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DIGEST



MAY - 1957

Vol. 11

No. 125

MAY • 1957

Robert H. Whiter
1956

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—THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST—

Vol. 11 No. 125

Price 1s. 6d.

MAY, 1957

Editor: HERBERT LECKENBY,
12 Herbert Street,
Hull Road, York.

or

c/o YORK DUPLICATING SERVICES,
12A The Shambles, York.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

IN SACKCLOTH AND ASHES. I would like to have a heart to heart chat with you about the problems which arise in preparing our little magazine for press each month. Believe me, there are problems. First I have to get together the regular features, keeping in mind that in all fairness, the Hamilton section should have most pages seeing that its fans form by far the biggest group. But having got the fair allowance I may still be up against it for there's a danger of the Genites declaring there's too much Greyfriars, or the Rookwood devotees exclaiming "What about us?" forgetting perhaps that if I haven't got the articles I can't put them in. Then I find an article is rather too long, or not long enough.

Well, then I have articles of a topical nature which won't be much use if not got in at once, letters, adverts, my chat and some other article like Bill Lofts' interviews. Bear in mind that articles are in some cases handwritten on paper of various sizes, others done on typewriters of different makes. Its all so difficult to estimate, but having got what I think is the right amount of copy I set off hopefully for the duplicating agency.

Sometimes I find that my estimate works out surprising well, it did in March, for when all was gathered in there was just half an inch of space left. But last month, oh dear, it was quite a different pair of shoes, for one morning when I went to collect the proofs I found that the S.B.L. reviews and some letters and adverts

had been crowded out despite the fact that I could have sworn all would be safely in. Here I might point out that with duplicating, once a page is done, well, it's done. You can't do any lifting like you can do with type. The only thing to do would be to start afresh or nearly so, and needless to say we can't afford to do that, apart from the fact that it would cause delay anyway. I got a rocket or two, so I felt I must go to some length to defend myself. Then, just to show there's no hard feelings on my part, I'm giving four extra pages this month though I really shouldn't be so reckless. So in the closing days of each month, just think of me wrestling with that copy to make it fit and make allowances won't you?

* * * *

FIRST VISITOR OF THE SEASON. Harry Dowler, my longest known hobby friend, spent the Easter week-end with me. On the Sunday evening we dropped in on Stanley Smith - for a few minutes. We stayed four hours. Well you know how it is once you get going about this hobby.

Harry came for the first time fifteen years ago. He stayed ten days on that occasion and we hadn't exhausted the subject when he left for home.

Hope there'll be plenty more visitors before the summer's over.

* * * *

BILL HUBBARD ARRIVES. I have already told you that Bill Hubbard was on his way home on leave from Kenya. Well he's arrived and in a letter to me recently he said:

"I have already seen Roger Jenkins and David Harrison twice, once at their flat in Kensington and on another occasion at Simpson's in the Strand where they had dinner with me. I have paid a visit to John Shaw, with whom I had a long and very interesting chat. I have been twice in Ben Whiter's flat in Bethnal Green and on the 28th I am to have lunch with the Packman's after which I will attend my first meeting of the London O.B.B.C."

He goes on to speak of telephone talks with Eric Fayne and Bob Blythe and invites me to meet him at Lords and have lunch with him at the Tavern, and when he comes up North to the Middlesex match to meet him again.

Ah, watching cricket in the sun and chatting about our grand old hobby. What better way of spending a summer's day?

* * * *

NOT SO GOOD. I've a habit of looking on the bright side and then in sheer cussedness turning to the gloomy one, but I will put that in a few words. It's "There's still a number who haven't yet paid for the Annual, yes, here in the merry month of May, with only two months to go before the forms go out for the new one."

Well, there I'll stop, or I'll be finding that despite four extra pages something's been left out, and that would never do.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

FROM INFORMATION RECEIVED

By W. O. G. Lofts

No. 1.

A.P. ROBIN HOOD LIBRARY. This was edited by Len Pratt, who was also in charge of the "Prairie Library". The R. Hood Library ran from 15/4/1919 until 10/7/1920 a total of 56 issues. Len Pratt needs no introduction to readers as he was Editor of the Sexton Blake Library from its commencement, 1915 until November 1955, and was also in charge of the "Thriller". No author's name was given to the stories in R. Hood Library, but I can reveal that all the stories were written by R. Coufts Armour, better to know to many of us as Coufts Brisbane and Reid Whitley. Armour was a specialist in historial stuff, and really had a good knowledge of the subject generally. He was an Australian by birth, and died some years ago.

ANTHONY SKENE. Anthony Skene the creator of Zenith the Albino; one of the most popular characters to appear in the Union Jack is still alive although not writing much these days. His real name was in fact GEORGE NORMAN PHILLIPS and he used the name of Skene for reasons only known to himself. This explains why stories known to have been his work in the "Detective Weekly" were written under the name of Philip Norman; his real name reversed.

ARTHUR MACLEAN. I have had the pleasure of meeting Arthur Maclean several times recently; and the present star modern Blake author is young, unassuming, and a most interesting conversationist on all types

of subjects. When our own Herbert Leckenby met him recently on his visit to London, I am sure that he did not suspect that Maclean is a fellow Yorkshireman! Born at Middlesbrough, he has for some time lived near Tunbridge Wells, Kent; but is shortly moving to London.

COMICS. The longest run of any comic is of course "Comic Cuts" which ran from 17/5/1890 until 12/9/1953 a total of 3,006 issues. But how many readers know that the shortest run ever, comic, was entitled "Charlie Chick Paper" which came out February 1st, 1934, and ran for one issue! This was published by of all people F. W. Woolworth's, so it seems as if money cannot buy success from publishing papers. There was also in January 1899, a semi-type of comic paper published by Gilbert Dalziel which only had one issue entitled "Ally-Slopers Haporth" but this was for the more adult public, and is not recognised by some collectors as a true comic.

*CHICKS OWN" And so another of the pre-war coloured comics has finished. For the very tiny kids and to many of us our first taste of reading A.P. papers. "Chicks Own" commenced 25th September, 1920 and ran for a total of 1,605 issues finishing March 9th, 1957. The comic characters were continuing in "Playhour" said the announcement in the Editorial. This leaves only "Tiny Tots" left of the coloured pre-war comics.

G. W. WAKEFIELD. George William Wakefield as recently disclosed by myself in the C. D. was most certainly a man, and what a man! Big, thickset, he was a real giant, and in his early days was a notable amateur heavy-weight boxer. Yet despite his size, his ham like fists could depict all his characters with angelic faces. One the staff of the A.P. for many years, he drew for many many papers; best known of course to us for his portrayal of the Rookwood characters. Another very interesting point about him was his very unusual style of drawing. He used to fill in all the background of drawings first and leave the figures until last! Wakefield sad to say, died some years ago.

W. HOWARD-BAKER. As Len Packman reported in his recent interview with Mr. Baker, he was and still is a keen reader of the "Magnet" and has still in his possession the copies he bought as a boy; which are roughly 1955 until the end. Recently, whilst in conversation with him, we were discussing series of the Magnet around that period, when Mr. Baker showed expert knowledge in all the characters and stories about that time. I must confess that I thought I knew my Greyfriars

of that period, but Bill Baker caught me out on several points. In his early thirty's and heavily built, Mr. Baker has a most charming and friendly personality, and is most anxious to try and please everybody, which of course is not possible.

Blakiana...

conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

As I am pushed for space I must confine my remarks in brief. S.B.L. No 379, "Flashpoint for Treason", featuring Huxton Rymer, is quite a good story - in my opinion - and I hope we shall hear more of this old favourite of ours in the near future.

I have received two posers that not only baffle me but also beat one of the most knowledgeable Blake devotees in our Circle. The details are in this issue, and in any reader can supply the answer(s) I shall be most grateful.

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * * *

ON OUR SELECTION (PART TWO)

By E. V. Copeman

TWELVE issues of the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY to give to a stranger so that he will be instantly captured by the appeal of Sexton Blake and want to read more about him!

Easy?

Well, in Part One I've sought to pave the way by listing twelve good adventures as recorded in the UNION JACK. If these have the appeal I believe they have, it will be natural for the new reader to seek further per medium of the longer stories.

But before I give the twelve titles I've chosen, I've decided it would be wisest to infiltrate with an extra dozen to take care of the transition from pre-war UNION JACKS to post-war SEXTON BLAKE

LIBRARIES. And the most obvious choice for that dozen is a selection of stories written during the period 1939/1945.

Here, then, is my World War II choice for the newcomer, to be read immediately after the twelve titles listed in Part One of this article. (Did I say "twelve?" If the reader is sufficiently interested to follow through the series begun by the different authors, by this time he should have read many more than just one dozen UNION JACKS!)

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARIES (WORLD WAR II VINTAGE)

1. THE MYSTERY MILITIAMAN by Ladbrooke Black (S.B.L. 701)
2. THE SECRET OF THE SIEGFRIED LINE by M. B. Dix (S.B.L. 717)
3. THE MYSTERY OF THE GERMAN PRISONER by M. Frazer (S.B.L. 725)
4. THE SECRET OF THE EVACUEE by P. Urquhart (S.B.L. 731)
5. THE RIDDLE OF THE UNCENSORED LETTER by J. Hunter (S.B.L. 18)
6. THE RIDDLE OF THE CAPTURED QUISLING by A. Parsons (S.B.L. 36)
7. THE ARMY DEFAULTER'S SECRET by L. C. Douthwaite (S.B.L. 41)
8. THE SOLDIER WHO CAME BACK by G. Chester (S.B.L. 48)
9. THE MYSTERY OF SQUADRON X by W. Tyrer (S.B.L. 53)
10. PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MISSING. NOW... by G. Chester (S.B.L. 66)
11. THE SECRET OF THE MAN WHO DIED by R. Hardinge (S.B.L. 346)
12. THE CASE OF THE BRIGHTENED MEN by A. Parsons (S.B.L. 348)

There has been much criticism of the war-time Blake stories. World War II marked a definite transition period in the type of yarn presented. A certain amount of unusual frankness crept into the stories, giving them possibly an air of reality at the expense of something else. However, no matter what your personal opinion might be, the fact must be faced that pre-war and post-war Blakes are vastly different. Whether we like it or not, the Blake writers have moved with the times - with one definitely satisfying result; Blake is still with us. I have little hesitation in saying that had some change not been made he would have long since "fallen by the wayside". Sexton Blake has proved himself to be a man who can adjust himself to changed times and circumstances, yet still maintain his appeal. Modern Blake writers are realists. It is up to us to be the realists, too. And no matter how hard we try, we must accept the fact that the war has changed the way of life considerably for most of us.

Blake has endured. Maybe I sounded nostalgic in Part One when I listed stories by those favourite writers. But credit must be given too, to the hard work put in by our present-day team.

And so, let's go back to our new reader. By this time he's

read a dozen (or more, we hope) pre-war stories, and a dozen of the best wartime adventures. Now what can we lay before him to bring him right up to the present moment without lessening either his regard or respect for his new-found friend, Sexton Blake?

It isn't as easy as it seems now. Post-war Blake yarns have been criticised severely. It has been claimed that writers have made "much ado about nothing" and that page upon page of "tripe" has been written over such trivial mysteries that it actually has been an insult to Blake that he should have been involved in them at all. Worse still, it is claimed that Blake and Tinker have been altered so outrageously that at times they are hardly recognisable.

Frankly, I don't agree.

Maybe we don't hear about many of Blake's old-time opponents. The main reason is that their author-creators have died. Another reason is that, since the Blake yarns are now confined to the monthly issues (two a month) there actually isn't room for continuous and endless episodes with crooks who always seem to beat justice at the end of each adventure. In a weekly paper like the UNION JACK, long series dealing with the same characters were possible, with a monthly, such series simply aren't practical. The stories must be complete and justice must triumph. Blake must bring each case to a successful and satisfactory conclusion and there must be no loose ends, no stray rogues left to defy the law again and thumb their noses at him at a later date.

I mention all this to justify the list of titles I would now suggest to the newcomer for post-war Blake reading. I have read and enjoyed them all myself and I say with complete honesty that I hope to read and enjoy many more like them.

Here is my final dozen which, I hope, will set the seal on the work done by the other stories mentioned:

SEXTON BALE LIBRARIES (POST-WAR)

1. AT SIXTY M.P.H. by John Drummond (S.B.L. 94)
2. THE RIDDLE OF THE MISSING WARDRESS by G. E. Rochester (S.B.L. 104)
3. ON COMPASSIONATE LEAVE by L. Jackson (S.B.L. 108)
4. THE AFFAIR OF THE FRATERNISING SOLDIER by J. Hunter (S.B.L. 116)
5. THE CASE OF THE NIGHT LORRY DRIVER by L. Jackson (S.B.L. 126)
6. THE MYSTERY OF THE WOMAN OVERBOARD by W. Tyrer (S.B.L. 183)
7. THE MADMAN OF THE MARSHES by W. Jardine (S.B.L. 204)
8. RETIRED FROM THE YARD by A. Parsons (S.B.L. 235)
9. THE SECRET OF THE MOROCCAN BAZAAR by A. Parsons (S.B.L. 319)

10. THE TEDDY-BOY MYSTERY by J. Drummond (S.B.L. 334)
11. IT HAPPENED IN HAMBURG by W. Howard Baker (S.B.L. 352)
12. DANGER AHEAD by Peter Saxon (S.B.L. 353)

I would draw attention to the fact the I haven't worried whether the same author has been included more than once, but rather have I sought to give a variety of yarns. To the list could be added many of Rex Hardinge's African stories and Anthony Parsons' Indian yarns, most of which, in my humble opinion, are very good.

Maybe it will be felt that my "sins of omission" are far greater than my "signs of commission". I can only say that I am endeavouring to suggest a "balanced diet" for a "new Blake convert."

If, after reading any of the stories I have mentioned, we can win just one more loyal reader I will be more than happy.

* * * *

CAN ANYONE SUPPLY THE ANSWER?

Poser Number One.

Probably about the period 1920 - 1925. The opening chapter read something like this: "George Marsden Plummer dropped his pick and set off at a steady lope through the gathering mist." This is probably not word perfect but the phrase "set off at a steady lope" may identify it.

Poser Number Two.

A young man calls on Blake. He is injured (believed to facially) and tells the following fantastic story: He is walking through the streets of London and sees a man carrying what he takes to be a coconut. (The young fellow has defective eyesight). What the man is really carrying is a severed head of dripping blood. The head carrier, who is a delightful (?) mad professor, hires the young man on account of his strong nerves, takes him to his country lab, and imprisons him therein until he manages to escape to seek out Blake. The professor manufactures waxen forms indistinguishable from human flesh and blood.

If any reader can say in which periodical these yarns appeared and can supply title/author, I should be very much obliged. J.P.

* * * * *

MY SELECTION

By Walter Fleming

It is with some trepidation that I pen the following.

Although I have been a reader of Blake for the last twenty years or so, I am by no means an expert in Blake lore; in fact, my reading - through no fault of my own - has been rather intermittent.

I could probably write with a little more authority on Nelson Lee and St. Frank's, but having read Eric Copeman's excellent article "On Our Selection." I felt I would like to air my own choice. I cannot, unfortunately, pin-point every individual title as my memory is not that good, but there were several series that still stand out in my mind.

So here goes:

1. I cannot remember anything better than the "Criminals Confederation" A brilliant series. Unluckily, I have not read all the stories. The character most firmly impressed on my mind is that of Dirk Dolland - "The Bat".
2. "The Seven Sons of Cynos". (Paul Cynos series). Another very enjoyable series. A particular episode was brought to my mind by a recent experiment on B.B.C. Television, that of the breaking of glass by sound vibrations.
3. (? title). An excellent example of E. S. Brooks writings. Full of action and thrills. Sir Henry Fairfax, assistant Commissioner, is murdered by American Gurmon and Blake takes over his job, with the assistance of Waldo.
4. "The Men Who Were Dead". A rather bizarre series by Gwyn Evans, with plenty of suspense. The first story in this series was set in Wales and the background was very well sketched in.
5. The Proud "Tram" series. This was a very unusual series enhanced for me by the fact that E. S. Brooks, my favourite author was the winner.
6. "Seven Keys to Bluebeard". Another fine series by Gwyn Evans, detailing Blake's adventures at home and overseas in search of the lost seven keys. Plenty of action.

Well, there they are. The six series that have stood the test of time in my mind, and I would very much like to read them all again. I am sure that I would enjoy them just as much. Although E. S. Brooks was my favourite writer in the Blake saga, Gwyn Evans ran him a very close second, and Evans more than any other writer (always excepting Dickens) will always be associated in my mind with Christmas. His stories of the Festive Season were really outstanding.

HOW'S YOUR MEMORY (No. 5) by E. V. Copeman.

The following extract comes from a story which appeared in the DETECTIVE WEEKLY. The clues are: (1) It was written by a man whose name ranks with the best of the authors of Blake stories. (2) The story was reprinted elsewhere just over seven years later. Now see if you can identify the story and writer.

The phone bell shrilled suddenly and Tinker crossed over to the instrument and lifted the receiver.

"Hullo. Yes" he answered.

"It's Harker of the Yard speaking, Couttys! He's all excited, and wants to talk to you at once."

Coutts grunted.

Tinker handed the receiver to the inspector.

"Yes, what is it?" he demanded.

"There's another of 'em gone!" twanged the voice of his colleague, Harker, over the wires.

"Another of them?" echoed Coutts blankly. Who is it this time?"

"Otto Krimm", came the reply. "You know, Krimm the financier. Last see two nights ago. Not a darned clue to go on."

Coutts stifled an oath.

"O.K. Harker!" he snapped. "I'll look into it. Goodbye!"

He hung up the receiver and turned to Blake.

"If this sort of things happens much oftener, I'll be the next on the disappearing list", he remarked.

* * * * *

Answer to Teaser No. 4 (April 1957 C.D.)

The author of the story quoted in Teaser No. 4 was PETER SAXON, and the title was DANGER AHEAD, which appeared in SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY No. 353 published in February, 1956. As is now known, "Peter Saxon" is a pseudonym for W. Howard Baker, prolific writer and present editor of S.B.L.

Baker was responsible for the introduction of Miss Paula Dane and the installation of a "new Blake" in "new quarters" at Berkeley Square. Nevertheless, despite all this, "Danger Ahead" written before the change-over, was a good story.

JACK NORTH'S HAYGARTHBy W. H. Broster

John Nix Pentelow (Jack North) wrote his best yarns of school life in the early 1900s, in the days before electric lights and motor cars, when England was at the top in everything, games especially. All through his tales you sense the pride in being English, though some of his very best character came from other countries and other climes. Sport predominates and no other author can surely surpass his descriptions of cricket and football matches. So true to life were these that you imagine yourself on the field taking part. Equally good were his glimpses into the school life and he covered all the school in his stories, the 'head', the masters, the boys from prefects down to the youngest fag - and even the domestic staff had a share of the limelight. Pentelows' characters grew up and you saw the effect of school life on a boys character as you lived with him from his early days in the lower school till he finished as a prefect. In all this was interwoven a sentimental touch which other authors ignore and which was never over-done. Though he commenced with yarns of Wycliffe School which lasted two or three years he perhaps surpassed himself with the series introducing Haygarth and the Four Macs. Haygarth was a typical English public school in one of the South east counties. As the name suggests it lay on the banks of the River Hay, a few miles from Waybourne and Felthorpe. It was not far from the old world village of Haygarth which lies on the edge of Wenvoe Moor and in the shadow of the beautiful Wyrrel Hills.

Typical countryside for a typical English School.

The school itself, a very old and charming building, consisted of four houses each presided over by a housemaster whose wife or sister in most cases acted as matron or house-dame. These houses, named North, East, South and West, each consisted of six dormitories which in turn took the name of a town each accordingly. Thus West House, which incidently was the most prominent in the stories, consisted of Bristol, Exeter, Bath, Plymouth, Bodmin and Barnstaple, while such as Southampton and Brighton lay in South House, Newcastle and Sunderland in North, Cambridge, Lowestoft and Norwich in East and so on. Anything from twelve to twenty boys of different ages from fifth formers down to second formers slept in these rooms. The sixth had their own study-bedrooms. The school itself was divided into Upper School, the Sixth and Fifth, the Middle School which comprised the Remove and Fourth Forms while the Third and Second

naturally were the Lower School. Each House had its own four prefects, one of which as house-captain and these were the only seniors allowed to punish with cane or impositions. Cups for cricket, footer, rowing and athletics were up for competition and there were "House" matches and "Dormitory" matches for these and most of the Haygarth stories centre round the rivalry between houses and dormitories. The main character in the series was Jimmy Mackworth, leader of the Four Macs who occupy Study No. 5 in the West House, that is in the early days in the Fourth. Later we find Jimmy Mac Captain of Haygarth with a young cousin in the fourth and remarkably like him in looks and temperament as he was in the same form. In the early days of Haygarth the rivals of the Four Macs were Barry and Co. in the next study. These last four were a fascinating quartette of character studies. Dick Barry, the leader, being a rough speaking burly type, inclined in those early days to be a trifle brutal always at loggerheads with Jimmy Mac. Later as they became firm friends his character mellowed and he became perhaps second only to his former rival in popularity at Haygarth. Similar to him in ways and build was Clavering, he of the slow brain but so very frank of speech. Then Walter William Rooke called "Crow", a fellow full of fun and mischief but one of the very best withal.

Completing the brotherhood was "Poet" Mandeville. His nickname gives a good indication of his character but he was physically the weakling of the clan. A proud sensitive chap who strove hard against his lack of bodily strength and made up in many ways. Midway through the series covering the Haygarth Saga, Pentelow introduced another grand character. This way Claude Ferringe who was the exact double of Jimmy Mack, in looks only, mind you. This likeness to the hero provided the theme to many a rattling good yarn as may be imagined. Used for nefarious purposes at the onset when he was up against Jimmy but later as they grew up and became like brothers, this astonishing likeness served its own ends. Another chum of the four Macs was Bob Bates who certainly was a rough diamond at the start but who like many of the rest, under the influence of Jimmy Mackworth, became a stalwart of Haygarth. Perhaps before we leave this little band of "ten" we had better elaborate on the "Four Macs". Jimmy the leader, a typical English boy, with all the mischievous faults of such but with wonder powers of leadership and the ability to turn enemies into friends, we have already described. There was the Scotch lad Duncan McLeod, sturdy and strong and as canny as any that came from across the border. Full of his native fun and high spirits was Terry

McKeown from the "Green Isle" A worthy representative of a fine fighting race. Completing the four was Machliwalla Khan. What a wonderful character study was this dark skinned boy from far off India. As steady as Duncan, as dashing as Jimmy, the "Khan" supplied the brains in the little band. He had the power of mesmerism too and used it to good purposes but never unfairly. There are many good characters at Haygarth and plenty of bad ones. But Haygarth like Wycliffe was a fighting school and differences were soon settled. Yes, Haygarth was a fighting school and battles between the boys with gloves and with the "raw 'uns" were a star feature of the yarns. Perhaps some may say Pentelow overdid the fighting in his stories. Maybe, but it was a fighting age and we were a fighting nation. There you have the main personnel. The Boys. But great consideration was given to the portrayal of the masters. A great Headmaster on the Arnold pattern was the Reverend Arthur Dalton. These were real men and worthy representatives of a wonderful and invaluable profession. The stories of Haygarth give you everything you want, sport in most of its popular branches, adventure, schoolboy pranks, just enough of the feminine instinct to avoid being termed "sloppy", all realistic stuff and very true to life. But if you want fat boys who are so unnatural they could not really exist, freak masters and impossible situations and the plots and themes of the stories repeating themselves and copying one another time and time again, don't read Pentelow's school stories. No, if you come across any just send them on to us, the few who can appreciate a really good author.

WANTED: Boys' Friend Libraries, 1st series. No. 525. The Sports of St. Clives and nos. 511, 518, 519.

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HAMILTONIANA

compiled by Herbert Leckenby

Last month I referred to an article which appeared in an Australian paper, actually The Daily Telegraph. It ran to no less than four columns with three illustrations and a banner heading right across the four columns, "I say you Bounders! Remember Old Squiff?" I have been obliged to cut it considerably; it doesn't suffer thereby however, for the paragraphs I have left out dealt mainly with what George Orwell said and we are all familiar with that by now.

The first paragraph is indeed illuminating. Mr. Monson, like most of his colleagues makes a few errors: he makes St. Jim's junior to Greyfriars for instance, but he can be forgiven for that.

As for that incident in London, well I wonder. Could be of course, but it's best not to start guessing as to whom it might have been. There's one small point, I haven't had any experience of bailiffs, I'm pleased to say, but I was under the impression that they had to leave the debtor his bed. Anyway here it is.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1957

The flood of answers pouring into the Daily Telegraph in reply to Jim Macdougall's request for the identity of the Cornstalk, the Australian schoolboy in Frank Richards' well-loved tales of Greyfriars School, shows the terrific hold these yarns had on a generation now grown to manhood.

Most of the replies came from men who were relying on the memory of stories they read between 1907 and 1940, when the Magnet, the boys' paper which dealt with the doings of the heroes of Greyfriars, was coming out each week.

Some were confused with their recollection of another Australian schoolboy, Kangaroo, or Harry Noble, who attended the rival school of St. Jim's, immortalised in a companion paper, The Gem, written by Martin Clifford.

However, the majority of old readers of these schoolboy classics were not in doubt.

They identified the Cornstalk as Samson Quincey Iffley Field, or Squiff, of the Greyfriars Remove, or Lower Fourth Form.

Quite a few women, most of whom said they read the Magnets and

Gems after their brothers had finished with them, also sent in the correct answer.

I was one of the legion of schoolboys throughout the world who read every issue of those gripping schoolboy epics, each of which ran to about 15,000 words.

We read them uncritically and loved them. We were genuinely sorry when they became casualties of World War II and ceased publication.

Though the Magnet and Gem died, the schoolboy characters of Greyfriars, whose deed were enchronicled in the Magnet - Harry Wharton and Co., the fat, egregious ass, Billy Bunter, and all the rest - today live on in a series of books, still being written by their old chronicler, Frank Richards.

In these books Billy Bunter has become the central figure. He is now an immortal.

He is a character in London television shows, has a newspaper strip cartoon devoted to his doings, and is discussed as if he were a living person by such groups of booklovers as the London Old Boys' Book Club.

Happily too, Martin Clifford still writes of Tom Merry and Co., and the other stalwarts of St. Jim's.

And a third group of schoolboy heroes, Jimmy Silver and his mates of Rockwood School, whose exploits were once described each week by Owen Conquest in the now defunct Penny Popular, also live in book form.

* * *

We who read all three boys' papers - The Gem, Magnet, Penny Popular - never doubted that Frank Richards, Martin Clifford and Owen Conquest really existed.

In London in 1934 I was sitting in a miserable tenement just behind Fleet Street with a cadaverous-looking young hack-writer who had just laid down a script which he said was a story of St. Jim's for the Gem.

He told me, in the presence of his wife, that he had written several of them - at £20 a time. I didn't get a chance to look closely at the manuscript, as just then two bailiffs marched into the room and snatched up the only three items of furniture in the place - the table and chair my friend was working at, and the rickety old bed the wife and I were sitting on.

Hamilton is one of the most prolific writers who ever lived and most critics accept that he almost certainly wrote as least 80 per cent

of the stories which appeared under his various pen names.

He turned out all his stories at the rate of 50 words a minute, and he credited with having spun 70 million words about his school-boy and schoolgirl creations.

He first started writing about Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry and the rest of the Famous Five at Greyfriars in 1907, and none of them aged a year as his readers' schooldays rolled by.

The stories of St. Jim's started in 1908, and none of the boys in that school aged either.

Today, half a century later Billy Bunter and his cronies are still in their same old forms, still being whacked by their master, Mr. Quelch, and still speaking in the schoolboy jargon of the beginning of the century.

Boys who smoke behind the Gym. are still howling cads, Horace Coker is as big a bully as ever, Bob Cherry is still bursting into a room, shouting: "Hullo, Hullo, Hullo!", and Billy Bunter is still trying to cadge tarts from Mrs. Mumble in the tuckshop on the promise of paying when a mythical postal note for a fiver turns up in the delayed post.

Goaling, the Greyfriars school porter, sits at his lodge gate grunting, as of old: "Wot I sez is this 'ere. I don't want none of you gentlemen's larks".

Skimmer, who doesn't play football or cricket, is as big a rotter as ever, and Herbert Vernon-Smith still a cheery bounder. Mossoo, the French master, whose English is atrocious, is still the butt of his pupils.

We readers knew every boy in St. Jim's and Greyfriars, and, perhaps, to a lesser degree, every boy at Rookwood, intimately.

Their escapades and adventures held us enthralled to the last sentence in every story.

The author of these "rattling good yarns," a confirmed bachelor, today works in his little Kent cottage, where he lives with only his cat for company. He wears a silk skullcap as he writes.

His face is rather stern and unsmiling. He looks a little like the portraits of the form-master of the Remove, Mr. Quelch.

He has never moved out of the early 1900's ... and that is the way his young - and old - readers want it.

Noted English writers, including critics of the London Times Educational Supplement, and the Manchester Guardian, have placed him high among the classic authors of juvenile literature.

And the millions of boys and girls he has enthralled for 50 years

certainly approve that judgment.

Even Australian readers do not think it is time Cornstalk came home and learned to surf.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL. No. 2.

(In this new series, Eric Fayne discusses certain topics of interest to students of the Hamilton papers. He gives his own opinion superficially, and invites you to write to him with your views on the subject. He will summarise readers' letters on the topic in a future C.D.)

No. 2. THE CLIFF HOUSE GIRLS.

The Gem certainly had a very valuable characters in Cousin Ethel, but she made only rare appearances and, of course, played her part solo. Were the Greyfriars stories strengthened or weakened by the introduction of the Cliff House girls? Did Frank Richards make his girl characters convincing?

Personal taste largely guides one in making a superficial answer to these questions. Generally speaking, I myself was never very keen on the stories which featured the Cliff House Girls, and I somehow feel that Frank Richards was not seen at his best when he was writing of those young ladies. At times, the episodes in which they played a part seemed to be stilted and artificial.

It is, of course, obvious that there was no need to make any of the girls outstanding character studies; they played minor supporting roles, of necessity, and only the lightest sketch of them was needed. An exception to this is found in the Sahara series of the Twenties, which in my opinion, was the very best to feature the feminine element. In these stories, character was much more deeply explored, when the gentle Majorie showed resolution and strength, while the more dominant Clara cracked under the strain.

Though I preferred my Greyfriars story without the girls playing a part, I must admit that I think the general plan was strengthened by having Cliff House in the back-ground. I welcomed them in small doses.

It's just my point of view. What's yours?

* * *

Do You Remember?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 23 - Gems. Nos. 1069-1072 - The Victor Cleeve Series

Masters' Nephews were on the whole an unprepossessing lot. The story of Mr. Ratcliffe's nephew now seems only a shadowy memory of an unpleasant boy who was worthy of his uncle. The more recent tale of Mr. Hacker's nephew was recounted in a curiously intermittent series which was well constructed but not particularly inspired. Mr. Manders' nephew Marcus was the most odious and memorable of them all: he featured in a series which was almost Grand Guignol in its presentation to the housemaster of the Modern Side at Rockwood. Varied as these Series were, however, none could hold a candle to the tale of Victor Cleeve, nephew of Mr. Railton, the boy who hated St. Jim's.

In his fine Annual article "Red, White and Blue", Eric Fayne lists this series as one of the three best Gem series of the period. It is possible that some collectors, when faced with the rich store of series to be found in this era, might think of three series they would cherish more than the Victor Cleeve Series. But no-one would quarrel with Eric's apt summing-up: "The stories contained fascinating cricket sequences, natural dialogue, superb character painting, tense situations, working up to a grand climax."

Victor Cleeve had left his former school under a cloud, and had obtained a place at St. Jim's only through the influence of his Uncle. He hesitated to become friendly with the others for fear of being dropped if the story of the theft at his old school should become known. In a delightful sequence Cardew told him that if he were expelled and sent to a new school he would act in precisely the opposite manner to Cleeve in order not to give grounds for suspicion. The moral was not lost on Cleeve, but he had little time left, and the story drew to a grand conclusion when it became known that the stolen money was being passed near St. Jim's. He eventually returned to his old school in a final blaze of glory, having won the Greyfriars and Rockwood matches for St. Jim's.

What is the secret of the fascination of the Victor Cleeve series? The answer must surely lie in its cohesion. It stuck almost entirely to the old characters - Tom Merry and Co. and Jack Blake and Co. The story was told tautly and concisely in only four numbers, and not a word was superfluous, not a note rang false. Above all, looked at from a distance of time, the series may be regarded as the Indian Summer of the Gem, the last series which Charles Hamilton wrote for the

coloured covers. It is no wonder that to the lover of St. Jim's this series really defies criticism.

* * *

"COLLECTOR'S DIGEST" PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 5

Set by Eric Fayne



This crossword puzzle is for amusement only, but to add to the interest a postal-order for 5/- will be forwarded to the sender of the first correct solution received by the Editor. If you do not wish to cut your copy of the C.D., make a careful copy of the square.

* * *

CLUES

ACROSS: 1, Barbara and Dick are not related. 4, A letter to this member of the Famous Five would make him bluster. Why? 7, Bunter's score in the double-innings match. 8, This friend

of Sexton Blake might be a giant ranger to a T. (2 words: 7 and 5) 12, Damp the fibre in the turrent-room. 13, Bunter needs a liberal one to tide over. 14, Brought back from China, perhaps. 17, Merely Dicky Nugent. (2 words: 4 and 7). 19, This description of Jimmy Silver and Co makes them sound short of furniture. 22, It melts in Bunter's mouth. 23, Tender concerning the New House? Possibly. 25, Doorsteps and dishwater in hall? 26, With 30 down, it's timber. 27, Described Bunter, of course, but it would be terrible for the Terrible Three. (2 words: 2 and 7). 31, Term that he been applied to Fishy. 32, Where the sting is.

DOWN: 1, A Star writer for the C.D. Annual (2 words: 5 and 7). 2, On whom does Miss Fawcett dote, my master? (2 words: 7 and 5). 3, Herbert might ride to York. 4, Mr. Peckover was his Headmaster. 5, Solitary

form of Christmas in France. 6, Game of numbers. 9, The week that 18 was continued. 10, Arrange rice, little by little. 11, The kind of shelter where Mr. Quelch spent one Christmas. (2 words: 3 and 4). 15, "Billy Bunter's Bolt". 16, Wingate's home is there on the Dee. 18, Martin Clifford wrote one and called it "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays." 20, Fatty Wynn takes this in goal, at a crisis. 21, Do this with your son's name at Greyfriars. 24, Where Da Costa came from. 28, Yaroooh! 29, The heart of 24, or the like. 30, see 26.

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MAGNET TITLES (continued from 124)

1651. Condemned without Evidence; 1652. Grunter of Greyhurst; 1653. The Bounder's Dupe; 1654. The Black Prince of Greyfriars; 1655. The Tuck Hoarders; 1656. Run Out of Greyfriars; 1657. The Remove Detectives; 1658. The Wanderer's Return; 1659. Billy Bunter's Bargain; 1660. The Man in the Mask; 1661. The Phantom of the Moat House; 1662. The May of Mystery; 1663. The boy from Baker Street; 1664. The Hooded Man; 1665. Smith's Secret Weapon; 1666. The Bounder on the Trail; 1667. Six on the Warpath; 1668. The Japer of Greyfriars; 1669. The Secret of the Dug-Out; 1670. The Thief in the Night; 1671. A Black-out Blunder; 1672. The Eleventh Hour; 1673. Vernon-Smith's Last Fling; 1674. Bounder and Slacker; 1675. The Bounder's Triumph; 1676. Sir William's Double; 1677. The Mystery Man of Eastcliffe Lodge; 1678. The Unseen Enemy; 1679. Billy Bunter's Hair-Raid; 1680. The Man from Germany; 1681. The Spy of the Gestapo; 1682. The Nazi Spy's Secret; 1683. The Shadow of the Sack.
(Note: When the MAGNET ceased publication on the 18th May, 1940, owing to paper shortage the following four stories which had been written genuinely by Frank Richards, were never published:-
1684. The Battle of the Beaks; 1685. Bandy Bunter; 1686. What Happened to Hacker? 1687. The Hidden Hand.)

I will exchange 'pink' Union Jacks or pay cash for any of the following Union Jacks: 113, 114, 116, 123, 124, 128, 129, 151, 184, 185, 186, 188, 189, 193, 203, 358, 506, 508, 510, 514, 515, 516, 517, 520, 521, 524, 527, 533, 563, 572, 575, 585, 586, 588, 592, 612, 615, 620, 649, 653, 657, 659, 662, 666, 667, 668, 670, 675, 676, 677, 679, 680, 682, 684, 687, 689, 691, 693, 695, 703, 704, 709, 711, 717, 720, 721, 725, 727, 732, 733, 740, 838, MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E. 22.

S.B.L. REVIEWSby Walter WebbAPRIL 1957Deadline for Danger (No. 380)Arthur Maclean.

A strangely assorted bunch of crooks striving by means of blackmail, murder, and every strategy known to crime, to get their greedy talons on a necklace of black pearls of immense value precipitates Blake into what may prove to be his most exciting case of 1957. Leaving Plymouth in the Bentley for a rendezvous in Torquay in darkness, Blake loses his way amongst the narrow, twisting, South Devonshire lanes, and finds himself heading for Ashburton. In the neighbourhood of Buckfastleigh, the car becomes fast embedded in a ditch, and Blake's first thought is to get to a telephone. This leads him to his fateful meeting with the lovely Venay Camplett, his introduction to a cunning, unscrupulous crook named Howard Storey, and the suave, calculating husband of Venay, Louis Camplett. Other characters quickly insinuate themselves. On stage a beautiful Chinese girl named Ruby Yen; Vivian Kane, jewel thief and pearl buyer; Finch, a dope addict. When Ruby commissions him to get the pearls, stating that they are really hers since they belonged to her father who was murdered in defending his property, Blake pretends to believe her story. Aided by Tinker and Nick Reuter, another assistant, he goes into action, but it's the brutal slaying of Venay which really rouses Blake into implacable, volcanic mobility, and his relentless pursuit and denunciation of the murderer and the recovery of the pearls makes a satisfying climax to an extraordinary well-written and gripping novel.

Rating.....Very good

* * *

Flashpoint for Treason (No. 379)Desmond Reid.

Desmond Reid is going to find favour amongst many old-timers with this story, for not only has he once again brought Tinker shoulder-to-shoulder with Blake, as in the past, but has re-introduced an old favourite character as well. Sexton Blake and Tinker versus Huxton Rymer in Australia! It reads like old times, and if one does experience a pang of disappointment it is in the fact that Mary Trent, Rymer's attractive partner in many a past exploit, is not featured. Offered the sum of fifty thousand pounds by the Syndicate (that

(international confederation of criminals, we first heard of in S.B.L. No. 374) for Commonwealth rocket secrets, Rymer breaks into the closely guarded Woomera Rocket Range, in the research planning offices of which he photographed plans, reports and details of everything likely to be of value to the Syndicate. In the process he kills Sir Francis Sanders, chief research scintist of Woomera. From this moment he finds himself on the run, with his old enemies, Blake and Tinker in hot pursuit. Partnered by a particularly nauseating crook, a sadist, of the unusual name of Nucky Bester, Rymer escapes by plane with Blake and Tinker bound hand and foot aboard. The crooks bale out leaving the pilot dead across the controls and the Baker Street pair doomed to certain death as the plane dives earthward. How they escape and retrieve the plans makes an exciting climax.

Rating.....Very good

* * * * *

MAY 1957

Special Edition - Murder (No. 381)

Arthur Kent

Sir Henry Proal was a genius whose unlimited capabilities gained him success and fame as a newspaper owner. This was reflected in the fact that the chain of newspapers he controlled enjoyed both a wide and healthy circulation. Entirely devoid of the better of human feelings - cold ruthless and without pity. Proal, nevertheless, commanded both fear and respect amongst his employees. Sexton Blake's feelings were quite different, he hated Proal intensely, and when two of the latter's employees, one Daphne Drew, who ran the problem page, and Percy Lennox-Craw, his secretary, were found murdered and suspicion fell upon Proal, his detective was secretly pleased at the opportunity of strengthening those suspicions into something more concrete. The brutal killing of Fay Coleman, a reporter on a rival newspaper, also had the finger of suspicion pointing in Proal's direction. But was Proal, who had good reasons for exterminating the three, the guilty man? It could equally have been any of several members of Proal's staff, Lawronce Craddock, editor of the Sunday Sentinel for example; Charles Kane, a reporter and one-time fighter ace in the R.A.F.; Gerald Faber, an aspiring editor; Sylvania Marlon, society reporter. Arthur Kent whose work can occasionally be seen in the pages of Tit-bits, has written a novel of grip and suspense, given Blake a good showing and introduced that old favourite, Coutts of the Yard. Splash Kirby is also featured. I have no hesitation in

recommending this one.

Rating..... Very good.

* * *

Vacation with Fear (No. 382)

Jack Trevor Story.

The scene - Madrid's famous art gallery, the Prado.

The players - A group of English tourists, members of the Sunshine Tours (London) Ltd. Meet Harry Parnell, a young drummer and singer; Tony, his friend, a musician; George Bannister, a bridge designer, the three most important members of the party. Now over to Judy Anderson, an attractive redhead, and her blonde friend, Edith Butt, American teenagers on holiday, sightseeing in Spain. Edith taking a film of a posing Judy with a small cine camera went unheeding about her task as five bandits dressed in the military uniform of the Guardia Nacionala held up the surprised gathering and proceeded to remove an El Greco painting from its frame. Still Edith continued to film. When, later, realisation dawned on the bandits that their crime could be brought home to them on the showing of the film, they kidnapped the girls in an effort to extract it from them. But various tortures and indignities to which they subjected the girls proved of no avail to the bandits - the film was in the possession of Parnell and his friend. Blake and Tinker, working on behalf of Scotland Yard made belated appearances, their objective being Bannister, who was wanted on a charge of poisoning his wife in England. But what intrigued Blake about the affair was that the robbery was undoubtedly the work of one of the numerous tentacles of that gigantic underground crime organisation known as the Syndicate (see S.B.L. Reviews Nos. 374 and 379). Not typical Story, and readers who like Blake featured prominently are likely to be disappointed.

Rating..... Good

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(Judging by other reports the story with Huxton Rymer was very well liked. It will be very interesting to see what the Australian H.L.)

WANTED: Boys Friend Libraries, 1st Series, No. 525, The Sports of St. Clive's and Nos. 511, 518, 519.

FRED GRIFFIN, 2558 GRAND CONCOURSE, BRONX, 58, NEW YORK, U.S.A.

MORE SACKCLOTH AND ASHES. An air-letter just received from Eric Copeman points out that the article "First Thoughts on the School Friend" which appeared last month was written by Sydney Smyth and not by him. Fortunately it arrived just in time for me to offer my sincere apologies to Syd, for this unfortunate error. The article had got attached to some of Eric's articles and as it was done on a similar typewriter, on the same sized paper and hadn't Syd's name on it, well it happened. I'm all the more sorry because Syd sent it quite a long time ago and had been very patient. Of a truth I shan't forget the April 1957 C.D. in a hurry. H. L.

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NELSON LEE COLUMN

by JACK WOOD

Nostaw, 328 Stockton Lane, York.

Phone: 25795

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Recent controversy about the authorship of several stories about the chums of St. Frank's has focussed attention on the period covering the final months of 1920 and the early months of 1921, so much that I thought it might be well worth looking more closely at what was going on at that important era just after the first World War in relation to the Nelson Lee story.

First then, let us look at the NELSON LEE LIBRARY itself. Still in the original small series, the stories were flowing from Edwy Searles Brook's pen in his best style. Towards the end of the summer, Brooks had ended his magnificent series about the Amazon to which the Col. Fawcett story had lent additional interest, and in which young Stanley Verrigan of the Ancient House Third form was reunited with his lost explorer father, Col. Verrigan.

We then went on to adventures nearer home - the arrival of Dick Goodwin, the inventor of the Remove; the coming of Levi and his building of a new cinema at Bannington; the interwoven stories of boxer Ernest Lawrence and of the Swale-Fox twins; and then the holiday series in Mordania with its thrilling battles against the Tagossa.

That covers the period from June, 1920 to May, 1921.

In the NUGGET LIBRARY which appeared at the rate of two volumes a month there were appearing stories of several kinds. Among them were Nelson Lee and Nipper detective stories written by Andrew Murray and bringing in such famous characters as the Hon. John Lawless, Kew and Carlac, and Trouble Nantucket.

There were also reprints of St. Frank's stories by Brooks which had originally appeared in the Boys' Realm. They included the Master of the Remove (the story of the actor-master who took the place of Mr. Crowell during his illness), the Honour of St. Frank's (in which Edgar Fenton, school captain played a leading role), and the stories of the coming of Augustus Hart and Timothy Tucker.

In July, 1920, there appeared the first issue of the new weekly, THE NUGGET WEEKLY, which combined the former Prairie, Detective and Robin Hood Libraries, and retained their best features. There were stories of Sexton Blake, Robin Hood, Buffalo Bill and Nelson Lee and Nipper, among many others. Arthur Jones, Harry Lane, Fred Bonnett and Leonard Shields were leading artists.

The earliest issue included a story called the Honour of St. Frank's. It was described in the advertisement in the N.L.L. as "a New serial by the author of the stories in the Nelson Lee Library." I haven't read it, so I don't know if it's the same yarn as the monthly story with the same title. The odd thing is that the weekly story is advertised in July; the monthly story came out in October, which seems unduly quickly for a reprint, however good a story. The advertisement in the Nelson Lee Library is edged by sketches of St. Frank's and of Edgar Fenton, so it would appear to be the same story.

It was the first of 13 St. Frank's reprints in the Nugget Library, and all the rest originated in the Boys' Realm, of which more later.

It was, apparently, the only St. Frank's story in the NUGGET WEEKLY, for immediately following it came an entirely new and original series of stories of Nelson Lee's fight against the League of the Green Triangle, Professor Zingrave and Jim the Perman. This was the series in which Leo, Nipper, Lord Derrimore, Zingrave and the Green Triangle clashed eventually in a subterranean wonderland in Antarctica. With Leo and his friends were Raymond Gray, inventor of the Flying Fish, a new aeroplane - submarine, and his rescued nephew, Major John Barrance.

This predecessor to the later New Anglia series in the N.L.L. was later reprinted in three issues of the Boys' Friend Library in 1923.

So far as the BOYS' REALM was concerned, there were at this period a number of series, all of which were reprinted in the monthly

NUGGET LIBRARY. They range from The Outsider, the story of Langley-Moseyn and his chums, to Nipper's Circus Clum. I haven't read all of these, but Jack Murtagh's survey of the Nugget Library reprints in the 1953 C.D. Annual for 1953 details the subject matter of the stories. On those I have read, and bearing in mind the Nugget reprints and my quotation recently of the Boys' Realm editor's comments on later stories by other writers than Mr. Brooks, I think we would be safe in assuming that only Brooks' yarns were honoured by a reprint.

That is my own deduction, anyway, and I shall await with interest the "jury's" verdict

OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

LONDON SECTION

A far cry from Kenya to East Dulwich, but Bill Hubbard and Roger Stacey, who had several talks about the old books in the former place now met at Len Packman's hospitable abode to renew the conversation. Another very welcome member attending for the first time was Frank Lambe who came along with his sister, Miss Millicent Lyle. Once again I have to state that it was a very happy and enjoyable meeting, the informal discussions were delightful.

Bob Whiter's reading from "Magnet" 1168, "Bunter the Ink Splasher" was well received and caused much laughter. The listeners were advised to listen carefully as a quiz would be held immediately after the reading. Roger Stacey, Hylton Flatman and Laurie Sutton were the three best listeners as they occupied first place. In fourth place were the following:- Miss Lyle, John Addison, Roger Jenkins and Len Packman. Another reading was the one by Bob Blythe dealing with most of the St. Frank's Rebellions. Then John Addison gave us a very good account of "The History of Greyfriars", how the old abbey first came into being. He shewed a drawing of it and both his and Bob Blythe's talks were greatly appreciated.

Finally on Bob Blythe's suggestion we had one of the good old eliminator competitions. The key word was Talbot. A triple tie here as Bob Whiter, Len Packman and Bob Blythe were in the first place and trailing along in fourth place was Roger Jenkins. A very fine

gathering with an excellent feed and as hitherto stated delightful informal discussions.

Next meeting provisionally fixed for Wood Green on Sunday, May 19th.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

* * *

NORTHERN SECTION MEETING, APRIL 13th, 1957

How quickly the years pass; here we were assembled for the Seventh Annual General Meeting, and what a happy meeting it was, everything in harmony, and a balance sheet presented by Gerry Allison showing the Club in a very prosperous condition. There was not a single expression of criticism.

Stanley Smith, who had so successfully acted as chairman for the past few months was unanimously elected to hold the post for the coming year.

On the proposal of Gerry Allison, J. Breeze Bentley was cordially thanked for his faithful service as chairman for so many years, often under difficult circumstances. The rest of the officials were re-elected en bloc.

The treasurer read a very cordial letter from Frank Richards in which he said he would be delighted to continue to act as President of the Club.

Outings in the summer were discussed, York and Chesterfield being mentioned as likely places with other Clubs joining in.

Business over, we got down to one of Gerry's games, marvellous how he finds something fresh month after month. He followed it with a quiz and an amusing reading from a Gem, "Gussy the Ventriloquist."

Next month Ernest Whitehead starts the summer season's programme. He put on a jolly good show last year and I hazard a guess he will again. The date - May 11th.

HERBERT LECKENBY

North Section Correspondent.

* * *

REPORT FROM MIDLAND BRANCH OF MEETING HELD 25th MARCH, 1957 from Harry Broster - Secretary.

A very well attended meeting gave a warm welcome to a new member Mr. S. T. Wise from Willenhall. A keen Hamilton fan Mr. Wise saw an article by the writer in Wolverhampton "Express and Star" giving an account of the "Brotherhood of the Happy Hours" and promptly contacted

me with a view to joining our Midland Club. We are hoping a similar venture in the Birmingham "Mail" will have successful results. The programme for the night was quite a change from previous, as first we had a really excellent talk on the "other B.B." by our treasurer Norman Gregory. After a comparison of the two characters Norman gave us details of the career of Buffalo Bill first as an Army Scout and later as a showman. How there were many hundred fictional tales woven round the adventures of this famous American national hero. Also details of true accounts and one in particular by Rupert Croft Brook recently published. As Tom Porter said, the only thing we could find fault with regarding this talk was its brevity. Our next item and we strayed miles away Hamiltonia was a holiday film with the Riviera and Menton in particular as the location. No need to describe its excellent colouring, everyone knows what the Riviera means in terms of colour and gaiety. Frank Richards has described it times enough in Magnets and Gems. Altogether we can congratulate George Chatham on giving us a grand item and we hope it will be repeated. The night concluded with a "St. Sam" short story from the Greyfriars Herald and read in her usual competent way by Madge Corbett.

* * *

MERSEYSIDE BRANCH O.B.B.C. - SUNDAY 14th APRIL.

It was a pleasure to see such a large gathering at the second meeting at our new address. After the business and financial details had been given by the Chairman, Don Webster told us that Herbert Leckenby would be paying us a return visit next month for the May meeting. It is hoped that there will be a large attendance for this. A formal welcome was then given to Frank Unwin on his return to the Club and of course to Liverpool. We all hope that he has the pleasure of seeing his team take its rightful place next season. Frank Unwin then gave us a few words saying how happy he was to be back again, and a toast was then given to the Club and its new Headquarters. Frank then gave us his version of "Down You Go" with a strong Greyfriars, St. Jim's etc. flavour. This turned out very successful and it is proposed to repeat it again. Library business concluded the meeting.

Next gathering, Sunday 12th May at 7 p.m. sharp with Herbert Leckenby as guest of honour.

NORMAN FRAGNELL

Secretary, Merseyside Branch O.B.B.C.

LETTER BOXTAKE WARNING

GUILDFORD PRESS LTD.

27 Craven Street, London W.C. 2.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

I thought you would like to know that the Billy Bunter's Own Annual is proving the great success we thought it would. I felt you should know this, as I don't want any of your readers to be disappointed if they find the book is sold out early in September. They can easily overcome this danger by placing their order now either with their local bookshop or writing direct to my distributors Messrs. Hulton Press, Hulton House, Fleet Street, London E.C.4.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

H. M. BAYNE-POWELL

* * *

Rose Lawn,
Kingsgate,
Kent.

April 6th, 1957.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Thanks for the C.D. The picture reproduced on the cover was a reminder of a very distant day. It must be well over half-a-century since I wrote that story, specially for Hamilton Edwards, if I remember correctly. It is rather pleasant to be reminded of the days when I used to call at the Old Carmelite House to see him, and always found him kind and affable to a somewhat diffident young fellow. They were good old days.

I found pages 105/6 in this issue of the C.D. very agreeable reading. My thanks to Gerry Allison and Jack Wood for their very kind appreciation of the latest Bunter book.

Now just to amuse you I will mention that lately I have had the bright idea of writing some short Bunter stories in Latin. May we, one of these days, see William George Bunter replacing Caius Julius Caesar! Fancy the Third Form called upon to construe "Tempestat calida erat, et Bunterus primo dormitabat, tum dormiebat. Caput ejus inclinabat, murmure ex naribus emanante." I almost think they would

like it better than the Gallic War.

With kindest regards,
Always your sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS

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