

The Collector's Digest

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JANUARY, 1953
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by M. LEWIS.



GORGE-ous!

The Collector's Digest



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Price 1s.6d.

JANUARY, 1953

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

A Sad Event. It is with the deepest regret that I have to announce the death with tragic suddenness, of the mother of Ben and Bob Whiter. The sadness of it was added to because it occurred on December 21st, at the very time the Christmas meeting of the London O.B.B.C. was being held at their home. The meeting was, of course, instantly terminated.

I am sure our readers will deeply sympathise with all at 706 Lordship Lane, in their great loss.

* * * * *

You Got A Surprise. I guess you raised your eyebrows when the Annual reached you more than a fortnight before Christmas. It rather made that 'late news' in the December C.D. which came at the same time, rather out of date, didn't it? Well, it was like this. On the last day of November, Mr. Wood told me that his business had been sold and he would be closing down on December 6th. Phew! there was still a good deal to do on the Annual and there was the December C.D. to start of.

The following six days reminded me of that thrilling race

against the clock five years ago to get out our first Annual.

Mr. Wood worked until the late hours, night after night, with the result that when I went down in the evening of the 5th, I found stacks of the Annual and the December C.D. awaiting me. By 11 p.m. they had nearly all passed into the jaws of the G.P.O. letter box. I felt on top of the world.

It was with a feeling of melancholy, though, that I walked along that familiar street next day to say farewell to Mr. Wood. The once busy office looked strange in its almost empty state.

Soon he will be setting out for South Africa. I am sure all our readers will wish him Godspeed and the best of luck in his new life.

* * * * *

NEW HOME, NEW DRESS. Now to the future. I don't mind saying now that after I learned we should have to part company with Mr. Wood, I lay awake o' nights wondering - well, you can guess what I was wondering. The C.D. would have come out somehow but if we had had to go out of York to have it done, all sorts of problems would have arisen. However, I need not have worried. We are moving only a few minutes' walk away from old world Stonegate to another famous street of ancient York, the Shambles. But there is nothing old-fashioned about the equipment of the York Duplicating Services I can assure you. The setting is a perfect blend of the ancient and the modern and from what I have seen of their work, I am confident you will be well pleased when you get this number. Moreover, I am sure the cordial relations which existed between us and our old publishers will continue with the new.

I might just mention that our expenses may be a little more. These won't justify an increase in price to 1/9d., but if any of you would like to pay postages, say 19/6d in all to yearly subscribers as a voluntary gesture, I should be grateful.

Where subs are paid monthly, I don't mind if I got a few by way of 1¹/₂d. stamps. I could use them for mailing the magazine and you would save poundage, but of course, I couldn't do with too many that way.

I am also pleased to say our new publishers are keen to tackle next year's Annual. Yes, we have talked about that too. A good deal of its success is due to the fact that almost before the ink is dry on one year's, we start planning the next. Get your

thinking caps on won't you?

So on to the new era and Volume Seven.

* * * * *

Don Wicks from "Down Under" Drops In. Hearing that Don Wicks, chairman of the Australian O.B.B.C. was in England, I asked Ben Whiter for his address. 'Uncle Benjamin', having complied with his usual celerity, I was just starting a note to Don when the office door opened and someone I had never seen before walked in. Lo! and behold! it was Don himself!! Almost before we had shaken hands, we were chatting away as if we had been meeting for years.

In the evening, we had several hours together, one of the red letter events which for me, are sheer joy. He saw the mag. being produced and how it will be produced in future. I heard too, first hand news of our members in Victoria.

When you read this, Don will be on the high seas homeward bound. What a story he will have to tell when he gets there. He has seen more of the 'old country' during his stay than many of us see in a life-time.

* * * * *

Question and Answer. It has been suggested that we run a Quiz Corner, something on the lines of the John O' London feature. It seems a good idea. So if there are any questions you would like to ask, send them along and we will publish them and try to answer them in the same issue if possible, especially if they are of general interest.

* * * * *

Thanks. It is quite impossible, though the spirit is willing, to reply individually to all those who have written congratulating me on the Annual, or to acknowledge the many greeting cards. So please let me say how deeply I appreciate them all.

And here's wishing one and all a very happy and prosperous New Year and may your collections grow.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

Popular Papers of the Past

No.22. "The Marvel" 1st d. Series: 15-11-1893-23-1-1904 = 533
1st d. etc. " 30-1-1904-22-4-1922 = 952
Total Issues .. 1485

* * *

by HERBET LECKENBY

* * *

The "Marvel" was the first of the many weeklies for boys launched by Alfred Harmsworth, the man who laid the foundations of the Amalgamated Press. In starting it he had a noble motive "to wage war against the penny dreadful" rampant at the time. For years it carried on its cover the slogan "Started to Suppress Bad Books for Boys". Curiously enough, almost every paper which was born in those late Victorian days, seemed to have that same crusading aim. In the case of the "Marvel" (or "Halfpenny Marvel" as it was known in its first decade), it must have been rather disconcerting to its founder that when a boy was particularly fond of the 'bloods', he was dubbed by his friends less addicted to reading as a ha'penny "Marvel" or maybe a "Deadwood Dick".

Some of the titles of stories at the start did seem rather full-blooded. For instance, No.1 - "Dead Man's Land"; No. 2 - "The Gold Fiend"; No.4 - "The Black Pirate"; No. 13 - "The Diamond of Death"; No.16 - "The Terror of the South Seas"; No.17 - "The Witches' Clutch". Still Captain Mayne Reed, whose stories still grace the library shelves, wrote "The Scalp Hunter" and "The Headless Horseman", so the ha'penny "Marvel" stories were in good company.

That No. 1 by the way, was written by S. Clarke Hook, that bearded individual who played a greater part in the history of the "Marvel" than anyone else and who wrote for it almost to the end of its long life.

It is also interesting to note that its first editor was Harold J. Garrish, who is still with the Amalgamated Press, or was very recently. He also wrote many stories for it under several pen names. We have him to thank too, for a lot of inside

information about the old authors, for our Walter Webb has always found him ready to help.

The "Marvel" has one real claim to fame for it was in its pages, and not in the Union Jack as was so often claimed, that Sexton Blake was born. We made that revelation some years ago, but one can be excused for repeating it, for many new chums have joined our ranks since.

The first Blake story was No. 6 "The Missing Millionaire" written by Harry Blyth under a pen name, Hal Meredith and a sequel "A Christmas Crime" appeared the following week. Both, read to-day, seem very crude stories.

Throughout its halfpenny days, the "Marvel" consisted of 16 pages, Magnet size, with two columns to a page. The complete story was shortly after the start, supported by a serial. The make-up, apart from improvements in cover design, changed very little and almost throughout its career, the colour of its cover was green.

Many of the popular boy's authors wrote for it, including Herbert Maxwell, Harry Blyth, John G. Rowe, Henry St. John, Paul Herring, A.S. Hardy and Reginald Wray. Artists were: G.M. Dodshon, T.W. Holmes, H.M. Lewis, Tom Browne and W.M. Bowles, among others.

For one short period, there was an attempt to introduce nut-shell versions of stories by such classic authors as Sir Walter Scott, Dickens, Harrison Ainsworth and Henry Cockton, but evidently the boys of the day wanted none of them, for the idea was soon dropped.

Towards the end of the halfpenny days, S. Clarke Hook started his stories of Jack, Sam and Pete, the characters which were to become famous and play the main part in the destinies of the paper. The first story, N. 385, was called "The Eagle of Death" and the second, "The Death Sentence" appeared a fortnight later. Rather more than thirty stories appeared before the end of the halfpenny days and it is interesting to note that the majority were illustrated by R.J. Macdonald, still active to-day, more than fifty years on. The last story was a Jack, Sam and Pete one, "The Haunted Mountain".

The "Marvel" was raised to penny status in January, 1904. The actual day it appeared was Wednesday, the 27th. I have good reason to remember the day, for at 8.30 that morning, I started work. (I believe I was waiting on the door-step at 8.15!!) Al-

though commencing in the middle of the week, my employer on the Saturday, generously paid me for a full one. I immediately invested one-fortyeighth of it in No. 1 of the new "Marvel". Reckon that up ye lads who get pounds where we got shillings. Yet I was as happy as a sandboy though I am afraid I was by no means paying my parents for my keep.

Anyway, that No. 1 looked good to me as I settled down with it that Saturday evening in the long ago. It had 32 pages in a very attractive green cover. There were two long complete stories, "The Isle of Fire", a tale of Jack, Sam and Pete and "The Detective's Triumph" by Alec G. Pearson. In addition, a serial, articles and an Editor's Chat.

Two long completes and a serial was the policy almost throughout the second series run of nearly nineteen years. Jack, Sam and Pete, with the exception of a few old numbers at the beginning were a standing dish until near the end and for a little over two years, the companion stories were of various types, detective ones predominating.

Then came the stories of Tom Sayers by Arthur S. Hardy. They told of the rise of a waif to middle-weight champion of the world, his name obviously adopted from the famous prize fighter of bare-knuckle days. The stories were Hardy at his best and some of them had extremely exciting descriptions of fights in the "square ring". Others had a theatre atmosphere where Hardy was on safe ground. R.J. Macdonald was the artist almost throughout.

Tom Sayers ran in harness with Jack, Sam and Pete for years, and for a long period was portrayed on the cover more than the trio. J. Abney Cummings drew the pictures for the latter, from shortly after the start of the new series until his death near the end.

In my opinion, Clarke Hook's stories lasted far too long; after a time they deteriorated into sheer slapstick, rubber stamp stuff. They were all Pete, with Jack and Sam merely acting as chorus men. There was a run of stories when, for an advertising stunt, the comrades were made to visit provincial towns, but there was little attempt to introduce local atmosphere and "Pete in Preston" might just as well have been "Pete in Portsmouth". I remember when he was supposed to be in Keighley, Pete tried to call it "Lockley". Clarke Hook was evidently under the impression that the Yorkshire town is pronounced "Key-leigh" but it isn't.

However, seeing Clarke Hook was kept busy turning out the stories for nearly twenty years, it would appear I was in a minority when I considered them too long lived. I must admit too, that after they were dropped, the paper began to falter but there may have been other reasons for that.

Following the war, when papers were so slim, there were a few stories of Calcroft School by Sidney Drew. Later the familiar green cover was dropped and replaced by a white one with printing in red and blue. John Nix Pentelow, under one of his numerous pen names, Randolph Ryle, wrote a series of football yarns. There were also some boxing stories concerning a character called Kit Strong. These were first-class but the name of the author escapes me for the moment.

In April 1922 came the end, but of course, the reader was not told the "Marvel" was dead. Instead, its title was to be changed to "Sport and Adventure". There was anti-climax in the fact that that lasted twenty-six weeks! Why the deuce couldn't they have buried the old "Marvel" with honours? After all, a run of twenty-eight years was nothing to be ashamed of you know.

* * * * *

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J U S T S T A T E Y O U R R E Q U I R E M E N T S
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HAMILTONIANA

by HERBERT LECKENBY

* * *

George Bromley of Wigston Magna, Leicester has made an interesting and amusing discovery; chapters in "Gem" and "Magnet", years apart which with the exception of characters' names and locale, are almost identical. These Hamilton fans don't miss much, do they? George quotes from the reprint "Gem" but the original would be very much the same. The remainder of the stories were different.

According to our records, the "Gem" story was written by Charles Hamilton, the "Magnet" one by a substitute. He coolly lifted a whole chapter. What a nerve! Here are the chapters, side by side:

GEM No.1336. Sept. 23rd. 1933.
Tom Merry & Co., Go Gay. Chap. 4.
(original story No.111 "Tom Merry's Carnival" March 26th 1910)

"Dover"

"Dovah Pieh" said Arther Augustus D'Arcy, jamming his eyeglass in eye and looking out through the carriage window.

"And it's wainin'."

"Dear me" said Miss Fawcett.

The juniors tumbled out of the train and joined the crowd that was surging towards the waiting boat.

A fine drizzle was falling, and coat collars and umbrellas were up.

Tom Merry took charge of Miss Fawcett, while Hannah the maid, carried the umbrella and the bags,

MAGNET No.601. Aug. 16th 1919.
The Greyfriars Tourists. Chap 8.

"Folkestone"

"Folkestone harbour" said Harry Wharton looking out through the steaming panes.

"And it's raining."

"Dear me" said Alonzo Todd.

The juniors tumbled out, and joined the crowd of soldiers surging towards the waiting boat.

A fine drizzle was falling, and coat collars were hurriedly turned up.

Harry Wharton took charge of his little detachment, while Maul- everer followed in his wake with

and the purse and the smelling salts.
 Jack Blake dashed away to see to the luggage.
 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, mindful of the safety of his trunks, dashed after him, but Blake disappeared in the crowd.
 Monty Lowther thrust an arm through D'Arcy's and marched him on.

"Come on Gussy" he exclaimed,
 "There's a big crowd and we want to bag seats on the lee side."
 "Yaas, wathah, but - -"
 "Come on then."

"Yaas, but--"
 "This way"
 "Blake is going --"
 "That's all right; Blake's looking after the luggage; besides, it really does not need looking after, as it's labelled for Paris."

"Yaas, but --"
 "Use your elbows"
 "But my twunks --"

"That's all right"
 "Of course it's all right", said Figgins, taking D'Arcy's other arm. "This way, I'll help you. You'll get your clothes rumpled if these rude people jostle against you, to say nothing of the risk to your topper".
 "That's vewy thoughtful of you, Fiffins, but --"
 "Rush for it".
 "But--"

the remainder.
 Frank Nugent dashed away to see to the luggage.
 Lord Mauleverer, forgetting his responsibilities, dashed after him, but he was whirled away in the crowd.
 Bob Cherry thrust an arm through Mauly's and marched him on.

"Come on Mauly", he exclaimed.
 "There's a big crowd and we want to bag seats on the lee side".
 "Yaas, rather, but - -"
 "Come on then, you're supposed to be looking after half the party"

"Yaas, but--"
 "This way".
 "Nugent is going".
 "That's all right, Franky's looking after the luggage. Besides, it doesn't really need looking after, as it's labelled for Boulogne".

Yaas, but --"
 "Use your elbows"
 "But my dear fellow, it's awfully important. I --"
 "That's all right"

"Of course it's all right" said Johnny Bull, taking Mauly's other arm. "This way, I'll help you, You'll get your clothes rumpled if these soldiers jostle against you".

"That's jolly thoughtful of you, Bull, but --"
 "Rush for it".
 "But--"

"Here we are".

They were on the plank bridge leading on deck now, and it was too late for Arthur Augustus to struggle back. He resigned himself to his fate, and was rushed on deck in the crowd. As rain was falling, most of the passengers went below, but the juniors of St. Jim's did not intend to go down. They found seats on the lee side and spread macintoshes to sit on, and placed D'Arcy there to keep guard over their coats and umbrellas and packages.

"Don't leave this spot for a moment" said Figgins warningly.

"But —"

"Stick there as if you were glued"

"Yaas, but —"

"If anyone sits down on this row, tell him the seats are engaged. If he's French and doesn't understand English, give him a biff on the ear. He'll understand that"

"Yaas, but —"

"Mind you don't move".

"But —"

Figgins and Lowther rushed away, leaving D'Arcy alone. The swell of St. Jim's rose to his feet and

"Here we are".

The party of Removites were on the plank bridge leading on deck now, and it was too late now for Lord Mauleverer to struggle back. He resigned himself to his fate and was rushed on deck in the crowd. As rain was falling most of the officers and men made a rush for below: but the juniors of Greyfriars did not intend to make the trip below decks. They found seats on the lee side, and spread coats and macintoshes to sit on, and placed Mault there to keep guard over their coats and haversacks and packages.

"Now then" said Harry Wharton warningly, "Don't leave this spot for a moment."

"But —"

"Stick there as if you were glued"

"Yaas, but —"

"If anybody sits down on this row, tell him the seats are engaged. If he's a Frenchman — I see there are some here — and doesn't understand English, give him a biff on the ear — he'll understand that."

"Yaas, but —"

"Mind you don't move while I go and show the tivkets and papers"

"But —"

Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull rushed away, leaving Mauleverer alone. Mauly rose to his feet

then sat down again. He had been left in charge and he could not very well abandon his trust. "Bai Jove" he murmured "This is too bad. I feel convinced that Blake intends to play some wotten twick with one of my twunks."

And he waited anxiously. Fatty Wynn came along with a large packet in his hand and sat down and began to munch at the contents of his bag.

"Have some?" said Fatty Wynn, holding out the bag. "They're pork pies and ripping. I got them at the station".

"No thanks, but —"

"You mayn't be able to eat presently" said Wynn.

"Yaas, but —"

"They're jolly good".

"I should advise you to be careful deah boy."

"Oh, that's all right. If I'm going to be ill, I may as well have a feed now, it won't make it any worse."

"Will you look aftah these seats Wynn while I go and look aftah the luggage?"

"Certainly. Sure you won't have a pork pie? There's a lot of fat and gravy in them".

D'Arcy shuddered. "No thanks." And he hurried away.

and then sat down again. He had been left in charge and could not very well abandon his trust. "By Jove" he murmured "This is too bad. I only wanted to tell those fellows I've left my Burberry in the train."

Billy Bunter came along, with a large packet in his hand and sat down and began to munch at the contents of his bag.

"Have some?" said Bill Bunter, holding out the bag. "They're pork pies and ripping. I got them at the harbour buffet".

"No thanks, but —"

"You mayn't be able to eat presently" said Bunter

"Yaas, but —"

"They're jolly good"

"You know what crossing the Channel is, Bunter, I should advise you to be careful deah boy."

"Oh, that's all right, I shan't be ill. I'm descended from an old seagoing family, you know. There have always been Bunters in the Navy.

"Will you look after these seats, Bunter, while I go away for a few minutes?"

"Certainly. Sure you won't have a pork pie? There's a lovely lot of fat and gravy in them".

Maully shuddered. "No thanks. Bunter". He hurried away.

Here, the chapters diverge, though two further paragraphs later on, are identical.

TRIBUTE IN VERSE

by

W. W. JARDINE

Who would not love to wander,
 With Clifford in the lead?
 With Conquest muse and ponder,
 When of Rookwood School, we read?

With Redway at the portals
 To the "wild and woolly west",
 But to soar above all mortals
 With a "Magnet" - that's the best!

Yes, these are dreams of glory,
 That are always coming true,
 When we read a Greyfriars story,
 From the pen of - you know who!

Your tales give more than pleasure.
 They're re-read throughout the year.
 Your works - a golden treasure.
 Frank Richards - we revere!

POTTED PERSONALITIES. No. 3FATTY WYNN.

David Llewellyn Wynn, the fat Welsh boy of the New House at St. Jim's, was almost unique in Schoolboy literature as a youth who was decent, sporting - and fat, at the same time.

In the early years of the Gem, Martin Clifford got a lot of fun out of Fatty Wynn, who was a delightful character, but the plump goalkeeper, like many other tip-top characters who were peculiar to St. Jim's, was neglected as time went on. Fatty's eclipse was due to Billy Bunter, who spread himself over Amalgamated Press school stories like a plaintain covers and kills the grass on a lawn. Fatty fell by the way, when that repulsive

imitation of Bunter - Baggy Trimble - appeared at St. Jim's in 1916.

Fatty is one of the oldest characters on the St. Jim's stage. He appeared in the first story ever to be published - in Pluck in 1906. In scores of stories, Fatty played an important part, in those old blue-cover days of the Gem. We recall him on hunger-strike on one occasion, and yet again when Glyn made an effigy of him in "Fatty the Second".

One of the very first of the cover-to-cover tales, "Fatty Wynn, Professional", was often mentioned in the Editor's Chat as years went by. For a time, Fatty turned his wizardry as a goalkeeper to professional advantage. Without reference, I believe I am right in naming this as a 'sub' story, though it is long since I read it.

Fatty, also, was "A Son of Wales" in a series of "National" stories which appeared about 1915, in which Kerr represented Scotland, Kildare Ireland, and, of course, "Tom Merry for England". Not a brilliant series, though, to the best of my recollection.

Fatty Wynn could take comfort that he was by no means the only fine character at St. Jim's who suffered eclipse, as the result of the Magnet's meteoric jump to popularity. Even Tom Merry himself, became little more than a figurehead for a good many years. But Fatty, like Tom Merry, jumped to fame once more, when the real Martin Clifford started writing St. Jim's tales again in 1939. Fatty discovered a secret passage between the two Houses at St. Jim's, with hilarious results.

We could certainly wish that, in the St. Jim's story as a whole, David Llewellyn Wynn had played a larger part.

ODDITIES OF HAMILTONIA

by ROGER M. JENKINS.

The conventions of the school stories in the Amalgamated Press have become so widely accepted to-day that most of them are usually taken for granted. This is especially the case with the work of Charles Hamilton; though his various schools were always well distinguished from each other, there are nevertheless, a

number of elements common to each school which provide an interesting source of study.

The curriculum at Greyfriars and St. Jim's was essentially a Victorian one with the emphasis on Classics to the entire exclusion of Science. In this respect, Rookwood was surprisingly up-to-date, with Chemistry, German and Double-Entry Book-keeping being taught to Tommy Dodd & Co. on the Modern Side to prepare them for their future careers as business tycoons. But all three schools were a little behind the times in having form masters whose duty it was to teach that form practically every subject in the syllabus. There can be few Public Schools these days whose staff do not consist entirely of specialist teachers, of whom Monsieur Charpentier, Mr. Lascelles, and Herr Schneider were presumably the advance guard. On the other hand, the housemaster of the School House at St. Jim's was apparently not required to do any teaching at all - a post which was surely one of the plums of the scholastic profession! There is no occasion, however, to regret the somewhat old-fashioned arrangement at these schools; it would scarcely have been possible to develop such fine characters as Mr. Quelch, for example, had it not been possible to introduce him so often as form-master.

Again, there are few Public Schools which have only one house like Greyfriars, or only two like St. Jim's or Rookwood. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that all of Charles Hamilton's Schools were on the small side, unlike such giants as Eton or Manchester Grammar School, both of which have a population running into four figures. For practical reasons also, it was definitely advisable to restrict the number of houses. Greyfriars has an air of intimacy about it which is somehow lacking at Rookwood and St. Jim's. The more the reader's loyalties are divided between groups of similar characters, the less he manages to sympathise with any of them.

The dragon of external examinations was one of the few troubles which did not beset masters at Hamilton schools. The Fifth Form never seemed to be wholly engaged in passing the old School Certificate, fortunately for Messrs. Prout and Greely, both of whom enjoyed chatting with their forms about extraneous matters; though it is possible that Mr. Ratcliff might have managed successfully to keep noses to the grindstone in the St. Jim's Fifth. Similarly, the Sixth Form (which was strangely not divided into

upper and lower divisions) seemed equally ignorant on the topic of the Higher School Certificate, though it was rumoured that Wingate was to go up to Oxford when he left school, presumably after passing this examination. In the meanwhile, Dr. Locke presided tranquilly over the Sixth Form Greek lessons (a subject oddly postponed until that form by all except the very studious like Mark Linley) while the Remove were, by present day standards, several years advanced in Latin, having reached Vergil already. Still, there is no necessity to take all this to heart: passing examinations would have meant changing forms or leaving school, and translating the Aeneid afforded both Bunter and Gussy countless opportunities to perpetrate priceless howlers.

One of the curiosities about the earlier stories is the lack of holidays. In later years, the holidays were usually carefully arranged to conform with the actual vacations enjoyed by schools, but in the first year or two, holidays seldom lasted longer than one issue, like Gem No. 22 entitled "Tom Merry at the Franco-British" and Magnet No. 78 - "Harry Wharton's Bank-Holiday" - which involved a visit to the Crystal Palace. After a while, a series of two or three numbers would appear, like Gem Nos. 92-94, dealing with a trip to Paris, and Magnet Nos. 123-4, featuring Study No.1 on tour. It was incidentally a holiday series which was one of the most captivating of all early St. Jim's stories in Gem Nos. 111-2 which related the famous trip to Nice and Monte Carlo and the efforts made to keep Figgins' wayward cousin out of the casino. It may be noted that most of these holidays were by special permission of the headmaster. The idea of taking regular lengthy seasonal holidays was still a long way off.

It was Charles Hamilton's passion for caravans which heralded the regular summer holidays. In 1918, the Rookwood heroes went off touring the countryside in this manner, in 1919 the St. Jim's juniors followed suit, and finally in 1921 Harry Wharton & Co. did likewise. After this, summer holidays had come to stay. The three or four week Christmas holiday was later in appearing: apart from the episode of the Phantom of the Highlands in 1923, it was not until 1926, when Coker was the prisoner in the bungalow, that a regular Christmas holiday of normal length became the rule in the Magnet.

The foregoing comprise a few of the oddities noticed in Hamiltonian writings which are offered up for the not too serious

consideration of collectors, many of whom have doubtless pondered over similar curiosities. It may be confidently asserted - especially in connection with the later stories - that most deviations were made for the purpose of heightening effects. In our somewhat over scrupulous attention to detail, we must not attempt to deny the author the legitimate licence of his craft.

Old Boys' Book Club

L O N D O N S E C T I O N

The Christmas meeting at Cherry Place on Sunday Dec. 20th, was well attended. Following chairman Len's opening remarks, in which he wished all seasonable greetings, the month's correspondence was quickly run through. Chief letter was from President Frank Richards saying how he enjoyed doing the Character Quiz, which appeared in the club's monthly newsletter. Peard Sutherland's very fine Christmas card was on show and was the subject of a short quiz.

The treasurer's report was adopted and numerous other items were discussed. The badge scheme was dropped owing to lack of support and those who have sent in money for them will be reimbursed.

Three quiz competitions were held, the three winners being Bob Whiter, Len Packman and Roger Jenkins. Seasonable decorations were in evidence and a box of crackers with famous old boys' book characters on them, were pulled and the paper hats from them were soon donned. The Annual General Meeting will be held at Hume House, 136 Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London S.E.22 on Sunday, January 18th.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

* * * * *

N O R T H E R N S E C T I O N

3rd Christmas Party, 239 Hyde Park Road, 13th December, 1952.

There was no business this month, just five hours of Food, Fun and Games. The ladies, God bless 'em, had been busy for many days and the tables had that setting only feminine hands can give.

There was an attendance of 22, including Cliff Beardsell of Stockport.

Among the toasts was "Absent Friends". Here, Gerry Allison gave some interesting details about those members scattered over a wide area who, though they are not able to attend the meetings, are always with us in spirit, some 40 in all.

And what followed is largely a story of live-wire Gerry. First came "Greyfriars Riot" - a merry jaunting affair which he had built up from an idea kindly supplied by Eric Fayne. He followed with two or three other puzzle games, good-humouredly question-mastered a "Twenty Questions" session (having compiled the objects), sang a song of Coker, then along with Mrs. Allison, played a piano duet. The masculine Ruth Draper!

Bill Harrison with a song concerning Bunter of his own composing, Herbert Sidebottom with a cross-word and Breeze Bentley a reading from a red Magnet Christmas Double Number, lent noble support.

"Twenty Questions" team was Vera Coates, Christine Banks, Cliff Boardsell and self. Gerry had set some teasers but we got ten out of the twelve including Next Year's Christmas Party and a seven word object which proved to be "Bob Blythe's complete set of Nelson Lees".

Yes, indeed, it was a jolly, happy evening and we left reluctantly, to catch our buses and trains, leaving Gerry busily clearing up the Library.

HERBERT LECKENBY, Northern Section Correspondent.

* * * * *

MIDLAND SECTION MEETING, 24th November, 1952.

This particular day was cold and frosty and doubtless this accounted for the absence of several regular members. Nevertheless the cosy number of sixteen members were present to enjoy a pleasant and for us, an unusually quiet evening; incidentally, our last meeting at the Townsend Club.

After the minutes had been read, the writer referred to recent correspondence, particularly to a letter (since sent), to Mr. R. W. Fone of Stoke-on-Trent. This is in reply to Mr. Fone's letter published in the November "C.D.", page 333. He suffers from infantile paralysis. We have much pleasure in sending Mr. Fone some "Magnets" and have enrolled him as an honorary member of

our club.

After this rather sad item of formal business, we settled down to some hard work (alleged to be entertainment), so well provided by our indefatigable Cradley friends.

First, came a most interesting quiz in which we had to supply the first Christian names of sundry Greyfriars boys, then after we had listened to an incident from the "Magnet", we were required to spend five minutes writing the conclusion of the story as we thought that it should be finished. After which the stories were read out and voted upon.

The quiz, (which like the story, was read out by Mr. Bollfield), was on most attractive and original lines, the Christian names required being arranged to run in alphabetical order. Thus question No. 1 ALONZO (Todd), No.2 BERTIE (Vernon), No.3 CEDRIC (Hilton), and so on to number 10 which was a saucy one as two Christian names were required (JAMES KENNETH), and then on to the finish at No. 15 PIET (Delarey).

As is now usual with our quizzes, there was a tie for first place and a second round was fought out between Messrs. Bourne and Smallwood. This resulted in Frank Bourne winning the prize (a "Magnet"). Hearty congratulations, Frank! George Smallwood must have been on excellent form however, as not content with nearly winning the quiz, he did win the prize for the story. Hearty congratulations, George!

By this time, the evening was far spent, so that it was time for our library session and ere long, an informal chat and dispersal.

EDWARD DAVEY, Hon. Sec.

(That's the spirit, Birmingham - H.L.)

* * * * *

MERSEYSIDE SECTION MEETING, Sunday, 14th December, 1952

The Chairman opened the Meeting at 7.30 p.m. by first paying tribute to those present for their hardiness and enthusiasm in reaching Waterloo House, despite the inclemency of the weather. A worse night could hardly have been chosen; the snowflakes "thicker than the leaves of Vallambrosa", but the warm atmosphere (literally and figuratively) in the room soon made the elements forgotten.

Formalities having been dispensed with, the chairman dealt with the matter of club badges, gave details on obtaining the invaluable "C.D." and "Annual" and then passed on to the matter of getting in touch with Amalgamated Press, with a view to re-introduction of at least one of our old favourites (Magnet, Gem, etc.). During refreshments, the library business was ably conducted by young Peter, deputising for Bill Horton, who was unavoidably absent.

Then came the Hamilton-Orwell talk by Jim Walsh; this, interspersed with extracts from Orwell's essay, was most interesting and entertaining, so much so, it was decided to give it a further airing at the next meeting, probably in the form of a debate.

Frank Case's "missing letter" quiz was next on the agenda, and this was won by one of our new members, Eric D. Coldwell; an excellent performance at the first attempt - Mr. Coldwell certainly knows his Hamilton! A toast to Frank Richards followed, Jim Walsh having provided the wine for the purpose and Don paid a sincere tribute to "The Master", which was heartily endorsed by all.

The meeting ended by Jim Walsh reading seasonable extracts from a Christmas "Magnet"; may we hear such extracts for many Christmases to come!

Next Meeting, Sunday, 11th January (Subject to notification).

F. CASE, Secretary.

Present: Messrs. Bartlett, Case, Coldwell, Crilley, Morgan, Pragnell, Switzer, Timmins, Unwin, Walsh, D. Webster, E. Webster, P. Webster and Windsor. (15).

MAGNET TITLES (Cont'd.)

"S" denotes Substitute. No.1116 The Mystery of Mark Linley. No. 1117 Under Suspicion. No.1118 Bob Cherry's Big Bargain. No.1119 The Trail of the Trike. No.1120 Chums on the Tramp. No.1121 The Mystery of Methusalah. No.1122 The House of Terror. No.1123 The Unseen Foe. No.1124 The Mystery of the Grange. No.1125 The Terror Tracked Down. No.1126 The Boy without a Friend. No.1127 Monty Newland's Enemy. No.1128 The New Boy's Feud. No.1129 Coker Comes a Cropper. No.1130 A Rogue in the Remove.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

All communications to ROBERT BLYTHE
46, CARLETON RD., HOLLOWAY, LONDON, N.7.

Things are looking up somewhat, as far as this column is concerned. As a result of my appeal, although I cannot honestly say that I have been inundated with articles, at least I've enough on hand (and to those contributors I'd like to add a word of thanks), to last for the next few months. After that, of course we shall be back where we started, so, if you had thought about writing something, don't for goodness sake say to yourself, "Oh! he's all set up now, he won't need my effort after all", for if you do, I can assure you it won't be long before this column, and all it represents to N.L. Collectors, will have gone from your gaze like a beautiful dream!

'Quoth the Raven - Nevermore'!!!

This month we have an article from the pen of Jim Sutcliffe (and what memories his fictional counterpart recalls!). It is more than welcome, inasmuch as he deals with the career of the inimitable Edgar Oswald.

* * *

SOME ASPECTS OF THE CAREER OF E.O. HANDFORTH
 by
James Sutcliffe

Of all St. Franks' characters created by Brooks, the most popular was undoubtedly Edward Oswald Handforth.

Big, clumsy, aggressive and impulsive, he possessed a quick temper and many of the juniors have been at the receiving end of one of his famous punches.

Although his faults were legion, he was as straight as a die and staunch and generous.

When Brooks first introduced St. Franks to the Nelson Lee Library in No. 112 Old Series, Handforth and his trusty henchmen, Church and McClure, were already established in the Remove Form. They were not particularly prominent members however, and although mentioned in all the stories, it was not until the Summer Holiday

series of 1918 that Handforth decided that the trio should stow-away in Lord Derrimore's yacht "The Adventure". The excitement that followed in the Pacific made this one of the finest holiday series that Brooks wrote.

In No. 169, we find Handy in what was undoubtedly his funniest role - that of an amateur detective, and this story incidentally, was the first to bear his name "Handforth - Detective".

In the series immediately following, Handforth was expelled from St. Franks for attempting to burn down the gymnasium! Needless to say, he was the victim of a plot by Reggie Pitt, then known as the "Serpent of St. Franks".

Throughout the remainder of the Old Series, Handforth was featured fairly prominently.

There was the series during 1920 when his sister Edith eloped with a Schoolmaster named Arthur Kirby who, under the name of Clement Heath, was temporary Remove Master during the absence of Mr. Crowell.

In No. 386 there arrived a junior who on every occasion they met, demanded "five bob" from Handy and rarely failed to obtain it. He was Willy, Edward Oswald's minor. E.O.H. was really very fond of Willy and spent many hours worrying over some of his escapades.

A barring-out series always brought Handy well to the fore and during the duration of the Old Series, there were several rebellions in which Handy fancied himself to be the General commanding with all the forces at his disposal. Nipper, who usually was in command on these occasions, found life more peaceful by allowing Handy to carry on under this delusion.

He was very susceptible to the fair sex, with a particular weakness for blondes and although when the Moor View School for Girls first appeared in No. 436 and Irene Manners became his special chum, his numerous flirtations with other girls made laughable stories.

It was evident that Brooks found the demand for E.O.H. increasing towards the end of the Old Series, and it was fitting that the final story should be called "Handy's Round-Up".

In the first New Series that followed, he really came into his own. Out of the first fifty titles no less than sixteen bear his name!

In No. 5, Handy became the owner of his famous Austin

Seven, a gift from his Aunt Constance, later, as the stories became more streamlined, it was changed for a Morris Minor.

In No.22 Handy realised another of his ambitions - that of being made Captain of the Remove. Luckily for the rest of the form, this state of affairs only lasted a few weeks.

Shortly after this episode, Handy took a party of boys and girls to his Uncle's home in Norfolk for Christmas, a very fine series.

To sum up briefly the rest of his activities in the first New Series, we have his famous Ark in the "Deluge at St. Franks", the Christmas barring-out series of 1927, in which Handy was the central figure, and the equally famous series in which he became the outcast of the Remove; and finally left St. Franks and went to St. Jims for a short period.

Throughout the "School Ship" and "School Train" series of 1929, Handy was always well to the fore.

The scene of the last Christmas series in the first New Series was set at Travis Dene, the Handforth country home near Dury St. Edmunds in Suffolk and was another very enjoyable series.

Then came the Second New Series and temporarily the end of St. Franks, although within a few months we found it rebuilt and School Stories appearing again, and while Handy had his full share of the limelight, there are no stories that can be singled out for special mention, unless it was No. 34, "It's an Old Spanish Custom" in which, after listening to one of his pater's political speeches, Handy starts a "Buy British" campaign with amusing results. Actually, this plot was used in an earlier Empire Day story (No. 5, 1st New Series), "Handforth the Martyr".

The Second New Series passed away with the usual quota of Handforthian laughs and blunders and as the Third and Last Series were practically reprints, little can be said of them.

Handforth was a great sportsman. As a cricketer, he was a slogging batsman and often as last man in he would take chances that made one hold one's breath with anxiety! As a footballer, he fancied himself a great player in any position on the field but was safest in goal where he usually played a great game.

At various times, correspondence pages purported to come from the pen of E.O.H., appeared in the Nelson Lee, such as "In Reply to Yours", "Handforth Replies" and "Handforth's Weekly", but of all were the screamingly funny "Adventures of Trackett Grim",

that fantastic detective and his assistant Splinter, who only a brain such as Handy's could have created!

* * * * *

Last month I promised to say something more on the subject of Maxwell Scott reprints. For years I, and I think most of us, were of the opinion that 2nd N.S. Nos. 112-115 were the only reprints. However, it is now certain beyond any shadow of doubt that 2nd N.S. 126-127 are by him, being reprinted from his story "Birds of Prey" which made its first appearance in the first number of the Penny "Boys' Friend" in 1901 and finished with No. 26. Incidentally, it is worth mentioning here that with No. 26 commenced "The Silver Dwarf" and when that story finished in No. 41, it was followed by the sequel "The Missing Heir" Nos. 42-61. These are the two stories reprinted in 2nd N.S. Nos. 112-115, with 2nd N.S. No. 131-132 we find another reprint of a Maxwell Scott story. This time it was "The Great Unknown" which originally appeared in the penny "Boy's Friend". I'm not certain of the date but it was in the early 1900's.

There are one or two other stories appearing in the N.L. at this time which are suspect, although I have no proof. One such is called "On His Majesty's Service" which, I believe, is the title of a Maxwell Scott story.

I am indebted to our worthy Editor and Bill Gander for much of the above and from the same source is the opinion that several of the N.L. stories in the 2nd N.S. originally appeared in the "Union Jack". The only alterations were the names of the characters. I seem to remember this being mentioned in the C.D. by someone some time ago. If this is true, then perhaps someone with the necessary "gen" would care to step forward.

The 2nd New Series is certainly an eye-opener to me for I have never regarded it very highly, but it seems that a little research is achieving some very surprising results.

It's a long time now since I got your brains working on a quiz, so how about mulling over these. Let me know what you make of them, with the amount of time taken. Results will be published next month.

1. How many members were there in the infamous 'Combine' that Eileen Dave set out to destroy? (1 point)
2. Who were known by these nicknames - The Serpent, The Worm, The

Gramophone, The Tame Lunatic, Manzie? (5 points)

- 3. Who, apart from Handforth, shared study D with Church & McLure for a short time? (1 point)
- 4. Who was the Patrol Leader of the Tigers? (1 point)
- 5. Who was Caleb Droone? (1 point)
- 6. How many St. Franks stories were reprinted in the Nelson Lee Lib. (1 point)
- 7. Who were the occupants of Study J, Study L, Study No. 6 and Study No. 15 and in which Houses were they? (4 points and 1 for each House).
- 8. What is the full name of the Tuck-shop proprietor in Bellton? (1 point)
- 9. What are the names of the various Houses at The River House School? (possible 3 points).
- 10. Which plot used by Brooks has appeared three times, each time more elaborated. First as a complete story, then as a serial and finally as a novel? (3 points)

Well, there they are. There's no prize attached but as Wilfred Pickles would say, "Have a Go"!

AD'S:

WANTED - SCHOOLBOYS' OWNS, 249, 226, 219, 211, 206, 170. Also ROOKWOOD STORIES before 160. HAVE 1924 HOLIDAY ANNUAL in exchange. - GORDON THOMPSON, 53 Wallasey Park, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

WANTED - "BOB CHERRY'S BARNING OUT" Your own price paid. -- "Robby", 13, Raphael Road, Hove, 3.

URGENTLY REQUIRED - Magnets 758, 759, 779, 811, 812, 881, 882, 906, 907, 925, 1066, 1128, 1149, 1194, 1219 and certain others between 413 and 959. Lists welcomed. Cash or various vintages Magnets, Gems and Holiday Annuals in exchange. State requirements by airmail please. CHARLES VAN RENEN, Box 50, UITENHAGE, SOUTH AFRICA.

WANTED - NELSON LEE LIBRARIES, any numbers of third and fourth series. Just started recollecting. Keen to correspond with other Lee enthusiasts. NORMAN PRAGNELL, 33 BRAE ST. L'POOL, 7.

ADVERTISE IN THE C.D. RATE ... 1d. per word.

BLAKIANA

Edited by H. M. BOND
10 ERW WEN, RHIWBINA, CARDIFF

THE ROUND TABLE - JANUARY, 1953

Most of our old friends have been absent from the Round Table the past two months. I suppose the approach of Christmas and the hundred and one other activities that Winter time involves are responsible for this, but I do hope that Sexton Blake lovers will respond to yet another appeal for articles and items of interest within the Blake field. Blake fans had a treat in the latest C.D. Annual, but we must not rest on our laurels and expect the monthly section of the C.D. to continue without support. For myself, I am afraid that I have not been able to give much time to article writing for quite a while, but I intend to get down to work on a few interesting ideas I have before long. It is my one regret that I could not provide a better Christmas fare for the December number, but it could not be arranged in time. However, the coming of a New Year has made me determined to put "Blakiana" back on the top of the tree and with your help, I am sure we can do this.

In this January number, you will find a review of the S.B.L. for 1952 by our good friend Derek Ford. Derek has obviously studied his Blake well and I am extremely grateful to him for the trouble taken to keep all Blake fans up to date with the news. Not all our readers take the modern S.B.L. Some say it is a mere shadow of former series and no doubt, in some respects, they are right. I think, however, that we MUST bow a little to progress and a decisive change to please the younger generation. As an old reader of the U.J. and the 1st and 2nd series libraries, I often get quite annoyed with younger Blake fans when they say that a new story by some new author is "the best Blake story ever". I am wrong, you know. I am prejudiced against the modern stories which are mostly minus Pedro, Mrs. Bardell and all the other characters who used to entertain me when I was at an impressionable age. I mourn the absence of Plummer, Rymer, Yvonne, Zenith and the rest -

I would like to have them back again, yes, even Gunga Dass, but I know that really they have had their day and they would not really appeal to the modern youngster as they did to me. Derek Ford, in his article this month, mentions that Anthony Parsons has not taken Blake to India so much lately. He sees that it is more and more difficult for this author to depict Blake in a modern India of which he (the author) knows comparatively little. Parsons knew the India of the old days when the British were dotted all over the continent; he could use Gunga Dass then, but it would be very unwise for him to use this character now. If one forgets the past and reads the new Blake story with impartiality, then one must admit that they are, on the whole, very well done and quite on a par with the average bound detective novel. The return of Hugh Clevely to the Blake fold is to be considered a good thing. Not only is it good to see new authors coming to the fore, but especially so when the writer is well known in other fields. I'd like to see Creasey come back, yes, he might do well to feature Blake versus the Toff. And if E.S. Brooks could once thrill us with Blake v Waldo, then why should not Norman Conquest be featured with Blake to-day? Waldo is dead - he has no place in the modern world, but his modern counterpart is popular and is more in keeping with the modern set-up. Why, I would even welcome a wife for Blake - one of our correspondents suggested that Blake need not be a wife. Perry Mason has a secretary (female) and many of the popular modern detectives have wives to help them. Look at Paul Temple. Tinker need not disappear. Maybe this sounds like a complete change of policy for me. It isn't really, for I should always remember my early Blake reading and view it with the greatest respect. It would most likely be always my favourite, but I want to see Blake on the map again, and it seems to me that the only way to put him on the map, is to present him to the modern reader in a manner that is likely to appeal. I love the works of Allan Blair, but imagine how the modern youngsters would take his stories to-day. Why, even Teed the Blake genius would have to change his tactics were he alive to-day and still writing for Blake.

I have just received a letter from Horace E. Twinham of Wakefield. He, like many others, deplors the modern Blake story and does not think the current authors handle our detective in nearly as adequate a manner as they could. He tells me that he

has just procured a number of pre-1939 stories and thoroughly enjoyed them, especially one (S.B.L. 2nd series 634 dated 4.8.38), "The Secret of Moor House" by Donald Stuart. He thinks it one of the best Blake stories ever. Now there you are. Here is a story written by one of the most popular of Blake recorders and who has also made a name as Gerald Verner in the bound volume field, quite apart from his plays and radio productions. Stuart supplied us with lashings of bodies, eerie situations and colourful descriptions of wind-swept moors and lonely mansions. We loved it, we delighted in the smooth style. But would the modern reader appreciate the same type of story? I am inclined to think he would consider it a trifle "corny".

This yarn mentioned by Horace is a perfect example of the good old melodramatic detective story of the 20's and 30's and I enjoyed it as much as our correspondent, in fact I like all Stuart's efforts in the Blake field. But, unfortunately, the detective story has changed since 1938. It has become much more sophisticated and much less actionful. Glamorous women moving in a world of international intrigue, have taken the place of ordinary people faced with stark common or garden crime. Bodies are not to be found on every other page as of old. Bloodhounds do not have to track cunning crooks across miles of countryside, instead the intricate system of mobile police serve to scotch the criminal almost before he jumps over the first stile.

No, we cannot revert to the past. We may enjoy ourselves to the full, turning over the pages of our old favourites, but we can't expect to ever see their like appearing again in the S.B.L. We have to move with the times and anyway, we are lucky that we still have ours here on the bookstalls. So many other favourite characters can only be found in the past. Let us then, try to console ourselves with the new Blake and trust that he and Tinker will still be with our children's children 50 years hence, as he was (in topical guise) with our grandfathers, 50 years ago.

HAPPY NEW YEAR.

H. MAURICE BOND.

* * * * *

SEXTON BLAKE, 1952.

By DEREK FORD

Ten authors recorded the twenty-four cases of Sexton Blake in 1952: these are contained in the SBL run numbered 255 to 278.

Nine of those cases took Blake abroad, five to France.

Anthony Parsons came first, with six case-books. He was very busy at the beginning of the year, contributing to the Feb., March and April issues. Incidentally, in an advert in SBL. 264, he is given the credit for one of the May issues, which was by John Hunter. Only two of these cases keep Blake at home, twice he goes to France and once to India and Spain, respectively. India, usually a popular setting with Parsons, has presumably become difficult to feature with the immense changes of the past few years. Venner and the Lady Emily Westomholme were well to the fore. I liked his "Case of the Jap Contract" (271) best.

John Hunter and Walter Tyrer come next, with four case-books each. Hunter's books are generally spoiled by too much brutality; the 1952 issues were no exception. Three of the cases keep Blake at home, the other takes him to France. I liked his "Crooked Hypnotist" (269) best.

Now, Walter Tyrer. I think the editor of the SBL must have been short of a case-book in February, for he published Tyrer's "The Dilemma of Dr. Hilary" (258). If this wasn't originally written for the Oracle Lib., and then transferred to the SBL, I shall be greatly surprised. It was a love story by any measure; Sexton Blake was incidental. Next, Tyrer's "The Hire-Purchase Fraud" (264) - it was a good story with a badly written end; I don't think I have ever read a worse. I enjoyed his last two books however, one taking Blake to Germany - much better. His "The Scrap Metal Mystery" (272) I liked best.

Rex Hardinge came next, with three case-books. I do not like stories where the murderer's actions are described first, placing the reader ahead of the detective, who follows up what we already know. Quite a few of Hardinge's novels have been of that type lately, as was SBL. 256. I believe you will find his first story of this type in the second Sexton Blake Annual. His other two books last year, however, were "straight". I enjoyed his "The Man from Space" - which took Blake to Litonia - best.

Of the other authors, Stephen Blakesley contributed two case-books; Warwick Jardine, John Drummond, Hilary King, Martin Frazer, and Hugh Clevely, writing one each. Of these, I liked Jardine's "The Man with A Grievance" (261), best.

February, 1952, saw the introduction of a sub-title on the first page. An illustration as of old would look better. The December issues had a streamer on the front covers: "64-page Thrill-

ing Detective Novel". There were only five "Magazine Page" in 1952.

That completes the survey of the SBL. in 1952; now for the other Sexton Blake events.

First, of course, was the re-appearance of the weekly yarn. Roland Davies's 2-page Blake strip in the "Knockout" was dropped and the story substituted. The first appeared in "Knockout" number 713, dated 25th October and was entitled "The Case of the Man from Mars". Considering the limited space, the yarns aren't too bad. In passing, I noticed the December SBL still advertising the appearance of Blake in pictures in the "Knockout"!

Blake made his first appearance on television. Although an old film was shown, I shall hope it was a sign of better things to come.

Lastly, but not least, 1952 saw the formation of the Sexton Blake Circle. One cannot too highly praise the results of its first researches published in the 1952 "C.D. Annual".

CORRECTIONS - Annual's "WHO'S WHO" One or two errors crept into the addresses. Please correct as follows: Page 127, MARTIN BILL - for "Jack Sheppard Lib.", read "Heeled Jack Lib." ... Page 128, PRIME, BERNARD - for "Hayfield Road" read "MAYFIELD Road" ... Page 131, STEWART, ALAN - for "Archdale Road" read "ARCHWAY Road" ... Page 135, "BLUNDEN, ANTHONY" (and Advert), for "Mayfield Avenue" read "ELMFIELD Avenue".

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The "KINGS OF CRIME" Feature in the Annual. Jim Smith of Newcastle-on-Tyne points out that Union Jack No. 401 (June 17th, 1911) "The Kidnapped Inspector" was a Plummer yarn.

And Ronald Rouse, Norwich, states No. 836 "The Case of the Four Detectives" concerned Kestral and that Yvonne came in S.B.L. No. 307 (1st series) "The Crimson Belt".

Just goes to prove what a terrific job compiling that epic was!

* * * * *

Letter Box

FRANK RICHARDS EXPLAINS

December 10th, 1952.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for the December C.D. and Annual, both of which I have already read from cover to cover. The Annual really is excellent itself. I have never seen a more readable article than Eric Payne's, which to me at least was a sheer pleasure from beginning to end.

With regard to Mr. Bentley's article on Levison, I wouldn't like anyone to pull his punches in dealing with me; but a little reflection mightn't be out of place at times. Charles Hamilton never needed anyone to "tell him" an item of common knowledge known to every inhabitant of this kingdom. In the early days, a certain editor used to ask for special stories with a reckless disregard of established manners and customs: once, as mentioned in my Autobiography, he asked me to write a story of St. Jim's, without caring a bean that the school game was Soccer; and being in those days much more easy-going than in these, I did what I was asked to do, leaving probability to take care of itself. That was not the only occasion when such requests put the author into a spot of bother. Mr. Bentley has put his finger on another. I humbly confess to Mr. Bentley that the author should have been made of sterner stuff. But if he will read Chapter VIII in the Auto he will realise that argument in such matters was an undertaking of some difficulty.

A jolly good annual, all the same.

With kind regards, Always yours sincerely,
FRANK RICHARDS.

BILLY BUNTER TO THE RESCUE?

Southampton,
22nd Dec., 1952

Dear Editor,

I must just tell you of a most successful window display which I ran at our Head shop, a fortnight ago. I work for a Baker & Confectioner and apart from the usual office work, I am frequently asked to use my artistic (?) talent to dress the main window. This time, it was to plug a largecardboard hamper of cakes and

pastries, for Xmas parties, etc. After many ideas - all useless - I suddenly hit upon the tie-up between Billy Bunter and a Christmas Hamper. I painted a fair-sized Bunter on the inside of the lid, with falling snow to give it the "Xmas Atmosphere" and placed this in the window, the hamper of course, stacked with cakes of all kinds, sausage rolls, etc. Then in the background, I constructed a large cardboard-mounted frame, covered with red crepe paper. Upon this, I fixed up eighteen different CHRISTMAS numbers of the MAGNET! All with Billy Bunter on the cover. They stretched over ~~practically the whole number of years the Magnet was published, 1908 until 1939.~~ (The Rod 1908 No. wasn't actually a Christmas No., but it had Bunter eating a jam tart on the cover, so I cheated shamelessly). Then I wrote, in "Old English" lettering, a copy, telling of bygone days, when The Magnet thrilled thousands of people and gave pleasure to all every Christmas... Bunter knowing what was good to eat - such as OUR Bumper Party Pack, etc. etc., with the usual corn, to plug the goods. It took me some three hours to fit it in the window and I deliberately covered the Magnets with brown paper, until the last minute! Then I uncovered them! Within seconds a large crowd had gathered outside, all peering in. And it went on like that for the rest of the day - and always was there more men than women! Watching from inside the shop, I could see them smile as they sighted the old papers - then breaking into a grin, they pointed and made remarks and peered closer. A woman came in to buy some cakes: "You must have dug deep for those old books", she said to the assistant. "Good old Billy Bunter!" Another customer the following day - a man - said: "Poor old Frank Richards is going blind, you know", to the manageress. And there were several such as these. It lasted a week altogether, and on the Saturday, it was a gathering of men, practically all of the time. I felt most pleased, I can tell you, I had no reason to congratulate myself; all the credit belonged to Billy Bunter and it proved that beyond doubt, Bunter is still remembered happily by many, many people.

Yours sincerely,

TED COX.

(Congrats Ted! You deserved a good feed yourself for thinking that up. - H.L.)