

# The Collectors' Digest

AUGUST, 1958

Vol. 12, No. 140

16



Bob  
Winter  
58

The Genial Bob!

# BILL MARTIN

WORLD FAMOUS  
FOR OLD BOY'S BOOKS

93 HILLSIDE : LONDON N.W. 10.

Phone: ElGar 3230

Cables: SUPERB USED, LONDON.

Bound Volume Union Jacks. 586/611. January - June 1915. £8 - 26 numbers.	Bound Volume Union Jacks. 920/ 955. May 21 - January 22. £7 10s. - 36 numbers.
Bound Volume Union Jacks. 952/976. January - June 1922. £5 5s. - 26 numbers.	Bound Volume Union Jacks. 1211/ 1236. January - June 1927. £4 - 26 numbers.
Bound Volume Union Jacks. 1264/1289. January - June 1928. £3 3s. Od.	Bound Volume Magnets - 32 numbers. between 635 - 996 - £7.
Bound Volume Union Jacks. 1446/ 1471 - 26 numbers. £3	1915 S.B.L. - 6 copies - 1st series also 12 copies 2nd series, the lot 18 copies - 30/-
Bound Volume Gems. 1456/1506. 51 copies - £7 10s. Od.	Penny Populars 1926. 363 - 374 Mint binding copies. 12 numbers. 30/-
Penny Populars 1923. 233 - 257. Mint Binding Copies. 26 numbers. £4	3 mint volumes Mysteries of Police and Crime. Volumes 1, 2 and 3. Published by Cassell and Co., Ltd. By Arthur Griffiths. These volumes were for subscribers only and never on sale to the gen- eral public. Average 469 pages per volume. £10 10s.
Boys' Friend - Green 'Un. 72 copies fit for binding. All consecutive and feature Rookwood by Chas. Hamilton.	Large selection Pre War U.S.A. Film Magazines, Cycling, Motor Cycling, London Life, Motor Car, etc.
Union Jacks in binder. Fit for binding. 1058/1081. Mint condition. 60/-	BOUND VOLUME UNION JACKS 378-402. 26 numbers 1911 .. £8
Old Boys Books in binder. 102 in all. Price 75/-. Contents Nuggets, Sports Budgets, Pals, Boys Magazines, Rockets, Champ- ions, Thrillers.	CASH WITH ORDER POSTAGE EXTRA

AUGUST, 1958.

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

o r

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

---

## *From the Editor's Chair*

PLEASURE AT THE PORTLAND: No, I don't mean the goal but the Portland Hotel at Chesterfield, where the Northern and Midland Clubs met on 29th June. Harry Broster tells you something about it on another page, so all I say here is that I am already looking forward to next year's reunion.

\* \* \*

THE ANNUAL: All goes well. At the time of writing orders are coming along in gratifying fashion. Please keep it up, I beg of you.

At Chesterfield Harry Broster gave an intriguing talk on "Just Where is Greyfriars?" I was so taken with this that I asked Harry to adapt it for the Annual. He's doing so. There will probably be more to map too.

And don't forget to let me have some adverts, for they are so essential.

\* \* \*

SEXTON BLAKE ON T.V. Said 'Picturegoer', July 19th "There's a chance that a new 'Thin Man' type of team may hit your T.V. screens soon, Geoffrey Toone and Jill Melford as the verbal sparring partners - the indomitable Sexton Blake and Secretary Paula Dane."

It went on to say that it depends on several things - including

---

whether American networks can be interested and on the success of the Sexton Blake feature film that's just been shot at Bray Studios. It put the query "Britons know Blake - but do the Americans?" Geoffrey Toone, back from filming and T.V.-ing in the States says Yes.

A particular matter of interest where our circle is concerned, is that on the American side Bette Pate's brother, Michael, may be connected with the venture.

Anyway, look out for further announcements.

'Picture Show', also dated July 19th, had a full page devoted to the coming Sexton Blake film "Murder at Site 3". Take my tip, try and get hold of a copy. It will certainly make you want to see the film.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

\*\*\*\*\*  
INTERESTING ITEMS: No's 1: (a)  $\frac{1}{2}$ d Greyfriars Herald (also No's 2 to 5; 7 to 16) (b) Schoolgirls Own, 2d. (also 9 early issues)

3d Sexton Blake: No's 8 and 40. B.F. Libs: 517 (M. Clifford) 155 (Ferrers Locke). 1d (Green) Popular: 30 early issues. Gem: 7 no's 230 - 627. 3d Wonder Library. 4d Girl's Friend Libs. Bound Volume (52) (1918) Magnets, new covers. 3rd Series Blakes: 3d each.

WANTED: Magnets prior 1934. Greyfriars, S.O.Ls. Other Hamiltoniana. Offers to: ASHLEY, 23 MOUNTJOY, BRIDPORT, DORSET.

WANTED: All "Monster Libs" except 2, 7, 15, 17, 19. Also Quirke Series, "Schoolboy's Own Libs" 366, 387, 411 (St. Frank's). 171, 169 (Grey.) Have No. 121 for exchange.

GORDON THOMPSON, 53 WALLASEY PARK, OLD PARK ROAD, BELFAST.

WANTED: Aldine Red Rover Library; Rob Roy; Boys Leader; Halfpenny Union Jack (mauve cover) Numbers 420 to 488 and 494; Penny Pluck, vol. 3, containing "Cookey Scrubs" and also "Specs" stories; The Comic Home Journal (1897-1902). I will pay five shillings each for following numbers 149, 203, 216, 217, 219, 252, 253, 255; The Jester 1906, 1907; Halfpenny Wonder; Funny Wonder; Ally Sloper, 1906, 1907; Pocket Budget (second series); Nuggets, 1900 to 1906; some True Blue numbers; a novel "The Lover Fugitives"; "Phra the Pheonician"; Victorian Bloods and Romances.

PETTINGELL, LINDEN LEA, ST. MILDRED'S AVENUE, BROADSTAIRS, KENT.

# Blakiana . . . .

conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

I have had a short but most interesting letter from Eric Cope-  
man, and as I have Eric's permission to put it in Blakiana I am doing  
so straight away. I know that Mr. Twyman will be reading this issue  
in the near future, and if he has any further comment to make I shall  
be pleased to hear from him.

Bill Lofts certainly gets around - I'm wondering whom the spot-  
light will be centred on next. Nice work, Bill!

J. PACKMAN

\* \* \*

## ROUND TABLE: A FRAUD? NEVER!

Dear Josie,

I've just read Bill Lofts' article, "THE ROUND TABLE WAS NO  
FRAUD" (C.D. May 1958), and can't let it pass without comment. I  
have the impression that I've been slightly misquoted, not so much in  
the article as in the letter Bill wrote to Mr. Twyman about my letter  
which appeared in DETECTIVE WEEKLY No. 10 in April, 1933.

So now, to straighten things out, I'll stretch a hand over a  
quarter of a century (and 12,000 miles!) and explain why I first wrote  
that letter.

Firstly, I never had any cause to doubt the veracity of the  
ROUND TABLE. I always read it first whenever I bought my UNION JACK  
or DETECTIVE WEEKLY, and prior to DW 10 I had not only had a number  
of my own letters quoted in its columns but had also received two  
personal long replies from Mr. Twyman (replies which I still possess  
and value greatly, written in answer to my endless queries back in  
1932).

However there was a chap at the place where I was then working  
who had read a few Blake yarns and knew I liked them. He also knew  
how to do a spot of leg-pulling! So he poured scorn not on the yarns  
(which he admitted he liked) but on the ROUND TABLE (which he'd never  
read!) I got my "mad" up and wrote to Mr. Twyman and told him there  
were probably other nitwits in the world with similar crazy views and

would he do something about enlightening them. (I expressed myself more conservatively but that was the gist of it.) In order to do the "enlightening" properly, H.W.T. wrote that reply in DW 10. I was very proud of it and read it out to my friend who was duly squashed.

I didn't need convincing myself. Nobody could have enjoyed and participated in the ROUND TABLE discussion as frequently as I did without knowing it was a really worthwhile fellowship of Blake followers. I might as well now suggest that everything in the C.D. is the work of one man and that the names and addresses in the backs of the Annuals are fictitious!!!!

Mr. Twyman took a lot of space back in 1933 defending the ROUND TABLE, and I see he still takes space defending it (as quoted in Bill's article). It was well worth defending; the best Editor-Reader get-together of any of the magazines of the day, and still remembered because of that.

When I read that H.W.T. was "understaffed and could have used two extra typists for that job alone," I still can't help marvelling that I should have been given such long and painstakingly detailed replies. I believe now that that feeling of kinship with other readers helped build up the spirit among Blake followers that has now blossomed to maturity in the fellowship of the Blake Circle in the C.D.

Clumsily put, but you know what I mean.

Thanks, Mr. Twyman, for starting us off discussing authors and characters way back there over a quarter of a century ago. If any of us had ever doubted you in any way we'd surely never have been still reading and writing about Sexton Blake now!.....

ERIC COPEMAN

\* \* \*

I MEET "MARTIN FRAZER"

by W. O. G. Lofts

"Have you ever met or heard of 'Martin Frazer?'" I asked a Sexton Blake author during an interview some years ago. A shake of the head was the only reply.

This type of question was asked by me to many other Blake authors and writers, that I was privileged to meet from time to time. But with the answer always being in the negative, I began to doubt if I would ever find out anything about this Blake writer; though it seemed that by other authors not knowing the name of 'Martin Frazer' it was certain that this name hid the identity of another writer, known to them, but not by that name.

There were two very good reasons why I showed such an interest in this particular Blake author; firstly I had always enjoyed the stories that he had written (where Blake was always brought into the first chapter), and secondly he was the only principal author left in the realms of Blake research that I did not know the real identity of and was curious to know more about.

I still never had any idea as to whom "Martin Frazer" really was until the latter part of last year, when a clue came to me in the following manner. One of the most keen and enthusiastic collectors of Blake material is Victor Colby of Australia, and whilst glancing through some copies of the "Knockout Comic" which I had recently obtained from him - containing the Sexton Blake Picture Strip - I noticed the name of "Martin Frazer".

This name was given as the author of a series of school stories "The Boys of St. Clements", which had a run of several years. "Ah", I thought, "this writer is still turning out stories. If I ask some Editor friends of mine perhaps they can find out for me the real name of this writer."

"Were you able to find out anything for me about 'Martin Frazer'?" I asked my friends the Editors whilst down in Fleet Street a little later. "Oh yes," said one. "It's Percy". "Percy?" said I, "Who's he?" "PERCY A. CLARKE" was the reply. "Know him very well, a very nice chap - he seemed very flattered that someone should have been trying to seek the identity of 'Martin Frazer' and remember the stories he wrote so well. Been connected with the Amalgamated Press for over 30 years - still there, now working on the Christmas Annuals. Perhaps you would like to meet him some time?"

Well, who has not heard of Percy A. Clarke? Nearly all Old Boys' Book Collectors must have seen his name penned to stories, whatever papers they collect. To name just a few from the end of the first world war; "Captain", "Boys' Friend", "Sports Budget", "Football Favourite", "Modern Boy", "Champion", "Triumph", "Detective Weekly", "Chums", "Pilot", "Startler", "Boys' Friend Library", "Nelson Lee", "Boys' Realm", "Holiday Annual" - and even in the "Gem" a serial story.

Through the kindness of Mr. Howard Baker I was able to have a short interview with Mr. Clarke shortly after - when, for the time we had at our disposal, some very interesting facts were revealed. Mr. Clarke who is in his early sixties confessed that he had no idea that he was so famous, and his tales thought so much of, for the authors as a rule soon lose interest in the stories once they have been paid for, because they are busy on the next. He has held quite a few

different Editorial posts during his service at the A.P. Two in recent years were Editor of the "Knockout Comic" and "Jack and Jill."

Another position which he held at one time was of great interest to myself; this was on the Editorial of the "Boys' Friend Library." "It was true of course", he said, "that the majority of stories were reprints of earlier yarns, in some cases rewritten and abridged to fit into the size of the Library; but at times stories were specially written and were original." He himself had had a number of stories published in this Library - two featuring Ferrers Locke the detective and another with the famous Nelson Lee as the main character. These I believe were all original tales. Apart from other reprinted tales of his, he had two stories published under the name of "Vernon Nielson."

On the subject of pen-names, he reckoned that he had had more pen-names than he could ever remember - or know about - because in the old days of boys papers, if an author had two yarns in one paper - then the sub-editor would put a pen-name on one of them rather than have the author appear twice; so what other names he did not write under will, I should say, unfortunately never be known.

An important question I next asked him was one which had puzzled C.D. readers for years, and had never as yet been satisfactorily explained. Readers will remember that in the 1930's the "Boys Friend Library" (second series) were reprinting old stories of Blake, such as "Sexton Blake, Sixthformer", "Sexton Blake's Schooldays" and "Sexton Blake at the Varsity", known to have been written by Cecil Hayter in the B.F.L. 1st series (year 1909), but this time under the name of "JOHN ANDREWS." "Why did they change the name of the author?" I asked.

"John Andrews was a stock name", was the reply, "It was a name used Editorially, when it was either thought that the original author's name had been used quite recently - or it was felt that a new name was needed."

In fairness to the editorial staff of the B.F.L. I had better explain further. In the 1930's Cecil Hayter's work had become slightly outdated; he had, like William Murray Graydon, retired from writing years earlier, and the style of writing was not considered by the editorial staff as suitable for the present generation of readers - the tales had to be modernised - and so they thought that a new name put to the stories would be the best policy. Another instance of this being done was the famous original Maxwell Scott yarn "The Silver Dwarf", also penned under the "John Andrews" name.

During the last twenty years or so, Mr. Clarke has mostly used the pen-name of "Martin Frazer" for his stories. Apart from his Blake yarns he has had several stories of the "thriller novel" type published by



Wright and Brown; also twenty Western novels published by the same firm under the name of "Dane Lander" and a number of Romances under the name of "Jane Lytton".

Years ago he wrote a large number of love stories for papers such as "Eve's Own Stories", "Sunday Companion", "Sunday Stories", "Hornet Stories" and several others. But strangely enough he has never written for the girls market. He is not "Renee Frazer" of the girls stories as many people (including myself) had thought.

Another point which had puzzled me a little was the fact of his Blake stories appearing with such long intervals between them, and in asking this question the answer was really simple. But first of all, for the record I had better list the titles and dates of all his Blake stories published.

SBL	2nd series	No. 524	(April 1936)	"The Crime at the Crown Inn"
"	"	"	No. 560 (Jan, 1937)	"The Riddle of Dead Man's Mind"
"	"	"	No. 725 (July 1940)	"The Mystery of the German Prisoner"
"	3rd	"	No. 5 (Aug. 1941)	"The Case of the Shot Looter"
"	"	"	No. 26 (June 1942)	"The Fatal V Sign"
"	"	"	No. 163 (March 1948)	"The Mystery of the Shadowed Footballer"
"	"	"	No. 270 (Aug. 1952)	"The Case of the Dope Dealers"

Having such a vast output of stories for other papers - and also his book writing - he was only able to write a Blake story now and again, and with the regular Blake writers turning out stories month by month it was a highly competitive market to write for too!

What of the future? Does he contemplate writing any more Blake stories? The answer is very doubtful; times have changed - the style of writing has changed - all periodicals have changed, to move with times and thereby keep a healthy readership.

Just before leaving, Mr. Clark kindly presented me with two copies of his latest novels - which I have enjoyed reading very much. These now grace my bookshelf, so that I shall always remember the time I met "Martin Frazer"

---

\*\*\*\*\*

WANTED IN GOOD CONDITION FOR BINDING:- GEM 1406, 1407, 1412, 1413 and 1418.

Price to:

R. HODGSON, 5 SILVER STREET, NEWTON HILL, WAKEFIELD.

## THE AUGUST SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARIES

\* \* \* \* \*

Reviewed by Walter Webb.

\* \* \*

Final Curtain (No. 411)Arthur Maclean

Casanova, Marie Antoinette, Quasimodo, Sherlock Holmes - all return in this novel of murder and mystery set in the shadow of the Surrey Hills. And in the darker shadow of death. The guests which make up the fancy dress party at Redroofs are enjoying the excitement of the firework display. All excepting their host, Karl Steiner, one-time famous actor and ventriloquist. One-time, because he now lies dead, murdered by - whom? Little Heinrich, the dummy to whom he owes not a little to his fame, lies crumpled at his feet. Inspector Grummett of the Surrey County C.I.D. has no doubts about the identity of the assassin, but Holmes is not so sanguine. Casanova, but a poor substitute for Doctor Watson, has no ideas, for with two beautiful women amongst the suspects his attentions are naturally divided.

It's a quiet sort of case for Holmes, with a far from original ending. It's been done before. The room of death. The suspects gathered together and Holmes eliminating them one by one until the murderer is revealed. Quite a neat whodunit, with the role of Casanova played by Splash Kirby and that of Holmes re-enacted by - well it's needless to say. What can be said is that Sexton Blake adds to his unique reputation in both roles.

Rating..... Very good

\* \* \*

Murder in the Sun (No. 412)Jack Trevor Story

Jack Story reverts to type in this novel, set first in Pimlico and then at a holiday camp, where two previously introduced characters of the Syndicate, and a homicidal maniac known as the Patron, give Sexton Blake and his assistants, not to mention Coutts of the C.I.D., no little trouble in baulking them in their crooked enterprises.

A twelve year old boy collecting scrap iron from a rubbish dump by the Thames unearths a quantity of plates used for the purpose of issuing counterfeit five pound notes. It's a discovery to imperil the lives of several people.....his sister Sally.....Foster Collins.....a photographer.....Paula Dane. To Collins, it means a grand holiday at the Palm Bay Holiday Camp with Sally, to whom he has lost his hand. Actually he does lose it and not figuratively at that!

Another win for Blake, but a triumph marred by a grave miscalculation, for, in under-estimating the opposition, he almost deprives himself for all time of the services of his honey-blonde and devoted Secretary Paula Dane. Just how much Blake is affected by this is shown in a typically humorous story ending.

Ideal holiday fare here for the Blake fan.

Rating..... Very good

\*\*\*\*\*  
 7/- each offered for numbers of the Magnets as follows:- (or exchange for certain Nos. between 800 and 950 or for S.O.Ls.) 950, 958, 960, 962, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 970, 971, 973, 985, 986, 988, 989, 990, 992, 993, 994, 997, 1005, 1035, 1062, 1083, 1088, 1089, 1090, 1092, 1096, 1100, 1116, 1118, 1119, 1121, 1127, 1128, 1129, 1179, 1191, 1195  
 5/- each offered for Gems Nos. 1327, 1367.

D. BROYD, 10 BEAN ROAD, BEXLEY HEATH, KENT.

HELP WANTED: I've been collecting Nelson Lees for 33 years now and only require six issues to complete. Will anyone help? Will pay or exchange 3 early Lees for 1 wanted have also early Magnets, U.Js, Sexton Blakes etc. I'd exchange for wanted Lees.

OLD Series Lees Wanted: 31, 64, 65, 78, 82, 88. Replacements for poor copies wanted. Old series 21, 27, 32, 54, 74, 84, 87, 107, 133  
 1st New series 52.

J. R. MURTAGH, 509 SELWOOD ROAD, HASTINGS, NEW ZEALAND.

Can anyone help me to complete my collection of "Representative" Comic Papers? I need one copy only and will pay 5/- each for the following:- "Bo-Peep"; "Merry Midget"; "Dazzler"; "Bouncer"; "Coloured"; "Sunny"; "Merry Moments"; "Sparkler" - (Trapps Holmes "Cheerful"; "Rocket"; (Comic) "Jungle Jinks"; "Chicks Own" - (before 1936); "Summer";

L. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

WANTED URGENTLY: S.B.Ls. 1st Series 17, 105, 109, 198, 197, 201, 200  
 S.B.Ls 2nd Series 102, 111, 243, 293, 296, 422, 520, 667.

BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARIES: 1st series 10, 68, 102, 105, 107, 165, 229, 246, 669. 2nd series: 79, 392, 396.

U.J. 881, 1041, 1098, 1378, 1519

Detective Weekly: 1, 2, 3, 4.

MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON S.E. 22.

FROM INFORMATION RECEIVED - No. 7

By W. O. G. Lofts

Nelson Lee is coming back!

For the first time - since seemingly, Nelson Lee and the beloved Nipper passed into oblivion in the last issue of the S.O.L. in June, 1940. (A reprint of course, of an earlier yarn). That is as far as the Amalgamated Press was concerned but to devotees of Lee - he has never "passed away" completely though never appearing in stories. But I understand on very good authority that Nelson Lee and Nipper will be making a most welcome return in the pages of the Sexton Blake Library in the near future - and will certainly be appearing in more than one story.

Tiger Tim Corrections.

I am most grateful to that great enthusiast of the "Rainbow" in its early days, and good friend Gerry Allison - for pointing out to me in a recent letter, that the lovable comic character Tiger Tim did appear in earlier A.P. publications than the "Rainbow", which came out in 1914. This was stated by myself in C.D. 130. (Information Received No. 5). Gerry told me that Tiger Tim and the Bruin Boys - appeared in the "Playbox Annuals" in 1912 and 1913, and in looking them up, of course he is quite correct. They were in those days at Mrs. Hippo's Kindergarten - and at the start of the "Rainbow" moved to Mrs. Bruin's school.

The first artist who ever drew them - J. S. Baker - is still alive I am told and lives on the South Coast - in happy retirement. He is believed to be in his 90's.

His son is also an artist, and contributes to several of the present day A.P. publications.

It is not generally known that in the mid-twenties the Bruin Boys were so popular with readers of the comics - that it was decided to create sister counter-parts of them to appear in adventures in the new comic "Playbox".

The "Hippo Girls" they were called - and we had Tiger Tilly, Jenny Jacko, Olive Ostrich etc; they were all drawn by the best of all 'Tiger Tim' artists - H. F. Foxwell - or reckoned the best by the Editors concerned.

\*\*\*\*\*  
WANTED: Specimen 1914 "Firefly". 10s. paid.  
E. V. HUGHES, 2, EAST FRONT ROAD, PAGHAM BEACH, BOGNOR REGIS.

CHESTERFIELD - 1958by Harry Broster

Every year all the people in this world look forward to a certain date. Certain days or collection of days during the twelve months mean a great deal to us. We of our religion look mostly to Christmas, Easter and other festivals of a like nature. Mostly we associate them with holidays. There again we all are waiting from one year to another for our own annual holiday. We as a rule, associate Christmas, which without any argument, is our best time of the whole year to a gathering clan, a re-union of the family, when old friends meet together again in many cases after a year's parting from one another. Such was the Chesterfield re-union on Sunday, 29th June, 1958. A re-union of friends, better still to call them brothers (and sisters). Yes, brothers for what is our hobby but brotherhood. As Herbert Leckenby calls it, "the Brotherhood of the Happy Hours." All joining together in good humoured arguments, interesting debates, catching one another with tricky quizzes, all connected with the words of our favourite authors. Yes, a happy band.

The same number this year as last, a few new faces if a few missing, old friends meeting once again, one or two meeting others they have only corresponded with. Maybe it is being sentimental but it did your heart good to see the happy faces, to hear the cheerful talk. The atmosphere was a "family" one and as we came away the general feeling was "roll along next time."

As before we met at the Portland Hotel. Lunch at one o'clock, (and even Billy Bunter could not have grumbled at the fare though at 7/6 a time; the two Treasurers would have had a few worries). We had a room to ourselves for each meal and to top all the good service, a room set aside for our meeting was thrown in free. You lucky people!! And what good use we made of that room. With Midland's Tom Porter in the chair we discussed several important matters connected with our hobby. Gerry brought up the old sore point of high prices. Various views were put forward, but the general opinion seemed to be that nothing much could be done about it. It was that law of supply and demand, especially where the Hamiltonian papers were concerned.

We had a reading by Gerry of extracts from a serial by John Fordwych called "Boys and Girls Together" from a paper called "Young Britain", but as the reader said, it was a reprint of the "School Bell" which ran in "Chips" many years ago. That same "Chips" is now much in demand, at least by one member of our "brotherhood". A talk on the local Geography of Greyfriars and the proximity of that famous establish-

ment of learning to the sea was one major item. A map based on the one which was reproduced in the C.D. Annual a few years ago, was passed round for general inspection. This was the work of Midland's Secretary who introduced the talk. His idea to get an authentic map of the Friardale and Courtfield district on the same lines as the one in C.D. Annual of St. Ninian's. This was a part of the programme which did not bring in so many of the company as did the discussion of the relative merits of S.O.Ls and the corresponding Magnets, Gems and Boys' Friends. Also not forgetting the St. Frank's yarns and other odd stories which appeared in full in other mediums. Actually, that was the basis of the talk, why S.O.Ls were seemingly preferred by collectors against the other papers when it was common knowledge that the stories were abridged or cut to suit the size of the book. Interesting view points were put forward and we were very intrigued by the forthright and amusing comments of John Gunn of Nottingham. The few quizzes set by Gerry and myself went down very well.

Jolly good show all round, and I think everyone enjoyed themselves especially one new "chum" John Tomlinson, meeting us for the first time. Tom as Chairman saw to it that everyone was drawn into the discussions and I feel everyone thought he did a great job of work.

Roll on next year, to the next one. THE FAMILY:-

Gerry Allison	Harry Broster
Herbert Leckenby	Norman Gregory
Jack and Madge Corbett	Beryl Russell
Jack Bellfield	Ron Hodgson and his wife
Laurie Morley and Mrs. Morley	Mollie Allison
John Gunn	John Tomlinson
Bill Williamson and	"Uncle" Tom Porter (in the chair)

---



---

#### FIFTY YEARS ON THE COMICS

On Sunday, 29th June, there passed one more link with golden days of the A.P. in the death of Stanley J. Gooch, editor of T.V. Fun and Radio Fun.

Early this year he celebrated his jubilee of 50 years with the Amalgamated Press.

One of the pioneers of the A.P. comics, Stanley Gooch went to the firm at 14½ years of age. His first appointment was with Home Chat where he remained until he was 18, when he changed his affections

---

and entered the comic paper field.

A year later he became story editor for Puck until he volunteered for service in the first world war.

Returning to the Fleetway House he was appointed editor of Funny Wonder and Jester, two of the most successful A.P. comics and remembered with affection by many. Later he took over Merry and Bright and brought out Crackers - a development from the old Lot O' Fun.

In 1934 he produced two more weeklies, Tip-Top and Jingles, and in 1939, when Radio Fun appeared he had a total of seven weeklies and six Annuals under his control.

One of Stanley Gooch's favourite stories was of the late H. J. Garrish, then A.P. Editorial Director, calling him into his office one Monday morning and asking him to produce two new papers by Friday! The promise was given that the entire copy and make-up of Tip-Top and Jingles would be in the printers hands by Friday - and it was carried out!

He was a great raconteur and will long be remembered, too, as a sure laughter raiser at many of the Press Club functions.

John Jukes, one of his artists, writes: "With the death of Stanley Gooch comes the loss of an old friend and the end of an association extending to almost 30 years."

He was one of the few editors with a practical sense of humour which could be translated into material for his papers. To see him miming his way through a 12 picture sequence for the front page of the Jester or Funny Wonder was indeed an experience and no comic artist could fail to be stimulated into creative activity.

I liked working for him. If he criticised he also praised and appreciated both. It will take me a long time to get used to his absence behind the familiar office door. I owe to him some of my happiest memories of Fleet Street.....

\*\*\*\*\*  
**MAGNETS WANTED:** 1023, 24, 25, 1089, 1360, 62, 64, 65, 69, 71, 73.  
 Can anyone help please?  
 E. S. LAWRENCE, 10 CLAREMONT AVENUE, SUNBURY-On-THAMES, MIDDX.

**SALE** - Nelson Lees, Rockets, Marvel, Pluck, Chums, Young Britain, Union Jacks, Boys of Empire, Digest Annuals and others. S.A.E. List.  
 L. M. ALLEN, 13 VIKING CLOSE, BOURNEMOUTH.

# HAMILTONIANA

compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

We start off with a letter from Frank Richards in which we find him in friendly disagreement with Eric Fayne's views last month.

Note too, another date for Bunter on T.V.

July 12th, 1958.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Thank you for the C.D., always welcome and always interesting; and the latter adjective applies especially to Eric Fayne's article. I wouldn't agree with Eric that the author had too many irons in the fire. Change is always good both for an author and his work. Some of my happiest hours were spent writing the "Rio Kid". I enjoyed every line; and came back from Texas to Greyfriers refreshed by my day off in a remote region. It was the same with "King of the Islands" and "Cedar Creek". A writer sticking wholly to a single subject may get into a rut; and the author's excursions to the South Seas and the Canadian backwoods helped, I believe, in keeping the "Magnet" up to what I would modestly describe as a fairly high standard. I feel just the same in these latter days. I just love writing the Bunter Books and T.V. plays; but I am always glad to get off, in the annuals, for a trip to Kenya or Texas, or on the dusty roads with "Jack of All Trades" and every now and then I dismiss the whole lot, and shut myself up with Horace in B.C.23. "Keep on the move" is a good maxim for any writer. So there you are Eric!

With kindest regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

By the way, Bunter gives the T.V. screens another look-in on August 9th.

\* \* \*

## LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

(In this series, Eric Fayne touches on certain matters of interest to students of the Hamilton papers. He gives his own views superficially. If you will write to him, expressing your opinions on the topics he discusses, he will summarise readers' views in a future issue.)

No. 17. WHICH WAS PREFERABLE - A SCHOOL SETTING OR OTHERWISE?



It might be true to say that lovers of school stories are not generally keen on adventure tales - and vice versa. As the Magnet and Gem catered for school story enthusiasts, we should perhaps have some doubt as to the wisdom of the policy of the last decade or longer of the Magnet, which devoted long periods of time to series of travel and adventure. Yet they seem to have been unquestionably successful, and so the Magnet was able to make the most of both worlds.

I preferred the boys at school, but it is a mild preference, and I greatly enjoyed the change of locale in the holidays, though I think it was a mistake when the holiday series were stretched out to cover a number of weeks far in excess of the normal school holidays. Prolongation never occurred with the Christmas series, and, with very few exceptions, these are among my favourite series.

In this month's Controversial Echoes, Roger Jenkins comments that in later years the foreign travel series lost their magic, and this is certainly true. The Texas series and the Mauleverer-South Seas series both appeared in 1937, and, apart from the fact that I regard both these series as well below standard, two foreign series one year were at least one too many. These followed the Brazil series of the previous year, another set of tales over which I have never been able to work up any enthusiasm. Even if they had all been first class three long foreign series within eighteen months was surely mistaken policy in a school story paper.

Until the Brazil series, I had enjoyed every foreign series without exception, but the episodic style of the last three travel series, which told chiefly of the evil machinations of some villain who was temporarily foiled at the end of each story, became tedious.

The caravanning and hiking series had tremendous charm, both in setting and incident, and they successfully overcame the fact that, with the passing of time, the theme inevitably became a little hackneyed. I have praised the Gem's 'Old Bus' series so often that I will not dwell on it again, and merely say that I consider it the perfect English holiday series. I regard what Mr. Wilde, in this month's Echoes, calls the 'inconsequential' type of handling as the most successful for this class of series, and I found the 'Water Lily' series marred by the connecting link of the villain chasing the school party, an idea overplayed in later years.

Mr. Hamilton's stories in the Gem and Magnet offered great variety of theme, and all tastes were skilfully catered for in season. One aspect of his genius is happily exemplified in this infinite variety. If one particular series did not appeal to us, we had the

knowledge that some other readers were undoubtedly enjoying it, and the series due to follow would probably be 'right up our street'. Providing the unwelcome series did not go on for too long - and here was the risk of any series of giant length - we had nothing of which to complain, and most of us welcomed the purely school stories, the thrillers, and the English holiday series, and those of foreign travel as they appeared in their turn. Few of us would have willed things to have been fundamentally different from what they were.

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

\* \* \*

### CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

#### No. 15. DID ANY OF THE SERIES OVERSTAY THEIR WELCOME?

BASIL ADAM writes: "Some of the Greyfriars series did overstay their welcome. In fact, some of them, such as the Putnam Van Duck and the Mr. Lambe series were not welcome to me at all!

Many of the long series in the latter years of the Magnet were marred for me by being dragged out and padded. That is why I have a special affection for most of the series which appeared between 1925 and 1934; they seem to escape from the unessential padding of later years. I think the length of the series did not really matter so long as the story held your attention to the very end, as in the 1925 Rebel series and the Loder v Wingate series of the same year.

The 1924 Sahara series is a great favourite of mine, too, because it is very descriptive and is free from padding. As soon as a series seemed to become long-winded, as in the Mr. Lambe and the Warren series I always felt that I had been 'taken for a ride'

GEORGE SELLARS writes: "A lot depends on the characters and the theme involved in a series. I don't think anyone could be bored with the length of any series featuring in the lead such popular characters as Tom Merry, Talbot, Gussy, Lumley-Lumley, the Bounder, Levison, Mornington or Wharton. Even so, 8 weeks is quite enough for most of them. The travel series never seemed too long for me as they were always full of exciting incidents, whether in foreign lands or hiking and camping in England. Finally, I must say some of the finest stories I ever read were Tom Merry adrift in London (7 stories), Tom Merry's Double (3 stories), the early Lumley-Lumley series and the early Toff series."

ROGER JENKINS writes: "Your point about the change in the use of the series system is original, but it is I think undeniably accurate. After the Stacey series in 1935 there was not one Magnet series in

which either the plot or the character developed. This is not to say that some of the individual stories in the various series were not of high standard, but certainly none of the later series as a whole exercised the compelling attraction of the earlier ones. The change may have been brought about as a result of editorial policy; it certainly meant that the casual reader would be more inclined to buy the odd copy.

Series which I thought overstayed their welcome were, inter alia the Warren and Compton series, the Bertie Vernon and Lembe series. I also have my doubts about the length of the Skip series. Foreign holidays in later years seemed to lose something of their magic, and could cheerfully have dispensed with half the Texas and South Sea series of 1937.

Since the change in the series system did not take place until 1935, Rookwood and St. Jim's largely escaped the disadvantages of the change, though the Wild West episodes in the Boy's Friend were prolonged for many months. These were, however, many series ~~series~~-in one, and the trouble was caused by the editor's decision to see whether the Fistical Four could successfully leave Rookwood permanent. Since this was a change of background rather than an inordinately long single series, I should think it true to say that Rookwood alone of 3 schools never overstayed its welcome. What quality was it, I wonder, that made Owen Conquest unique in this respect?"

GEOFFREY H. WILDE writes: "It is true that many of the Magnet series having brought a train of events to some kind of central point, were then artificially prolonged by a number of independent episodes that merely illustrated, and did not really develop, the given situation. How tiresome these episodes became depended on the central idea - too delicately poised a crisis could not convincingly stay in suspension for long - and, of course, on their merit as individual tales; but several of the longer series do rather sag in the middle. I would consider the China series a case in point, especially, perhaps, because few began and ended in such gripping style. Doubtless, too, this accounts for the appeal of the more inconsequential tales - the Hiking or Water Lily series - where episodic treatment is perfectly in keeping, and we can give in wholly to charm of setting,

The Jim Valentine series (11 weeks) began promisingly, and reached a high level in the third story. Plot construction and the interplay of character made this an excellent yarn, and foreshadowed a fascinating line of development. Unfortunately, the ensuing weeks merely played over a single implausible gambit and, no real resolution

being possible, the series expired with a grotesque coincidence, leaving loose ends lying about everywhere; it remains to me an almost total disappointment.

In the Compton series (11 weeks) we had a beautifully planned opening. There was a change of locale after 7 weeks and, full of incident to the last, the series came to a satisfying climax. I didn't find it a word too long.

Finally, my vote for the most overdue ending of the lot; the Texas series of 1937."

ERIC FAYNE comments: "It is clear that in Blue cover and Red cover days, the supply of plots seemed to the author and the editor to be unending. As a result of this outlook, many a tip-top plot was curiously handled and disposed of, when much longer treatment and development would have been a very distinct advantage. In the closing years, the pendulum swung to the other extreme, and plots seemed to be so precious that they were stretched to the utmost, the very last drop of drama or comedy being squeezed out of them. The result was the ultra-long series of later years, some of which, without doubt, overstayed their welcome.

\* \* \*

Here are some posers for you. The donor of the 5/- wishes to remain anonymous, but you know him well.

ASK ME ANOTHER - No. 1

1. Who was Blumpy?
2. What was "Born Tired"?
3. In which paper did Constable Cuddlecook appear?
4. What criminal featured in "The Case of the Bogus Judge"?
5. Who invented Ferrers Lord?
6. How many issues of the Gem were published?
7. Why did Talbot win the King's Pardon?
8. Who was influenced by "A Christmas Carol"?
9. What paper was first published on October 11th, 1912?
10. Who was Kit Hudson?
11. What was Talbot Baines Reed's first serial in the B.O.P.?
12. Which School was near the village of Chade?

5/- to the sender of the first correct answers received by the Editor. 10 points to his Club Branch. Points will be totalled each month. Which Club is the best-informed on hobby matters?

Answers next month, plus the second set of questions.

	1		2		3		4		5		6
7							8				
					9						
10	11						12				
13				14							
							15				
16											
				17				18		19	
20						21					
22											

We haven't had a Cross-word lately. Well, here's one by Eric Lawrence. Answers next month.

\* \* \*

CLUES ACROSS

1. Rivals of the Terrible Th
7. Useful hiding places
8. Inky county?
9. Skimpole seldom has enough
12. Very refreshing in summer
13. Backed by Smithy in France
15. Senior
16. Lemonade
17. Tiny
20. Nigel by the fireside
21. Junior
22. Sharp man (2 word 6 & 5)

\* \* \*

CLUES DOWN: 1. Bring age to tea for masters and prefects only.

2. A mixed raid on the moderns? Too dry.

3. Loder is a hard one to task.

5. Checking the books.

10. Much akin to Fishy's deals.

14. Often emptied over Coker.

18. Found in timber.

4. Comic.

6. Dan Dare and Co.

11. Spaniel.

15. Spoken in Ogilvy's home?

19. Fatima.

\* \* \*

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 30 - Boys' Friends 843 - 847. (S.O.L. No. 32)

The wartime stories of Rookwood were on the whole much better than those of Greyfriars and St. Jim's, but the quality of the writing was decidedly uneven at times, no doubt as a result of the uncertainty of the author's movements. The coming of Kit Erroll in Nos. 831-833 for instance, had been related in an exceptionally fine manner, and already been reviewed in this series in No. 93 of the C.D. The next series to feature Morningson, in Nos. 843 - 847 of the Boys' Friend (the 'Erbert Series) was scarcely comparable in quality, but it assumes some importance because it marked a crucial stage in the sag

of Valentine Mornington.

It was in No. 811 that Mornington had found the waif 'Erbert and had persuaded his guardian to provide for him at Rookwood. By a curious twist of fate, it became known at the beginning of the 'Erbert series that there was a missing heir with a prior right to the Mornington monies, and when Mornington saw the unmistakable birthmark on 'Erbert's shoulder, knew it was the waif he had befriended who would deprive him of his inheritance of twenty thousand a year.

The plot was embellished a little. Lattrey's father was the head of a firm of enquiry agents who were trying to trace the missing heir, and Lattrey was willing to keep his father in ignorance of the discovery if Mornington made it worth his while. Mornington for his part could not make up his mind what to do, and finally in a very melodramatic scene he attempted to push 'Erbert over a cliff into a quarry.

It was on the whole unsatisfactory (a rare thing in the Rookwood saga), and the trouble was undoubtedly due to the failure to develop the situation. There was a suspicion of crude construction of the plot and a certain lack of polish in the writing that made the reader wonder whether it would stand comparison with the series immediately before and after. But whatever the merits of the series, its importance in the general run of Rookwood stories cannot be over-emphasised. Mornington was at all times the most striking character in the Fourth Form, and this series marked the end of his days of wealth and ostentation. Ahead of him lay comparative poverty and considerable humiliation, whilst ahead of the reader lay good series in plenty. The 'Erbert series also acted as a bridge between what may roughly be called the "old" and the "new" Rookwood stories. Scarcely any Rookwood tale after this series shewed any marked defects or signs of tentative handling. It was as though Owen Conquest had, by depriving Valentine Mornington of his fortune, decided to terminate the period of experimentation. The success that attended his efforts after this time is too familiar to every Hamiltonian collector to require any comment here.

\*\*\*\*\*

## OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

LONDON SECTION MEETING - JULY 20th, 1958

Glorious weather and a grand 'Nelson Lee' meeting at the residence of Bob and Laura Blythe. A good muster of stalwarts to view once again

the complete set of all the "Nelson Lee Libraries". A scrumptious feed in the 'Ancient House' and with several good quizzes, a grand mystery debate plus a very humorous reading by Roger Jenkins made the gathering a very happy one. Good progress was reported by Roger Jenkins re his Hamiltonian section of the Club Library; by now all should have received one of the fine catalogues that Horace and Betty Roberts so kindly and ably compiled. Fortunate are we in our happy rendezvous and the members that do all the labours of love as regards our hobby. The coming autobiography of Captain F. E. Shaw, the famous "Chums" author was mentioned also that of Stanton Hope. Proposal of thanks to the host and hostess and the naming of the next meeting at East Dulwich on Sunday, August 17th, brought proceedings to a conclusion and we left Neasden with very happy memories.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

\* \* \*

NORTHERN SECTION MEETING - 12th JULY, 1958

The rain cleared in time for the meeting and thirteen members turned up at 239 Hyde Park Road, in anticipation of a brain racking evening, as this month it was the turn of Ernest Whitehead to provide the programme.

An apology for absence was received from Herbert who was on his way down to London. Minutes, report on the Chesterfield trip, correspondence and all the usual business matters were dealt with and then chair was handed over to Ernest for his quiz. A system of handicapping gave some of the members a number of points start - and how we needed them. Ernest must have burnt some midnight oil in sorting out some of his 36 questions with a possible total of 70 points. The first and last questions were easy, but how many of us knew in which paper "The Red Rovers" appeared or who was Mrs. Sempronia Peckover? Very few, I must admit. However, the final check up shewed Bill Williamson, who started from scratch, to be first with 30 points. The quiz should be in Australia by now to see if our friends there can cope with Ernest at his best.

After refreshments a game was set by Gerry Allison. Twenty six words from Magnet 295 "The Sneak's Revenge" arranged in alphabetical order had to be re-arranged in consecutive order to form a readable paragraph. I managed to be first in this myself. To round off the programme we had a short game of trying to work through the alphabet with Christian names connected with St. Jim's and surnames connected with Greyfriars.

Next meeting, 9th August, when it will be the turn of Jack Wood to provide the entertainment.

RONALD HODGSON,  
Hon. Secretary.

\* \* \*

MIDLAND SECTION MEETING. - 30th JUNE, 1958

A jolly good programme tonight, the highlight being Norman Gregory's talk on Buffalo Bill. Tom Porter was in the chair for the first time since his election and there were apologies from members, Jack Ingram amongst them. A gift of Sexton Blake Libraries from the Rev. A. G. Pound was mentioned and favourably received. Before his main talk, Norman read us an article on the immense value of reading to the deaf with special reference to the papers of our hobby. Then on to the Wild West. Buffalo Bill was a real hero, in fact one of the national heroes of America. Much has been written about him some of it very true, some fiction but it is true to say he is a world wide hero. Norman gave us an authentic biography of William F. Cody illustrated by several illustrations. He mentioned many incidents of the great frontiersman's adventures. His exceptional gift as a horseman and a rifle shot. This last reference to shooting brought up the topic of Annie Oakley. Norman told us how Annie Oakley was mostly associated with Wild Bill Hickock and not Buffalo Bill though they were friends and contemporaries. Mention was made of our great American writer, Ed Buntline who wrote many of the Buffalo Bill yarns. Interesting too was one of Norman's exhibits - a B.F.L. (3d. edition) written by Edwy Searle Brooks, entitled "Buffalo Bills Boyhood". A rousing programme and well worth the attention it received. Well worth too the applause at the end. And - Norman says - there is more to come.

HARRY BROSTER,  
Secretary.

\* \* \*

MERSEYSIDE SECTION O.B.B.C. - SUNDAY, 6th JULY

A smaller gathering than usual met at 11 Neville Road for the July meeting, the holiday season being, in some respects responsible for this. After business and financial matters had been dealt with the Chairman gave a special welcome to a new member - Mr. Harding, whom it is hoped will soon become a "regular."

The Secretary then read in full Mr. Howard Baker's editorial from this month's Sexton Blake Library. The Editor's strongly held views



aroused much comment among the Club members, and it was generally agreed that he has taken the right line.

Frank Unwin's account of the return match between the Merseyside Branch O.B.B.C. and Greyfriars was well received by us all. One fears that it did not carry the hall mark of a genuine Frank Richards story for it seemed there was very little evidence of the true spirit of the game. As far as we were concerned it was the result that counted, and so it did, for we won by the odd run. Tea and library business followed and we then tackled the next round in the school shield competition, a further edition of Criss Cross Quiz. Once again Greyfriars in the lead with St. Jim's second and St. Frank's third.

Next meeting, Bank Holiday Sunday, 3rd August at 3.0 p.m.

NORMAN PRAGNELL,  
Secretary.

\* \* \*

"THE GOLDEN HOURS CLUB" - FRIDAY, 27th JUNE, 1958

Despite the wet weather there was no lack of enthusiasm shown by the members at the above meeting. The Chairman, Arnold Keena, opened proceedings by expressing the appreciation of the members for the cordial reception afforded our letter of greeting - its prominent position in the May C.D. was most gratifying to the collectors "Down Under". A letter of greeting from Jack Murtagh in New Zealand was read and members expressed the hope that later in the year we will have the pleasure of his company at one of our meetings. A very pleasant half-hour was spent by the members reading the newspaper clippings so kindly sent by Ron Hodgson - also the copy of the rules and Winter Syllabus were read with great interest. Stan Nicholls had excited our interest by his reports on the photographs taken at our previous meeting and when these were passed around for general inspection, it was obvious that the photographer had done a splendid job.

Main feature of the evening's programme was most entertaining, two part talk by Victor Colby dealing with the styles employed by the various authors of the Sexton Blake stories and this was expressed in his usual interesting style. In lighter vein his second offering "Wal I'm darned" was an hilarious resume of an early Blake story. Arnold Keena then expressed the thanks of the members to Victor Colby and on this happy note the meeting broke up about 10.30 p.m.

BETTE PATE,  
Secretary.

## NELSON LEE COLUMN

by JACK WOOD

Nostaw, 328 Stockton Lane, York.

Phone: 25795

\* \* \* \* \*

Continuing his report from last month, our resident correspondent at St. Frank's, Jim Cook, produces all the old holiday flavour of the famous stories. He writes:-

"St. Frank's hasn't been the same since Dr. Stafford left." Lee said as though to himself. He left the window and returned to his chair. He was smiling now as if he had found a solution to a puzzle.

"Things may brighten up like old times when the doctor returns," he said cheerfully. "And you must admit most things happened when he ran St. Frank's." I agreed with him there. During the time other odd headmasters took over nothing much that could be called exciting took place here.

"Well, Mr. Lee, have you heard any more about Lord Dorrimore, since you received the cable from Walfis Bay?"

Since I wrote my last letter to the Collectors' Digest, Lee had heard from the happy go lucky sporting Peer.

"No, I haven't." "There is some mystery which I think may please your readers. Dorrimore had been set on taking a party to New Anglia this summer. As you know, the Antarctic Expedition has rather opened up new ideas about this kingdom left over from the past and Dorrie, and of course, myself, wanted to contribute to the International Geophysical Year."

"You mean you wanted to make yourselves available to Her Majesty's advisors for putting this place on the map?"

"Not exactly" smiled Lee. "I doubt whether the New Anglians would wish to suffer for our so called progress by letting people from this side of the world enter their domain. No, what we had in mind was a scientific survey after the style of Sir Vivian Fuchs, but, not, of course, so spectacular."

"Well, something big must have happened to put Dorrie off such a project." I pointed out, "And won't the juniors be disappointed, or were they not told?"

"First it is as you say, something big that had caused Dorrie to abandon the South Pole trip, and secondly, only Nipper knew about it. I'm infernally worried because Dorrie has mentioned in his cable about

a lost city in the Kalahari desert and, unless I am miles out, this refers to the lost city which Farini claimed to have discovered in 1885." "Are there still lost cities these days?" I grinned. Before replying, he got up and crossed over to a cupboard. He brought a roll from it and began to unfold it. It was a map. He pointed out the great Kalahari desert which for the most part is blank and only occasionally dotted with names. This part of Africa forms a closed book to me. All I know is that a great part of the territory belongs to the British Bechuanaland Protectorate. Lee told me the Kalahari covers some 120,000 square miles, which is an area as big as Great Britain, surely.

I stayed on for a little while longer, after which I left with the impression there is a lot more behind the whereabouts of Lord Dorrimore than Nelson Lee would admit. Seeking a lost city must surely indicate an Archaeological interest which, up to now, does not belong to Dorrie's many hobbies. However, something is afoot which promises to relieve the dull routine of school, and I hope to enlarge on this affair in my next report.

\* \* \*

Timothy Tucker has informed me of his desire to become a Member of Parliament. He tells me there is a by-election pending in Bennington. I told him to apply for the necessary writs for such occasions to the House of Commons. Can you imagine T.T. as an M.P.?

\* \* \*

I have been for a boat ride on the River Stowe. The other day was so beautiful and the river so inviting that when I saw Handforth and Co., carrying the boat out from the boat-house, I asked if there were room for me. The summer afternoon was sweltering, and it was, naturally, a half holiday or Handy would not have been on the river with his chums. The sun glared down from a cloudless sky of blue, and there was hardly a breath of wind in the heated atmosphere. On such a blazing afternoon cricket was almost painful - it was an afternoon when scarcely a living soul was to be found indoors. All the Houses were practically deserted. There's nothing like some fine weather to put new life into you.

\* \* \*

In his latest letter, Jim Cook writes:- By the time you read this I shall probably be en route for Africa! So much has

happened since I mailed my last letter to you that I do not really know where to begin.

You will recall that I interviewed Nelson Lee and that we got around to Lord Dorrimore's cable from the West Coast of Africa, and also, a guarded reference to a lost city in the Kalahari Desert. Well, following that message another was received from a place called Gobabis stating that a party led by Dorrie were fighting for their lives in a remote part of the Kalahari Desert, and a native runner had managed to escape and bring a message. The cable was signed by someone whose name meant nothing to most of us until Nelson Lee had a brainwave and rang Dr. Brett, the village medico. And the good doctor was able to throw some light on the subject. For Ridgeway was the owner of the Mount, which, you may remember, was converted into what is now the Moor View School. He had been a great friend of Lee and a long time ago had "boarded" a couple of juniors who had been temporarily sacked!

Ridgeway, who had been a novelist of some repute, had gone to live in Africa after selling the Mount and settled there. Because he kept in touch with Dr. Brett as Nelson Lee guessed, the cable immediately became authentic and urgent. It was from someone who could be relied upon not to mince matters, and who was an old friend of St. Frank's. Nelson Lee took control at once. A party was formed, packing and baggage attended to, departure details and passports and the hundred and one things that go with a trip abroad. Luckily, the summer vacation was about to begin and although this party was very similar to other holiday adventures Nelson Lee still had to get the parent's permission of the boys who were invited. And I never realised the feeling that went up and down the Lower school. A feeling that hinged on hatred from those who could not go, and a front of black looks and tension. It wasn't very nice since I felt like an intruder, and a limited number made my inclusion in the party subject to somebody being dropped out.

Nelson Lee had invited me to go to Africa and report for publication at which I jumped at the chance. If we all come out of it safely I will send you despatches each week and give you a full report in the Annual. As far as I know Africa holds no dangers these days for anyone. Where dense jungles once stood are now modern runways for swiftly moving planes and mud huts have given way to skyscraper hotels.

\* \* \* \* \*