

STORY PAPER  
**COLLECTORS DIGEST**

VOLUME 33

NUMBER 386

FEBRUARY 1979

# THE THEFT OF RORY!

JACK, SAM and PETE. By S. CLARKE HOOK	<b>THE</b> <b>MARVEL</b> <b>1<sup>D</sup></b>	THE COWARD. Grand Complete School Tale
--	---	--



RORY GAVE HIS FIRST GLANCE OF RECOGNITION,  
AND THEN HE SANK INTO THE SNOW.

Howard Baker Facsimiles. I have now acquired quite a number of very good second-hand copies with dust-wrappers, etc. The £4.95 are £3.25 and the £10 and £12 ones £7.50. The usual new stock of course.

Fine collection of Thomsons Annuals recently purchased. Please state requirements. New additions to stock - more Boys' Magazine (pink), The Popular, Triumph, Thrillers, Pilot and Pioneer - £1 each.

Fair copies of most Boys' papers and comics,  $\frac{1}{2}$  price. Bumper lots, asstd., 24 for £10 plus post.

Have you visited Aladdin's Cave? The largest stock of Old Boys' Books anywhere, see for yourself! Just give me a ring for an appointment to view.

Several large collections purchased last month!

# NORMAN SHAW

84 BELVEDERE ROAD

UPPER NORWOOD

LONDON, SE19 2HZ.

Tel. 01 771 9857

Nearest Station - Crystal Palace B.R.

STORY PAPER

**COLLECTORS DIGEST**

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by  
W. G. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 33

No. 386

FEBRUARY 1979

Price 24p

(COPYRIGHT. This magazine is privately circulated. The reproduction of the contents, either wholly or in part, without written permission from the Editor, is strictly forbidden.)

LET'S HAVE A GIGGLE

We have mentioned before that, every so often, professional writers for newspapers and magazines return for another bite of the cherry which grows on the Magnet and Gem tree. Just before Christmas my Sunday newspaper came up with yet another in the long, long list of articles down the years which have invited readers: "Let's have a giggle at the old boys' papers".

This one, inevitably, was decorated with a Chapman picture of Billy Bunter. Greyfriars, of course, did not escape attention, and Hurree Singh was referred to as the "nawob" of Bhanipur, and Bulstrode

was described as the bully of the Remove. As Inky was never the "nawob", and Bulstrode disappeared from Greyfriars after early days, one doubted whether the writer was really all that well acquainted with the subject he was having a mild giggle about.

Also, down the years, quite a few restaurants have turned up with the name "Bunter's". Several readers have sent me particulars of the latest which has opened in London, and Mr. Bob Moir forwarded a cutting from a newspaper of an article describing the new restaurant.

It seems from the article that the new "Bunter's" is "decked out with memorabilia from Bunter stories in the Gem and Magnet comics".

As we have mentioned before, people who really know what they are talking about do not call the Magnet and Gem "comics". "Memorabilia" from "comics" sounds just awful to me, though I'm sure it is an excellent restaurant. A word like "memorabilia", used in connection with the big business of nostalgia, to which I referred recently in this column, has probably come over the pond from Fishy's land, where the nostalgia boom exploded much earlier than over here. I only hope that we don't get caught up in it, and that nobody will start describing C.D. as a "fanzine".

Trendiness and nostalgia don't mix.

#### FROM BLOCK CALENDARS TO CHOCKS

Every Christmas my best girl gives me a block calendar. Every day, all through the year, I tear the date off each morning, and read the day's message.

I have always loved a block calendar. Today they are difficult to obtain, and only a very few, mainly of a religious nature, are now manufactured. It was very different, years ago. As I grew up, and the years flew by, the stationers were always stacked with block calendars of all types - Humorous, Famous Sayings, Quotations from the Classics, Religious, Shakespeare, Dickens, Cookery hints - every subject you could think of. In more than thirty years of school life, I always had a different block calendar in each of my form-rooms.

And then some Chancellor introduced a new tax - Purchase Tax - and evidently he didn't like block calendars for he slammed the heaviest purchase tax of all on them. It almost doubled their buying price in the

---

shops, and the industry was killed off. Only a few religious blocks - sponsored by a religious firm - are available today.

It has always seemed to me that a tax which kills off an industry must be a bad tax, but governments always seem naive and gullible. Charles Hamilton used to say that cabinet ministers were not too well equipped for thinking at all, which may be the reason that he was never honoured as he should have been.

For instance, they replaced a pound worth 240 pence with one worth 100 pence, and then were astounded that inflation leaped entirely beyond their control. They abolished the death penalty, and just couldn't believe it when criminals started carrying guns and shooting their way out of trouble. Another lot opened wide the cesspool gates so the country became awash with pornography, and then were utterly amazed that a great increase in sex crimes occurred. Yes, indeed, they're naive and gullible.

Yet another lot is determined to land us with Metrication. Just before Christmas I bought what I thought was a half-pound of chocolates. When I got it home, I read on the box: 195 g. (net), which sounded liberal, and, in addition, 6.88 oz., which didn't sound so good. So the price had gone up and the weight had gone down since last year. As Mr. Alonzo Todd, the Minister, would say: "Amazing! Nay, incredible!"

### THE COST OF C.D.

Commencing next month, with our March issue, the cost of C.D. will rise by two pence to 26p. There is no need, I know, for me to say how much I regret the increase, but the costs of all branches of production continue to rise and are entirely beyond my control. In fact, it seems that inflation in this land is entirely beyond anybody's control. It is depressing and embarrassing for me. I suppose that, while everybody expects and gets an increased income, more or less, every year, it is just a way of life that prices follow suit. One can only carry on and hope for the best.

### THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

Mr. Tom Porter has suggested that, each month, when space

permits, we should devote a few lines to the adventures of the Princess Snowee, and thoughts concerning her family. Cat lovers will like the idea, and I expect the rest will smile tolerantly.

For this month's corner, I feel I must refer to the most beautiful Cat Calendar by Beverley Nichols. Naturally we have it every year. In the text accompanying the January picture, Mr. Nichols writes:

"Are cat-lovers snobs? Speaking for myself, the answer is definitely yes. Why? Because I love grace. I am attracted by elegance and I respect the pride that goes with breeding. And in case this sounds arrogant, let me suggest that all cats have these qualities. Not only the pampered beauties of the drawing-room but their less fortunate sisters in the shabby streets. To me they are all aristocrats, and should be treated as such."

How beautifully Mr. Nichols expresses it.

THE EDITOR

\* \* \* \* \*

# DANNY'S DIARY

## FEBRUARY 1929

It has been a very cold February, and the weather was really bitter in the middle of the month. It really set in on the 11th, when there was keen frost over the whole country, and in Kent there was 13 degrees of frost. And then, for a week or so, it got colder and colder. There was a shortage of water in many places, and big teams of hard workers kept the roads clear of snow. I went down a hill on a sledge and couldn't turn it at the bottom, so I crashed through a fence. Luckily it was a very soft fence, and the fence suffered more than I did.

In the Modern Boy, the long Ken King series about the gold in the sunken Spanish galleon has continued and finally ended. It was Jim Daunt, the sailorman, who had the secret of the treasure, and in "The Luck of Dandy Peter", Peter managed to get the secret. Then, in "Sailing for Treasure", both Ken King and Dandy Peter sought the bars of gold, hidden in the wreck of the galleon.

"The Lost Galleon" brought the rivals to the galleon and the

---

treasure, only to find themselves facing a giant octopus. In "Fortune's Favourite", it was Ken King who at last got the treasure, bringing an exciting series to a close.

Our King is convalescent after his illness, and has gone to Craigwell House in Bognor, with the Queen, to try to build up his health again.

The glorious series about the Greyfriars chums in the States has continued in the Magnet. I am loving every word of it. The month's opening tale is "Harry Wharton & Co. in New York". Coker is kidnapped and it is Bunter who rescues him. Next, "Greyfriars Chums in Chicago". This one has Lord Mauleverer in the lead. He puts paid to some villains in Chicago.

Next, "Held up by Bandits", with Hurree Singh putting the snaffle on the thieves who hold up the train which is speeding west with our pals. And this particular week, the Magnet is 21 years old. Last tale of the month is "Bunter's Amazaing Adventure". In San Francisco, Bunter is mistaken for Lord Mauleverer.

All through the month, they have continued to give away the metal badges of famous makes of cars - mainly British cars, for British cars and motor-bikes lead the world, and it's a lovely proud feeling.

A new paper has come on the market. It is called "The Thriller", and, so far, I have had it every week, thanks to my brother, Doug, buying it and passing it on to me. The opening issue contains "Red Aces" by Edgar Wallace, and I liked it all right. The second issue contained "Lynch Law" by Hugh Clevely, which is a tale of the underworld of London. In the third issue is another Edgar Wallace novel "Kennedy, the Con Man", which features Wallace's famous detective, Mr. J. G. Reader, and it is good.

England have won the Ashes in Australia, and it has been the finest series of games ever between the two countries. At the end of the month the Daily News gave away a big photograph of the English team, and the Nelson Lee Library is also celebrating by giving away metal pictures of the star cricketers. They give three with each issue, and there is an album to keep them in. They are fine.

Two very good stories in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. "The Get-Rich Quick Schoolboy" is a long old tale about Fisher T. Fish,

---

and "The Rookwood Rebellion" is about a kind of barring-out of the juniors against Mr. Manders. This one was really the result of a Christmas holiday affair, though the Christmas part of it all has been left out.

At the pictures this month we have seen Lon Chaney in "London After Midnight", a good thriller; Lillian Gish in "The Wind"; Jackie Coogan in "Buttons"; George O'Brien in "Three Naval Rascals" (my favourite film of the month); Alice Terry in "Garden of Allah"; William Haines and Joan Crawford in "Eternal Youth"; Gloria Swanson in "Sadie Thompson" (from a Somerset Maughan short story); and a lovely one, H. B. Warner, Alice Joyce, and Anna Q. Nilsson in "Sorrell and Son".

Nothing in the Gem is by the real Martin Clifford these days. The first tale is "Taggles' Barring-Out", a sequel to the final story of January; then two tales "The Mystery of Spalding Hall" and "A Fortune at Stake". Ernest Levison is kidnapped by a gang of ruthless crooks. His sister is a pupil at the new school. Finally "Two Forms at War" in which Messrs. Lathom and Linton quarrel, and their forms take sides with their masters. This one continues next month.

On the last day of the month the tramway system at Gravesend in Kent was scrapped, and the services are taken over by the Maidstone & District Bus Co. I'm always sorry to see big changes like that.

A boy violinist named Yehudin Menuhin has appeared in London, and his sensitive performance has brought him great kudos. His picture is in all the papers.

One evening I went to the first house at New Cross Empire. The chief act, which occupied all the second half, was the appearance of an Australian escapologist named "Murray". I loved it.

In the Popular "The New Recruit of Sampson's Ranch" is the opening tale of the Rio Kid. He makes a cowboy out of Captain Shack, the villain who shaghaied the Kid. The next tale is "The Man from Frio". Cactus Pete, a ruffian who knew the Kid in the old days, turns up to spoil things for the Kid on the Sampson Ranch.

Next week "Roped In", when Cactus Pete betrays the Kid to the Law. The Sampson bunch wants to stand by their pal, but the Kid gives himself up. Finally, "The Kid Wins Through" when the Kid rides to freedom. Great western stories.

Also in the Popular, the St. Frank's chums are in an African

series, and the Greyfriars pals are at the House of Pengarth, while Tom Merry & Co. are finishing off their Christmas barring-out.

In the Nelson Lee Library, St. Frank's is on an educational cruise in the School Ship, with Nelson Lee as the Headmaster. They are now in Australia, and the month's first tale is "The Adelaide Test Match Sensation", in which William Napoleon Browne, by means of the Adelaide Sentinel newspaper, brings off a huge hoax in connection with cricket. Next week, in "St. Frank's at the Test Match", Handforth has vowed to get the autographs of all the Australian cricketers. The following week, "In Unknown Australia" finds the chums stranded like Crusoes in a valley where a visitor, once he has entered the place, is never allowed to leave again. The chief of the valley is the White Master.

The final tale of the month is "The Valley of Surprises". The St. Frank's fellows are getting lots of exciting adventures, but I should think the educational part of the tour is a bit thin.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S.O.L. No. 93, "The Get-Rich-Quick Schoolboy" was constructed from a few chapters of the mid-1913 story "Uncle Fish", in which Fish set up as a pawnbroker, followed by the entire 1912 red Magnet tale "The Greyfriars Insurance Co." The latter was probably the best Fish story, of this type, in the earlier Magnets. S.O.L. No. 94, "The Rookwood Rebellion" comprised eight stories from the Boys' Friend of January and February 1922. This seems a lot, but the Rookwood tales in 1922 were very short indeed, occupying much less than two B.F. pages. It was a contrived series - a crowd of juniors kept at school through the Christmas vacation, owing to an outbreak of influenza. Written by a lesser writer it would have been an absurdity, and, in fact, it was just that when a sub writer pinched the theme for a dreadful Gem pair. The first story of the series about the rebellion against Mr. Manders, who was kept at school in charge of the juniors, was omitted, and a tale in the middle of the series was also cut away. The series developed into a row between Mr. Manders and Mr. Dalton,

The scrapping of the Gravesend tramway service is interesting as it was the very first abandonment of trams in the Greater London area.)

\* \* \* \* \*

WANTED: To buy or loan: C.D. issue containing article by Roger Jenkins on Charles Hamilton's minor schools stories which appeared in the Boys' Friend Library. Sorry, no number or date. Also any pre-1920 Hamilton school stories in "Pluck", "Vanguard", Trapps Holmes comics, etc., and "The Man Without a Name" in "Gleam Supplement" dated 6th February, 1902. State price required. If loaned, will return immediately after reading.

HOWARD PIPE, 23 STOKE LANE  
WESTBURY-ON-TRYM, BRISTOL, BS9 3DP.

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Well, here is the second part of our trip into the Occult as travellers with Sexton Blake. I do hope you enjoy it and if anyone wants to read this story it is available from my lending Library.

I have also received two articles on the subject of Sexton Blake versus Sherlock Holmes which I propose to publish in next month's Blakiana. My own opinion on this matter, especially regarding the remarks I made about snobbishness, referred not to Sherlock Holmes himself but to the presenter of "The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes" Sexton Blake was the greatest rival of all. After all is done and said, practically every one of those other detectives are long forgotten, just shadows which appeared in a few magazines way back in the 1890's. Our Sexton Blake still lives.

## A DOG FOR DINNER

by S. Gordon Swan

Pedro as a prospective meal for two starving detectives? It seems an unlikely contingency, but that was the situation the noble hound found himself in during 1906, at a time when both he and Tinker were comparative newcomers to the cast of the Sexton Blake Saga.

The story which contained this episode is to be found in U.J. No. 152, "The Steward Detective", by W. Murray Graydon. The Rajah of Jazelpur had come to London some time after an attempt by his rascally brother, Heera Beg, aided and abetted by a Russian spy, Serge Zouroff, to remove him from the throne.

This was the result of a Russian plot. Yes, the Russians were at it even in those pre-Soviet days, during the old Czarist regime. The state of Jazelpur was near the northern border of India and the Russians wanted to get control of it so that they could have easy access to India when the time was ripe for an invasion. But the Rajah, Kumar Beg, was loyal to the British Raj, so an attempt had been made by his brother, Heera Beg, to usurp the throne.

In London the Rajah was kidnapped and members of his entourage came to Sexton Blake for help. Blake and Tinker succeeded in rescuing the Indian potentate; then the Foreign Office requested Blake to accompany the Rajah back to India on the liner Darjeeling. The detective was to undertake the journey unknown to His Highness, so

Blake and Tinker went aboard as steward and cabin-boy respectively. The author showed knowledge of the duties of ships' stewards and the idiom relating to their various jobs.

The Rajah, while he might have been loyal to the British Empire, was by no means an amiable character. A despot, he had much in common with the Red Queen, particularly in his outbursts of "Off with his head" when anyone displeased him. Both Blake and Tinker fell foul of him on the voyage: Tinker when the purser gave him a package to take to His Highness -- the package contained a deadly snake; Blake when, owing to an accident, he deposited a plate of steaming soup in the Rajah's lap.

Heera Beg was on board disguised as a lascar, the Russian masquerading as one of the passengers. In the Indian Ocean, after the ship had weathered a typhoon, the Russian threw Blake overboard; Tinker jumped after him bearing two life-belts and Pedro followed. The vessel stopped but searchers failed to find the detectives, so the ship went on its way. Blake and Tinker, supporting Pedro for hours, were at their last gasp when they spotted a crude raft on which they climbed. Evidently this had been made by the crew of some other vessel which had foundered during the typhoon, but the men aboard it must have been washed off.

The detectives were not much better off. All that they found on the raft were an axe, a knife and a few mouldy biscuits. There was no water. Thirsty and hungry, they were in a sorry plight. Then Blake captured a large white bird that flew over them and this helped to assuage their hunger. A rainstorm that blew up on one occasion gave them water to drink but they had no means of preserving any of the precious liquid.

For days they drifted. Blake contrived to kill a shark with the axe but the inevitable seemed only to be postponed. He had to restrain Tinker from jumping overboard. Then came the situation referred to at the beginning of this article -- whether to kill Pedro in order to obtain food to survive. Blake contemplated this, abandoned the idea, then returned to it in spite of Tinker's protests. The bloodhound would have been sacrificed had not the lad sighted a ship at the critical moment.

The vessel belonged to an American millionaire and took Blake

and Tinker to Colombo where they encountered the head steward who told them that there had been an attempt on the Rajah's life and that the passenger believed to be Serge Zouroff had left the ship and a newcomer had come aboard at Colombo. Blake suspected this to be Zouroff in another disguise.

It was arranged that the chief steward should smuggle Blake and Tinker aboard that night. While the detective was waiting that evening he was attacked by a lascar. He was rescued by Tinker and Pedro and the lascar proved to be Heera Beg. He was taken into custody but would not betray his accomplice.

Once aboard, Blake was astounded to hear that the Rajah was dead. There was argument between the captain, who wanted to bury the body at sea, and the Rajah's servants who wished to carry the remains to Jazelpur. The new passenger, Dr. Lambrick, volunteered to examine the corpse. Meanwhile, Blake had entered the Rajah's cabin and hid behind the curtain when he heard the captain and the doctor coming. As the latter bent over the body of the Rajah Blake sprang from concealment and wrested a thin steel weapon from the would-be assassin's grip. The doctor, who was indeed the Russian, took poison and died. The Rajah's servitors then revived His "dead" Highness who had been given a drug which simulated death.

Blake's mission was to have ended at Calcutta, where a military escort was to take over as guardian to the Rajah, but the latter persuaded the detectives to accompany him to Jazelpur, where they spent a week's holiday. It was said that even Pedro enjoyed himself. Perhaps he was celebrating his escape from the fate of providing a meal for his masters.

---

## THE HOUSE OF THE HOROSCOPE

by Raymond Cure

Horoscopes are all the rage. Politicians, film stars and other celebrities await the conjunction of various planets to find what fate has in store for them. Thousands follow the tid-bits in the daily and evening papers and Women's Weekly and woe betide the editor who neglects to carry the horoscope figures, etc.

Not that horoscopes were always on the go, more or less, less if anything in the twenties (1920's). Today people haste to tell you that they are Scorpion or Gemini or whatever . . . In case the reader is interested

---

---

I am Taurus and whatever you can make of that you are welcome. Ma being a fortune-teller, clairvoyant and crystal gazer, I met some nice people in those circles between 1926 and 1960. One thing I noticed that while they worked out your destiny via the Zodiac their own destiny seemed to take them by surprise. Ma wrote to one of the leading lights she knew for a full horoscope for me when I was fifteen; for a few years it was my bible till I found the Christian Bible made a lot more sense. However, to see the title across a Union Jack No. 1111, dated 1925, "House of the Horoscope" awoke the dormant in me. So let us enter the house of the Horoscope. Take a good look at the wall pictures, black and white drawings by J. H. Valda depicting the exciting incidents we shall come across as we wander around and every chapter headed by a sign. Large print books in your local Library include some called "Zodiac" each one a tale of people born under one of the signs, which reveals that Sexton Blake and the Union Jack were leading the way in 1925.

The author (Gilbert Chester) heads each chapter with a sign and its significance, not necessarily the Zodiac signs, take one chapter, Neptune - bringer of fear, the chapter itself throbbing with stark fear. Chapter two, Jupiter, the befriender. Yseult Axell, the terror stricken lady of chapter one finds a friend in chapter two, hence the heading. The befriender being none other than Sexton Blake. So we can follow the trail, Mercury - the torch-bearer of reason, Mars - the formenter of strife, Saturn - the planet of falls, Uranus - the destroyer, Lord of Altruism, Venus - the lady of love and good fortune; each chapter works out its theme in the course of the story.

Imagining that as you go through the house of the Horoscope each sign is a door in this house, you will then enter with a thrill of fear and leave with the lady of love and good fortune. As a bonus you will have the company of Sexton Blake and Tinker through each room - and that's no mean thing.

The author appears to know his stuff as the centre pages of this copy of the Union Jack is devoted to an article - "Astrology and Crime" written by him in which he says: "It may be thought that I have made Sexton Blake, the modern, shrewd and hard-headed detective conversant with astrology. It may be considered even more remarkable that I should have made him resort to it as a means of solving the mystery that

---

confronted him. A little reflection however will serve to show that Blake's conduct was neither so extra-ordinary, nor so far-fetched as it might appear to be". The author goes on to point out that if astrology had been made use of in the past by charlatry and imposture then every detective should acquaint himself with it. Actually the author wrote this in 1925, in 1978/9 Astrology is more respectable (though still used to influence the gullible) and from the pages of the new paper "The Star" I quote:-

"Two hundred years ago S. Macdonald would have been burnt at the stake. Today the 51-year old "Highland Seer" is still pursued by the police but for a different reason. He is helping the Northern Constabulary's murder squad to locate the bodies of the contractor's wife, Mrs. Renee McRae and her three-year old son Andrew, missing from their Inverness home for two years. I feel convinced that both are buried near running water. I feel drawn to the mystery, friends of the McRae's asked me to find out if they were still alive and I told them NO."

He has my best wishes whether or not, but it proves my point that Astrology and the Occult are much more respectable today.

The author of "The House of the Horoscope" had no need to fear. He had not demeaned our Sexton Blake by his use of Astrology. He has exalted him. After all, he put Sexton Blake over fifty years ahead of the police of 1978.

\* \* \* \* \*

# Nelson Lee Column

ECHO OF JANUARY

from Chas. Churchill

I much enjoyed the delectable article by Mr. S. Gordon Swan in the Nelson Lee section of the January C.D., regarding the stories by G. H. Teed in the N.L. Library. I would like to add that there were in all five stories of the adventures of Dr. Mortimer Crane. These were as follows:-

No. 55, "The Man with Four Identities"

No. 58, "The Crimson Disc"

cont'd . . .

- No. 61, "The Golden Boomerang"  
 No. 71, "The Clue of the Raincoat"  
 No. 79, "The Mystery of the Closed Door"

In the final story Crane came to an end by taking poison. The Black Wolf appeared in No. 61 as well. It seems strange that Mr. Teed should include her in one story only of this series about Crane when she had her own series of stories. After No. 61 it was over a year before she appeared again (in Nos. 107 & 108) and this was then the end of her. She just disappeared from the scene and we never heard of her again.

### BROOKS - SECOND SIGHT?

by R. J. Godsave

It would almost seem that E. S. Brooks possessed a prophetic second sight in that some of his St. Frank's stories which were pure fiction in the 1920's became facts many years later.

Perhaps, the Communist School series written at the end of 1921 was the most outstanding example. One has only to cast one's mind back to a year or so ago to remember the sit-ins and other forms of student protest which were front page news. In 1921 Communism was, more or less, confined to Russia, and the idea that anything of that nature could ever happen in this country was laughable.

In the 1970's industrial unrest, which often ends in strikes, has almost become a way of life due mainly to the pressures of inflation. In March 1920, Brooks wrote the 'School on Strike' series in which the domestic staff at St. Frank's College came out on strike after the refusal of Sir Roger Stone, Chairman of the Board of Governors, to grant an increase of 50% in their wages, in spite of the cost of living having risen to well over 100%. After the 1914-1918 war prices were running fairly high and the action of the strikers was backed-up by the junior school. A fascinating series in which the juniors had to make their beds and attempt to cook the meals makes good reading.

A few months ago a report appeared in the newspapers of people in Peru being lured to work in the jungles by the promise of high wages and free transport. Those who took advantage of this tempting offer soon found that they were virtually slaves, cut off from civilisation almost, and forced to dig for gold. Brooks wrote the Dorriemore Island series

---

in 1923 in which the St. Frank's party, falling foul of a Captain Hurricane, found themselves trapped, and forced to form additional chain gangs with those, mainly shanghaied sailors, already on the island. Again the aim was gold digging. With no wages to pay, and the supply of indifferent food, profits could be high.

These are a few examples of what could be called imaginative stories which have come true.

WHEN IS A COINCIDENCE NOT A  
COINCIDENCE?

by William Lister

Whether you believe in coincidence or not, there are times when things have the appearance of coincidence.

Like the event of two years ago when, as I sat down to read a St. Frank's tale in which our schoolboy heroes were embarking on an airship to adventures unknown, there appeared overhead a large airship shaped balloon.

Lots of neighbours turned out to view it along with myself, after which I returned to my "Nelson Lee".

No! it wasn't a U.F.O. It was some advertising gimmick - but to appear at that precise moment, oh, boy! Of course, a thing like that couldn't happen a second time, or could it? Let me assure you that it could - and it did.

Only the other day while I was perusing the pages of a 1924 "Nelson Lee" series, almost as my eyes alighted on No. 474 of 5th July, "A Schoolgirl's Word of Honour", a T.V. discussion commenced in which one of the Women's Lib. enthusiasts criticised the Ladybird book producers, for using stories in which the role of little girls and women were played down to the advantage of the males. The gentleman concerned assured the alarmed lady that new editions of Ladybird books would rectify this and mentioned that in one case even girl cricketers were featured.

So there was this "coincidence thing" again, and what a scoop for our Edwy Searles Brooks. Here was a 1979 book publisher endeavouring to pacify the alarmed "Women's Lib." spokesman, (or should I say spokeswoman) by letting her know that the new-look "Ladybirds" would proceed to lift the fictional female characters to higher heights - even to

---

the realms of cricket.

Good for 1979, but in my hand I was holding a 1924 copy of the "Nelson Lee" in which the girls of Moorfield School are engaged in a thrilling cricket match with the St. Frank's boys; and, what is more the Moorview girls turn out to be the winners.

Now we are talking about fifty-five years ago. If I could have handed my Nelson Lee through my T.V. screen I would have liked to have dropped it on the lady's lap.

I will admit that the Moorview girls only won by one run, but still the girls won; and that in 1924! Good for Women's Lib. and good for Edwy Searles Brooks.

But we St. Frank's fans always knew that E.S.B. was ahead of his day.

\* \* \* \* \*

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 153 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 296 - "The Fourth Form  
at Rookwood"

Many of the later Rookwood Schoolboys' Owns were little more than miscellaneous collections of odd stories, often from early days. It is easy to recognise the origins of "The Fourth Form at Rookwood" because of the manner in which the character of Valentine Mornington was handled.

Mornington was originally presented as a purse-proud snob with a streak of unreliability and unscrupulousness, often leading to viciousness. This was clearly shown in the hare and hounds paper-chase, when he partnered Jimmy Silver as a hare and played all sorts of tricks on him but eventually carried him home on his back in a quixotic gesture to prevent both hares from being caught. He was given a place in the junior football team as a reward, only to let the side down in his usual unpredictable manner.

The presence of a military camp at Latcham and the special regard paid to soldiers suggests a story from the first world-war, which again means a reprint from early numbers of the Boys' Friend. Jimmy Silver dressed up as a chap named Argent who invited the Modern juniors to send a football team to play a non-existent Drummer Boys'

Eleven on April the first. This was a successful revenge for a trick played on the Classics a week earlier.

Leggett was a villain to fit all occasions at Rookwood. He was a combination of Skinner and Fish, combining malice with avarice. In one story he typed a letter from a firm of solicitors for Tubby Muffin, informing that fat junior that he had come into a fortune from his uncle. When Tubby borrowed on the strength of his expectations, Leggett obtained a rake-off, and all went well until Tubby's 'deceased' uncle paid him an unexpected visit at the school. On another occasion, Leggett took a bribe from Pankley to raid the Rookwood studies and leave insulting messages from Pankley behind, suggesting that the Bagshot junior was some sort of invisible ragger.

These early tales have a light touch and cover a variety of themes: yet they are far from being mere trivialities. So far as I am concerned, Rookwood is the last creation of Charles Hamilton that carries both a full realisation of the author's talents and that magical essence of belief that can carry the reader away unquestioningly. I have to be in the mood for a Greyfriars or a St. Jim's story, but when my eye lights upon the bound set of complete Rookwood Schoolboys' Owns I stretch out my hand without question. I am always in the mood for a Rookwood story.

\* \* \* \* \*

REVIEW

THE TOFF OF ST. JIM'S

Martin Clifford  
(Howard Baker: £12)

This is one of the Howard Baker "specials", and it is a beautiful book from any viewpoint. All of these "specials" have been good, but this one is arguably the best of the lot. It seems to me that production, down to the last detail, cannot be faulted, and the contents are superb. One cannot but be impressed by the dignity, the tidiness, and the solid stability of these old English papers, just at the time when the First World War was breaking out. These were qualities which were lost as the war progressed, and they were never found again. Nothing that I have seen, in the papers produced for youngsters now, even remotely approaches what was on the market in mid-1914.

A generous helping of no less than eleven 32-page blue Gems helps to make this volume a book to cherish for all time.

Here we have the first two Talbot series. The first series, commencing with the famous one entitled "The Toff" introduces Talbot - handsome, intelligent, a fine cricketer, and a

professional thief. He is recognised by Joe Frayne, who himself had been rescued from London's underworld. Hookey Walker takes his first bow. His unworthy shadow was to fall across dozens more tales as the years went by. Tom Merry becomes Talbot's closest friend. The first series comprised four stories. At the end we were told: "Talbot was not seen again at St. Jim's". Whether the St. Jim's saga would have been better had the author meant what he said is a question you can answer for yourself. I have harped on the point in many articles in C. D. down the years.

At any rate, three months later Talbot was back. He earned "The King's Pardon" for saving a troop train from disaster, went to the New House as a bootboy for a while, and then won the Foundation Scholarship and re-joined the School House as a star pupil. The second series comprised three stories.

There can hardly be any question that these first two Talbot series were the best of all those about the schoolboy Raffles. Martin Clifford never reached quite the same heights with Talbot again, and, later on, the sub writers were to re-hash Talbot's past over and over again. But nothing can dim the glory of these opening series.

A story of some irony in the book is "Monty Lowther's Mistake". Lowther loses his heart to Herr Schneider's niece, but Lowther guys the Herr in a school play, and breaks the young lady's heart. She never even spoke to Lowther again and he groaned over losing the fair German lass. The date? August 1st, 1914.

Three more tales tell of the holiday party at Eastwood House - Tom Merry's last summer holiday before the war altered everything. Lumley-Lumley made one of his last appearances in the first of the three. And the ubiquitous crook of early days, Captain Punter, is on the scene to bring us happy memories of what used to be.

Chungum's Circus, plus Billy Bunter, turns up in the second holiday tale, and in the third yarn Blake and Co. lose Study No. 6 to the black sheep, Levison, with his cronies. It is Lowther - not Manners - with a camera who gets a snap of the blades playing cards in their new study and makes them give No. 6 back to its owners.

There is another little item to endear this volume to sentimental readers. Instalments of a serial by Clive Fenn are illustrated by either J. Louis Smythe or Wakefield - their work was very similar, and I would not be surprised if Wakefield modelled himself on the great Smythe. The pictures are fascinating.

An excellent book! Happy reading.

\*\*\*\*\*  
 FOR SALE: Magnets 321, 350, £2.50 each; 512, 1101, 1124, £1.50 each. G.H.A's 1929, 1935, 1939, 1941, £4.50 each. All above good condition. Magnet reading copies: 230, 259, 397, 424, 427, 1113, £5.50 the six. 'Science Fiction Art' (£2.95) and 'Origin of Marvel Comics' (£6.95); as new £4.00 the two. All items plus postage.

BECK, 29 MILL ROAD, LEWES, SUSSEX.

\*\*\*\*\*  
 SALE: B. O. P's Vol. 1, Nos. 1 - 14. Details of condition, etc., from CONCHAR,  
13 COTTON ST., CASTLE DOUGLAS, KIRKCUDBRIGHTSHIRE.

## BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

### No. 59. A WOMAN'S FACE

Our opening programme brought, from M.G.M., in glowing Technicolor, Fred Astaire and Lucille Bremer in "Yolanda and the Thief". Another Technicolor item in the same bill was the newest Tom & Jerry cartoon "Cat Fishing". There are also two documentary items in that programme which intrigue me all these years later. One was "The Voice that Thrilled the World". I wonder whose voice it was .. Melba's? Caruso's? I can't remember at all. The other item was "Remember When?" That title makes one think that the nostalgia craze might even have been starting then. But I have long forgotten.

Next week brought, from M.G.M., my favourite of all Joan Crawford films - "A Woman's Face". It was sheer melodrama, but great, great entertainment, with a nailbiting finish. I loved most Crawford pictures, and admired a fine artist.

A coloured cartoon in the same bill was "I only have Eyes for You".

Next week, Warner Bros. sent us John Garfield in "Forever in Love", which was probably good like most Garfield films. A Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon in that bill was "The Bodyguard".

Next a double-feature programme: from Warner's came Ida Lupino in "Pillow to Post" and from M.G.M. the supporting film was John Hodiak and Lucille Ball in "Two Smart People". I have a note that the script of the latter film was by Leslie Charteris. A coloured Droopy cartoon in

the same bill was "Hound Hunters".

The next programme looks very interesting indeed, though I have long forgotten it. The main feature, from M.G.M., was Robert Young in "Florian" which I have a feeling was famous in its day. In support, from Warner's, was "Okay for Sound" which was an hour-long documentary telling of the coming of the talkies, and must have been as interesting as such things always are. A Passing Parade was "Magic on a Stick", an intriguing title, a coloured Fitzpatrick Traveltalk was "Mediterranean Ports of Call", and a coloured cartoon was "She was only an Acrobat's Daughter".

Next week, a delightful film from M.G.M.: Butch Jenkins in "Boys' Ranch". There were two short dramas (about thirty minutes each) entitled "Drunk Driving" and "Star in the Night" in the bill which included a Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon "Part-Time Pal".

The following week brought a double-feature programme: Butch Jenkins in "Little Mr. Jim" from M.G.M., and Joan Leslie in "Too Young to Know" from Warner Bros. There was a coloured cartoon in the bill, I see, but its name is not recorded.

Then, from M.G.M., Margaret O'Brien, Lionel Barrymore, Lewis Stone, and Edward Arnold in "Three Wise Fools". A coloured cartoon was "Swooner Crooner".

Now M.G.M. re-issued their magnificent production from the Cronin book "The Citadel", starring Robert Donat

and Rosalind Russell and we gave it a welcome return date. (M. G. M. had not been too lucky in the pictures made at their British studios, but there were three big hits - this one, "The Citadel" - the unforgettable "Good-bye, Mr. Chips" - both of these we played twice - and, later on, "Ivanhoe" which was one of our last films.) A coloured cartoon with "The Citadel" was "Red Hot Rangers".

Next, from M. G. M., an excellent psychological thriller, which was taken from a popular novel of the time: Lana Turner in "The Postman Always Rings Twice".

\* \* \* \* \*

(OUR CLASSIC SERIAL from early in the Century, well over seventy years ago.)

### THE MISADVENTURES OF MARMADUKE

"Great snakes!" ejaculated Figgins.  
"What's that?"

Figgins & Co. had come in while Blake was gone to the village, and they were in the quad, and they immediately spotted the chief of the School House juniors as he marched his prisoner in.

"One of 'em's Blake", said Kerr, surveying the muddy pair. "The other might be the wild man from Borneo."

"Let's go and inquire," suggested Fatty Wynn.

And Figgins & Co. bore down on the School House juniors.

"Hallo, Blake!" said Figgins genially. "What's the game; and where did you pick that up?"

"It's a new kid," explained Blake. "I promised Kildare to bring it straight to St. Jim's, and it didn't want to come. Behold the result!"

To wind up that term came, from M. G. M., Van Johnson and Pat Kirkwood in "No Leave - No Love", which sounds as though it might have been a bit tame. But I'm sure there was nothing tame about "Keystone Hotel", another of the splendid collections of sequences from early Mack Sennett Keystone Comedies - these came from Warner, and were always a smash hit. A colour cartoon in that bill was "I'm a Big Shot Now".

(ANOTHER ARTICLE IN THIS  
SERIES NEXT MONTH)

"Does that object belong to your house?"

"Kildare says so," groaned Blake. "Its name is Marmaduke Smythe, and it's a millionaire from Petticoat Lane."

"Fellow, how dare you!" exclaimed Marmaduke. "My father is Samuel Smythe, the millionaire, and I shall write to him about this outrage. You will all be severely punished."

Figgins stared, and then chuckled.

"You've got some funny merchants in the School House, but this is the funniest of the bunch. I should drown it if I were you. It's whiffy, too. Take it in and wash it - do!"

"Walk up, gents!" exclaimed Kerr, in imitation of a showman. "Come and see the latest addition to the School House menagerie."

"Oh, clear off!" said Blake

crossly. "Get out of the way, you New House cads."

"Walk up!" yelled Figgins. "Come and see the latest - ooch!"

Blake had collared the New House chief. Blake was redolent of the deep, slimy ditch, and gracefully festooned with fungus like the new boy. He wasn't pleasant at close quarters, as Figgins soon found.

"Get away!" gasped Figgins. "Chuck it!"

Blake grinned, and hugged his old enemy as if he loved him. Mud and slime was transferred to the person of Figgins.

With a desperate wrench, Figgins tore himself away.

"I'll scalp you for this!" he yelled furiously.

"Come on, then," said Blake, darting at him.

But Figgins had had enough. He scuttled away, and the Co., equally desirous of avoiding Blake's embrace, followed their leader. Blake, laughing, returned to Marmaduke, and marched him on to the School House.

"Come on, Marmy", he said. "I'm going to show you to Kildare to prove that I've kept my word, and then you can go and clean yourself. This way."

"I refuse to come with you."

"Oh, come along, fathead!" said Blake. Seizing Marmaduke by the collar, he ran him into the School House, and along to Kildare's study.

The Captain of St. Jim's was at home, and his cheery voice bade Blake enter. The junior propelled the squirming Marmaduke into the room. Herries hung behind, grinning.

Kildare was seated at his table, working out a mathematical problem. He forgot all about mathematics at the sight of the strange object propelled into his room.

"Blake. What have you been doing?"

"Falling into a ditch!"

"That cannot be the new boy?"

"It's the very identical article."

"What has happened? Did the hack upset?"

"No, I believe the hack's all right. You told me to bring this merchant straight to St. Jim's, didn't you?"

"Yes, but --"

"That's what I've done. He didn't want to come in the hack. Wasn't good enough for him. Wanted to go around searching for something else. I remembered your instructions, and bundled him in head first."

"I never instructed you to do anything of the kind," gasped Kildare, not knowing whether to laugh or to be angry. "How did he get into this state?"

"He bolted from the hack. We both took a tumble in the ditch. Look nice, don't we? But I've brought him safe to St. Jim's, Kildare. Thought I'd please you."

Kildare laughed involuntarily.

"Now you've brought him safely here, take him to a bath-room and clean him, and get him a change of clothes."

"Right you are!"

"Stop!" yelled Marmaduke. "Let me speak!"

"What is it, Smythe?"

"I have been treated outrageously. I am the son of Smythe, the millionaire.

I understand you are the captain, or something in this school, and have some authority."

"Yes, that's about right."

"Then I insist you immediately punish that insolent boy."

Kildare stared at him.

"Do you hear?" snapped

Marmaduke. "He has been most insolent, I am accustomed to being treated with respect. Punish him at once."

Kildare sat down.

"Take him away and clean him, Blake."

"I insist --" spluttered Marmaduke.

But Blake's strong grip on his collar cut him short. Blake propelled him out of the study as he had propelled him into it, and the door closed. Kildare returned to his problem, and Blake marched Marmaduke off to a bath-room.

"This is a nice job to give me," he growled. "I thought I should be able to turn the object over to Kildare, and have done with it. Get me some clean clothes, Herries, old man, there's a good kid, and get something to shove on Marmaduke, too. His box hasn't come."

"Right-ho," said Herries.

Blake bundled Marmaduke into a bath-room. He turned on a tap, and a bath was soon filling with steaming water.

"Get those filthy things off and tumble into that!" he directed.

"Shan't!"

"You'll go in clothes and all, then!"

Marmaduke caught the gleam in Blake's eye, and thought he had better obey. He sullenly began to strip.

Herries came along with a change

of clothes. Blake was glad enough to bath and change, and even the sullen Marmaduke felt better for his wash. He had to dress in the odd garments Herries had found for him, and they did not meet with his approval. A very old pair of Norfolk knickers, much too short for him, with stockings too large, looked rather odd in conjunction with canvas tennis shoes, and a light-striped cricketing shirt. But, as Herries remarked, he had to take what he could get, and ought to be thankful for it.

"I won't wear those things!" he declared flatly.

"All right," said Blake serenely.

"You can put on your wet clothes, or stay in the bath till your box arrives, for all I care. Only that hack may be an hour yet, and I don't see who's going to unpack for you and get you a change of togs. I jolly well won't!"

"Get me some better clothes!"

"Can't be did! We don't keep a second-hand clothes department here."

"Your Sunday clothes would suit me very well."

"Marmy, you're too condescending. I've done all I've been told to do. Now I'm finished, and you're on your own."

Blake finished dressing, and walked away with Herries.

"It's rotten," said Herries.

"We've got to have him in our study. If he doesn't change a bit, we can make No. 6 too hot to hold him."

Blake grinned.

"Hallo! He's decided to clothe himself after all."

Marmaduke came along the corridor arrayed in his odds-and-ends of

raiment. He was looking savage, and his appearance was decidedly odd. He went into the hall, and, as luck would have it, met Mr. Kidd, the master of the School House, coming in.

The housemaster stared at the queer figure in amazement.

"Who are you, boy?" he demanded.

Marmaduke stared at him.

"Who are you?" he retorted. "You should not question me in that hectoring tone. I dislike it, and I decline to answer your impertinent question."

It took Mr. Kidd some moments to grasp this. Marmaduke turned to walk away. The housemaster stepped after him and took a grip on his ear, and twisted him round.

"Do you know who I am boy?" he thundered.

"No, I don't, and I don't want to," snarled Marmaduke.

"I am your housemaster. Are you the new boy?"

"Yes. I wish I had never come here."

"What is your name?"

"Find out!"

"Ah!" said Mr. Kidd. "Your name is Marmaduke Smythe, I think."

"Yes, it is. Let me go, you low fellow."

Mr. Kidd marched Marmaduke away. A few moments later the swish of a cane and howls of anguish proceeded from Mr. Kidd's study. Marmaduke Smythe was receiving his first lesson.

(Another Instalment of this Old, Old tale next month.)

\* \* \* \* \*

# The Postman Called

(Interesting items from the Editor's letter-bag)

H. A. OWEN (London): In answer to Mr. Lofts in Collectors Digest - December - the White Chief of the Umyimoubu Kaffins appeared in "Every Boy's Annual" for 1885. It appeared in twelve instalments with illustrations and was by Major-General A. W. Drayson, R.A. It is one of the first books I remember buying about fifty-four years ago, second-hand at about 1/- I should think. I still have it.

R. MOIR (London): Hearty congratulations on a superb Annual - sheer delight from beginning to end. The cover drawing was magnificent. How few publications these days go for a seasonable December cover!

N. GAYLE (Budleigh Salterton): I have recently bought a batch of old C.D's and have been reading them through with much delight. Congratulations to you for writing one of the funniest pieces that I've read in years; I tried to read it out aloud to my wife, but failed miserably three times, becoming convulsed with laughter on each occasion! ... I'm

referring to your editorial 'Anyone Want a Steamroller?' in C.D., No. 258. It was hilarious. What about a 'repeat spot' in C.D. where you could reprint items such as these which have proved popular in the past? I'm sure it would go down well. After all, we now have thirty years of material to choose from. How say you, skipper? ...

G. HUDSON (Durham): I was interested in the Biggles article in the December C.D. I acquired a book not long ago, "Biggles Looks Back" which repudiates the suggestion that Biggles was a woman-hater - in fact it pointedly states quite the opposite, and shows that his indifference to - and not hatred of - women was the result of his love for one particular woman whom he never forgot. Perhaps rather unusual for a Biggles story. I have not read the book yet but I hope to do so in the very near future and will try and let you have a note on the subject.

I am at present reading Billy Bunter at Butlins. One thing has struck me during this and it was Frank Richards' regular use of the term "footpad". I cannot recall seeing this word used by any other writer. I suppose in the timelessness of the majority of the Greyfriars stories the word fits in very easily, but somehow in this particular story it seems a bit of an anachronism - much in the same way I suppose as today's equivalent but awful word "mugger" would have been out of place in a story of the 1960's. However, this in no way detracts from the enjoyment of the story itself.

R. BLYTHE (Kingsbury): Another excellent Annual. I really must get down to a serious article on the Nelson Lee for the next edition. Nick Gayle's article this year is first-class. Just a bit too fanciful for me, but very readable. He certainly has a good imagination. As good, in fact, as E.S.B. himself - and one can't give higher praise than that.

ALEX STANDEN (Heaton Chapel): Some readers, as I know, switched to Thriller from Union Jack when the former paper first appeared. I took the Thriller as well as U.J. for a time, and then got fed-up with the yarns written by so-called "big names" which were often inferior to those of Union Jack.

Even the U.J. authors, when writing for Thriller, seemed lost without Sexton Blake, except perhaps for Edwy Searles Brooks, no doubt pleased for a new magazine to write for, after the finish of the Nelson Lee.

I still preferred Detective Weekly, when it replaced U.J., to Thriller.

TOM PORTER (Cradley Heath): What a marvellous Annual you have given us again. When I have read it all, it will take its place in the appropriate bookshelf alongside the other 31. Incidentally, I wonder how many enthusiasts possess all 32 volumes?

C. OLIVER (Newcastle): I would like you to know how delighted I am to see in your editorial to the Annual the photograph of Excelsior House. It is nice to see the home of the magazine and the Annual that provide us with so much reading enjoyment and happy memories of our youthful reading.

W. THURBON (Cambridge): I was interested in Mr. Rowe's article on "Chuckles". I took it irregularly from its first publication until the serial "Adventure Island" began. I then took it regularly until almost the last instalments of "Adventure Island" when I turned to other things. I was always sorry I never finished "Adventure Island". I thought it at the time the best "Desert Island" story I had read. Whether I should think so now is another matter. But I enjoyed it then. I am glad to be reminded of the author, whose name I had forgotten. Who was Harry Revel? The two serials I recall most are, apart from "Adventure Island", Reginald Wray's "Phantom Gold", which owed a very great deal to Rider Haggard, and a space travel story whose title and author I forget, but which I liked very much at the time. Can Mr. Rowe tell us what this was? Strangely enough I can still recall the name of the Martian spaceship, "Ramalia" or "Raymalia" or "Ramaylia" - I am sure of the name, but not now of the spelling. I agree with your editorial doubts about Charles Hamilton having written the Council School stories - my distant remembrance of them is that they were not in the Hamilton style. On the other hand the Claremont stories by "Prosper Howard" were much more in Hamilton's style. I now realise they were by a Hamilton substitute writer.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: My grateful thanks to the writers of many dozens of letters expressing pleasure with the latest C.D. Annual. It may be possible to quote from a few of them next month.)

---

---

# News of the Clubs

## LONDON

The first meeting to be held at the new Walthamstow rendezvous was an unqualified success and those present were unanimous in their praise for such a convivial meeting held in delightful surroundings.

From the chair, Eric Lawrence read the article that Bill Evans had contributed to the December issue of Kent Life and which was entitled "Kingsgate: 'Home' of Billy Bunter". A photostat copy of the article was provided by Maurice Corkett of Sidcup.

Josie Packman conducted a fiendish Sexton Blake Authors and Characters quiz and the winner was Bob Blythe. The latter then went on to read extracts from the December 1962 newsletter which told of the Christmas meeting at Brian Doyle's residence. He also read extracts from the January 1963 issue. Later on, Bob read a couple of chapters or so from the Nelson Lee Library number 24, New Series. This reading came from the story "Handforth's Iron Hand". The reading of Bill Thurbon's treatise that he gave at a Cambridge Club meeting seems to bring out the theme of Don Webster's talk of last month and which dealt with the repetition of themes by the authors. Bob Blythe's reading was an example of this as in a previous Saint Frank's reading the theme was almost the same. Handforth getting mixed up with the identities of Irene Manners and Dora, the girl that Irene sent to look after Handy.

Mary read her review of the new book about Biggles by James Pearson. Winifred Morss conducted a quiz and Eric Lawrence was the winner. Four copies of "School Cap" were added to the miscellaneous section of the club's library and Roger Jenkins gave information about this post-war boys' paper.

Winifred Morss was the architect of the tea-making and was assisted by the other ladies present.

Brian Doyle spoke of the proposed full page spread in the Guardian on the centenary of the Boys' Own Paper.

Next meeting on Sunday, 11th February. Full details of venue will appear in the February issue of the newsletter.

BEN WHITER

---

NORTHERN

Meeting held 13th January, 1979.

There was nearly a full cast of regulars to greet the New Year, and the time passed so quickly and enjoyably that more than one intended item had to be held over.

Darrell Swift, our serendipity specialist, had acquired a mint run of Magnets from 1909 which he exposed to our envious gaze; he also told us of his trip to 'Courtfield' in Ruislip. Secretary Geoffrey read out a couple of press cuttings, one of which (from the Huddersfield Examiner) was typical of the ignorance - one uses the word in its most exact sense - with which the popular press still write about Charles Hamilton. Harry Barlow, who had brought the cutting, told us he had written a reply to the paper and was awaiting its outcome. Chairman Geoffrey read another press cutting, of a rather more informed nature, sent to us by June Arden.

Chairman Geoffrey, with the news of England's victory in Australia still fresh, also read a recent article from 'The Cricketer' about the playing career and the cricket writing of our late President, P. G. Wodehouse. It was suggested that cricket literature became immensely the poorer when PGW turned to other fields of work. The article showed a full familiarity with PGW's school stories and ended with a charming quote from that rarity 'The Swoop' - "Stop Press: Fry not out 104; Surrey 148 for 7. A German army landed in Essex this afternoon."

'Forty Years On' says the Harrow School Song; and it comes as something of a shock to realise that the dawning of 1979 brings us to the fortieth year since World War II began, and both Gem and Magnet enjoyed their last full year of publication. The theme of our quiz was "How well do you remember 1939?" and it would appear that the sharpest recollections are those of Bill Williamson - or perhaps the rest of us are just a good deal more youthful! Bill scored 17 out of 25, the questions ranging from the name of the French Premier to who won the Cup Final, and where did the Famous Five spend Easter?

Next month: a talk by Jack Allison, and a story, written, we are all delighted to learn, despite his continuing illness, by Ron Rhodes.

BOB BLYTHE WRITES:

In connection with the Midland Club report of last month to the effect that I was a member of the Friars Club, several O.B.B.C. members have asked me if the report is true.

In view of my position as co-founder of the London O.B.B.C., my loyalties lie entirely with them, and not with the Friars Club.

If people wish to belong to the Friars Club, which is, in effect, a Howard Baker appreciation society, that is their privilege. Good luck to them and to Howard Baker, who is doing an excellent job, but - and this is the point I wish to stress - I am not a member.

\* \* \* \* \*

MATCH OF THE DECADES

by Ernest Holman

Explanation: This is the Report of an International Match between the Northcliffians of Amalgamated Press Ltd. from England (AP) and the Dundee School of D. C. Thomson & Co. Ltd. from Scotland (DS). It was played for the Championship of "The Boys' Story Paper Weeklies" and lasted from 1st January, 1921, until 31st December, 1940. The Arena was the National Bookstall and the Referee was Father Time. Your Match Reporter is Ernest Holman, who gratefully acknowledges the sources from which the necessary information was obtained, namely "The Complete Catalogue of Old Boys' Books" by Derek Adley and Bill Lofts and "King of the Castle" by John Geal in Collectors' Digest Annual 1973.

Before the Match: AP had a very long practice session of more than 25 years. They launched MARVEL in 1893, added a few more by the turn of the Century and had reached double figures (allowing for starts and stops) before Edward's Reign had ended. Although the war years were to see a few casualties, AP had a Team of 12 in an unopposed field in 1914. They actually started a new Publication, NELSON LEE, in 1915 - but by the end of hostilities their number had fallen to 6. With the easing of paper rationing and aware of distant rumblings in Scotland, AP took the bit between their teeth and launched 10 new weekly Story Papers in 1919. A certain amount of discomfort resulted but with adroit adjustment AP were able to muster a team of 15 with which to start the March at the beginning of 1921. The players were: All Sports (born 1919);

Boys' Cinema (1919); Boys' Friend (1895); Boys' Realm (1919); Football and Sports Favourite (1920); Gem (1907); Greyfriars Herald (1919); Magnet (1908); Marvel (1893); Nelson Lee (1915); Nugget Weekly (1920); Popular (1919); Sports for Boys (1920); Union Jack (1894); Young Britain (1919). DS had no Team available when the Match kicked off.

First Half (1/1/21 - 31/12/30): Despite having the field to themselves, AP were soon in trouble. Greyfriars Herald became Boys' Herald, Sports for Boys went into All Sports and Nugget Weekly was incorporated with Marvel. DS seized their advantage and sent Adventure into the field. There was opposition for AP at last and the Match took on an interesting aspect. 1921: AP 13 - DS 1. Several variations were now noted in the pattern of play. Boys' Herald was the next to go into Marvel, only for Marvel itself to be consumed by the new Sport and Adventure. Still within the year, the latter Paper took the name of Pluck. Sports Fun also commenced, to be soon swallowed by Football and Sports Favourite. AP, however, added Champion to their Team. In the meantime, DS had multiplied their score by three when they brought on Rover and Wizard. 1922: AP 13 - DS 3. AP went straight into the attack and launched Rocket and Sports Budget, without losing a single Publication. DS came up with Vanguard. 1923: AP 15 - DS 4. Then came more changes; Young Britain went into Champion and Triumph was introduced, although the latter came into the fray only by consuming both Pluck and Rocket. DS made no change of any sort. 1924: AP 13 - DS 4. When the first half was mid-way through, AP had remained steady but DS had lost Vanguard. 1925: AP 13 - DS 3.

No changes during the next year, with each Team just about managing to hold its own. 1926: AP 13 - DS 3. The score-line still did not alter during the following year but AP came up with a few changes. Boys' Realm became Boys' Realm of Sport and Adventure. Boys' Friend went into Triumph but Chums was taken over by AP from Cassells. 1927: AP 13 - DS 3. A change in the score-line at last, in favour of AP. They were reinforced by the new Modern Boy. 1928: AP 14 - DS 3. Pressing their advantage, AP introduced Thriller. Boys' Realm of Sport and Adventure became Realm of Fun and Fiction; Football and Sports

Favourite adopted the title of Boys' Favourite. AP were back to their highest previous score, with no change for DS. 1929: AP 15 - DS 3. Approaching half-time, there was action from both sides, this time to the benefit of DS. They added to their total by issuing Skipper. On the AP front Boys' Favourite became Startler and two losses were recorded. All Sports threw in the towel and Realm of Fun and Fiction ceased as a Boys' Story Paper when it became a Film Periodical. At the end of 1930 the half-time score-line read: AP 13 - DS 4.

When AP came out to start the second half, they still had six Members with whom they had kicked off: Boys' Cinema, Gem, Magnet, Nelson Lee, Popular and Union Jack. They were augmented by an additional seven: Champion, Chums, Modern Boy, Sports Budget, Startler, Thriller and Triumph. DS lined up with their fast-developing four of Adventure, Rover, Skipper and Wizard.

Second Half (1/1/31 - 31/12/40): Before very long Popular had become Ranger and a new Publication named Bullseye joined the AP Team. DS continued with their steady method of play. 1931: AP 14 - DS 4. Several bouts of action now. Startler was renamed Surprise and Chums was taken in by Modern Boy. DS fired off Red Arrow. 1932: AP 13 - DS 5. The writing on the wall was about to appear for AP. Surprise went into Bullseye and Gem received Nelson Lee. Union Jack became Detective Weekly. Red Arrow was not long in flight but DS soon replaced it with Hotspur. The margin was narrowing; for the whole of the first half and the beginning of the second half, AP had always wavered between 13 and 15 but now they were to come down to their lowest score of the Match. 1933: AP 11 - DS 5. Only slight variations, with Bullseye ceasing as a Story Paper and going into the 'film world'. AP gained Boys' Broadcast. A less happy venture for them was the starting of Pioneer, which soon disappeared into Ranger. 1934: AP 11 - DS 5. Very soon Boys' Broadcast went into Boys' Cinema and Ranger became Pilot. Three-quarters of the Match was over. 1935: AP 10 - DS 5.

AP were not prepared to yield any further ground and brought out Football Weekly. Meanwhile, DS never altered their mode of procedure. 1936: AP 11 - DS 5. The hoped-for impetus from Football Weekly was not realised and it was absorbed by Sports Budget. 1937: AP 10 - DS 5. Action seemed to be dying somewhat; whilst DS defended steadily AP's only movement was to change Pilot into Wild West Weekly. 1938: AP 10 - DS 5. AP had been hovering for some little time between 10 and 11, whilst DS had maintained their well-knit Team of 5. The end

of the Match was in sight and the Teams were soon to become very close together in the score-line. AP began to adopt the consuming technique with a vengeance. Thriller took in Wild West Weekly; with the advent of the war, Sports Budget went into Detective Weekly and Boys' Cinema received Modern Boy. At the very end of the year it was announced that Triumph would take in Gem. 1939: AP 6 - DS 5. There was little of the Match remaining but it was the decisive part. Boys' Cinema and Thriller went out in the Spring. A week later, without any previous indication, Magnet failed to appear; at that time Knockout Comic and Magnet showed its title. Also at this time came the end for Detective Weekly and Triumph went into Champion. At the end of the year - and the Match - Champion was the sole AP contender against the 'Big Five' of DS, namely Adventure, Hotspur, Rover, Skipper and Wizard.  
MATCH RESULT AT THE END OF 1940: AP 1 - DS 5.

After the Match: The remaining six went into unspecified extra time, with no score relevance. Skipper was a war casualty in 1941. The last AP Member, Champion, lasted until 1955. By then, the Stories-in-Pictures type of Paper had appeared and one such, Tiger, took Champion into its tank. Lion and Champion was a title to be seen amongst this 'New Generation' of Weeklies in 1966. Before then, however, Hotspur had branched out in the new guise as New Hotspur. Adventure went into Rover in 1961. In 1963 Rover and Adventure ceased as a title and for four weeks Rover operated under its own name. Then Wizard packed up as a Story Paper and there was Rover and Wizard. In 1969 Rover reverted to its single name again. In 1970 Wizard rose again, as one of the modern-style Weeklies. Rover lived on alone as a Story Paper into Decimal Currency days but not for much longer. At a price of 3½p, after a life-span of fifty years as a Boys' Story Paper, it went - swallowed completely by the modern Wizard.

Finally: The AP/DS Boys' Story Paper Weekly was no more. From Marvel in the eightennineties to Rover in the nineteen-seventies, there had always been such a Weekly. It is now close on sixty years since the 'Big Match' started and it lasted for two decades. This Report can really only finish by everyone of us looking back with affectionate memories to so many of the players who took part in the Engagement - those "Champion Wizards" of yesteryear!

\*\*\*\*\*

FOR SALE (v.g. condition) early 20's: (a) Magnets 45 at £1.50; (b) Gems 116 at £1.25; (c) Greyfriars Herald (2nd series) 107 at £1; (d) Nelson Lee 160 at £1; (e) Union Jack 80 at £1.25. Late 40's: Sexton Blake Lib. (3rd series) 115 at 60p. Send for specific wants or 40p in stamps for full list via air. MIKE STONE, 4 IMMARNA RD.

CAMBERWELL, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 3124.

\*\*\*\*\*

FOR SALE: Mumfies Uncle Samuel; Bobby Bears; Teddy Tails; Little Ones Own Friend; Mrs. Strang's Annual for Girls; Sunday Sunshine; Hobbies New Annual; Uncle Mac's; Sammy the Hunter; Buffalo Bill, Lion; Many other Annuals. Would like to exchange Magnets for Magnets, from 1930 to 1940.

"OLYMPUS", SANDFORD MILL RD., CHELMSFORD, ESSEX.

\*\*\*\*\*

WANTED: to complete Magnets 10, 134, 136, 162, 167, 169, 181, 200, 215, 217, your price paid or exchange. Interested in Xerox copies of above and Magnet covers 21, 28, 29, 39, 40, 49, 52, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 69, 71, 239, 158. Also want Baker Vol. 18.

MURTAGH, WINDSOR AVE., HASTINGS, NEW ZEALAND.

\*\*\*\*\*

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: pre-war Champion, Wizard, Hotspur, Triumph Annuals. WANTS: Thomson or similar comics, Magnets, Gems, H.B. re-prints. G. HOARE, 91 MOOR CRESC., BELMONT, DURHAM, DH1 1DJ.