

# The Collector's Digest

Vol. 8. No 91.

JULY, 1954

Price 1s. 6d.



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NEW ADDRESS

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Editor, HERBERT LECKENBY,  
c/o YORK DUPLICATING SERVICES,  
7, the Shambles, YORK.

## From the Editor's Chair

STARTING A NEW LIFE. Perhaps some of you would wonder what was the reason for change of address announced last month. I hadn't the chance to explain then, but the fact is that by the time this appears in print, I shall be drawing "retirement pension" as I prefer to call it. The news came rather as a surprise to me, but when I was told some months ago that I should be expected to carry on, it seems the powers that be thought I should be 60 next birthday, not 65. That's what this hobby does for you!

Well, after 40 years going to and fro to the same sort of job, I suppose it will seem strange at first, but I shall get used to it. At any rate I shall be able to concentrate on what is nearest to my heart, and may be take more care over what I write. And the bigger my mail each morning, the better I shall like it. But I am sure you won't mind me mentioning this; retirement will make a difference to me financially, even though I have never been called upon for more than a few shillings a week in income tax. There have been occasions in the past when I have had to put my hand in my pocket where the old mag. is concerned; but I shan't be able to do it now. So this is just an appeal to a small minority who have been somewhat lax in the past in renewing their subs. If they will act more promptly well I may find being "retired" has its points and I shall be able to continue to serve you with a light heart. Mind you it is only a small minority that this applies to, nevertheless sufficiently large to have made things difficult at times, if others had not in contrast done more than their share

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AND NOW THE ANNUAL: Once again the now familiar forms are coming to you, and from now on we shall be down to it in real earnest.

Now, you will see that you are going to be asked to pay a

little more this year; let me explain why, for I like to put all the cards on the table.

Last year our present publishers, without going into details, agreed to do the job for the same price as the previous one. This was a shot in the dark, and when they took stock afterwards, they found it had cost far more than anticipated. When you can compare the two places in which the Annuals have been produced (some of you can), one can fully appreciate the difference in overheads, the more modern and expensive equipment, etc. This was plainly evident for everyone to see for last year's edition was far superior in appearance to all that had gone before, as was unanimously agreed.

I have been shown the production costs and I can assure you that the increase of a shilling is absolutely justified. A publication the size of the Annual is a very expensive matter when the circulation is only in the hundreds. The only alternative is a reduction in size. I am convinced no one wants that, and, in fact, judging by the programme already planned, impossible.

Now, in view of what I have said about my changed circumstances I am sure you will all do what you can to make my lot as easy as possible in the coming months. You can do this by sending in your orders promptly so that I can see my way clear. It is not essential to pay at the same time, all I want is for you to do so before publishing day, for there must be no 'bad debts' this time. Those to whom it is more convenient, payment by instalments can be made.

As to the programme, most of the old favourites will be with us again, including J. Breeze Bentley, Eric Fayne, Roger Jenkins, Jack Wood and of course the SextonBlake Circle.

And the other day I received an article from Geoff. Hockley of New Zealand. It's called "The Cases of Peter Flint, Detective Extraordinary". Few of you will have read those stories of 50 years ago, but the article is written with such delicious, chirpy humour that I vow you will all vote it a real winner. It reached me on a day of worry at my office. It cheered me up no end.

Now you'll get those forms filled in, won't you?

\* \* \* \* \*

"YOU CAN'T TAKE THEM WITH YOU!" Jack Murtagh's article under this heading last month has caused a lot of interest and in a letter Eric Humphreys says:-

"I think a good idea would be to arrange for the O.B.B.C. to get them should anything happen, for they would be in good hands."

This is an excellent idea. Handled carefully by the appropriate Club, it could have been of great benefit to the next of kin and to genuine collectors generally. It is a matter worthy of serious thought. During the life of the C.D. it has often been my melancholy duty to record the death of a member of the clan. Not always has it been an elder one; sometimes it has come with tragic suddenness to one in the prime of life. There was poor Joe Bagguley for instance who shortly after his arrival in Australia wrote me oh so cheerfully one day telling me of his plans for the future. Before that day was out, he was dead.

It's not a very cheerful subject I know, but like making one's will, it is one that should not be neglected. You have a duty to those you leave behind.

\* \* \* \* \*

BLAKIANA IN DANGER!! Hi ! you Blake fans, see what Josie Packman says about scarcity of copy, with the possibility of Blakiana disappearing as a result. Surely you'll never let that happen. Fancy celebrating our 100th number with Blake out in the cold. Surely there's enough material in the 60 years of the Baker Street sleuth to keep us going until our No. 200. So please get busy and make Josie joyful through plenty of copy for many months to come.

Yours sincerely,  
HERBERT LECKENBY.

STOP PRESS: Deeply regret to report the death on June 11th of Peard Sutherland of Vancouver.

OTHER FIELDS. If for a change you would like to read again about cricket or football matches you attended years ago and the 'giants' who played them; or if you have a wish to recall stars of the theatre and music hall, political battles and noteworthy events of the past thirty years or more Charles Vennimore, 25 Byron Avenue West Hounslow, Middlesex can help you. For he still has for sale quantities of papers like "Answers"; "Stage"; "Performer"; "All Sports"; "Tit Bits"; "John Bulls", etc., at very reasonable prices.

WANTED: Nelson Lees First and Second New Series. Some copies available for exchange. N. PRAGNELL, 33 BRAE STREET, LIVERPOOL, 7.

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

How quickly the months slip by. No sooner have I sent one month's Blakiana to Mr. Leckenby I find myself preparing another.

In this issue we have another very fine article by Walter Webb on PEDRO. Dear Old Pedro has been neglected far too long, and I am sure you will all agree with me that Walter has admirably remedied a long overdue omission.

This article was of course written before last month's S.B. Libraries were published. It is therefore somewhat strange that seemingly in direct contradiction to Walter's statement that "Blake authors of today have no intention of giving further recognition to what they obviously regard as a spent force", we find Hugh Clevely in S.B.L. No.313 "The Heir of Tower House" bringing Pedro into the story - albeit briefly. Maybe there is something in Mental Telepathy!

And now about the Blake Circle Quiz. Will everyone please note, that in order to give as many of our overseas readers as possible the opportunity of taking part, the closing date has been extended to 31 August and not 31 July as stated last month. I want you all to have a go. Some of the questions are easy and some are not, but everyone can, I know, answer some of them. There are no 'strings' to this competition, so get cracking, and be sure you send your solution to me at the above address. The result, in detail, together with the full solution, will be published in September's Blakiana.

Fianlly, with regard to Blakiana itself. My requests for articles have met with little response. I would therefore remind you, that if no material is forthcoming, neither will Blakiana!!!

JOSIE PACKMAN.

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THE END OF THE TRAIL

A Tribute to Pedro.

By Walter Webb

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'Every Dog Has His Day' is a good old saying, and in the case

of Pedro, famous bloodhound and canine ally of the equally famous Sexton Blake, the description is particularly apt, for without doubt, the noble fellow has had his day. Many a trail has Pedro followed in the past, in all parts of the world, in the company of the two masters he has served so faithfully and unflinchingly. Now he has reached the end of the longest trail of all - his own.

Whether or not this generation of Blake readers want Pedro featured in the present day exploits of the Baker Street pair is doubtful; what is abundantly clear is that the Blake authors of today have no intention of giving further recognition to what they obviously regard as a spent force. If this is the light in which they look on things, it might be pointed out to that that far from being out-of-date, the bloodhound is still of inestimable value to the police in the tracking of criminals, and will continue to be used with telling effect while crime exists.

It was W. Murray Graydon who brought Pedro into the world; the same author who a little earlier, just after Tinker's arrival, had established Sexton Blake at Baker Street and then introduced Mrs. Bardell as housekeeper.

It was in the case known as "The Dog Detective" (U. Jack No. 100, published 9 September, 1905), that we heard of Pedro for the first time, and he was described then as being 'liver-coloured mottled, with spots of rusty yellow, of enormous size, massive-limbed and pendulous-jowled'. Pedro's original owner was a man named Rafael Calderon, who, on going abroad and not wishing to take the bloodhound with him, made Blake a present of the sagacious fellow, in appreciation of the services the criminologist rendered him during the case just mentioned.

From that day Pedro became as much a part of the stories as Sexton Blake and Tinker themselves, and not a week was allowed to slip by but that the bloodhound was featured, be it only in a small way. Even when Blake's investigations necessitated him going abroad there was no thought in his mind of leaving Pedro at home; Pedro went and thus must have become the most widely-travelled dog in the history of the canine world!

Pedro proved his fearlessness and courage on many occasions, and there was nothing born of four legs who could make him quail. In Africa, he met unflinchingly the attack of a leopard in an encounter which was ended abruptly when, locked in close embrace, they toppled off a tree trunk into a surging river - perhaps

fortunately for the hound; then there was another occasion when, with Sexton Blake helpless on the ground, Pedro stood across his master and bayed defiance at a lion which was about to spring. The bloodhound kept the King of the Jungle sufficiently long at bay for Tinker to take aim with his rifle and shoot him dead.

Pedro's love for children is well-known, and in a case published in 1908 he was instrumental in saving the life of a little girl, when a panther which had escaped from a menagerie threatened her life. What followed was a fight to the death between the bloodhound and his formidable adversary, but Pedro fortunately managed to obtain an early grip with his strong teeth on the panther's throat and that spelt 'finis' for him.

A later adventure described how, when lost in the forests of Brazil, Tinker was stalked by a Jaguar, whose intentions were so obvious that Blake's youthful assistant gave himself up for lost. But Pedro was at hand, and instead of becoming a victim of the Jaguar's vicious teeth, it was the jungle beast who became the object of Pedro's. This incident was described more fully in the story entitled "Sexton Blake - Aviator" (U. Jack No. 317 published 6 November, 1909), and was one of those extremely rare narratives of Sexton Blake written by that grand old-timer, D.H. Parry.

Thereafter, the exhilaration of the chase often proved too much for Pedro, and back home in his native London the urge to dash after stray cats and small dogs sometimes proved too strong for him. On those occasions his departure from dignity would oft incur a wrathful rebuke from the older master, though to be nullified somewhat by a sympathetic and understanding grin of quiet enjoyment from the younger.

Pedro would have you know, however, that these and similar incidents only occurred during his younger and impressionable days; with the passing of the years came a greater sense of his responsibilities, a graver, more sober outlook on life, so that he came to look upon the various types which made up the feline world, and the many pedigrees of his own four-footed clan, with lofty disdain, prompted not by any feelings of snobbishness or exaggerated ideas of his own importance, but simply because his beloved older master expected him so to do.

In his heyday Pedro played the leading role in a number of the early cases of Sexton Blake, and one outstanding example was the occasion when wholesale smuggling was taking place on the French

and Belgian frontiers. The intervention of the famous bloodhound resulted in the rounding-up of the smugglers, and Sexton Blake honoured his noble ally by briefing the affair in his case-book as "Pedro's Trail". Beverley Kent used both title and ingredients for his detailed account of the case which was published in the 'Union Jack' dated 14 March, 1908.

From the time of his first appearance to the outbreak of the first world war Pedro was well to the fore; then from 1914 his star began to wane, and his appearances began to get fewer and farther between, until, by the twenties, he was making only occasional appearances in the stories. Only W. Murray Graydon and Allan Blair in the 'Sexton Blake Library' featured Pedro with any degree of consistency, for amongst the newer and younger writers the bloodhound seemed right out of favour, and in some instances certain authors never once referred to him at all.

Gwyn Evans put Pedro right back in the limelight when he described in 'Union Jacks' Nos. 1,179 and 1,180, how Sexton Blake smashed the schemes of a gang of dope traffickers. Most of the action in this case occurred in the Channel Islands, and no doubt when he jumped ashore at St. Peter Port, the capital of Guernsey, Pedro had no inkling that this was to be the scene of his greatest case. A point of particular interest about Guernsey is the fact that Victor Hugo was an exile there when he wrote 'Toilers of the Sea'.

Blake tracked down the leader of the drug traffickers to the island of Hathou, a small dreary spot beyond Herm, but both he and Tinker were made prisoners by the gang, and it was left to Pedro to foil the schemes of the evil-doers.

Working on behalf of his Government, Blake was in possession of a secret which if divulged would smash the chancelleries of Europe and menace the world with another war, but by the injection of a truth-compelling drug, the gang leader, unmasked by the detective as an eminent M.P., learned the secret.

Blake and Tinker were imprisoned in an old monk's house from which escape was impossible, but when his master sent a piercing whistle out across the lonely desolate wastes to him, Pedro was not found wanting. Although the prison was guarded by a wolf-dog named Satan, this did not deter the bloodhound, and after a bitter battle in which Satan was killed, Pedro submitted to having a handkerchief containing a written message for help tied round



his neck by his master through the bars of his cell. When he was told to go home to Baker Street the old fellow was left wondering how on earth his master expected him to get across the long stretch of water between him and home. When he saw the steam-yacht belonging to the leader of the gang lying at anchor, Pedro got a brilliant idea and stowed himself away on the vessel. He was subsequently discovered by the ship's cook, a Chinaman, knocked out, muzzled, and sold to an Egyptian restaurant owner. When the place was raided by police led by Inspector Coutts, Pedro was discovered, and acting on the information contained in the message round Pedro's neck another raid was made on the island of Hathou, in which the gang leader was killed. It was a triumphant ending to a difficult case, in which Pedro took chief honours.

If there was one time of the year which Pedro enjoyed more than any other, it was Christmas, for it was on those occasions that he met most of his human friends, under his own roof. Beneath the holly and mistletoe and the gaily-coloured bunting which adorned his master's sitting-room in the modest-fronted house in Baker Street, Pedro was wont to sprawl at his ease in front of a cracking log fire and enjoy the many caresses and hugs which were affectionately bestowed upon him by his master's numerous friends, men and women whose friendship he was proud to share.

There would be Mr. Spearing of the Yard, stocky, fiery, short-tempered, but a faithful old ally; Sir Richard Losely, an old school-fellow of his master's, and a much-travelled man; Lobangu, chief of the Etbaia; the Hon. John Lawless, globe-trotter and man of independent means; Dirk Dolland, suave, dapper, and one-time cracksman; Granite Grant, secret service agent, spare of speech but explosive of action; Splash Page, newspaper reporter and a human bloodhound in his quest for hot news; Ruff Hanson, a tough American sleuth, whose habitual use of two trusty firearms, nicknamed Willy and Wally, did not altogether meet with Pedro's approval, for the old fellow had more than once been on the receiving end of the leaden objects they ejected with such damaging and often fatal effects. Then there was Waldo the Wonder-Man, who was something of a puzzle to Pedro, because sometimes his master would instruct him to track the fellow down, whilst at others the pair would be quite friendly disposed to each other. It was all rather puzzling to a bloodhound whose only desire was to do his level best for the master who placed so much faith in him; but then, there was much about the human race that the

canine intelligence could never understand, so Pedro never allowed his mind to dwell too deeply on such matters, and invariably dismissed them with an expressive whisk of the tail. The Hon. Eustace Cavendish was another well-remembered visitor who made an occasional Yuletide call, and despite the vacuous expression on his somewhat foolish features and the dandified air, Pedro was sufficiently an observer of Human nature to know that this was only a cloak concealing a very keen intelligence.

Amongst the ladies, Pedro had a very warm spot in his heart for Mademoiselle Yvonne, and had always entertained a secret hope that one day would find her installed as a permanent member of the Baker street household. Even to a dog with half an eye, it was obvious that the older master had a very deep affection for the girl and that on her part it was reciprocated, so why on earth didn't the gov'nor pop the all important question? The older master had the right to make his own decisions, of course, but there were times when he - Pedro - really despaired of him!

Yes, those were the days, every hour of which was a happy one for the old fellow - but what of today? No longer does he see the friendly faces as of yore; there comes to him no caress of welcome from any of his old admirers; the affectionate slap on the flank, the gentle pull on his long ears by the white feminine hand of the beautiful girl for whose life the old fellow would have laid down his own, are just memories. Today, his masters see little of their Baker Street residence, and Pedro, yet another victim of the changing times, becomes one more has-been, so that we visualise him either chained up in his kennel at the rear of the house or wandering disconsolately about the kitchen quarters with Mrs. Bardell as his sole companion.

If permitted a glance through Sexton Blake's case-book for the year 1921, one would eventually come across details of a case in which Pedro played a not unimportant part. The title - "The End of the Trail" - is not without significance, for it could well be Pedro's epitaph.

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#### SEXTON BLAKE QUIZ

1. Name Mrs. Bardell's predecessor.
2. Name Tinker's three predecessors in their respective order.
3. Which assistant did Christopher Stevens write about?
4. What was the name of an extra assistant of Blake's?

5. Give the name of a relation of Blake and also one of Martha Bardell.
6. Who was the 'ghost writer' for Michael Storm?
7. Who was 'The Snake'?
8. Who was 'Professor Andrew Butterfield'?
9. Who was the 'Black Duchess of Jorsica'?
10. What was the Christian name of George Marsden Plummer's brother?
11. Who was known as 'Princess Pretence'?
12. Who was the 'Chief of the Etbaia Tribe'?
13. In which year did Det. Insp. Coutts make his debut?
14. Who was 'Lord of the Ape Men'?
15. Who were 'Willy' and 'Wally'?
16. Who was 'The Girl of Destiny'?
17. Name six members of the Kestrel Syndicate.
18. Name the two men intimately associated with 'R.S.V.P'.
19. Give the titles of S.B. Library No.1 1st, 2nd and 3rd series.
20. In which year did the first Yvonne story appear?
21. Name the title of the S.B. Library (by Teed) later reprinted in the U. Jack and S. Blake Annual under a different title.
22. Who was the first President of the Criminals Confederation.
23. In which S.B.L. story did Blake and Tinker quarrel and part, and who was the author?
24. Name all the chief characters (apart from Blake and Tinker) in U. Jack No.1000 'The Thousandth Chance'.
25. Who created the following: Eldred Kurtin; John Marsh; Krock Kelk; Olga Nasmyth; Tinker and Pedro?
26. Which current series S.B.L. author has the same surname as a Collector's Digest subscriber?
27. What was Lobangu's favourite drink?
28. Who was 'The Gang Girl'?
29. At which school was Sexton Blake a Form Master and Tinker the Headmaster's Secretary?
30. In which year did the Sexton Blake Bust appear?

WANTED: Chums Annual for year 1912 on sale or exchange basis.  
Reply to R. STOREY, 4 BYRON STREET, SHIELDSFIELD, NEWCASTLE ON TYNE 2.

WANTED: SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY (1st & 2nd Series only). Please send me details of any you have for disposal (Price, Series and Serial Number) JOSEPHINE PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

# HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

Here is a quotation from Ronald Wilkinson's T.V. Column in the "Yorkshire Evening Post", June 9th.

"Let us have men about us who are fat..... and so on. We are, indeed, having a spate of corpulence.

The gargantuan Fred Emney floundered his amiable way into his own programme (Emney Enterprises), this week. Gerald Campion, aided by padding and specially-fitted, tight suiting scuttles into our homes as 80-year old Frank Richard's ageless schoolboy, Billy Bunter, on July 1.

So far only one episode has been arranged, under the title "Bunter Won't Go," but I am told others will follow.

What are your reactions to the "Owl, of the Remove"? Mine are wholly in favour of him. I would love to hear in nostalgic ecstasy the "yarrochs," "ows," and "leggo-you-beasts" of younger days. So, I should have thought, would many others. But the B.B.C. says Bunter has no adult appeal, and showings are limited to afternoons."

The B.B.C.'s statement would appear to be in flat contradiction to what was experienced when Bunter first appeared on T.V. Then it was said there were so many demands from adults that repeat viewings in the evenings simply had to be arranged.

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And here's what Peter Black had to say in the "Daily Mail", July 15th.

"Joy Harington, producer of the original TV series of Billy Bunter sketches, announces the return of this 44-year-old immortal to Children's TV on July 1 and 4 in a piece called "Bunter Won't Go."

Greatly to my chagrin, evening viewers are to be denied this programme. Miss Harington explains that though the first series went down extremely well with what I may respectfully call adult viewers, it was felt

that the temptation to burlesque the stories was too strong.

I don't agree with this altogether, chiefly because Charles Hamilton, the jaunty octogenarian who writes the Bunter stories, would be down on any burlesque like several tons of bricks.

To be fair to all parties, I must add that when I saw the last Bunter sketch I was disappointed. I can claim to be a fairly constant reader, for I turn back to the Greyfriars Holiday Annuals every time I have 'flu. My wife has kept nearly all of them, and their pages, stiff and white after 30 years, unsullied by any attempts to decorate characters with beards and spectacles, testify eloquently to her neat and gentle childhood.

The appeal is, however, more nostalgic than literary, and on TV even the nostalgic is faint. Charles Hamilton's achievement was to paint a portrait of school life grotesquely exaggerated and unreal which yet struck a deep responsive chord in its young readers.

Upon the ears of older folk this note now falls but faintly. But the response of young viewers, says Miss Harington, shows that Hamilton's touch is still sure."

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LATER: Joy Harington, writing about the new television play in the 'Radio Times', June 25th, said that after two series it had been thought by the B.B.C. that Bunter had had his day, but all this year letters had continued to pour in asking "Where is Bunter?" "Please can we see Billy Bunter again?" and so on. So back came the Owl on July 1st.

It would seem that the present younger generation is as keen on Bunter as were previous ones.

Joy Harington also says "When the Greyfriars stories were suggested for T.V., dozens and dozens of letters poured in describing in minute detail the shape of Greyfriars School, the size of the windows, the length of Mr. Quelch's nose, the width of the stripes on the caps, the size of Bob Cherry's feet, the shape of the form-room, the number of playing fields. "Don't you realise there are five hundred boys and thirty acres of playing fields at Greyfriars?" wrote one angry man after our first modest production from a very small studio. Beautiful drawings, old copies of the Magnet, maps of the district poured in, and I welcomed them with

delight".

Well, that might be slightly exaggerated, nevertheless, I have an idea Joy will be getting some more letters for she made two mistakes in her article. She said Billy Bunter made his first appearance in 1910 in the Magnet and stated she had written to Frank Richards at his home at Kingston-on-Sea.

Still it's easy to make mistakes about Greyfriars and its associations. In an article I wrote years ago I said Bunter was dead. But I was in good company for Frank Richards thought so himself at the time.

Well by the time you read this some of you will have 'looked in' on the new story. Drop me a line and tell me what you thought to it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now to test the memories of St. Jims fans. Can any of you say in which number of the Gem Tom Merry sang "Two Eyes of Grey"? It was probably round about 1915. P.J. Laffey, 32 Galsworthy Avenue, Liverpool, 21, will be grateful for the information.

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Without a doubt, all Hamiltonians will enjoy this extract from a letter I received from Dr. Robert Wilson recently. The happy interlude took place at Pitlochry whilst he was on holiday.

"Here's something interesting. The night before my return home, I was seated in the hotel lounge. Two little girls came in armed with "comics" and sat down near me to become engrossed in the adventures of Keyhole Kate etc. I made some casual remark to the ma and pa about the children's books of today and at once received the reply from the father:- "Nothing to compare with Harry Wharton & Co." "Nonsense," interrupted his wife, "you mean Tom Merry & Co." Thereupon ensued a friendly wrangle about the respective merits of the Magnet & Gem. What astounded me was the detailed descriptions given of some of the stories. The wife was all for Talbot and admitted to the shedding of a furtive tear while reading the series in which Talbot runs off to London and is found by Merry in a starving condition. The husband, however, had no time for sentiment and sang the praises of Coker, the unwitting humorist. Only

the fact that I had to be up early next morning for my return home, kept us from an all-night sitting. One more proof of the wide-spread influence of Frank Richards."

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The "Caravan" (9d.) for June carried a most entertaining and appropriate article by Jim Walsh of Liverpool. He recalled the golden days when the chums of Greyfriars and St. Jims toured the English countryside. It had an illustration from the "Gem".

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DO YOU REMEMBER?

BY ROGER M. JENKINS

No. 1 - Gem No. 1220 - "Battling Grundy"

George Alfred Grundy was not, perhaps, a favourite character with Gem readers. Stories about him had perforce to be as blunt and as lacking in finesse as he was himself. Yet Gem No. 1220 was probably the best of all stories centring around him, being written in Charles Hamilton's vintage dryly amusing style.

Grundy was in trouble with his form-master for continually fighting, and the unfortunate manner in which Grundy sank into deeper disfavour through a combination of obstinacy and bad luck made a very readable tale in the humorous vein.

When Charles Hamilton wrote the story, he referred to Grundy's form-master as Mr. Linton, of course, not being aware that a substitute writer had removed that gentleman from the St. Jim's scene and replaced him with a Mr. Pilbeam. Accordingly, the editor had to substitute Mr. Pilbeam's name for Mr. Linton's throughout, but it is pleasing to note that, when the tale was reprinted in No. 383 of the Schoolboys' Own Library, Mr. Linton came into his own once again as Master of the Shell.

Gem No. 1220 came at the end of a period during which the substitute writers played havoc with the paper. "Battling Grundy" is one of the eleven stories written for the Gem by Charles Hamilton between January 1928 and July 1931 when it appeared. It was also the last of the 'ancien regime', as it were, for with No. 1221 began the eight years of reprints of early stories. Looked at 23 years later, No. 1220 therefore assumes a position of some importance in the history of the Gem. Much as one likes the early stories which were then reprinted, it is also possible to wonder what the paper would have been like if Charles Hamilton had prevailed

upon to write a series of new stories for the Gem comparable to those in the Magnets of the early 'thirties. "Battling Grundy" and its 10 earlier companions are all we have to console us for the stories that might have been.

—ooOoo—

THE ENVIRONMENTS

BY J.K. MORGAN

Much has been written about the Hamilton characters and many controversial claims have been made about their respective merits but I wonder if enough consideration has been given to that which very often plays such an important part in the development of the plots and creating the appropriate atmosphere of the stories, namely, the surrounding countryside and the descriptive scenes associated with it.

Now, in many respects the environments of Greyfriars, St.Jims and Rookwood have a basic similarity, i.e. Woods, River, Island, Inn, Railway Station and Rival School, etc. All these are skilfully blended into the stories to give the appropriate background and all have figured prominently from time to time either in single stories or series.

The river affords us some pleasant scenes with its boat races and picnics and if the picnic happens to be on Popper's Island, then the serenity is likely to be shattered by the arrival of the irate Sir Hilton Popper. This island once served as a stronghold in a Remove rebellion.

The Woods, where so many japes are planned and carried out, also provides suitable cover to that "snapper up of unconsidered trifles", who, armed with his cudgel, lies in wait for the unsuspecting junior. Virtue usually triumphs, however, and this gentleman finally drags himself wearily out of the ditch or duck-pond in a very bedraggled state.

The Green Man, The Three Fishers and The Bird-in-Hand have each done yeoman service but out of bounds and disreputable as they are, we would not be without them.

The local railway stations have witnessed many humorous exciting and rumbustious scenes, especially on breaking-up a first day of term days. At Courtfield, H. Wharton & Co. ably assisted by Billy Bunter sit upon Coker; at Wayland, Gussy's topper quickly assumes the shape of a concertina while at Coombe, the Classics and Moderns may be seen strewn all over the platform. The



villages add a quaintness and charm to the stories and an air of mystery abounds in the Ruins, Castle and Priory.

There is one feature of Greyfriars, however, which is different; its proximity to the coast. Many thrilling incidents have occurred here.

After "lights out" the pleasant murmur of the sea may be heard as it floods towards the Shoulder, Black Pike and the Caves, but should it be stormy, then the gale sweeps through the close and old elms and rattles the dormitory windows. The waves can be heard pounding and crashing on to the beach and dashing madly against the cliffs. Perhaps - Boom! a distress signal may be heard faintly above the storm as a ship drifts helplessly towards the rocks. Old Dave Trumper and his fellow fishermen from Pegg turn out to render assistance and we can be sure that the Famous Five and other members of the Remove are close at hand.

Yes, I think, no matter how good the characterization, the background plays no mean part in helping to produce the finished article.

So let us during our reading, pause for a moment to appreciate the background in which the story is set and in spite of George Orwell, if by "projecting" ourselves we can picnic with H. Wharton & Co. on Popper's Island or jape with Tom Merry & Co. in Rylcombe Woods, then our reading has not been in vain.

\* \* \* \* \*

MAGNET TITLES (Cont'd): 1295 Saved by a Scapegrace; 1296 The Runaway Rebel; 1297 The Boy from the Underworld; 1298 The Kid-napped Schoolboy; 1299 Dick the Penman; 1300 The Boy with a Guilty Secret; 1301 His Past Against Him; 1302 Coker the Detective; 1303 Bunter the Footballer; 1304 The Mad Musicians of Greyfriars; 1305 Black Magic; 1306 Billy Bunter's Bargains; 1307 The Hunted Schoolboy; 1308 Wibley's Wonderful Wheeze; 1309 Popper's Unpopular Prize; 1310 The Schoolboy Impersonator.

\* \* \* \* \*

I Offer 5/- Each for any of the following Detective Library numbers in good condition. 10/- for No. 1. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 24, 29, 31, 33, 35. LEONARD PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

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Your opportunity for profitable exchange! Any of following at your valuation for those below. S.O.L.'s 25 & 29 (Mint) Magnet and Gems Xmas Nos. 1921; Magnets 756, 1017-1026 (South Seas, Complete); 1072-75; 1093-94-95; 1121; 1176-86 (China) 1210; 1272; 1274; 1228-1236 (Africa Complete) 1332; 1342; 1349; 1309; 1370-73; 1389 and onwards. WANTED: Mint or near for binding: S.O.L.'s - 5 - 292 - 304 - 307. Magnets 642; 704 - 05 - 08 - 09; 776; 864-5; 1120. GEMS 596-97; 600 - 01 - 04 - 05; 1120; 1470; 1538. J. WALSH, 345 STANLEY ROAD, KIRKDALE, LIVERPOOL, 20.

WANTED ALWAYS: 3d. Union Jacks, Marvels, Plucks, Boys Realms, etc. Old Series Nelson Lees, Story Paper Collectors, Vol.1; Collectors' Miscellany, Vanity Fair, prior to October 1945. Press Cuttings, Letters, M.S.S. and photographs of authors, check lists and correspondence always welcome. F. VERNON LAY, 167 WATFORD ROAD, HARROW, MIDDLESEX.

# OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

MEETING AT HUME HOUSE, SUNDAY, JUNE 20TH: Although few in numbers, it was a happy band that congregated at the above address.

After the usual opening remarks by Len and previous meeting's minutes had been read and signed, the correspondence was delivered and commented on. Among the latter was a fine letter from Bill Jardine offering his residence as a venue for the September meeting; needless to say this was received by all present with much jubilation. Treasurer's report was adopted, likewise the two librarians, Bob Blythe and Roger Jenkins. Tea and refreshments followed, members taking advantage whilst so imbibing to pay their subs.

Arthur Lawson then gave two of his celebrated readings, namely, "The Boys' Comic Journal" and "Jack Harkaway", these were received with much acclaim and before Arthur left he had promised in the near future to give another paper on "Buffalo Bill".

Eileen Whiter then set a new idea in Quizzes, i.e. "A walk round Greyfriars"; Roger Jenkins a good winner was followed by yours truly with Len in 3rd place.

Another quiz of twenty-one questions, including Greyfriars, St. Jims, St. Franks and Sexton Blake puzzlers was won by Reuben Godsave, with Len just beating Josie for second place.

A humorous incident from the Crum series, where Bunter is tested by Mr. Quelch as to whether or not he is dropping his itches was read with gusto by Roger. Not to be beaten Bob Blythe read a rib tickler from Nelson Lee No. 20 first new series entitled "Handforths Bad Bargain!" Judging by the laughter, both readings finished "honours even".

The meeting wound up by an interesting discussion on the age old topic Greyfriars versus St. Franks! Nuff Said!

Next meeting - Cherry Place, 706 Lordship Lane, Wood Green, N.22, at 4 p.m. sharp.

ROBERT H. WHITER  
Acting Secretary.

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NORTHERN SECTION, MEETING JUNE 12th: On the morning of the meeting I had a pleasant surprise - a call from Phil Warren who had ridden from Manchester to York on his motor bike. On learning I was going to Leeds, he agreed to go too. I caught an express

train and he proceeded on his bike. Not being the Coker type, he was awaiting me on my arrival.

On reaching the meeting place we found our usual room occupied by someone who had a prior right and we were accommodated in the lounge upstairs. We could have no complaint, for it was a very cosy room.

J. Breeze Bentley presided over an average attendance. For once Secretary Norman Smith was absent, unavoidably detained through domestic reasons.

We were sorry to learn that one of our most popular members, Harry Stables, was in hospital again. We sincerely hope he will be with us next month.

Gerry Allison as usual had some cheerful things to say about his activities during the month. He must be adept at wrapping parcels by now.

Followed a couple of word building games, compiled by some ingenious members.

After refreshments Gerry read some delightfully humorous chapters from "The Jape of the Term", Gem No. 1319. Ripples of laughter rang through the room.

Next Meeting, Saturday, July 10th.

H. LECKENBY,

Northern Section Correspondent.

-----ooOoo-----

VISIT TO YORK

BY HERBERT LECKENBY

The weather was perfect (as it usually is) when some of the faithful journeyed to York on June 20th. The Liverpool fellows were due at 1.42, those from Leeds at 2-15; and I muttered below my breath when the indicator board said the Liverpool train was running 27 minutes late. However, I was greeting Frank Case and Norman Pragnell at 2-10 and we arrived at the other destination just as Gerry and Mrs. Allison, Mollie Allison, Norman Smith and Bill Williamson dismounted from the Leeds bus, so British Railways were forgiven.

Shortly afterwards we were viewing York from the battlements of Clifford's Tower and also looking down the "Well of 300 Murdered Men". Then followed a trip down the Ouse. Came tea and after the "Affair of the Exchanged Raincoats" had been satisfactorily cleared up, we toured the streets of the ancient city, getting a glimpse of a Festival item in the process.

The Liverpool pair reluctantly departed at 7 o'clock and those that remained made for the city walls. An hour later I was standing alone.

It was voted by all another enjoyable event in our annals, the only regret it was all too short.

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MIDLAND SECTION MEETING - JUNE 21st, 1954: Fortunately this unseasonable midsummer does not affect our happy hours with the old books and we enjoyed a varied and interesting "Magnet" evening.

Formal business included reference to two very interesting and charming letters received by our Chairman from our distinguished visitors recently, Messrs. Down and Chapman.

Then our Chairman's wife gave us a delightful reading about "Harry Whartons amazing relation".

We look forward to hearing Mrs. Corbett continue this (as usual) skilfully constructed and well written story next month.

We spent a pleasant half hour essaying a very nice Greyfriars Quiz constructed by Mrs. Winifred Brown. Much to his own surprise the present writer proved the lucky winner; lucky certainly was the operative word.

Refreshments, a general discussion, a raffle and some swapping and trading in "Magnets" concluded yet another happy evening.

EDWARD DAVEY.

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MERSEYSIDE SECTION MEETING - 13th JUNE: In view of the weather, the attendance was quite satisfactory this evening and most of the "regulars" were present. The chairman opened proceedings with a general survey on club and section affairs, and gave a brief account of his pleasant evening at the London Meeting; he was most gratified with the hearty welcome from our Southern colleagues.

The secretary then dealt with the financial statement, etc. and gave details of the trip to York on June 20th; at least three of our members will be making the journey and we anticipate having a nice day out with our Northern friends.

After refreshments, the remainder of the evening was spent in playing a game based on "Lotto", familiar in its hobby form to the other sections, and we soon grasped the rules. Two members tied for the winning place, and two also for second place, from which may be gauged the fact that competition was very keen, and the game was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Mr. Windsor and Mrs. Webster are co-operating on a quiz game programme for the July meeting and we hope there will be a good attendance for the event, which promises to be a happy one.

FRANK CASE

# Nelson Lee Column



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By JACK WOOD

NOSTAW, 328 Stockton Lane  
York.

As I write this month's gossip, I am gaining inspiration from a two-fold source. One is the excellent work contributed by the nine entrants to our competition, and the second is that I am writing it at the top of Beachy Head, which so many of us would, with perhaps not a little justification, like to identify with Shingle Head, that promontory which played so leading a role in the St. Frank's stories. Every breath of the strong breeze which is blowing around my ears stirs a nostalgic memory of the Brocksian scene.

But before we can recapture some of those memories, I want, from the heart of the St. Frank's country to cross Bellton Wood and to pass over the Downs, past Helmford and to come to London town where, over the years, almost as much happened as in the three square miles or so of the St. Frank's country proper.

So, fellow old boys of St. Frank's and old girls of Moor View, our friends and visitors, if you will kindly make your way to the luxury coaches which await us in the street behind King's Cross Station, we will make a short tour of London before leaving by the coaches for Bannington, Bellton and St. Franks. During our London tour we shall see some of the homes associated with the developing

story of Nelson Lee.

We shan't have time, for instance, to nip out to Reggie Pitt's home at Windermere, 59 Duncan Square, the home which you will remember he saved from the machinations of Simon Raspe by playing professional soccer for Bannington Town in the guise of an Arab. Nor shall we be able to visit the comfortable little home in Leigham Court Road, Streatham, which Tom Burton's father bought for his retirement; Levi's home in Fenchurch Street; Miss Muriel Halliday's in Cricklewood (you recall how the lads and lasses, Lord Dorrimore and a convenient Dorrimore Castle legend restored her lost romance?); or even page boy Tubbs's home in Walthamstow. But there are plenty left!

With that preface then, let's go, travelling smoothly along Euston Road before turning right into that road which saw the beginning of it all - Gray's Inn Road - where we shall observe a reverential silence for a spell as we pass No. 131a, the home of Nelson Lee himself, not, of course, forgetting the one and only Nipper and the plump, homely housekeeper, Mrs. Jones. More of them later, however, in the Annual, so we'll press on with a brief thought for the house next door which later became the first Detective Academy and the nearby Turret House School premises which were to fulfil a greater, though temporary, destiny as St. Frank's in London!

Turning again then, along High Holborn we eventually run into Oxford Street, where we pass the studios of the eminent art connoisseur, Mr. Oscar Hammerton, that old friend of the Glenthorne's who came to the aid of the juniors when they wanted to help Mr. Stockdale, the College House master to raise money to provide the cure for his sister. Her specialist, Dr. James Martin, lived in Gossmore House, Wigmore Street which we leave on our left as we turn right again into Portland Place where, in the adjoining Mount Street, we find the London home of one of the principal St. Frank's denizens, the inimitable Archibald Winston Derek Glenthorne!

Across Marylebone Road, now, into the Regent's Park area where we find the houses of Tommy Watson and the St. Frank's Roscius, Horace Stevens.

We swing back south again, now, to pass in quick succession through Belgravia, Grosvenor Square, Piccadilly and Kensington areas where we discover that Mr. Brooks has planted quite a few of the leading lights. Here we can call upon Dorrie himself in Belgrave Square, though he is more likely to be abroad or at the Wayfarers' Club; Professor Cyrus Zingrave in Grosvenor Square; Sir Edward Handforth and family in Grosvenor Avenue; Mr. Justice Browne and William Napoleon Browne in Curzon Street; Mr. Justice Dorrington in Berkeley Street (he's the judge who sentenced Jim the Penman, you

know); Archie Glenthorpe at his elder brother's flat in Jermyn Street; all our old friends at the Venetia, off Piccadilly Circus, (a Teed contribution to Lecania, of course); Sir Gilbert Hart-Hyde, Bart., at Kentover House, Grosvenor Square (Augustus Hart's father); Lawrence, at 25 March Street, Kensington and Fullwood, also in Kensington.

As we bear back again south-westwards to leave London, we can drop in for a cup of tea with the charming Eileen Dare in her cosy little Chelsea flat. We won't stay long, though, as Aunt Esther is out and Capt. Billy Masters, Eileen's fiance, is giving us "dirty looks"! We can take a hint!

And so as the shadows lengthen, we board the busses again and set off for the St. Frank's country, leaving London by way of Putney, Esher, Ripley, Kingston, Guildford and Horsham. Our next stop will be the thriving town of Helmford, some 20 miles from the school, but I'll tell you what we know about Helmford in the next article in this series.

#### STOP PRESS:-

Prizewinners in our Nelson Lee competition are:-

1. Frank Unwin, Liverpool;
2. Charles Churchill, Exeter;
3. Stanley Smith, Craven Arms, Salop. Their prize money will be on the way shortly. Congratulations and many thanks too, to those who did not win but sent in good material, nevertheless.

AVAILABLE Magnets, 1932-40, few earlier, Gems 1934-40, Union Jacks 1924-30, Chums 1930, Hendersons, Nuggets 2 Vols containing 3 Tim Pippin Stories. Tit-Bits 50 Mint, Detective Weeklies, Boys Own Papers, Chatterbox, Young Folk. Early Mint Vols of Wideworlds, Buffalo Bills, complete mint run bound, 17 Nos. all issued of Jack's Paper, only set noted outside B. Museum. Young Britains, Modern Wonders, American Mags., 2nd Series and 3rd Series, Sexton Blake Libs, Adventures 1932 onwards, Rovers. All kinds of Books purchased, such as Magnets, Gems, Populars, S.O.Lib, etc. WANTED, the following Bloods, Boy Detective, Moonlight Jack, Calandar of Horrors, Night Hawks of London and Calcraft. S.A.E. Please. RONALD ROUSE, 3 ST. LEONARD'S TERRACE, GAS-HILL, NORWICH, NORFOLK.

WANTED TO PURCHASE or would pay for Loan; S.O.L. No. 5. Also D'Arcy's Cricket Week, Gem No. 124 (Reprint No. 1375) PHIL WARREN, 30 NEWTON ROAD, URMSTON, LANCs.



## POST BAG

ROGER IS NOT REPENTANT

"The Firs", Eastern Road,  
Havant, Hants. 14. 6. 54.

Dear Editor,

I am in trouble with the Lee fans again, and this time, at least, I am as innocent as the proverbial dove! I did not allege that Handforth was only a carbon copy of Coker - so Norman Pragnell and Cyril Banks have sprung to the defence of a fortress which was never beleaguered. What I did say was that Handforth was based on Coker. This is not deduction, surmise, or even imagination - it is a fact which Edwy Searles Brooks admitted the last time he attended a meeting of the London Club.

In No. 14 of the C.D. that author stated "I was a keen reader of the Gem and the Magnet from the first number of each of these papers". When St. Frank's was created, the Amalgamated Press told him to put this knowledge to good account, and base his school stories on those of St. Jim's and Greyfriars - another fact admitted in a frank and good-natured way at the same meeting.

This is not the moment to attempt a general assessment of Brooks's ability as a writer, which has already been well-defined by Nemo in No. 19 of the C.D., and S.F. Jones in No. 63. But now that the subject of Brooks's much vaunted originality has been raised, I feel I might as well have the game as well as the name, so to speak, and make a few personal observations on the matter.

Frankly, E.S. Brooks did not hesitate at times to borrow from other authors. Archie Glenethorne and William Napoleon Browne were straight out of the pages of P.G. Wodehouse, the former being cast in the image of Bertie Wooster, the latter evoking memories of the redoubtable Psmith. It might be an incident from a story like the "lift" from Dickens so carefully traced in No. 78 of the C.D. Or it might be the general plot of a story, like the one Norman Pragnell so unfortunately cites to illustrate Brooks's originality - the 1927 series about the supposed death of Church who was really only in a trance. This plot was used by Charles Hamilton in 1910 in Gems 141-2 when he described the supposed death of Lumley-Lumley who was really only in a trance - a remarkable story which made a considerable impression at the time. It is

unlikely that E.S. Brooks could have been unaware of it, since he wrote one or two St. Jim's stories himself in 1910 e.g. Gem 146. This is not the first time I have traced the parentage of a St. Frank's story back to an earlier Magnet or Gem, but this was, after all, only what his publishers had told him to do.

I am afraid that E.S. Brooks sometimes forgot the golden rule that an author should seek his inspiration from life and not from other authors. Not all the summer competitions in the Nelson Lee column will induce me to believe that the St. Frank's stories are better than those of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rockwood. But good luck to those who can - and do!

Yours faithfully,  
ROGER JENKINS.

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MORE ABOUT GWYN EVANS

37 Holders Hill Drive, Hendon,  
London, N.W.4. June 5th, 1954.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

I was much interested in the article on Gwyn Evans in your current issue but I note that your contributor made one small error and omitted one item of information!

He states that Gwyn Evans "decided in 1924 to return (from Egypt) to England, at which time he started to write stories about Sexton Blake", etc. Actually, Evans was doing that at least a year earlier and also contributing regular to my paper Pluck, in which we introduced his character 'Splash' Page. The first story was published in the issue dated April 14, 1923, and was called "The Sensation Hunter". Another appeared in the same paper, dated May 5, 1923, under the title of "The Phantom Omnibus" and with it we reproduced a portrait of the author.

The other point concerns Gwyn Evans' period of service on the staff of my department at the A.P. He was engaged as a sub-editor on The Champion, either in 1923 or 1924 (not later) but his unpunctuality and his dislike of even the most flexible discipline compelled us regretfully to terminate his employment after a very short period. He then went back to free-lancing and contained to write for my papers as well as for others in the Fleetway House. He turned out stuff like a factory, nearly all of it superlatively

clever, but he let the editors down so badly that only his immense popularity with the readers enabled him to carry on and (literally) laugh at all editorial warnings.

Everybody liked him, even though nobody dared trust him. He had a most charming personality; but I'm afraid that his best friends could not deny that he was fundamentally unstable and irresponsible. Nevertheless, his death was a tragic loss.

I met his father who, if I remember rightly, came specially from Wales on one occasion to see me and make inquiries about Gwyn, who had just then sprung one of his not infrequent "disappearances".

Kind personal regards,

Sincerely,

F. ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

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ON THAT MATTER OF THE 'GRIM REAPER'

24 English Street, Longtown,  
Cumberland. 14th June, 1954.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

J.R. Murtagh has put something into words which I have often thought about. My own collection might be worth £50, but so far I have done nothing about its future, and I know that in this I am just drifting. A fine thing it would be, wouldn't it, if we old boys eventually find ourselves looking down from heaven, or up from hell, and seeing our treasured possessions neglected, scattered and lost for ever. What about a committee of C.D. readers, with yourself as chairman, to fully consider the problem with a view to finding a satisfactory solution?

With good wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
ROBERT FARISH.

Well, what do others think?

H.L.

-----ooOoo-----

SPECIALLY WANTED for sentimental reasons:- S.B.L. No. 243 (2nd series) "The Murder of Constable Cartwright". Good price paid. V.E. COLBY, 8 BERESFORD AVENUE, BEVERLEY HILLS, N.S.W. AUSTRALIA.

THE MYSTERY OF "SCHOOL AND SPORT" SOLVED BY HERBERT LECKENBY.

Until quite recently the exact length of run of "School & Sport", that foolhardy venture of H.A. Hinton, one time editor of the "Gem" and "Magnet" was an unsolved mystery.

In the "C.D. Annual" 1947, it was stated that it ran for about twenty weeks, but in an article on the paper by Tom Hopperton which appeared in Nos. 61 and 62 of the C.D., the opinion was expressed that its life was only about half of that. In No. 64 however, Tom had a letter in which he said he had had a letter from Mr. J.R. Swan who had in his possession Nos. 25 and 27.

Well thanks to Bill Lofts, who in the past few months has spent so much of his time patiently searching the files of the British Museum, we are able to state for certain that the paper finished with No. 28, June 24th, 1922.

Thus it ran just over six months; the only surprising thing is that it lasted as long as it did, even though for the first few weeks he had the powerful help of Charles Hamilton who contributed the main story and who as Tom Hopperton revealed, never got paid a penny piece. And as Tom also stated in his article, it was evident there was little capital behind the venture and it was soon in troubled waters. Another surprising thing was why a man of H.A. Hinton's experience could dream of publishing it in the unwieldy size he did, a size which may have been popular in the early days of the 'Boys' Friend' had by 1922 been long out of favour.

By the time the paper had struggled as far as No. 24, he had evidently realised his mistake for in that number it was announced it would be of more handy size. Magnet size in fact, though of course he did not mention that paper by name. The change came too late, however, for as Bill Lofts says, only four numbers appeared in the new size.

Here are a couple of illustrations of the desperate state "School & Sport" got into; about half way through there was a change of printers - an ominous sign. Then week after week the editor tried to persuade readers to advertise their wants at 2d. word. Little revenue could have come in from this source, for it would appear that never more than a couple of such adverts appeared in any one week!

Anyway, this was the run of "School & Sport", December 17th, 1921 - June 22nd, 1922 - 28 numbers.

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