and Co. One of Mr. C.H. Chapman's drawings appeared on the cover, and showed Bunter, as usual, endeavouring to extract a loan from Wun Lung. The yarn was stiff and stilted, and, we remember, was a bitter disappointment.

Harking back to very early days, a Gem Christmas Number was published without a coloured cover. This contained a yarn entitled "Nobody's Study", and eventually became, we believe, something of a classic, and was much sought after by later readers of the Companion Papers. Incidentally, it is worth noting that "Nobody's Study" was referred to in the Gem throughout its subsequent history. Levison was, of course, to the fore in this story, and Tom Merry spent a terrible night in the fateful room.

Another grand Christmas issue without a coloured cover was "The Ghost of St. Jim's". We can still remember the opening sentence in this yarn, although we haven't seen it since 1920. It is - "Snow, thicker and thicker. The white flekes were falling incessantly." A grand yarn, this, full of the right Christmas atmosphere. (Since this was written, a copy of "The Ghost" has reached me from the Chairmen of the London O.B.B.C.)

One rather amusing aspect of the production of these Christmas numbers was their appearance on the bookstalls as early as November 15th to 20th. They believed in getting the Christmas spirit started early!

"The Shadow of the Past", a really splendid yarn, appeared in the Christmas No. for 1917. This appeared on the scene in November 1917, and possessed a front cover printed in red and blue, and designed by that grand illustrator, Warwick Reynolds. Frank Levison is shown holding a lantern against a background of snow and darkness, with a dog helping him to locate the whereabouts of his major, who has mysteriously disappeared in Pepper's

bern. We always thought Warwick Reynolds the best of the illustrators of the Companion Papers. His beautiful line work was always a joy, and though his characterisations of schoolboys was open to criticism, his drawings of Rylcombe High Street, and Herries bulldog, or Wally D'Arcy's Pongo were a delight. He was probably one of the best animal artists of his time. The story in this issue deals primarily with the attempt of one Valentine Outrem to escape the attentions of the police. He has run away from a school in Devon and finds himself in Pepper's old barn near St. Jim's. He has apparently lived for a couple of weeks in snowy wintry weather on beetroot and potatoes obtained from the fields. He has slept out in vicious weather, tramped about two hundred and fifty miles from somewhere in Devon, to Sussex, but after reducing himself to a mere skeleton, is able to handle four unsuspecting fellows and leave them in a ditch! And this, mind you, at the age of 16! Nevertheless, a good yarn, and well told.

Another tale of long ago was "Schoolboys Never Shall be Slaves", a Magnet Double Number. We remember this as a brilliant tale, but memory is rather vague.

The Nelson Lee produced an excellent Christmas Number called "The Phantom of Tregellis Castle", a yarn calculated to provoke the necessary chills and thrills. We always thought that E. S. Brooks was at his best in this type of story.

For some unaccountable reason the Christmas Double Number went out of fashion, despite the fact that as the 1920's drew nearer to the 1930's, and the 1930's saw paper supplies back to normal. Admittedly, Christmas issues were produced, but without the flavour of previous years. Was it because 2d. was the weekly charge? And to double it to 4d. was considered too much?

The decline in the designing of the front cover was another noticeable feature. When the Gem produced its grand double numbers between 1912 and 1918, most of the covers were beautifully printed. The register of blue and red was always good, whereas in later years we found the colours sometimes  $\frac{1}{2}$ " out of register. The covers of the Gem which appeared during the last year or two of its run were simply dreadful.

Curiously enough, C. H. Chapman and R. J. MacDonald, who between them, illustrated the yarns in the Gem and Magnet for years, appeared to decline in their draughtsmanship. In the old



green-covered Gems appear some really meticulous examples of Macdonald's pen and ink technique, whilst Chapman's earlier illustrations are much better than those appearing in the late 1930's. We were always rather amused at the stiff, carved-out look of Chapman's schoolboys, particularly in the early issues of the Magnet, but during the 1920's more freedom was apparent in his work, and some delightful semi-cartoon drawings appeared in many Holiday Annuals.

The Christmas double numbers were gigantic affairs and we used to wade through them from cover to cover. In those days it was apparently possible to buy a brand new suit for 25/-. You could guarantee to stop smoking in a few days by following a course laid down by Professor Somebody or other. You could increase your height to 6 ft. You could stop stammering. And, above all, you could nip round to the nearest newsagent's and obtain your lovely brand new copy of the Magnet, Gem, Penny Populer, Boys' Friend, Union Jack, with holly and snow and Christmas fairies all over the place, and then call in at any tobacconist's for a packet of ten for 6d! Snow has always been the vital necessity in Frank Richards' Christmas stories. We are all for it, and love our stories of the festive season suitably adorned with lashings of snow.

When, however, the "series" idea began, and eventually became a permanency, we noticed that Kent and Sussex were under snow and in the grip of winter from December to March. They must be pretty tough in this part of England!

It is sad to reflect that the Christmas Double Number is a thing of the past. The boys of 1949 are missing something. When one glances over the bookstalls today, it is with despair. From a boys angle, there is nothing. Nothing at all. Cannot somebody do something about it?

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WANTED for collection, Magnets prior to No.890. Gems prior to No.1000. Populers, S.O.L's, Holiday Annuals, Nelson Lee, Boys' Friend, Pre-war Champion, Triumphs, Hotspurs, Rovers, Pilots, Rangers, Adventures, Wizards, and Skippers. Good prices paid. Books with school stories only. P. Willett, 67 Ford Bridge Road, Ashford, Middlesex.

POPULAR PAPERS OF THE PAST1 - The Boys' Leader

(Continued from No.34)

As we tore along, I, clinging to my seat, I caught sight of a clock. Seven minutes to go. I exclaimed to the girl, "We'll just do it."

Then in a flash my thoughts travelled back through the years. "Goshi!" I said to myself, "this is just like that race to Armley Geol in the 'Iron Skull'." For strangely enough, apart from our own race against time, we had travelled partly over the same route, and the place we were making for also had six letters and ended with "ley".

My thoughts came back to the present as with a screaming of brakes we pulled up at the house where the mourners were anxiously waiting. We handed over the certificate and a moment later the funeral procession was wending its way at a more appropriate pace to our goal. We arrived there just in time, not to save a life, but to lay an old comrade of mine to rest at life's journey's end.

Now you see why I relate that little adventure of mine. I hadn't seen the 'Iron Skull' for over 30 years, yet it all came back to me in a flash. Surely a striking example of the vivid impression those stories of the long ago left on one's boyhood mind.

However, to return to the "Boys' Leader". The "Iron Skull" was a big success and shortly afterwards Maxwell Scott wrote another Vernon Reed story, "The Red Hand". It is interesting to note, in view of the apparent bitter rivalry which existed between the Harmsworth three and the plucky Boys' Leader, that years later the A.P., having got an interest in Pearson's, published these two serials, very much abridged, in the Boys' Friend Library.

Curiously two other serials appearing at the same time as "The Red Hand" were "The Green-Painted Ship" by Robert Leighton, and "Black Diamonds" (Stacey Blake), what the editor styled "colourful" serials. And another in the same volume, No.3, was "The Black Judge" also by Stacey Blake, a yarn about the notorious Judge Jefferies.

Others which come to mind were "Vultures of the Line", a really fine railway yarn by Herbert Wentworth (Herbert Wentworth James), a sub-editor on the paper. "Secret of the South" by the other Herbert, Maxwell, to wit. Sidney Drew contributed serials about Ranthorpe School (in the Hermsworth papers he wrote about Calcroft).

Then came what I always look upon as an ominous sign - the publishing of reprints. One was "The Vanished Fleet", a Graydon Garth story by Sidney Drew. It had appeared in the "Big Budget" a few years earlier. It was a fine yarn certainly, but it was hardly consistent with a policy of "always something new".

However, whether the Boys' Leader was finding the going hard or not, it came out with a startling announcement in No.66, December 10th, 1904. It concerned a new prize competition, in which the competitors had to collect coupons to be issued each week with the paper. Nothing new or novel about that, you might say. Nevertheless, the announcement occupied all the front and second page, and it was justified, for the first prize was certainly a startling one, no less than a six-weeks' foreign tour, with all expenses paid and 10/- a week pocket money. Moreover, it applied to two boys (or girls) who would go together under the care of a responsible person. It must be remembered that this was over forty years ago when places like New York seemed a long way off, and 10/- week pocket money for the average boy was wealth indeed.

Although the competition was run on behalf of the "Boys' Leader", coupons also appeared in the "Big Budget". It ran for months and each week a table was published showing the position of the leading competitors, for they were at liberty to send in their coupons as often as they liked. It is probable that the paper was getting into stormy waters, and that this was a bold and desperate attempt to revive its fortunes. If it was so, the scheme failed, for the result was made known in the very last issue of the Boys' Leader.

In No.98 dated July 22nd, 1905, came a significant incident, which to the keen observer implied all was not well. Three weeks earlier it had been announced that a "grand new serial", "The Mysterious Army", by Sidney Drew, would start in this number. Actually this would have been another reprint, for "The Mysterious Army" had already appeared in the Big Budget. However, No.98

carried no such story. Instead in the editor's column there was an apology for its non-appearance, and the statement that neither the editor nor Sidney Drew had any control over the circumstances, and that the decision had been made at the last moment.

The tragic news that the Boys' Leader was to die, however, was naturally kept quiet until the last moment - the issue of August 12th, No. 101. Even then, of course, it wasn't quite put that way; instead, the editor announced it was to be embodied with the Big Budget to make one great paper, a step he had "often been asked to take". At the time no less than five serials were running. "Rung by Rung" by Gilbert Gray; "The Bushranger Millionaire" (Donovan Mart); "A Felon's Secret" (Henry Farmer); "The Five Swordsmen", and "The Lads of Lengton's House" by Sidney Drew. The first four were transferred to the "Big Budget".

As I have said, the result of the competition with the unique first prize was announced with the dying breath of the poor Boys' Leader. The lucky two were

Herry Hertley, 21 Oxford Road, Waterloo, Liverpool, and Nicholas De La Mere, Mont Saint, St. Saviours, Guernsey. Arthur Brooke paid a special visit to Liverpool to discuss plans with Herry Hertley's father, acting for both boys. The editor's feelings must have been mixed as he made the journey, as he thought of the fate of the paper he had tried so hard to make into a success.

However, the boys, each 16 years of age, decided in favour of a tour of America and Canada, and an assistant editor of the Royal Magazine was appointed to go with them. Lengthy and interesting accounts of their tour were given in the Big Budget. It is interesting to note that early in the competition they were well down the list, gradually working their way to the top. It may be mentioned, too, that there was consolation for the pairs who came second, third and fourth, for they won a fortnight's tour of the British Isles, all expenses paid and 5/- pocket money.

I have dealt with the competition at some length, for I think it will be agreed it was the most novel one, so far as the prizes were concerned, ever to be run by a boys' paper.

The two lucky first winners would be 61 now. How interesting it would be if one could get in touch with one or both of them, so that that novel experience could be retold in the C.D. One never knows, even though it happened a long time ago.

Well, the Boys' Leader died a week or two before its second birthday. It was a pity, for that kindly soul, Arthur Brooke, deserved better fortune. Possibly there were too many papers of the same type in those days of limited pocket money. I recall that Hamilton Edwards could not resist a parting gibe. In the Boys' Friend he stated that several of his readers had written to ask him why he had stopped the paper, but he wished to inform them that he had nothing to do with the unfortunate paper. Ah well, he could afford to be patronising at the time. His own papers had been too powerful and were on the crest of the flood, but time was to come when "his white paper" the Boys' Herald was to grow sick and join the Boys' Leader in the graveyard of boys' papers.

(Note: By an inexplicable lapse on my part I stated in the first instalment that Arthur Brooke's real name was Arthur C. Mortimer, when of course it should have been "Marshall". - H.L.)

"THE SECRET OF THE STUDY," BY MARTIN CLIFFORD  
(Mandeville Publications, 6/-)

A review by John R. Shaw

In this ingenious story of St. Jim's School the identity of the malefactor (for such there is) is not revealed until near the end. Thus the reader, though possibly guessing the guilty party, is spared the necessity to take interest in, and perhaps feel some sympathy for, a character who is unworthy of either. Instead he can concentrate on following the plot, and studying the subtle delineation of schoolboy character with which this story abounds.

The Third Form "fags" are quite prominent once more. Reggie Menners decides to "go in" for football pools, and is in great danger of being suspected of even worse things. A brief extract will shew how true to character are these young fags after all these years:-

"He's soft, as you jolly well know," said Reggie. "Anybody can get round D'Arcy of the Fourth." .... "He's soft as putty, and you can manage him --"

"If you say my major's soft as putty, young Menners, I'll jam your head into a locker!" exclaimed Welly, indignantly.

"You've said so yourself," barked Reggie.

"Well, I can say what I like about my major, but you can't," retorted Wally.

It is very pleasant to read again more description of scenes in recent stories. Such a paragraph as "It was a sunny morning. St. Jim's generally had a cheerful aspect — the grey old walls, the old red chimney pots, the ancient elms, the innumerable windows, glimmering in the morning sunshine" is of greater value than any illustration, and helps to create that little World of School and its characters, of which, whilst reading the stories, we like to feel a part.

"THE SECRET OF THE STUDY" (Mandeville Publications)

A Review by Leonard Parkman

It is with much pleasure that I recommend this the second of the "Tom Merry's Own" series.

The noble "Gussy" takes the lead in this story, the plot of which is woven in the usual delightful "Martin Clifford" manner. Here again we meet many of the old familiar characters, "The Terrible Three", "Jack Blake & Co", "Figgins & Co", Cardew, Clive, Levison, Reggie Manners and Mr. Reilton being well to the fore.

The plot, which deals with the theft of money from Mr. Reilton's study involving D'Arcy as the suspect, is full of humorous incidents, the combination of which make a story that all true "Hamiltonians" will thoroughly enjoy.

As for the illustrations, which I say they are, as usual, by Mr. Macdonald, I need say no more!

"Martin Clifford" and Mandeville Publications are again to be congratulated and thanked for this second treat.

I am now wondering whom the third book in this series will feature. Quite a number of readers have suggested "Talbot", undoubtedly one of the most popular characters at St. Jim's.

What about it, Messrs "Clifford" and Mandeville?

—o—o—

7/6 EACH Magnets No. 958 "A Slecker's Awakening"; No. 903, "Sports Week at Greyfriars"; No. 234, "Harry Wharton & Co's Bank Holiday" 10/-. 2/6 each for P. Populars, new series, 1919 Nos. 17 to 50. A few early Magnets and Gems for exchange for similar ones. E. B. Flinders, "Roseview", Gosmore Road, Nr. Hitchin, Herts.

# Old Boys' Book Club

Wood Green Meeting. November 20.

"There was a sound of revelry by night", Byron. But all was in order and the very best taste in the "Rag" at Cherry Place on the occasion of the November meeting of the club. A pleasant surprise was the first arrival, Bill Colcombe of Southend, his first visit. Second to arrive were Mr. Jenkins of the "Leader" magazine with two attendant photographers. One of the latter has a collection of 300 Magnets, a small world wherein collectors are to be found. Owing to Bob Whiter having a dress rehearsal with Wibley and the Remove Dramatic Society at the Scala Theatre, Veronique being the production, William and Ben Whiter were the hosts until the arrival at 5.50 p.m. of Bob.

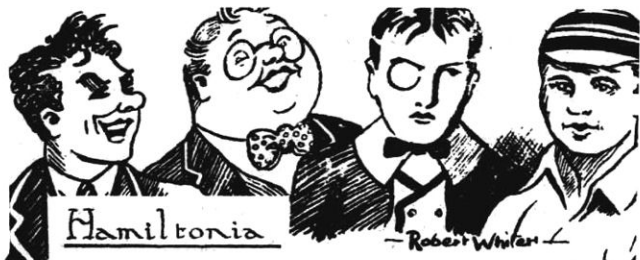
The formal business of the club was quickly dealt with so as to facilitate the photographs and interviews by the "Leader" magazine representatives. Numerous photographs were taken, also very much knowledge relating to the hobby and the club. One or two photographs of Ian Mackenzie and Geoffrey Evans as Billy Bunter and a fag respectively should be very humorous, as they caused great fun amongst the large attendance. A good general quiz was held, one of the questions was "Who were the secret seven?" Seven Guy Fawkes masks adorned the walls so as to give colour to the question. Winner of the quiz was Ian Whitmore, with John Geal and Len Packmen deadheating for second place. The first postal members' draw took place and resulted in Maurice Bond winning "The Secret of the Study" and James Smith, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, winning a copy of Tom Merry's Annual. The bookcases, crammed full of Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, Chums, B.C.O.Ps, Young England, and all the latest Bunter and Tom Merry books created great interest, and time passed too quickly during the informal chats and conversations that followed.

Truly a great occasion for the club and thanks are due to Len Packmen and others responsible for the attendance of the

press.  
Attendance: William, Ben and Bob Whiter, Len, Josie and Eleanor Packmen, Charlie and Olive Wright, Frank and Mrs. Keeling, Harold and A.M. Dubb, John Geal, Ian Whitmore, A. Blunden, W. Colcombe, R. Mortimer, R. Deacon, W. Lawson, Harry Homer, C. Wallis, John Young, Ian Mackenzie, Geoffrey Evans and Mr. Jenkins (Leader magazine).

BENJAMIN G. WHITER.

(Look out for the Christmas Leader magazine. - H.L.)



Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

You haven't read Magnet No. 1685 containing a story called "Bendy Bunter", have you? "Of course not," you say, for there was no such number." No, I know there wasn't, but there would have been if the Magnet had not closed down with such dramatic suddenness, leaving lamentation in the land in that fateful week of May, 1940. Nevertheless, there was a story called "Bendy Bunter" - and three others which never saw the light of day. Let me explain.

Just over four years ago Frank Richards told me a very interesting inside story. I wrote about it at the time in the S.P.C., but as our numbers have increased considerably since then it is worth repeating.

When the red light appeared six stories were in hand. Two of these, "The Nazi Spy's Secret" No. 1682, and "The Shadow of the Sack" (1683), ominous title, were in process of production and eventually reached the bookstalls. "The Battle of the Beaks", as all old readers know, was announced for the following week, but when they went eagerly to their newsagents so that they could follow further the trouble between Mr. Quelch and Mr. Hecker, they were turned empty away. And, if things had been different, there would have followed:



- No. 1685, Bandy Bunter,  
 No. 1686, What Heppened to Hacker?  
 No. 1687, The Hidden Hand.

Messrs. Quelch and Hacker were still in a spot of bother at the end of the latter story.

So you would have had the chance of at least four more Magnets in your collections if "that man" had not stepped in.

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I continue to receive requests for Magnet titles to appear in this column on the lines of my co-editor's U.Js and Bob Blythe's Nelson Lees. Well, there were nearly 1700 of them, you know, and they would take a long time. Still, if you Magnetites so want them, we'll make a start, say about 40 a month. Let me know and if you say yes, I shall want someone to supply them. But there should be plenty of volunteers for that.

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Talking of titles, you will remember that question as to how many times Bunter had been mentioned therein. Well, here's a sequel in the form of a very interesting letter from that dynamo - A. J. Southway. You will see he wasn't far out where Bunter was concerned. And when one compares him with the others the result is very much the same as when the Owl was present when tuck was around.

One of my oldest hobby friends once said I was a "begger for statistics". Maybe, but some of you fellows have me beaten hollow. As for the patience required to arrange all those titles in alphabetical order, well, it leaves me breathless. Anyway, here's Jim's letter.

P.O. Box 3, Beaconsfield,  
 Cape Province, South Africa.  
 30th October, 1940.

Dear Editor,

Thanks for the October copy of the DIGEST received yesterday.

Regarding your query on page 279 as to how many times the Fat Owl's name appeared in the MAGNET titles. Curiously enough, I recently catalogued this paper in alphabetical order of titles and from a quick glance through it would appear that Bunter's name is mentioned, or implied, no less than 193 times. As you may guess, Wharton is the runner-up with 51 to his credit. I wonder how many would get the third person correct? Is it

the Bounder? No, it is Horace Coker with 44, closely followed by the Bounder with 40. Next, peculiarly enough, we have Alonzo Todd with 31, Fish with 15, and Cherry with 12. Three others, i.e. Wun Lung, Mauleverer and Redwing have 9 to their credit, then Skinner and "Inky" have 8, with Loder, Bolsover and Ponsoby having 7 each. Wibly alone has 6, followed by Wingete, Quelch, Linley and Vivian with 5. Bull and Peter Tood have 4, Bulstrode, Nugent, Prout and Penfold three each, and Aunt Judy, Hazeldene, Hecker, Levinson, Napoleon, Rake and Walker have 2 each. Finally, those with 1 each are Angel, Blundell, Clavering, Chumley, Russell, de Vere, Hoskyns, Newland, Desmond, "Squiff", Snoop and Dutton.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

ARTHUR J. SOUTHWAY.

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And here's a nice little Christmessy article from one of our youngest members. Young as he may be, John is doing good work for the hobby across the Irish Sea.

#### CHRISTMAS AT WHARTON LODGE

By J. A. Boland

Many an enjoyable Greyfriars yarn has found its setting at Wharton Lodge. We have had summer tales, with the famous five making full use of the swimming pool, and engaging in summer sports, while an exhausted Bunter, panting, perspiring, was slung in a hammock waited on by a polite, patient, but untipped Wells.

Despite its summer glories, it is at Christmas that Wharton Lodge really comes into its own. Within its walls we find everything that is necessary to celebrate Christmas in the good old English way, the holly, the blazing log fire, and the ever abundant supply of estates. Outside we find that obliging snow that always arrived on Christmas Eve, and the ice on which Bunter's feet frequently "developed an obstinate desire to part company and travel in opposite directions".

Christmas morning in the Wharton Household was similar to any home in the kingdom. It was after dinner that the Lodge recovered its individual character. The afternoon invariably found Bunter wedged in a fireside armchair debating the cause of those sub-waistcoat eruptions, - "It can't have been the pudding - maybe it was nuts." Possibly from the colonel's

study the occasional pop of a cork, together with the sound of gruff but friendly voices penetrated the haze of cigar smoke and the solid oak door. It signified that Harry's uncle was entertaining his own circle of friends. From Wharton's den came the cheery chatter of the famous five, maybe they were discussing last night's mysterious burglary, or the ghost, or were they just passing time until tea arrived to re-unite the household for further festivities.

It is now ten years since we have had a Greyfriars Christmas; let us hope with the advent of the first post-war Greyfriars Christmastide that we shall spend it at Wherton Lodge.

FOR SALE: About 20 1d Populers (1st series) between numbers 60 and 89; or would exchange for Schoolboys' Own Libraries. No's required are (St. Franks) 4, 27, 54, 120, 336 and 369. (Rookwood) any numbers between No's 6 and 166 inclusive; also No's 174, 206 and 262. (St. Jims) Any between No's 2 and 164 inclusive, also numbers 172, 176, 180, 190, 224, 230, 234, 236, 246 and 365. (Greyfriars) Almost any numbers, especially before No. 277. Must be in good condition with original covers. Particulars of numbers and price to A. J. Southway, P.O. Box 3, Beaconsfield, Cape Province, South Africa.

WANTED URGENTLY: Your price paid. Gems 819, 878, 879, 946. Can any Fellow Collector oblige? Leonard Peckmen, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22.

WANTED Odd job lots. Anything cheap, complete preferred. Exchange lists. Also fantasy fiction. Henry J. H. Bertlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

WANTED Sexton Blakes, present series, many numbers. Osborn, 24, Harpur Street, Bedford.

WANTED: "Boys' Magazines", "Pilots", "Rangers", "Bullseyes", "Dick Turpins", "Robin Hoods", "Buffelo Bills", etc. etc. Patrick O'Donohue, Seaport House, New Docks, Galway, Ireland.

WANTED All back numbers of Collector's Digest. Also Annuals. William Martin, 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10.

WANTED Aldine Publications, Turpins, Duvals, Robin Hoods, etc. E. R. Landy, 4 Nuneston Road, Dagenham, Essex.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libraries, 2nd Series. 171 or 723. Leonard Peckmen, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

# The Nelson Lee Column

All queries and suggestions to Robert Blythe,  
46, Carleton Road, Holloway, London, N.7.

You will remember that some months ago we went into the question of authorship of some of the early N.L.'s. Well, Mr. Webb of Birmingham has evidently gone into the matter with his usual thoroughness, but, as he says, his findings have confused rather than clarified them. His letter deals with No's 3,6,11,12, which we agreed were all by one author, whilst in No.3 it states that the story was by the author of "The Case of the Turkish Bonds" and "The Mystery of the Five Towns". Here is what he has to say about it. "—I have traced both these stories, which are, of course, titles of old U.J. stories, the first bearing the heading of the "Five Towns" (issue No.289, published 24th April, 1909) and the second being contained in No.604, published 8th May, 1915. — There is absolutely no doubt that these stories were the work of separate authors. The "Five Towns", for instance, was certainly written by A. S. Herdy, — "The Case of the Turkish Bonds", however, was penned by W. Murray Graydon; so instead of shedding a little light on the subject, I seem to have clouded the issue still further. — Both Graydon and Herdy wrote stories of wrongly accused young heroes and the faithful loving sweetheart who firmly and tearfully believed in him. When you wrote that the passages between the lovers sometimes descended to sheer bathos, this might apply to the work of either of the above-mentioned writers — seemed quite out of their depth when describing a love scene, and marred an otherwise very good yarn."

However, things are not quite so clouded as they may seem, because from certain clues supplied by Mr. Webb, I think I am safe in saying that these four stories were written by William Murray Graydon. Also in view of the fact that the "Turkish Bonds" was issued in 1915 just before the Nelson Lee Library made its appearance, readers would more likely remember that story than the other which appeared in 1909.

Some time ago Mr. Charles Hamilton suggested that readers would like to know the titles of the novels Mr. E.S. Brooks has written. For various reasons, although I gave a few, I was not able to continue. However, arising out of the meeting Brooks attended, I am now able to give you a complete list. So here they are, listed under his various pen names.

By BERKELEY GRAY: Mr. Mortimer gets the Jitters. Vultures Ltd.  
 Miss Dynamite. Conquest Merches On. Leave it to Conquest.  
 Conquest Takes All. Six to Kill. Meet the Don. Convict 1066  
 Thank You, Mr. Conquest. Six Feet of Dynamite. Blonde for  
 Danger. The Gay Desperado. Cavalier Conquest. Alias Norman  
 Conquest. Mr. Bell of Fire. Killer Conquest. The Spot  
 Marked X. Duel Murder. The Conquest Touch.

By VICTOR GUNN: Footsteps of Death. Ironsides of the Yard.  
 Ironsides Smashes Through. Ironsides Lone Hand. Death's  
 Doorway. Mad-hatter's Rock. Ironsides Sees Red. Nice Day  
 for a Murder. The Dead Man Laughs. Ironsides Smells Blood.  
 Death on Shivering Sand. Three Dates with Death. Ironsides  
 on the Spot. Road to Murder. Dead Man's Warning.

By E. S. BROOKS: The Case of the Antlered Man. The Grouser  
 Investigates.

All of the above are published by Collins. He also wrote  
 a story under the name of Robert W. Comrade called "Desert Gold".  
 I'm not certain of the publisher. I do know, however, that  
 it was a revised version of a story that appeared in the first  
 N.S. No's 171-174.

SERIES 2nd New Series

- Nos. 74-77. St. Frank's under Canvas. (Note 74. Complete story)  
 " 78-83. Intro. Victor Orlando King of Ceronia.  
 " 84-87. Barring-out Against Prof. Ogleby.  
 " 88-93. Featuring the Return of Ezra Quirke.  
 (Note Nos. 88, 89 complete stories)  
 " 94-97. U. S. Adams as Remove Captain.  
 " 98-101. Christmas at Tregellis Castle.  
 " 102-105. Featuring Prof. Zingreve.  
 " 106-109. The Removites in Search of Treasure.  
 " 110-111. Intro. Tony Creswell.  
 " 112-115. Nelson Lee and the Silver Dwarf.  
 (Note: Reprint of Maxwell Scott yern)

TITLES: O.S. No. 291. The Schoolboy Builders. 292, The Cinema  
 Strikers. 293, Solomon Levi's Triumph. 294, The College House  
 Mystery. 295, The Schoolboy Lightweight. 296, The Blackmailed  
 Schoolboy. 297, The Housemaster's Double. 298, The Lure of  
 the Ring. 299, The Housemaster's Hate. 300, The Beginning of  
 the Rot. 301, The Secret Tribunal. 302. The Schoolboy Profes-  
 sional. 303. On the Track of the Schemer. 304, Fooled at the  
 Finish. 305, Drift in Mid-Air. 306, The Ship of Mystery.  
 307, The Mountain Stronghold. 308. In the Brigand's Lair.  
 309, The Saving of the Capitol. 310, The Sign of the Fleming Torch.

LETTER BOXAn Old Friend Passes

34, Aragon Drive, Barkingside,  
Ilford, Essex. 12/11/49.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

I know that you had known my husband over a fairly considerable time and would probably wish me to write to you about him. Joe Baguley died most suddenly and unexpectedly on 11th August at Blacktown in Australia. It was a great shock and blow to me as you can imagine, as we had only just moved into our property and I was left with a young baby. As I had no relatives or connections out in Australia I decided to return home as soon as ever I could sell the property and settle my affairs. I arrived back in this country by air on 16th Oct. and am now hoping to find a home and a teaching job in this district where I have friends. It seems such a tragedy that we ever thought of leaving England at all, but Joe was so anxious to go to Australia and had planned everything so carefully that we did not think we could go wrong. However, one cannot plan against all eventualities, it seems, and so, just when he thought he had achieved what he wanted, he was struck down, and died within half-an-hour from a clot of blood in the coronary artery.

Yours sincerely, WINIFRED BAGULEY.

Frank Richards Writes on a Secret Subject

Rose Lawn, Kingsgate-on-Sea, Kent.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

October 12th, 1949.

Many thanks for the October C.D. Good for you and for all concerned.

I have just finished "Tom Merry's Barring-Out" for next year. I feel a little shy about confessing the work upon which I am now engaged. I just love it, but am not quite sure that I shall definitely go on with it. I think you read an article I wrote for the Saturday Book four or five years ago, in which I mentioned that one of my wishes was to write a book on religion. Now, at last, I am setting my hand to it. It seems to me sometimes that such a book may do good, in this age of dreary doubt and unbelief, written by a man who has reached almost the verge of human existence, and whose faith enables him to look calmly into what is to come, without a doubt and without a fear. Then again I get a feeling of diffidence, and wonder whether I had better leave it alone. So I don't know yet whether I shall finish the book.

If I do, it will be a short book, simply written, and published at a low price, as I should not care to make money out of it. If it should come to pass, I cannot help wondering how many of my old readers would care anything for it—do you think that many or any - would? It may seem out of keeping with Tom Merry and Billy Bunter; but it is not really so, for I am certain that but for the influence of religion I should have written very differently. Anyhow, that is what I am writing at the present moment, though whether I shall go on with it I don't yet know.

With kind regards, Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

(Note: I replied to Frank Richards advising him to go ahead, for there is not a great gulf between a book on religion and the stories he usually writes. For he must have a bulky file of letters from men paying sincere testimony to the good influence those stories had had on their lives in their adolescent days. I received the following reply. - H.L.)

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

What you say about my little book is very pleasant and encouraging, and I think I shall go ahead with it. The title I am thinking of at present is "Faith and Hope", which fairly well describes it. It will be quite a small book, not over 10,000 words, simply written, and I hope readable. It does seem to me sometimes that it may be of use, especially to young people who may be troubled by doubt, which is so easily cleared away in the light of experience and reflection.

With kind regards, Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

27 Archdele Road, East Dulwich  
London, S.E.22.

Dear Editor,

In a letter received recently from Peard Sutherland of Vancouver, I have been presented with the following queries which I am unable to answer. I am therefore referring them to the Digest in the hope that either yourself or readers can answer them through the medium of our magazine. I may add that I am just as interested to know the answers as is my correspondent

1. Why was the river that flows by St. Jims spelt "Ryll" for the first dozen or so years and then changed permanently to "Rhyl"?
2. Does the river flow in front of the school or behind it?
3. Is the "Green Man" in Rylcombe Lane or High Street?
4. Was the old castle (in Castle Wood) near Wayland or Rylcombe?

LEONARD PACKMAN.



All letters, manuscripts etc. to be addressed  
to the Editor of Blakiana Section:-  
H. M. Bond, 10 Erw Wen, Rhiwbina, Cardiff.

#### THE ROUND TABLE

is very short this month as you will observe. But I think you will agree that the features which replace it are more than welcome. In my brief chat I must take this opportunity of wishing all Blake fans the very happiest of times this Xmas. I can see some of you taking down a Blake novel from the shelf on Xmas afternoon. Perhaps it will not be possible to do so at that exact time, knowing family gatherings as I do, but I am sure that SOMETIME during the festive season you will enjoy a few minutes with our own favourite character, one of the finest in the world. I will resume the usual features in January, so, until then, I will conclude with the age old wish A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ONE AND ALL.

Cheerio for now,

H. M. BOND.

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#### THE MEMORY OF A GREAT AUTHOR GWYN EVANS

compiled by H. M. Bond with the help of several readers of Blakiana, including Mr. R. Mortimer and his wife who have kindly furnished the interesting details of the family life of the late Sexton Blake writer.

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Every Christmas I tell the same story to my readers in the pages of Blakiana. Now I take down the Gwyn Evans Xmas stories and turn their pages with renewed interest. One would say that



his Yuletide yarns should have lost their savour after being read many many times, but no, they are always fresh and the plots, although being well known still thrill me. But it is not the theme of the stories that gives the big thrill. It is that original and unsurpassed description of Xmas at Baker Street that makes one feel that Sexton Blake is just outside the door waiting to walk in and join my Christmas fare. I can sit down in my arm-chair and live again the thrilling moments when I first read those stories. Holly and mistletoe draped around the familiar consulting room by Tinker. Blake in his saddlebag chair by the fire, smoking that age old briar pipe, that curved pipe that has burned most of the tobacco the detective has smoked while he has been wrestling with those tricky problems with which he has been faced through the last fifty years or so. The door opens and Mrs. Berdell comes in bearing the Xmas Turkey. Familiar happy faces sit round the room. Dear old Couttsy, that hardened member of the Yard with whom the detective has faced so many perils. The irrepressible "Splash" Page and his Editor Julius Jones. The breezy American sleuth Ruff Hanson and that dry and humorous character, Mary Ann Cluppins, that relation of Mr. Berdell's who lends herself to the Yuletide scene admirably. Yes, those wonderful characters of Gwyn Evans live again every Xmas for me, and I am sure for many of you also. As I have said before in these pages, Blake stories were always topical when they were appearing in the old Union Jack. But never were they more so than at Xmas time. Somehow Gwyn Evans had the knack of putting the Yuletide scene over as no other author I have ever known, and although a lot of the nostalgia I experience every Xmas may be due to my knowing all the characters so well I feel that had those Xmas stories never been printed Xmas would be a less joyful season to me. Is it not strange that such stories, appearing in the pages of a boy's detective story paper twenty or more years ago should so influence a man of nearly forty with a family of his own? Such is the influence of Gwyn Evans, who was, undoubtedly, one of the masters of the Blake story. You can travel abroad with that other master G. H. Teed, you can roam the country with Pedro at the leash through the medium of Allen Blair and you can almost hear the sound of blows when Anthony Skene describes a scrap but not one of those authors, or the many others that have contributed to the success of The Men From Baker Street, can convey that spirit of Xmas such as did Gwyn Evans. And the remarkable part of the whole thing is that the author himself did not live a very happy or healthy life, or at least that is how it appears to me now that I have come across some scraps of information from

various sources. Of course it is obvious that Evans had a superb sense of humour. This is manifestly evident in his stories as a whole, quite apart from the seasonable humour in his Xmas stories, but one cannot say, after hearing some of the chapters of his life, that it was all honey, as the saying goes.

Evans was a bohemian character. You may have guessed that by some of his work, by some of his descriptions, and by some of his ideas in his various yarns. It is known that he lived in the Chelsea district of London in the early thirties and was often to be seen in the various taverns that are placed in that area. Apparently he did his story writing in spasms. We have already smiled at a few of his tricks with the various Editors with whom he worked, but it now transpires that the men would just disappear for a couple of weeks at a time and ultimately turn up with a batch of work. Then he would be seen again around the taverns, spending money freely and enjoying life gaily and without restraint. A tall, lean figure, with a pale face that had the marks of cleverness about its features, one reader has stated that he almost looked like Sexton Blake himself. There is no doubt at all that he was a most popular figure amongst the people of Chelsea, and one can almost imagine him emulating the actions of Sexton Blake by distributing his money amongst the poorer people of the district. Mrs. Evans, his wife, was no less a popular figure. She was evidently a woman of extremely small stature and was known as "The Bug" for that reason. It is said that in her young days she was an artist's model and was much in demand. You recall that usually Evans introduced children into his Xmas stories, in fact a youngster usually found his way into his yarns. But I do not think that it is generally known that he had a child of his own. I am told on good authority that his little daughter was a very quaint little thing. One can imagine the child of such a pair being so.

Imagine, if you can, the scene at one of the Bohemian parties often held in certain parts of Chelsea. Imagine the personality of Gwyn Evans making itself apparent at such events. Is it any wonder that the themes of his Blake stories were bizarre and often strained credulity. Were he alive today I can picture him as a disciple of Salvador Dali. I often wish he were with us still. Think of the possibilities! Evans, as you probably know was very familiar with the Middle East. Think of how the recent events in that part of the world would have provided much material for his wonderful stories. But alas we shall never have another new Evans story and so we can only find solace in those yarns of the

pest, and, for my part at least, they will live forever as the greatest examples of their kind. Never before, or since, have we had stories so human and so unusual. And greatest of all are those unforgettable Xmas stories. So rejoice! Although he has left us Gwyn Evans will still always be with us in spirit. As long as those tattered copies of U.J.'s continue to exist we shall never be without that Xmas spirit which is one of the finest things that the Union Jack ever gave us. Long live the memory of Gwyn Evans! And a Merry Christmas with Splash Page, Inspector Coutts, Mary Ann Cluppins, Martha Bardell, Pinker and the eternal Sexton Blake.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Walter Webb we have pleasure in giving our readers a few very interesting items that will solve a few queries which have been outstanding for some time. Here, then, are more

### ITEMS FOR YOUR SEXTON BLAKE SCRAPBOOK

By Walter Webb

Being keenly interested in authors and their various pseudonyms I was so intrigued by the possibility of John Drummond and John Newton Chance being one and the same writer that I determined to go all out in an endeavour to solve this problem.

Result - a letter to the Withy Grove Press which published the Cherry Tree novel "Murder in Oils" and another to the Amalgamated Press calling the editor of the Sexton Blake Library. No reply from the former, but, somewhat surprisingly, a communication from Kemaley House, to which my letter had apparently been forwarded, to say that they were checking up on the matter.

Their efforts, however, have been forestalled by the Editor of the Sexton Blake Library, who has obliged by answering the great question which has cropped up in Blekiens.

Yes! John Newton Chance and John Drummond are indeed one and the same writer. Although the editor did not go into details there is satisfaction in the knowledge that the cloud of mystery once shrouding Drummond's identity is now finally dispersed.

In my letter I also touched upon the activities - and leak of them - of other writers whose work I have followed through the pages of "The Union Jack" and "Sexton Blake Library". After referring to the immobility of Gilbert Chester, who has turned out only one Blake story in the last two years, I inquired into the whereabouts of Anthony Skene and several others, such as George E. Rochester, Barry Parowme, Stanton Hope, Ledbrooke Black, Walter Edwards, Donald Stuart, Allan Blair and Arthur S. Hardy. Although in the reply I received, mention was not made of all

these authors, there were several points of interest to be digested from it. For example, neither Anthony Skene nor George E. Rochester are likely to be billed again as Sexton Blake writers, for they no longer appear on the A.P. list of contributors. Of Chester, Edwards, Perowne, Stuart, Blake and Hardy there was no mention, or information to be gleaned, but I remember that in a reply to a letter I wrote during the War, the editor stated that he was no longer in touch with either Ledbrooke Black or Edwy Seagrave Brooks and could only conclude that they had retired from the writing profession or were working in other fields. Evidently he had not heard of Berkeley Gray!

But of Stanton Hope there is at least some definite news. This great traveller who has knocked about the world as extensively as did the late George Hamilton Teed, is at present making a long tour of Australia, and if the time of his return to England is at the moment not quite certain it is gratifying, anyway, to know that yet another of the really old timers is still with us. Paper restrictions, in particular, have resulted in the departure of far too many old favourites as it is.

I had always entertained a suspicion that Walter Tyrer wrote about Blake under a number of pseudonyms, but from the editorial chair comes the news that this author only uses pen names when writing for women's periodicals. All his Sexton Blake stories appear under his own name.

A pity about Anthony Skene; he was among the really great stars, and his going leaves a gap almost as wide as that left by the incomparable George Hamilton Teed. Of Teed, the editor pays warm tribute, both to the man himself, whose services and friendship he valued so highly, and also to the grand stories he used to write.

It was during his writing of the series "Spice Ltd" that Teed fell seriously ill, an illness from which he never completely recovered. Long years of bronchial trouble eventually took their toll, and G. H. Teed died just before the outbreak of World War II. Leaving the ranks of Blake authors considerably depleted thereby. To "The Thrillers" went the privilege of publishing the last Teed story, "The Plunder of Sainte Marie" (14th January 1939).

But to offset the loss of these many old favourites is the encouraging fact that under the skilled authorship of men like Walter Tyrer, John Newton Chandler and Anthony Parags, the quality of the Blake stories at least need never fall beneath their present high level.