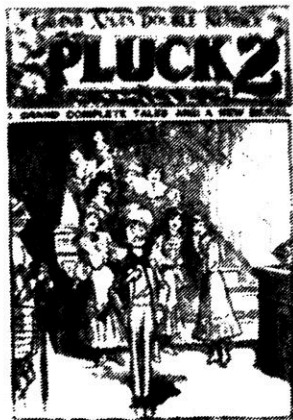


# The Collectors' Digest

VOL. 5. NO. 60. DECEMBER 1951  
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Price 1s.6d.

Post Free

DECEMBER 1951

Editor, Miscellaneous Section

Herbert Leckenby, Telephone Exchange,

C/o Central Registry, Northern Command, York.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Wishing all our readers at home and  
overseas a Happy Christmas and  
a Prosperous New Year

An Eventful Five Years: Once again we've reached the end of a volume - I'm getting used to saying that now. I remember when the letters started to come in in response to No.1 one of the first contained a subscription for six months. I said to myself a little fearfully, "I hope I shan't have to send him any of it back." Well, that trustful friend had more faith in the success of the little magazine than I had, and it's great to think he will soon be getting the issue numbered ten times six.

At the end of each volume I like to look back. This year there's been storm as well as sunshine, nevertheless we reach the end with colours flying.

Where trouble was concerned I refer, of course, to the alarming increase in cost of production, which gave us no option but to increase the price of our little magazine. Only

two subscribers dropped out as a consequence, convincing proof, I think, of the affection with which the C.D. is held. We have lost a few others for various reasons, two unfortunately, John Medcraft and A. J. Cruse, at the hand of the Great Reaper. On the other hand we have gained many new friends, with a gain in circulation.

Once again there were many outstanding events. In May the happy occasion when the parent Club in London welcomed members of Northern. Then the impressive start of the Midland Club, under the enterprising chairmanship of Jack Corbett, followed by others at Liverpool and in Australia; all likely to become gratifying successes. Isn't it marvellous when you think of it?

We've also had four Exhibitions - at Newcastle, Gateshead, Bradford and Scarborough. I'm writing before news of the last named comes through, but undoubtedly the others created a lot of interest and brought bouquets from the Libraries concerned.

Yes, we can safely say that despite difficulties it's been another year of steady progress.

Now on to Volume Six.

=====

It's Nearly Ready. Not long after you receive this the Annual will be dropping through your letter box, not with the "dull thud of a returned manuscript", but like, I hope, the cheerful entry of a welcome visitor. At the time of writing this many pages have been run off, and late articles typed and read over for possible errors to be corrected. One article is "The Remove Form at Greyfriars" by J. Breeze Bentley referred to on another page. In type it looks the goods. In an earlier Annual <sup>was</sup> a winner from Bill Gender telling of the arrivals of the boys at Greyfriars, but I don't think the two articles will in any way clash.

I spent the whole of last Sabbath day checking and re-checking the "Who's Who". I found that about 40 delinquents had not sent in their Questionnaire forms, so I had to prepare an entry for them - Mr. Quelch would have given them lines.

That wasn't the end of my labours. Once again, I found I had an embarrassment of riches and inevitably someone had to be disappointed and a few articles left out. These include two of my own written early on, "Curiosities in Magnet Titles" and "Detectives in Boys' Fiction". However, they won't be wasted - they'll give us a start for next year's!

You may find just a few pages less, to combat the increased

cost of production over and above that gained by our own advance in price, but by a re-arrangement of the "Who's Who" we calculate we shall gain some pages, thus on the whole you will get just about the same amount of reading matter as last year, which I think I can claim is no mean achievement.

Now there's will a few who haven't yet ordered. Please do the necessary, those it refers to, and thus relieve the anxiety of

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LOCKENBY

SALE OF 33 SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARIES (First series) between 74 and 175.

20 Boy's Friend Libraries (First series) Between 439 and 549. Also 580, 667, 702.

9 Nelson Lee's, 1918/9. Boys' Leader, 2, 3, 4.

Also some Aldines. Robin Hood, No's 2-8, 32, 43, 47, 49, 50, 54.

6 Buffalo Bills. 5 Diamond Libraries. Jack Harkaway etc. Honeysett, 65 Orchard Road, St. Annes, Lancashire.

CAN ANYONE oblige with GEM number 946, please? I will pay a good price. Josephine Peckmen, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

WANTED. Illustrated Police Budgets; Famous Crimes. Also Dixon Brett's and Dixon Hawke Libraries. Good price offered. R. Rouse, 3 St. Leonards Terrace, Gas Hill, Norwich, Norfolk.

EXCHANGE. 50 Sexton Blakes 1943/50 for 30 Sexton Blakes 1930/40. Graham C. Davies, 54 Newton Road, Mumbles, Swansea, Glam.

FOR SALE: Gems No's 233-250; 293-344; inclusive, in 5 volumes (1912-1914). What offers? T. W. Walker, 387 Liverpool Road, Hough Green, Widnes, Lence.

SALE: Boys Friend (2d New Series); Boys Realm (1905-6 Bound); Chums (2d 1916 onwards) and 9d, 10d and 1s.0d (1921 onwards); Champions (from No.1, Vol.1.); Young Britain (from No.1, Vol.1.); Boys' Magazine; Boys' Comic Journals (1891).

Offers to Ingram, 97, Tottenhall Road, Wolverhampton.

A CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER OF THE GOLDEN AGE

By Herbert Leckenby

It is customary in our December issue to browse over some Christmas Double Number of the long distant past. For this occasion I have chosen that of "Pluck" published November 18th, 1905 (you will see its seasonable cover displayed on ours).

I remember that number, oh, so well. Some of you may recall an article I wrote two or three years ago entitled "Streets of Memories" wherein I described some of my boyhood haunts in this ancient city of York. I related how my benevolent employer staggered me by giving me half-a-sovereign for a Christmas box, and how I had straight away made a dash for my favourite second-hand bookshop. Well, among my purchases was this very number of "Pluck" which had already been bought, read, and sold, by someone who had been better off than myself a month earlier. Anyway, it came in just right for my Christmas holiday.

Well, let's have a look at the copy I now possess, which is in far better condition than the one I bought forty-six years ago. "Pluck", of course, was Magnet size and had an attractive primrose-coloured cover. This double number had 56 inner pages, jolly good fare for twopence. But we lads of the period used to think we had been diddled. For, a normal issue consisted of 28 pages and cover, therefore this was not a double number, for there were four pages short, or so, Fisher T. Fish like, we reasoned. Be that as it may, would that there were such twopennorths to-day!

There were two long complete stories, a short one, the first instalment of a serial, a page of riddles, and a page of editor's chat.

One of the complete stories was "Cookey's Christmas". This was a story in a series very popular at the time and which had a good run in "Pluck". They concerned a quaint trio, "The Captain, the Cook, and the Engineer", and at the beginning of each story they were invariably described something like this.

"He was a very exceptional-looking man was the captain.

"Enormously broad, if short, he was sun-tanned to a degree, also bearded, and he smoked incessantly long, fat and strong cigars.

His attire proclaimed his rank, for he was arrayed in a new and well fitting blue reefer suit, with gold bracelets on his sleeves to the number of four.

The enormously powerful bulldog expression about his face was softened by a kindly light that twinkled in the sou'sou'west corner of his eyeballs. Such was Captain Kelly, R.N.R.

The middling little man of middling size was clothed in immaculate white ducks and his name was Mr. Scrubbs, and he was by profession a ship's cook. But no mention of his personality would be complete without a reference to an enormous ham-bone he carried, and which was his inseparable companion. The ham-bone was of enormous length, and its bald knuckle-end revealed that it had stood true and staunch in many a hard fought fray.

Such was Cookey Scrubbs and when the third has been mentioned, the trio of comrades will be complete.

Number three was Donald, a ship's chief engineer. His reefers were designed more for comfort and use than outward show. He neither judged by appearances, nor cared for his own appearance. He smoked a short clay pipe, and the usual stolidity and rugged grit and good nature of the born and bred Scotsman characterised him.

Thus the trio. The stories were grand stuff, stirring adventure all over the world expertly flavoured with dry, whimsical humour. In my opinion they were far superior to the Jack, Sam and Pete stories which were running in the Marvel at the same time, and went on doing so for many years, long after Captain Kelly & Co. had passed out.

The stories appeared under the name of Herry Belbin, but this was simply a pseudonym for Harold J. Garrish, that sturdy veteran who celebrated his jubilee on the A.P. steff quite a number of years ago, and who I believe is there still.

"Cookey'd Christmas" ran to 21 pages, and was illustrated by the inimitable A. H. Clarke, who in fact, did the series throughout and who for a spell made Cookey as familiar as Billy Bunter and as amusing.

The other long complete, which also ran to 21 pages, was called "Hard Times" and again was one of a series, this time concerning "the Universal Purveyors of Messages" who had an office "hard by Aldgate Pump". They were written by Alfred Barnard, and the artist was again Arthur Clarke. I never

discovered who Alfred Bernard was, but it was probably a pen-name.

The stories told of the adventures, usually centered in London, of another trio, Joe, Jim and Jeremy, the latter, the comic character, and nick-named "Hairpin". He possessed a monkey called "Jacko"..... Why, bless my soul, looking through the story more closely it comes to me like a flash that Alfred Bernard was almost surely none other than H. J. Garrish, whom I have just been talking about. Yes, the more I look the more certain I am. There's the same blend of excitement and whimsical humour - Jim, the sturdy leader, Joe the quiet but dependable one, Jeremy the quaint, always in trouble, lanky edition of Cockey Scrubbs. Strange I should not have thought of that years ago. Anyway, I shall have to ask Walter Webb, our researcher, to try and get confirmation.

The short complete story was "Grindley's Ghost Hunt", a reprint, much abridged Henry St. John story which had appeared in a Boys' Friend Christmas Double Number a year or two earlier.

The serial was "Chums of Waverley" by "Maurice Merriman". I am confident he was S. Clerke Hook. The picture was by Leonard Shields, destined a few months later to illustrate the very first St. Jims stories, and years on to become so familiar to readers of Greyfriars stories.

Well, it was a fine Christmas Double Number. Looking through it has given me a real touch of nostalgia, and I am hoping that this coming Yuletide I shall have the chance to settle down to read it from first page to last, and then see pictures in the fire of the day when I rushed round to buy it at the shop which is now no more.

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OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB. LONDON SECTION.

East Dulwich Meeting Sunday November 18th

Despite inclement weather chairman Len had the great satisfaction of seeing a muster of 24 when he opened proceedings with a hearty welcome to Don Webster, chairman of the Mersey-side section. Dealing quickly and efficiently with the usual formalities he then dealt with the new design for the official club stationery. A postal members' draw was then held and this resulted in E. Windover and H. Leckenby winning copies of "Billy Bunter Butts In". Bob Mortimer then explained an idea he had thought of and a committee of Bob Whiter, R. Jenkins



and himself were elected to deal with the matter. Eliminator Quiz, key word Wharton, was then held and resulted in a win for Bob Blythe with E. Reynolds 2nd, and Bob Whiter 3rd. Doubles Quiz, originated by E. Reynolds was actually a double dead-heat as C. Willis and Bob Whiter were 1st, and J. Geal and I. Whitmore 3rd. Don Webster then addressed the company with a few well chosen remarks and then R. Blythe gave a reading from a "Nelson Lee" and R. Jenkins one from a "Magnet". Both these were on the humorous side and were greatly applauded at the finish. Next meeting at Wood Green on December 16th.

Annual General Meeting at Greenwich on January 20th, 1952. The present officers have been proposed en bloc, but postal members can send in any further nominations. The meeting then closed with thanks to the host, chairman Len, who was off to address a local youth club on the old boys' books. And so homeward bound with more happy memories of the past and the promise of more to come in the near future.

BEN WHITER alias UNCLE BENJAMIN.

#### OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB - NORTHERN SECTION

Meeting, 239 Hyde Park Road, Leeds, Nov. 10th, 1951

Bill Williamson had to reluctantly take the chair again, reluctantly, because he had once more to set for our much tried Reg Hudson, who was again having a spece in the Infirmary after a break-down a week earlier.

However, Bill was able to announce that Reg hoped to be home again in a day or two. He also had the pleasure of extending a hearty welcome to new members. Mr. and Mrs. H. Coates of Bradford and Mr. A. Ennew (Dewsbury). In addition Robert Peck, an old member paying his visit to a meeting; along with Cliff Beardsell from Stockport. Cliff was having a real day out. He had called at my office early in the morning, gone off to see his top-of-the-world Stockport County, beat my York City, then on to Leeds, all smiles, to the meeting. No wonder he said to me afterwards - a perfect dry.

As we had a star attraction the formal business was soon disposed of. There was one important matter - the date of the Christmas Party. It was announced that as the room would not be available on December 8th, the event had had to be postponed until the 22nd. It's to be hoped that this re-arrangement will not mean any reduction in numbers. The new

date will at least provide the Christmas atmosphere. So rally round and advise the secretary as soon as possible. It will be a delightful evening, and 5/- covers everything, knife and fork tea and all.

Now to the event of the evening. J. Breeze Bentley's second smashing success, a talk on "The Remove Form at Greyfriars". Among the numerous questions he was bombarded with afterwards was one, "How long did it take you to prepare it?" Breeze just smiled good humouredly. Well, I have the manuscript before me (it's going into the Annual for the benefit of you all) and I'm wondering how long it took him to write it, let alone swot it all up, for it's all in beautifully written script, a sheer joy for a typist to follow. How I wish I could write like it!

Anyway, the audience of 25 listened with rapt attention for well over an hour and let 'Breeze' know in no uncertain fashion at the finish how much they had enjoyed it. They certainly know now everything there is to know about the famous Remove - as you will soon, too.

Yes, it was a splendid meeting with one thing to regret that our well-loved leader was in a hospital bed instead of his chair. That he will be at the head of the table on December 22nd is the heartfelt prayer of us all.

HERBERT LECKENBY

Northern Section Correspondent.

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OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB (MERSEYSIDE SECTION)

November Meeting

The meeting opened at 7.30 p.m. with an attendance of ten, including two new members. A representative of the "Bootle Times" was present.

The chairman, Don Webster, opened the proceedings by extending a welcome to our new members; he regretted the absence, through indisposition, of G. E. Simpson, and thanked him on behalf of the section for his efforts in gaining prominence for our activities in the local press. In this connection, satisfaction was expressed re the publicity we have obtained in the Merseyside papers, and negotiations are at the moment in progress for a "write-up" in one of the national "dailies".

It was proposed that a librarian be appointed; this

office to take effect from January next, was accepted by W. Horton, and all wish him every success in his new capacity.

The minutes of the October meeting were read by the secretary, and refreshments were next partaken of - again provided by our hostess Mrs. Webster - and served by our "Nippy", Edna Mervyn.

Then followed the discussion, "Greyfriars v. St. Jim's", with Jim Welsh taking up the cudgels on behalf of the former, and Don Webster the latter. Some very interesting and debatable points were voiced by both speakers, and the duel culminated in a general discussion; it is safe to say, to use a hackneyed phrase, "a good time was had by all".

The talk for the next meeting (November 25th) is under review.

The financial and library business concluded the meeting at 9.30 p.m., and we reluctantly set forth to face the inclemency of the weather.

F. CASE,  
Secretary.

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Report of Meeting of MIDLAND SECTION,  
O.B.B.C. on October 29th at 7.30 p.m.  
at The Townsend Club, Birmingham

It is very unlikely that any of the thirty enthusiasts who came to our October Meeting will ever forget that splendid evening. The highlight of this event was the visit of the famous Magnet illustrator, Mr. C. H. Chapman. (Jack Corbett will be telling you of his arrival and the way he was welcomed on another page.) He arrived at our new meeting-room in the Townsend Club at 7.30 p.m. Norman Gregory and Mrs. Davey had got there earlier and prepared the room which was full when I stepped in. Everybody was delighted to see who was with us and I could see that Mr. Chapman himself was impressed with their enthusiasm. He then offered to explain any points we cared to raise regarding the Magnet, and was immediately inundated with questions. During reminiscences Mr. Chapman cited many amusing incidents that cropped up during the years he sketched for "Greyfriars" readers. He then temporarily disappeared from my vision as a crowd of eager Bunterites pressed round him to see the various sketches and water-colours.

he was taking out of his bag to show us. Many pressed him to do a sketch for them and familiar faces again appeared on paper as that versatile hand and brain went to work. This atmosphere of nostalgic loyalty to Greyfriars reached the climax when Mr. Clegg sat down at the piano and we all took up positions for the singing of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" and "Luld Lang Syne". We did find time for a short twenty-questions session, and subjects like "The boot Smithy planted on Bunter" must have amused our other visitor, Mr. Morgan from Sandwell Toc H. Our last item was, of course, the Sales Table, and Mr. Chapman can't have failed to observe that inside five minutes, Members had bundles of Magnets in their possession, whilst other papers remained.

Yes, it was a grand evening and a good start in our new room. A vote of thanks from the Club to Mr. Chapman for coming along, and let's not forget the hospitable spirit of Mr. and Mrs. Pound who invited Mr. Chapman here and provided the accommodation for his stay in Birmingham. Thank you, Mr. Chapman, and we hope you will come again.

Meeting closed at 10-15. Next Meeting November 26th.

P. L. MELLOR,  
Secretary.

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## HAMILTONIAN

Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

I am indebted to Anthony Baker, of High Barnet, for some comments which appeared in the October number of the veteran "Boys Own Paper". Coming from a periodical which has been thought of with affection for more years than the great majority of us can remember, the views of the editor will be most interesting a gratifying to all Hamiltonians.

A few remarks from Anthony, who is one of our youngest members, first:-

The October Editorial of the Boy's Own Paper is rather interesting. It is entitled "What Price School Stories?" In the first and third paragraphs it asks whether school stories are still popular today, or whether boys have grown too scientifically minded to enjoy them.

The second paragraph says:

Your elder brothers and fathers will talk with affection about Billy Bunter, Harry Thorton, Bob Cherry and the famous Greyfriars characters created in the "Magnet" by Frank Richards. Their fantastic adventures were discussed eagerly each week. Frank Richards set a new popular level in school stories. The boarding school setting of Greyfriars was popular because so many boys identified their school and their friends with it. But Greyfriars had its rivals. I, for one, much preferred the more sober, but always entertaining adventures in the "Gem" of Tom Merry & Co. at St.Jim's. There was nothing more exciting than to slip over the school wall of St.Jim's on a hot summer afternoon with Tom Merry or Beggy Trimble, though poor old Beggy could never skim over any wall without the utmost difficulty. That incredible character, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was always around somewhere to add a touch of finesse, and inevitably we would be swinging away down a dusty Surrey lane in search of adventure, dodging in the ditch every now and then to avoid some dastardly prefect.

From what he says the Editor of the B.O.P. seems to think that the authors of the Magnet and the Gem were different people.

As you will have heard, Mr. C. H. Chapman was recently the guest of the enthusiastic Midland Branch, O.B.B.C. Here Jack Corbett tells you all about it. Nice work, Birmingham.

MR. CHAPMAN COMES TO TOWN

By Jack Corbett (Chairman of The O.B.B.C.  
(Midland Section))

One of my most cherished dreams in forming the Midland section of the O.B.B.C. was the possibility of having some personlity, closely connected with the old pepers, to visit our Club and thus meet in the flesh a link with the past era that we all hold so dear.

I discussed this idee lest June with the Rev. Pound, who had assisted me in forming our Club, and the outcome of our talk was a letter to Mr. Chapman, inviting him to spend a day with us in Birmingham. Our delight was boundless when e

letter arrived saying that October the 29th would suit him very well, and to make arrangements absolutely ideal for this great man's visit, Mrs. and the Rev. Pound eagerly offered to accommodate our guest for the night.

Well, October the 29th dawned cold and grey, causing me to cast anxious glances from the window, as a notable day like this really deserved bright sunshine to give that cheer and warmth, so needed on occasions of this nature. During the morning the mist cleared away and it really looked as though King Sol meant to show himself, and so at about twelve-thirty I met our Club stalwart, Mr. Pound, at Snow Hill station. We paced the platform talking animatedly of our long awaited day and trying to conjure visions of what our guest would be like. In fact the air seemed full of the atmosphere of Greyfriars, and as the finger of the station clock moved towards twelve-fifty, so our expectation increased. Mr. Chapman had that morning sent Mr. Pound a very excellent sketch of himself, raising his hat, and certainly from this clever drawing it would be easy to spot him. I was armed, however, with a bundle of "Magnets" that I intended to hold aloft as the Reading train came in and the bright blue and orange stood out well against the sombre grey of the station.

Just then the train was signalled and a distant rumble swelled to a roar as she steamed in and I raised the precious "Magnets" as the coaches glided past and as the iron horse slowed to a screeching standstill, a carriage door opened right opposite us and out stepped Mr. Chapman. His face broke into a lovely smile as he beheld the old papers and we stepped forward with outstretched hands, and really it seemed as though we had met before, so easy and happy was the atmosphere, in the midst of a cold, grey railway station.

A good lunch was thought to be the order of the day, so we escorted our guest to a pleasant restaurant, where a table had been reserved. What a splendid dinner it was, good roast beef of old England, which we treated in true Remove style, and Mr. Chapman obviously found it "grateful and comforting" although he did not put so much away as the Bunter that he had made famous.

Of course the conversation went all one way, the "Magnet", the Fleetway House, and the loss borne by society when the Hamilton papers ceased in 1940, while it was very enlightening to hear Mr. Chapman's own views on these much discussed matters.

At last our lunch came to a leisurely finish and so we left the cosy dining-room, stepping out into the wintery sunshine of Birmingham's main street. Here I must tell you that prior to our friend's visit, I had approached the "Birmingham Mail" and informed them of the visit of Billy Bunter's creator and countless other illustrations of old boys' papers, and they had shown great interest, so much in fact that I was asked to take Mr. Chapman along to the editorial offices and meet a Mr. Enfield from this department. 3 p.m. found us entering the great building and earlier Mr. Chapman had shown much pleasure at this invitation, so after disclosing our identity to the reception clerk, we awaited the above mentioned gentlemen. We were warmly received and as good luck would have it, Mr. Enfield was an old "Magnet" reader and vividly recalled Harry Wherton, Inky, Johnny Bull and many others, soon the grand old men of the drawings so well remembered, and the "Mail" gentlemen were talking of many things.

During this pleasant chat, several staff members passed through and Mr. Enfield asked them if they recalled the old "Magnet" and "Gem" and of course they did, but on learning that they were looking at the men responsible for the grand pictures contained in these papers, their surprise and pleasure was obvious. Our enjoyable interview was concluded by a very charming photograph of Mr. Chapman being taken, drawing a picture of Billy Bunter. This picture appeared next day together with a very good write-up which also spoke well of our Club and told how members were delighted by this suspicious occasion.

During this visit to the "Mail" Mr. Pound had left us to conclude some clerical business, and I had to call at my office so our friend met us as we came out of the building and the arrangement was to meet at the vicarage later for tea, when Midge, my wife, and Peter Mellor would join us.

Peter Mellor has reported elsewhere on the evening meeting, but I must add that never before have I seen such boundless enthusiasm and sheer delight as was manifest that memorable night. We were housed in a very comfortable new Club room, and super stacks of old papers added just that real nostalgic atmosphere, so valued by "Clen" members. Our evening ended all too soon, and after leaving the Club, my wife escorted Mr. Chapman and they chatted merrily until we

reached the point where farewells had to be said. As we shook hands with our grand guest, before he left to spend the night at the vicarage, I felt very sad to bid goodbye to this great man from Fleetway House and wondered if we would ever repeat such a lovely day. So in the heart of our great City I saw this unseen friend of countless folk melt into the gloom comforted by the fact that his work was immortal and like Tennyson's brook, would go on for ever.

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And now, something to make you smile. First, an extract from a Tom Hooperton letter. -

"Here is something I think the Club ought to do something about. I was taking a short cut round the back of Woolworths at Leeds and ran into a big sign, "Bob Cherry Commission Agent". This is letting Greyfriars down with a bump. Surely a deputation can impress on the chap that he he had called himself Harold Skinner or Aubrey Rocke there could be no objection, but to couple Bob Cherry and a bookie is little short of sacrilege."

Funny how the cheerful Bob who would have scorned to have a tanner on a horse at any price keeps getting mixed up with "the turf". First, a racehorse, now a bookie. Too bad!

And here's a remarkable coincidence spotted by Frank Snell of Bideford. Says he:

"Did you spot that Charl ton had three players open to transfer - D'Arcy, Lumley, and Hammond! Gussy has since gone to Chelsea. Any offers for the remaining St.Jim's players?"

You simply can't keep 'em out of the news.

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And now some seasonable recollections by Eric Payne. Read them and sigh for the years the locusts have eaten.

#### THE PICK OF THE SERIES. No.11.

##### The Christmas Series.

Readers liked their Christmas stories seasonable, with snow, and holly, and mistletoe, and family ghosts roaming around. I think, too, that Magnet readers liked the chums to spend their Christmas at Wharton Lodge. This was fairly conclusively proved by the result of the voting in the recent



Christmas Series contest in the Collectors' Digest when the WHARTON LODGE MYSTERY Series (Christmas 1932) smashed its way to the head of the poll. This superb series told of Bunter, for once forbidden to cross the threshold of Wharton Lodge for Christmas, stowing himself away in an attic, and causing all sorts of fun and games. Second in the voting came CHRISTMAS AT POLPELLE (Christmas 1935), set in Devonshire with a real Christmassy flavour, with a gruesome ghost to add to the excitement. CHRISTMAS AT CLAVANILLE ABBEY (1930), a glorious Christmas adventure, is also unforgettable.

Down with a bump, in the voting, came CHRISTMAS AT SEA (1936). Almost everybody voted it last in the Christmas Series. It was probably not so much a reflection on the Compton Series, which contained some good episodes, as it was proof that readers liked tales of the good old-fashioned Christmas.

It is impossible, in this limited space, to touch on many of the fine Christmas series which appeared in the Magnet, but mention must be made of that magnificent HERRY WHARTON versus MR. QUELICH Series (1924-5) in which Herry Wharton went to Monte Carlo to spend Christmas with the Bounder, but returned to spend it with Jimmy Silver in the "Boys' Friend". Though readers of that year probably thought wistfully of other Christmases at Wharton Lodge, they must have been fully recompensed by the power and excellence of the series which they were enjoying.

The Gen Christmas stories were nothing like so outstanding as those in the Magnet, though two unforgettable Christmas yarns appeared in the early blue-cover days, "NOBODY'S STUDY" (1912) and "THE MYSTERY OF THE PAINTED ROOM" (1913). Many of the Christmases at Eastwood House were overplayed, inasmuch as they were overburdened with characters. Crowds of characters were introduced, with crowds of sisters and aunts and uncles, and the main characters were lost in the crush. One series in the early nineteen-twenties told of Tom Merry expelled, and the chums barring out over the festive season. But a barring-out just did not seem right at Christmas time.

At Rookwood, they seem to have had their fair share of festive occasions and disturbing ghosts. As was mentioned in the "Popular Popular" article in last year's ANNUAL, three different stories of Rookwood, (re-printed from the "Boys' Friend") bore the same title, "The Phantom Prior" for three successive years.

Magnet Titles (Contd.)

"S" denotes Substitute.

No.801, (S) The Greyfriars Day Boy. 802 (S) Bunter's Barring-Out. 803 (S) A Puzzle for the Remove. 804 (S) The Twin Tangle. 805 (S) The Hand of Fate. 806, Lame Bunter. 807, Meuleverer Means Business. 808, A Split in the Co. 809, Sir Jimmy's Substitute. 810, Bunter the Hunter. 811, The House of Pengarth. 812, The Secret of the Caves. 813 (S) The Heart of a Hero. 814, Montague the Mysterious. 815 (S) Fishy's Friendly Society. 816 (S) An Island Mystery. 817 (S) Condemned by the School. 818 (S) Disgraced by his Father. 819, Mick the Outcast. 820, The Gipsy Schoolboy. 821, Mick the Untameable. 822, The Luck of the Gipsy. 823, The Gipsy Millionaire. 824, (S) The Greyfriars Gliding Corps. 825 (S) The Coker Challenge Cup. 826, The Rebel of the Remove. 827 (S) True as Steel. 828, The Gipsy's Return. 829, The Phantom of the Highlands. 830, The Wraith of Locksmair.

THE NELSON LEE COLUMN

All communications to Robert Blythe,  
46, Carleton Road, Holloway, London, N.7.

Now that the Christmas season is with us once again (or will be in a week or two) with its holly and mistletoe and attendant festivities, I wonder if you, like myself, turn once again to one of the many excellent Christmas holiday series? If so, which will you choose?

Speaking for myself I consider one of the finest was the occasion when Handforth invites a crowd to Handforth Towers, his uncle's place in Norfolk, as told in 1st N.S. Nos.34,35. Only two stories, but they recapture the spirit of Christmas to perfection. From the time Handforth steps out of the train at North Walsham and skids on the icy platform, the scene is set for a Christmas that every boy loved to read about. North Walsham! To me, even that name has a Christmassy sound. From then on the reader is up to his neck in snow, a haunted house (complete with ruined wings and mysterious happenings) and, of course, a ghost! True, the whole thing is a leg-pull got up by the irrepressible wily Handforth and his Uncle George - but what happens to the lads of the village before the

denouement was nobody's business.

The joke being over, everyone moves to the real Handforth Towers (the previous happenings having taken place in an uninhabited ruin) and the real festivities begin. Starting with a ball (which describes one of the most amusing incidents ever penned by Brooks) we move back to the old ruin in search of another ghost, and buried treasure. Oh yes! old Edwy certainly went to town in this story.

But perhaps you stopped reading the N.L. before this story was published? Which, then, would be your choice? The first Christmas story of all is remembered with affection by many published in 1916. It was called "A Christmas of Peril". As St. Franks hadn't appeared at that time it was of necessity a mystery story. However, it had all the appropriate ingredients, although no ghosts. Or was there? I forget offhand. But what it did have, was Prof. Cyrus Zingrave, Jim the Penman and Eileen Dare, so what more could one have wished for? Incidentally this was one of the few Christmas Double No's. (Few! There were only two properly speaking. There were three in the years 1928-30 but they only had 52 pages, whereas these two had 70!)

Should it be that other happenings prevented a Christmas holiday series taking place, Brooks made sure that his readers got their proper ration of snow and ghosts.

There was the occasion, for instance, during the building of Bannington Cinema when, as you remember, a number of Removites were holding out against the machinations of rival cinema owner, Mr. Webb. It being Christmas, what could be more natural than that his thoughts should turn to ghosts and mysterious happenings?

Then, as happened twice, there might have been a barring-out going on at the time. Again, what could be more natural than that a ghost or two should be produced in an effort to shift the rebels?

The artist, too, played no small part in putting over a Christmassy atmosphere and of all the artists whose work appeared in the N.L. I favour that of Arthur Jones. It must be admitted that much of his work, apart from his cover drawings, were artistically and technically crude. In spite of this his drawings had a certain indefinable attraction that in the long run made him inseparable from the stories. One

has only to compare a Christmas number of the Old Series with those of the latter 1st N.S. and the 2nd N.S. to realise how well he managed to convey the weirdness of a ghostly happening or the stillness of a snowbound landscape.

On the other hand some of the other artists never managed to achieve this effect. One in particular was Kenneth Brookes. Now Brookes, outside the pages of boys' papers is an extremely competent artist, as I well know, having seen some of his water colours, (he has, in fact, been 'hung' in the Royal Academy) but somehow he never managed to succeed in putting over, to me, at any rate, the essential fact that it was Christmastide. As for ghostly effects - well, they were just not there.

Brooks (Edwy, this time) had a fondness for "ancestral" homes. This was right up Jones' street. He loved to portray these historic, albeit gloomy piles, for that was something that he could do really well. I'm thinking of two in particular - Handforth Towers (the ruined one) and Tregellis Castle. He puts over this impression particularly well in the cover of "The Christmas Plot". In this he shows Tregellis Castle up to its ears (or should one say turrets?) in snow. A blizzard is raging and the castle, looking like one of those mediæval castles one sees perched on cliff tops along the Rhine, is looking grim and forbidding. In four-colour printing (as were, of course, all N.L. covers) with an appropriate Christmassy surround, it's an ideal Christmas cover design. Needless to say, the story itself lived up to the suggestion conveyed by Jones' drawing.

I wish that I could say that all Brooks' Christmas stories were excellent. Unfortunately, I can't. Brooks, like all authors, had his off moments, and it seems to me that his off moments became more frequent as the 2nd N.S. progressed (it would be more correct to say retrogressed!) and so we find his least creditable effort in his last Christmas story of all, "Archie's Christmas Party". In this he goes all streamlined (trying to cope with the then editor's latest policy, perhaps?) and instead of relying on the old standby of ghosts and ghostly effects contrived by understandable means, he brings in a gadget, a cinematograph projector (a new invention!) which projects images into space and causes them to appear whenever needed without the aid of a background or screen. Of course the possibility of ghostly effects with such a machine is limitless and Brooks goes the whole hog with it, but I always felt that he was being unfair to his readers. Of course, no-one

believed that the ghostly manifestations were caused by anything other than by human agency, but to have everything attributed to a "new invention" rather spoilt things.

However, in spite of this blot on the escutcheon, there are many fine stories to be found amongst the Christmas numbers, so whatever your favourite, you can look forward to a few hours of really enjoyable reading. Personally, I shall be reading the "Spectre of Handforth Towers" and "Handforth's Ghost Hunt".

I don't know whether I made my quiz too difficult last month or whether you're all working overtime, or something, but the fact remains that no-one has written giving me their answers. Never mind, I'll forgive you! I can't give you any more this month as I want to give a further list of titles. There'll be some more in the next issue, though, so start swotting. The answers to last month's issue were:-

- 1) Mr.Sylvenus Noggs, the old actor in the series concerning Steven's father's play.
- 2) Dr.Kernak.
- 3) The enemy king in the New Anglis series.
- 4) Mr.Crowell (I'll bet you thought it was Prof.Tucker!) as related in "The Remove Mester's Delusion, O.S.No.256.
- 5) The Lightning Clue, O.S. No.39.
- 6) Mr.Lucien Dexter, Archeologist, brother-in-law to Dr.Stafford.
- 7) The rival cinema owner who goes insane. Told in "Solomon Levi's Triumph", O.S.No.293.
- 8) Eric Gates.
- 9) The lane leading to Holt's Farm where his workmen have their cottages.
- 10) If you refer to the map given in O.S.No.537 you will find that you are looking at the Chapel. Or at least, you should be if you didn't get lost!

Titles. The first in each case is the detective story, the 2nd N.S. second the St.Frenks.

15. The Atlantic Pirates, by Robert W.Comrade.  
Back to St.Frenks!

16. The Mummy Mystery, by Robert W. Comrade. K.K. - K.O!

17. The Vanished Film Star, by R.W. Comrade. Handy the Plumber.

18. The Dorriemore Castle Mystery, by R.W.Comrade.  
The Jazz Japers.

19. The Room of Death, by R.W.Comrade. Handyman Handy.

20. The Man from Mars, by R.W.Comrade. Boys of the Bold  
Brigade.

P.S. Ron Burrow, of Leeds, has turned up trumps with another all-correct list of answers.

LETTER BOX

Don't Miss This, St.Jim's Fens!

23/11/51.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Thanks for the "C.D." which came along happily to cheer up a damp and dismal day. I liked very much your description of your visit to the Oldest Inhabitant, and it is very agreeable to know that you found it as pleasant as I did. Do you remember Bob mentioning a Latin poem of Gray's? He has since sent it along to me: and I am afraid that I am keeping it a long time, as I am waiting for a spot of leisure to translate it for him. I have found it very interesting, bristling with tags from Virgil, and a few from Horace and Lucretius — good old Thomas evidently believed in helping himself liberally from the classics. It is a curious thing that Gray's Latin poems have never been translated so far: and I am minded to have a shot at it myself, if Tom Merry and Billy Bunter permit. Anyhow, I shall do the "Iuna Hebitabilis" for Bob.

Now as it happens I have a little spot of news, — nothing less than a project for a new series of Tom Merry books, to be published in paper covers at a moderate price — 1/6 or perhaps 2/-. My own belief is that what readers want is the story, not the covers, and that they would tolerate paper backs, for a moderate price. However, we shall see how it turns out. I expect that Martin Clifford will be even busier than Frank Richards for some months to come. Which is a prospect that quite exhilarates Martin.

With kind regards, Always yours sincerely,  
FRANK RICHARDS.

A Plea for the Old Firm

Dear Editor,

I am in agreement with the review of "Tom Merry's Own", but I should like to bring up the question of the illustrations — they are not worthy of the stories, and spoil the appearance of an otherwise good production. I should like to plead to have the old hands back on the work with which we have always identified them — C.H.Chepman on Greyfriars stories, R.J.Macdonald on St.Jims. It would make all the difference. Mr. Chepman, as we know, is fortunately still active, and maybe available. What do others who know and admire these artists think? Yours sincerely, ROBERT H. WHITER.

# BLAKIANA



Edited by H.M. Dond. 10, Erw Wen, Rhiwbina, Cardiff.S.Wales.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO ALL READERS OF THIS SECTION.

## THE CHRISTMAS 1951 ROUND TABLE.

Once more the Yuletide season has come around and all Sexton Blake enthusiasts are hoping to have at least an hour or two by the fire with their favourite character on the 25th December. Younger readers will turn over the pages of those old Gwyn Evans Xmas numbers without the feeling of nostalgia that older friends of Blake will have, but I think that we shall all wish that those days could temporarily return and we might be treated to a NEW Gwyn Evans Christmas story. At the time of writing I have not had a glimpse of the December numbers of the current series of S.B.Ls, but I can hazard a guess that they will not in any way convey that Christmas feeling which we used to have when the dear old U.J. was on the bookstalls and Eric R. Parker treated us to some typical Yuletide scenes at Baker Street. No, we shall have to be satisfied with our old copies and try and imagine them to apply to this Xmas too. Certainly no other character in fiction, apart from Dickens famous Pickwick, can have had such seasonable treatment as our Blake, and certainly no one before or no one since have equalled the work of Messrs. Evans and Parker. Once again

I shall turn out these famous Christmas numbers and re-read them. Once again "Splash" Page and Tinker will rival one another in seasonable repartee, and once more dear old Mrs. Bardell will cook that Turkey, be toasted for her efforts, and will undoubtedly present Sexton Blake with yet another new dressing gown to replace that old, faded, chemical stained, specimen that he loves so well. And once more we shall be able to get a glimpse of Pedro. His day is very obviously done, but we shall bring him out of retirement for a few fleeting hours.

I would like to repeat the good wishes made at the head of this section this month, and trust that every reader will have a good time this Xmas.



*Maurice Bond*

XMAS 1951

TREAT YOURSELF

to a really fine Xmas present. Fill in the form beneath and send it with P.O. for 12/6d to the address on the previous page. You will be delighted with this lasting reminder of the Man from Baker Street. Remember it is the one and only Sexton Blake record ever made and will most likely never be available again. This is your last chance to obtain a copy so go to it NOW. No orders can be received after 31st December 1951 - so HURRY UP!!!


I ENCLOSE P.O. VALUE 12/6d. PLEASE SEND ME, POST FREE, ONE COPY OF THE SEXTON BLAKE RECORD "MURDER ON THE PORTSMOUTH ROAD".

Name.....

Address.....


FOR DETAILS OF THE SEXTON BLAKE CLUB PLEASE APPLY TO HARRY HOLIER, YULDEN FARM, HEATHFIELD, SUSSEX. No further correspondence re the club to Blakiana address.





# THE DISAPPEARING TRAMCAR

by Ben Whiter.



Nostalgic memories of my youth received a severe jolt on the occasion of my journey recently to the home of those ardent Blake fans, the two Packmans. I had waited nearly half an hour at the Elephant and Castle in South London, for a tram to take me to the destination I required.

Suddenly it dawned on me that the beloved trams of my youth had this day, on the two routes I could have used, been replaced by omnibus substitutes. This made me ponder on the remarkable coincidence, for have not the Blake fans also lost the authors of the famous "Tramcar Series" that appeared some years ago in the now defunct U.J? Coming as I do from Wood Green, the supposed location of the tram depot where the man Proud was murdered, trolley buses have replaced the trams for a good many years and one has to cross the river Thames, scene of many a Blake adventure, to South London ere one sees a tram except for the few that run through the Kingsway Subway. The disappearing tram and the disappointing absence of Blake authors of our youth especially those who wrote the tram series, what memories they bring. Chester starting the ball rolling and featuring the Hales, Skene bringing in Zenith, and then G.H. Teed with his famous Roxane. Next came Donald Stuart with "The Witches Loon" and Gwyn Evans cleverly bringing in his then popular Onion Man. Robert Murray was supposed to have been in at the kill but was replaced by E.S. Brooks who fettered his star character, Waldo. This latter was voted the best of the series much to the delight of Brooks supporters, and so the disappearing London trams hold memories for the Blake fans but surprisingly what has been the loss of London has been the gain of Leeds, home of the Northern O.B.B.C, for the Faltham type trams were sold to that city. So perhaps the Blake supporters up North will think of the Proud mystery when they see these particular trams in the streets and roads of Leeds.

# Confessions of a Crime Lover

REVERIE ON SEXTON BLAKE

by

ERIC FAYNE



My study of Sexton Blake lore has been too narrow for me to claim to be an authority on the great detective. I cannot, really, claim to be a Sexton Blake "fan" even, for since the War I have found it difficult to sit down and digest any of the new stories which are published monthly in the Sexton Blake Library.

But, when I analyse myself, I find that the reason the new stories are unpalatable to me is that I cannot settle down to the new method of handling the great man. I do not know Sexton Blake any more, and Tinker, that smart young man about town, irritates me. It is that conservative trait in me, which dislikes change, and causes me, perhaps to be ungenerous to the men writing the stories to-day.

But I have countless happy memories of Blake as he used to be, and I still enjoy an evening with an old masterpiece from my small Blake collection.

I believe I first met Blake when someone gave me, as a lad, a set of old Penny Populars. These papers contained reprinted Blake stories, and I would occasionally read one, but, as a small lad I found the detective stories, frequently docketed with romance, rather heavy going. Tom Morry was in the Penny Popular, and he was the main attraction - for me, at any rate.

As I said in my Penny Popular article in last year's Annual, Blake and Tom Morry always seemed to me to be rather curious bed-fellows. Though it has been proved that Tom appeals to readers of all ages, his main attraction in the Penny Popular must have been to the younger readers, boys from 7 to 14 could read and enjoy the school tales. But Sexton Blake is in a different class. A 12 year old, for instance, is out of his depth with him. At least, I found it so, and I was a typical kid - I think. Nevertheless, as I said earlier, I occasionally found a Sexton Blake story in the Penny Popular to appeal to me, and I

planted the seeds of the affection for the Baker Street man which was to blossom when I reached manhood.

I recall one day being taken afloat by my father, on the vessel of which he was master. Leaving at 6 in the morning, I had difficulty in finding a paper shop open to provide me with something to read on the "bridge". At last I found one. But the newsagent had few periodicals for sale, and no Magnets or Gais. So I purchased a Sexton Blake Library - without much enthusiasm. It was "The Mystery of the Turkish Agreement". I revolved in it. I still think it one of the finest Blake stories ever published. The clever plot thrilled me to my 13 year old marrow. And so I met Granite Grant and Mademoiselle Julie for the first time. It was years later before I found that the author was Pierre Quireule, the "Rolling Stone".

But after that I never missed a Grant story, and I have a complete set of them to-day, many of them obtained through the kindness of members of the Sexton Blake circle.

But even so, I cannot call myself a real Blake fan, inasmuch as I have never been a regular reader of Blake's adventures. I call myself a crazy reader, for I had "crazes" in reading Blake. And these crazes I have always had at regular intervals, which perhaps sounds rather self-contradictory. Now, Tom Merry and Harry Wharton I can read all the time. I never grow tired of them. But with Blake. I would read him solidly for perhaps a month, story after story. Then I would neglect him for a time, only to have another craze later on.

When the Union Jack appeared first with its varicoloured cover, I bought the first one - "The Case of the Bogus Judge", a Kestrel story. I thought it a grand yarn, and still do. I went on with "The Dog Detective" and made my first acquaintance of the Confederation, and was fascinated. Who wouldn't be. For many months I had the Union Jack regularly, delighting in the variety of stories till my fickle soul grew tired, and I left Sexton Blake alone for another long period.

Such was my ~~sporadic~~ cursory treatment of the world's greatest detective.

Looking back over it all, down the vista of the years, I know that the Pierre Quiroule stories always came first with me. I read them to-day, and enjoy them just as much as when they were first published. I loved the Kestral tales too. Even such tales as "Lady of Ravensedge" and "The Mystery of X04", theatrical as they are by modern standards, have a charm of their own which the modern writers never succeed in capturing.

One story which always remains in my memory as an especially cleverly written yarn was a Sexton Blake Lib: story called "The Great Diamond Bluff". Some years after the story entitled as above was published, I saw a film of the same title. The plot was similar, but it did not introduce Blake. I have often wondered whether the script writer of the film might have been the same man who wrote the story.

I remember buying, reading, and enjoying the famous "Tram" series in the Union Jack, simply and solely because I was always interested in Trams. I always bought the Xmas numbers, too.

I liked Tinker as a youth in his teens. I liked him to call Blake by the homely name of "Guv'nor", though they dropped it for a time. I liked Mrs. Bardall.

My favourite story in the U.J. and S.B.L. was undoubtedly "The Mystery Box" by Pierre Quiroule. Curiously enough it was one of his few tales in which the action did not move out of England.

#### BLANKMAN in 1952.

There is every reason to suppose that 1952 will be a momentous one in the career of fictions greatest private detective. The newly formed Blake Circle will most likely stimulate greater interest in the Man from Baker Street and with the added co-operation which is expected from this venture much research will be undertaken. We are going to try and make this section of the C.D. of even greater interest than hitherto and it is hoped that all those interested will help in this respect. Quite a lot of interesting facts should come to light ere long.