

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 35

NUMBER 415

JULY 1981

CHUCKLES, JR.
CHAMPION COLOURED COMIC

GRAND COMPLETE DETECTIVE STORY INSIDE.



No. 112, Vol. 1.

PRICE ONE HALFPENNY.

August 22nd, 1914.

BREEZY BEN HAS ALL THE LUCK THIS WEEK, WHILE DISMAL DUTCHY GETS LEFT!



1. The two Ben and Ducky have been having round events, and they found in sight of a few more had in a garden, and so they went for it. Had no speaker room, and Ben, as he looked at the mirror above the door, this means that you can get a good idea here. And just then Ducky got an idea.



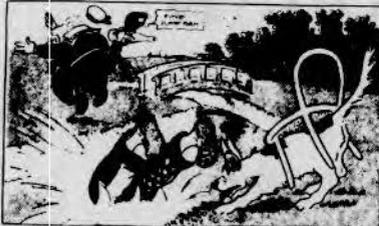
2. He grabbed a chair and did a quick dash, and then he got to the door. Ben, who was sitting at the table, said to him, 'How come you're in a hurry?' Ben said, 'I'm going to the toilet, and the paper says to get out of the room as fast as you can, and I don't want to get caught in the toilet.' Ben said, 'Oh, my dog, and Ben, oh my!'



3. The Ducky was gone now. So he went to the chair and saw a sign that said 'WELCOME TO THE BREEZY BEN RESTAURANT'. He said to himself, 'This is a good sign, and I can see that it is a good sign. But Ben, who was sitting at the table, said to him, 'How come you're in a hurry?' Ben said, 'I'm going to the toilet, and the paper says to get out of the room as fast as you can, and I don't want to get caught in the toilet.' Ben said, 'Oh, my dog, and Ben, oh my!'



4. The Ben had a chair and did a quick dash, and then he got to the door. Ben, who was sitting at the table, said to him, 'How come you're in a hurry?' Ben said, 'I'm going to the toilet, and the paper says to get out of the room as fast as you can, and I don't want to get caught in the toilet.' Ben said, 'Oh, my dog, and Ben, oh my!'



5. Then she and also the sign, Ben said to himself, 'This is a good sign, and I can see that it is a good sign. But Ben, who was sitting at the table, said to him, 'How come you're in a hurry?' Ben said, 'I'm going to the toilet, and the paper says to get out of the room as fast as you can, and I don't want to get caught in the toilet.' Ben said, 'Oh, my dog, and Ben, oh my!'



6. Then Ben said to himself, 'This is a good sign, and I can see that it is a good sign. But Ben, who was sitting at the table, said to him, 'How come you're in a hurry?' Ben said, 'I'm going to the toilet, and the paper says to get out of the room as fast as you can, and I don't want to get caught in the toilet.' Ben said, 'Oh, my dog, and Ben, oh my!'

30p

Kindly note - correction to publisher's announcement last month:- Greyfriars press titles. These will be increased from £5.95 to £7.95, NOT £8.95 as announced last month for 1st July.

Book Club Specials - £16, instead of £15 on 1st July. I have good stocks of both, so hurry and order before 1st July!

Have you read the excellent article by Tony Glynn about the "little pink mag." (the Boys' Magazine). I have hundreds of these. Special offer: 60 for £50, usual price £1.25 each. My selection, you could show special preferences, however.

Another Special Offer! I've over 6,000 U.J's in stock, far too many duplicates. I'll send 100 good U.J's between 1,200 - 1,500 for only £80, but my selection, price per copy is £1.60.

I'm still spending roughly £1,000 per week despite the idea of semi-retiring, some hopes, as busy as ever! I enjoy my work.

Please jog my memory for your wants. With two cabinets full of "wants" it's a bit difficult! List of immediate wants appreciated.

I will probably try to close my business for a break between 23rd July - 9th August, so please bear with me.

Visitors always very welcome to see "Aladdin's Cave". Just give a ring. Please compare my prices and you'll appreciate mine!

NORMAN SHAW

84 BELVEDERE ROAD
UPPER NORWOOD
LONDON, SE19 2HZ

Nearest Station - B.R. Crystal Palace

'Phone 01 771 9857

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 35

No. 415

JULY 1981

Price 30p

(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.)



THE BIG PLAN

Exactly fifty years ago, in the first issue of the Gem for July 1931, there was a double-page spread occupying the centre of the old paper. It was headed "Your Editor's Big Plan!"

In fact, it was not the Gem editor's Big Plan. It was mine.

The story is well-known to most C.D. readers, but, as it is now precisely fifty years since it happened, it is worth looking back to it all. And I must say that I feel a trifle stunned - and a little over-ripe into the

bargain - to realise that half a century has passed into history since that momentous happening.

It was early in 1931 that I first wrote to Mr. Down to suggest that the Tom Merry saga should be re-told in the Gem, replacing the long glut of substitute tales which had been a blot on the paper for a number of years.

Very occasionally a genuine tale had appeared, but the last Hamilton tale of any consequence had been the 4-story Victor Cleeve series in the summer of 1928, the only genuine tales in that year. In 1929 there was no genuine tale at all. Between January 1930 and July 1931 there were, perhaps, four Hamilton tales.

From the fact that tradition was being abandoned wholesale, and the style of the tales had altered almost beyond recognition, it was obvious that Hamilton had abandoned the Gem. A girls' school, Spalding Hall, was set up, with a number of new girl characters, to which had been added, as pupils, Cousin Ethel and Doris Levison. And even those two played second fiddle to some of the new ones.

A tedious character, Handcock, became an occupant of Study No. 10, and was added to the much loved Terrible Three. Heavily-plotted and stodgy crime stories were too frequent. Sheer farce became the order of the day in material which was foreign to the former Gem readership. Mythical kingdoms were visited, and Tom Merry piloted aeroplanes. Racke was expelled and replaced with the unnecessary and unpleasing Bully Burkett. In a silly series, Kildare joined the Foreign Legion. And finally, by an absurd piece of contrivance, Mr. Linton retired, to be replaced by the freak master, Mr. Pilbeam.

Some time, fairly early in 1931, I wrote to Mr. Down, giving my views, and we exchanged a number of letters. At first he told me, politely and definitely, that my plan was "out of the question". It could not be done and would not be done.

Then, suddenly, out of the blue, came a letter from Mr. Down to say that "you will be interested to know that the suggestions you made about reprinting the early Tom Merry stories in the Gem itself is being considered." Interested! I was absolutely delighted - and a bit staggered, I must admit. Then, some time in May came another letter to say that "your suggestions are to be adopted for a trial period, and

the first Tom Merry story will appear in the Gem in a few weeks' time." I wrote back: "I hope you will call the first story 'Tom Merry - New Boy!'" And he did.

(It was ironical that the last of the new stories in 1931 was "Brainy Grundy" by the original author - and it featured Mr. Pilbeam as master of the Shell. I asked Charles Hamilton how he came to write of Mr. Pilbeam. Hamilton answered that he didn't. He had never even heard of Mr. Pilbeam. He wrote of Mr. Linton - and someone changed the names.)

Clearly the reprinting offered problems for the Gem's editorial department. For instance, there were four tales of Tom at Clavering, but only three featured in the reprints. One of them "Troublesome Tom" had appeared recently in the Holiday Annual, so it was omitted now. Some stories, like the one about the Diavolo craze, were dated, and could not appear. At Clavering were Mr. Quelch, Wingate, and North. They had to be altered for 1931 consumption.

In the thirties I did all that I could to boost the sales of the good old Gem. We had a number of school social functions each year - fancy dress parties, dances, whist drives, and the like. All senior boys and girls could attend. The only stipulation was that everybody had to carry a current copy of the Gem.

We had essay competitions, run in connection with the current Gem's story or something of the sort. The best of the efforts were sent along to Mr. Down, who judged them, and sent me his findings. There was one boy who was an excellent student with a lively, imaginative brain, but he was an appalling writer. His written work was a disaster to the eye, yet he expressed himself remarkably well. I hesitated whether to include his essay with those I sent to Mr. Down. Finally I sent it - and, to my great pleasure, Mr. Down selected that essay as the best. It may be of slight interest that the character of "Tammadge" in the Mr. Buddle stories, is based on that lad who, some 43 years ago, won Mr. Down's approval.

A good many times, in his Editor's Chats, Mr. Down referred to the Gemmish activities of the Modern School, Surbiton. Somewhere in the later thirties, the Gem carried a picture of some of my boys waving aloft their Gems, and another week there was a picture of a crowd of my

girls, all covered with Gems.

On one occasion, Mr. Down, unknown to me, commissioned the artist, R. J. Macdonald, to paint a portrait of Tom Merry. It was headed "Greetings from St. Jim's to the Modern School, Surbiton". It came along to me "With best wishes from C. M. Down, R. J. Macdonald, and Martin Clifford". It hung in one of my form-rooms for years. Today it hangs in our dining-room at Excelsior House. The loveliest portrait Macdonald ever painted, and the colours have not faded an iota with the passing of the years. Once, years ago, I had it photographed, and it adorned a cover of C.D.

The mention we had occasionally in the editorial pages of the Gem brought me my earliest contact with what we know now as "the hobby". Cedric Rickard of Canada read about us in the Gem, about 1938, perhaps, and he wrote to me. He was my first "hobby" correspondent. We even published some of Mr. Rickard's verse in one issue of our school magazine.

Later, "Tex" Rickard put Bill Gander in touch with me, and, just before the war, Mr. Gander mentioned me to an English gentleman he knew named Herbert Leckenby. And so the seeds were being sown, all those years back, for Story Paper Collectors' Digest. So my first hobby correspondents were Canadians, and Herbert Leckenby was the first English one, though I did not meet him in person till after the war.

An interesting postscript. In 1939 I wrote Mr. Down that, in my opinion, it was time the reprints ended. "Could you not ask the original Martin Clifford to write new stories regularly for the Gem now?" I suggested. This time there was no delay. In a very short time he wrote to me that Charles Hamilton was to resume writing new stories for the Gem. So Hamilton was back again for the final stages until the paper shortage wrote "finis" at the end of the Gem's wonderful run in the last week of 1939.

OLD MAN RIVER

Inflation, like the Old Man of the song, rolls on, though goodness knows where it is rolling us. Rising costs in publishing make it essential for the basic cost of C.D. to be increased to 32p from our next issue, if our little mag is to continue its monthly appearance. I have not much

doubt that eventually we shall be priced out of existence, though we shall carry on while the mass of our readers still want us. The loyalty and love of our splendid band of readers cannot be measured in pence, but there is obviously a limit. The C.D. is not a necessity. Still, all being well, we shall carry on, unless the creeping fire of inflation brings down the safety-curtain.

The price of C.D. is kept to an absolute minimum, and, I daresay, it compares reasonably well with a daily newspaper at half-a-crown, a plain currant bun at two bob, and country bus fares which seem to work out at four bob a mile.

PERMISSIVE AGE

Almost daily one reads of sex crimes, or hears about it on TV. The curse has come near home for us. A child of fourteen - her family lives half a mile away from us - was on her way to a music class one Saturday morning. She never got there. She was sexually attacked and murdered.

If anyone really believes that the glut of sex crime and the cesspit flow of dirty films and books are not related, he must be blinkered. I see that an enquiry has been conducted by a woman's magazine into the slant on sex which occurs even in papers produced for the 11 to 14 age group. And W. H. Smith says that these papers are bought from 7 years of age onwards. So even the youngsters' papers are not immune from it. Shades of the Magnet and the Schoolgirls' Own.

Apart from that, sex books pollute most of the newsagents' shops today. You don't have to go to the horrid and evil little "private" shops which are springing up. The muck is all over the place - a shelf or two above the "Beano" and one shelf below Enid Blyton. Not, in my view, that it is much more harmful for youngsters than it is for warped adults, who get inflamed and go off and commit murder.

Arnold Toynbee wrote: "Of 21 notable civilisations, 19 perished, not from conquest from without, but from decay within." The people who govern us might well print those words on the front page of every edition of Hansard.

THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S COLUMN

The Princess has been very poorly. For three days she ate nothing at all. She wilted visibly. We called in the vet. He looked grave, diagnosed kidney trouble, and gave her an injection.

That evening, Madam said softly: "I believe we are going to lose our Snowee." And we both piped our eye a little.

But the Princess isn't a lost heiress for nothing. The fighting spirit of Grace Kelwyn rose to the occasion. She began to improve. She started to eat with a vengeance. Four days later the vet came again. Another injection. "Well," he said, "she's much better. I can't guarantee anything, of course ---"

But as I write, the Princess seems more her old self. I told her last night: "I saw your vet in the town today. He waved to me."

The Princess said: "I don't care two purrs who sees him, so long as I don't."

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

Danny's Diary

JULY 1931

"A Big Surprise For Every Reader!" That's what it says on the front cover of this month's first Gem. And what a glorious surprise it is, too. The Editor had hinted at it in the previous week's Gem at the end of last month, and I spent days wondering what it could be. It's better than I could possibly have dreamed about.

The Gem has gone back to the beginning, and is republishing all the original St. Jim's stories. After all the rubbish we have had to put up with (Doug says I ought to have written "Up with which we have had to put" - but that sounds awful, and who cares?) it is all too wonderful to be true. But it is true. Now each Wednesday will be a real gem of a day for me.

By a strange coincidence, the first story of the month (and, heigh-ho, the last of the new ones) is "Battling Grundy", and I am sure

it is by the original Martin Clifford although it introduces the new Shell master, Mr. Pilbeam. Grundy, without knowing it, rescues the Head from a vicious ruffian.

"Did you not know that it was I, Grundy, when you so gallantly came to my assistance?" exclaimed the Head.

Grundy gasped.

"You, sir! Never dreamed of it, sir! I just had a glimpse of an old codger with white wool -- I - I mean, an old gentleman with white hair, sir --"

A nice tale - and what an irony.

And, next week, "TOM MERRY - NEW BOY!" Right back to the beginning, with Tom Merry a new boy, not at St. Jim's but at Clavering. And he becomes friendly with Manners and Lowther, the Terrible Two of Clavering. Mr. Railton is the Headmaster. Mr. Welch is the master of the Shell. Herr Schnieder is the German master. Gore is the bully.

Next week, "The Hero of Clavering". Hawke, the old school captain has left, and an election is to be held. Gilbert Felgate is a candidate - and Tom Merry puts up as well. Also competing is Devigne of the Fifth. But Mr. Railton has a quiet talk with Tom, and asks him to withdraw from the election. Great tale.

Final of the month "Tom Merry's Challenge" in which Tom Merry sets out to persuade Devigne of the Fifth to accept a cricket challenge from the juniors. All splendid reading. Life is worth living again now the good old Gem is back in top form.

The Rookwood tales in the Gem this month have been "Tubby Takes the Cake" in which Muffin stole Hansom's cake; "Lovell's Lucky Loss" in which Lattrey (long time since we heard of him) bags Lovell's bike and meets trouble with it; "Tubby Muffin - Artist" in which Muffin draws a cartoon of Mr. Dalton, and there is a to-do over it; and "Stocking the Stocks" in which somebody unknown puts Carthew in the village stocks.

In the Boys' Friend 4d. Library this month there is the cricket story, once a serial in Modern Boy, entitled "Captain of Claverhouse", supposed to be written by Wally Hammond of Gloucester and England.

The Modern Boy itself has struck rather a dull patch at the

moment, though some of it is good. There is a new series about Captain Justice by Murray Roberts. The Hylton Cleaver tales about Milford School have ended and, have been replaced by air stories by Michael Poole concerning "Couriers of the Clouds". And there is yet another railway serial by Alfred Edgar.

In real life, the trial of Mrs. Hearn has taken place. She was accused of murdering a farmer's wife, a Mrs. Thomas, by giving her a poisoned sandwich at a picnic. Mrs. Hearn disappeared, and her clothes were found on a beach last year. Actually she had taken a job, under a new name, to a Grimsby solicitor as his housekeeper. But eventually Mrs. Hearn's picture appeared in a newspaper, and her new boss recognised her, and claimed the reward which had been offered for the information which led to her arrest. But he used the reward to pay for Mrs. Hearn's defence, which was conducted by Mr. Norman Birkett. And Mrs. Hearn was found not guilty.

We went to visit some relatives at Plaistow, and while we were there we went to a variety theatre called East Ham Palace. In the programme we saw Dr. Walford Bodie who is a kind of magician who works magic tricks with electricity. It was interesting. Also on the bill was Florrie Forde, a plump lady who sings; Datas, the Memory Man, who remembers every date there ever was, Bert Terrell, a Dutch comedian; and the famous old star Tom Costello who sang "Comrades" and "The Ship I Love".

Two simply gorgeous tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library. "The Joker of the Remove" was Mr. Quelch's nephew, Roger, who didn't want to be at Greyfriars, and who tried to make his uncle want to be rid of him. And "Seven Schoolboys and Solomon" - stunning holiday tales about Tom Merry & Co. Solomon is a donkey. Lovely month.

At the pictures this month we have seen Bessie Love in "Good News", which had some nice tunes, but was not so good as the stage show I saw at the Carlton a bit ago. Norma Talmadge, Conrad Nagel, and William Farnum in "Du Barry"; Joan Crawford in "Within the Law" which is Joan Crawford's first dramatic part. All her others have been comedies. A Sherlock Holmes picture called "The Sleeping Cardinal" with Arthur Wontner as Holmes and Ian Fleming as Watson. Jeanette Macdonald in "The Lottery Bride", and Clara Bow in "Love Among the

Millionaires". Finally we saw Marie Dressler and Polly Moran in "Reducing", a story about ladies trying to lose weight. And with this one there was a new Laurel & Hardy comedy "Below Zero".

After the wonderful series about Lancaster, there was almost sure to be an anticlimax in the Magnet. The opening tale "Speedway Coker", about Coker on the dirt-track, was not by the real Frank Richards, and a loser from the start.

Next week "Billy Bunter's Bargain" in which Bunter came by a photograph showing Price of the Fifth at the Cross Keys pub, and Bunter set out to blackmail Price. Tales about Price and Hilton are usually good, and I liked this one. This was followed by "Bluffing the Beaks" in which the Bounder tried to pull a fast one on the Head, and nearly got away with it. This had a sequel the following week in "The Impossible Schoolboy", with the Bounder expelled. He shut Mr. Quelch in the punishment room. The master escaped up the chimney, and the Bounder redeemed himself by saving Mr. Quelch from peril on the roof. A pretty neat month in the Magnet.

The King has opened and christened the new George the Fifth dock at Glasgow. But the Prince of Wales was in a collision with his car near Sunningdale where the Prince has a residence. The Prince wasn't hurt, but the other car's occupants were slightly injured.

In the Nelson Lee Library the series about St. Frank's under canvas continued with "The Open-Air Heroes" with plenty of fun and excitement. Rascally Amos Whittle is anxious to step in and claim the camping ground as his own property. This one was followed by "Peril Camp" in which a lion is let loose among the St. Frank's campers. Waldo plays a part in this one.

Then the start of a new series with "His Majesty of the Remove". King Victor of Caronia has arrived to be a schoolboy at St. Frank's. Final of the month is "The Kidnapped King". Victor is kidnapped by Caronians who are plotting to secure the throne for his half-brother Prince Zeno. And the St. Frank's chums go off to Caronia with the assistance of Lord Dorrimore. And Umlosi will be there, too.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The original titles of the 1931 stories in the Gem reprints are given in brackets: Tom Merry - New Boy ("Tom Merry's Schooldays"), The Hero of Clavering ("Our Captain"), Tom Merry's Challenge ("Tom Merry on the Warpath"). The second Tom Merry

story "Troublesome Tom" was omitted.

The Magnet story "Speedway Coker" which Danny bought in July 1931, was destined to be the last sub tale in the Magnet.

S.O.L. No. 151, "The Joker of the Remove" comprised two Magnet tales of the Spring of 1927 entitled respectively, "Roger of the Remove" and "Fed Up With Greyfriars". The two stories fitted snugly into the format and made one of the most satisfying S.O.L's. S.O.L. No. 152, "Seven Schoolboys - and Solomon" comprised four tales from the Gem's summer of 1921. One of the best holiday series of all time. Original titles, "Tom Merry & Co's Camp", "Seven Schoolboys and Solomon", "Cardew and the Campers" and "Camp, Caravan, and Cricket".)

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I hope you will all enjoy the continuation of the Sexton Blake films. These have been listed in earlier years, but this time there is more information about them. Please let me know and I should also be pleased to have some material for later months this year as well as for the Annual. Sorry to keep harping on this theme, but I must keep Blakiana going with fresh articles. Articles for the Annual should reach me before September and, if possible, typed ready for the printers.

SEXTON BLAKE (Series) (U)

May 1928

British Filmcraft (Par)

P: George J. Banfield

S: (STORIES) various authors

Langhorne Burton Sexton Blake

Mickey Brantford Tinker

1: THE CLUE OF THE SECOND GOBLET (2246)

D: George A. Cooper

Fred Raynham George Marsden Plummer

2: BLAKE THE LAWBREAKER (1888)

D: George A. Cooper

Fred Raynham

3: SEXTON BLAKE, GAMBLER (1962)

D: George J. Banfield

Marjorie Hume Joan Fairfield

Frank Atherley Lord Fairfield

Adeline Hayden Coffin Lady Fairfield

4: SILKEN THREADS (1832)

D: Leslie Eveleigh

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Leslie Perrins | Stormcroft |
| Marjorie Hurne | Nadia Petrowski |
| Frank Atherley | Man |
| Mrs. Fred Emney | Mrs. Bardell |

5: THE GREAT OFFICE MYSTERY (2060)

Ronald Curtis Kestrel

6: THE MYSTERY OF THE SILENT DEATH (1965)

D: Leslie Eveleigh

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Roy Travers | Mr. Reece |
| Mrs. Fred Emney | Mrs. Bardell |

CRIME Private tec and young assistant solve various crimes.

THE GREAT CHEQUE FRAUD (3000)

July 1915

Silent Film

I. B. Davidson (Walturdaw)

D: SC: Charles Raymond

S: (CHARACTERS) Harry Blyth

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Harry Lorraine | Sexton Blake |
| Douglas Payne | George Marsden Plummer |
| Bert Rex | Tinker |

CRIME Tec saves boy assistant from bank swindler after escaping fire by overhead cable.

THE THORNTON JEWEL MYSTERY (2600) (A) November 1915

Silent Film

I. B. Davidson - St. George (Serra)

D: Charles Raymond

S: (CHARACTERS) Harry Blyth

| | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Harry Lorraine | Sexton Blake |
| Bert Rex | Tinker |

CRIME Girl frames drunkard for gem theft and tec is saved from crook's launch by boy's 60 ft. dive.

A Gerald Verner Film

NOOSE FOR A LADY (73) (A)

April 1953

Talkie

Insignia (AA)

P: Victor Hanbury

D: Wolf Rilla

S: (NOVEL) Gerald Verner (WHISPERING WOMAN)

SC: Rex Rienits

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Dennis Price | Simon Gale |
| Rona Anderson | Jill Hallam |

cont'd ...

Ronald Howard Dr. Evershed
Alison Leggatt Mrs. Langdon-Humphries

CRIME Tec proves his convicted cousin did not poison her blackmailer husband.

CONSULTING ROOM CHAT (3)

Mine Mystery. I went down a coal-mine the other day, courtesy of Walter Tyrer's case-book "The Conscript Miner" (81/3). Topically using the advent of the "Bevin boy" scheme Tyrer introduces Arthur Fielding to a battleground when he gets sent to Herrington, where his estate agent father has once been concerned in shady dealings with the mineral rights of the New Pit which replaced the useless old Neptune mine. Down this flooded old mine are clues to the mystery: a human skeleton and a sprawled message "BEHIND THE DOOR OF MOTHER'S CLOCK", which Arthur discovers when he is trapped down there. Dear old Pedro leads Blake to the old shaft which Arthur has gone down. Through a hillside ventilation shaft they gain a chamber in the dry workings to rescue him. Then they are all back again down the ventilation shaft, this time hunting the murderer of Arthur's father, but this time the pumping engines that hold back the floodwater are stopped and they are trapped - the water entirely enclosing the passage through which they have entered. Tinker just manages an underwater escape swim only to discover that the pumping engines he hoped to re-start have been smashed beyond repair. There is a desperate spectacular solution - the valley reservoir dam is blown up, draining off the water flooding the Neptune. A mighty torrent traps the last of the villains as he flees in his car across the valley road. Blake and Fielding are saved. The Baker Street pair have often featured in mine mysteries but I think this was the last time a coal-mine was used as a setting for a case in the SBL. That Tyrer could contribute such splendid case-books as this sample only to decline into the later unworthy cases he lumbered Blake with has always saddened me.

As a postscript to the above, I have just thought Tyrer ended his three evil characters by a stroke, drowning and hanging, then turned round, fresh from their deaths, to meet them face to face, perhaps, in the street. For one author at least has recorded this was the way she

disposed of real frustrating people by way of her novels.

1981. How about a bullet-proof 110 mph "Grey Panther" that can safely be driven over land-mines; driven through a smoke screen with the aid of infra-red beams; started by remote control to foil terrorists who have attached a bomb to the ignition; with tear-gas launchers to deter a mob, and a rear oil spray to cover the road and make a pursuing car skid. All mod cons in a Cadillac ordered by the late Shah of Iran, for sale at £65,000.

Or a "Grey Panther" helicopter fitted with radio, stabilised binoculars, TV camera and loud hailer. £150,000 extras added to a £600,000 Bell 222 helicopter that Scotland Yard has added to its air support base at Lippitts Hill, Loughton, Essex.

To which must be added a briefcase which can test a room for electronic bugs, track down bombs and has a telephone scrambler and a two-way radio. Price £300 to £5,000, depending on the equipment.

But what would be the use of all this expensive "crimongery" to Blake if there are clients around like Prince Al Thani of Qatar? When thieves stole an estimated £8 million in jewels and cash from his villa in Cannes he was so unconcerned that police gave up trying to get a list of the missing property from him.

And who would have time to read about his cases, anyway, with the latest "Electronic Detective" available last Christmas. A computerised game to test your powers of logic and deduction in solving over 130,000 murder mysteries. However, just before Christmas, a small ad. appeared in my local paper offering one of these games for sale, three weeks old, £20. Could it be that it was found on top of the wardrobe and "read" like that "Sexton Blake Annual" before it could be put at the foot of the bed on Christmas Eve? There is hope yet, it seems.

McLean. Further to my note on Dandy McLean and Gordon Hudson's interesting article in the Annual, "The Weekly News" provided me with some facts and figures. George Goodchild, his creator, was born in 1888 and died in 1970. The Dandy McLean stories were first published in the "News" in 1928. A weekly detective story for nearly forty-two years by the same author, and then a further nine years or so by other hands must be something of a record. In "McLean Finds A Way" there is a list of sixteen titles in chronological order with "McLean of

Scotland Yard" first. No info. was forthcoming about the Library first mentioned by Bill Lofts, so presumably this was a short-lived publication best forgotten.

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

"I DO LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE SOUTH SEAS"

by William Lister

I must confess I have a 'yen' for the South Seas. At this stage, memory being what it is, I can't recall if the tales, "The Blue Lagoon" or "Coral Island" have a connection with the South Seas or not.

Being popular stories, and films, in my early days they turned my thoughts to a better world across the seas. Further South Sea pictures and tales fanned the flame and my 'yen' for the South Seas became what one would today call "FANTASY ISLAND".

The years have rolled away and I don't suppose the South Sea Islands are what they used to be (unless you happen to be reading a travel brochure). Even Wigan would look romantic in one of those.

However, you could still say "There's no fool like an old fool". I have a couple of records and a tape featuring Hawaiian guitars and a background of breaking waves, etc. Closing my eyes, my imagination does the rest.

Talking about imagination, how about Edwy Searles Brooks, the master of imagination? Did he or did he not, visit the South Sea Islands with his St. Frank's boys? He did; the year being 1925 and chronicled in the summer series (o.s. 529-536) eight in all.

To transport the St. Frank's party from here to there, so to speak, E.S.B. provides them - and us - the 2d. weekly customers of his, with a beautiful yacht, repainted, reconditioned, her brass work glittering brilliantly, her graceful hull cream coloured, and her two funnels having a squat, rakish appearance which gave her the suggestion of a destroyer. Lord Dorrimore had spent a bomb on the "Wanderer".

Did we "Nelson Lee" fans climb aboard? You bet we did and for

eight glorious weeks we followed the adventures of the St. Frank's boys into the world of the South Sea Islands at a total cost of 1/4d - there was the added attraction of a few Moor View schoolgirls aboard.

What did we get for our 1/4d. South Sea trip on the "Wanderer"?

The company of Nelson Lee and Nipper, the leading St. Frank's boys, and Moor View girls. Add to this, a cyclone - a hurricane - romance - the discovery of "Paradise Island". Beautiful scenery - palm trees - blue lakes - pearl divers - giant squid - romance - a sunken Galleon - plus treasure chest - a gigantic Loch Ness monster type horror - an amazing tight-rope act in which Tessa Love carries an unconscious schoolboy over a raging sea; and much more beside.

And so, good friends, all good things come to an end - home again! and to quote Edwy Searles Brooks: "England and a cold, raw September morning. The English Channel was particularly inhospitable, but nobody cared. There was something rather ripping about the thick atmosphere and the nip in the air. It was so different to the relaxing languor of the tropics. "Can't you see the light-house" panted Church, "give the old place a cheer". The cheer was given and with a will."

And so say all of us!

The South Seas Holiday Series, of 1925. Produced by The Amalgamated Press 1922 Ltd. Distributed by The Nelson Lee Library. Illustrated by Anon. Script by Edwy Searles Brooks. Sub-titles - 'Adventure Bound', 'The Wanders Quest', 'The Isle of Coral', 'The Pearl Hunters', 'The Secret of the Lagoon', 'Beset by Cannibals', 'The Demon of the Reef' and 'The Terror of the Pacific'.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

If you missed the boat in 1925 you'll find it sailing again via the Bob Blythe - Nelson Lee Library.

COVER COLOURS

by R. J. Godsave

During the first half of the 1920's great care was taken over the cover design and colouring of the Nelson Lee Library. One of the best colour combinations used at that time was that of yellow and blue. An excellent example of this is seen in the Dr. Karnak series o.s. No. 449, "The Evil Eye of Baal". This cover drawing has Nipper and Reggie Pitt standing on the wide ledge which ran outside Dr. Karnak's bedroom and looking in at his caperings around a brazier in his effort to invoke the

aid of evil spirits. The combination of these two colours gave the cover a sombre and fitting atmosphere to this type of story.

Another cover which stands out from the artistic point of view is that of o. s. 382 "The Price of Folly". An extremely attractive design printed in dark blue with two thin red lines running down on either side of the frame. This fine effect is made by the almost complete absence of red, the dark blue being relieved in parts by a pale pink.

The drawing above the title of o. s. 382 which was displayed in the centre of the cover shows Fullwood being rescued from drowning by Archie Glenthorne. A small drawing under the title shows St. Frank's in the distance through overhanging willow trees with a punt lying alongside the banks of the river Stowe. This small drawing is printed in dark blue and is the original of the enlarged drawing which appears with the delightful collection of drawings of the St. Frank's environs by E. E. Briscoe in the Bibliography of the Writings of E. S. Brooks.

One wonders what effect a well-designed and colourful cover had on the sales of the Nelson Lee Library, especially to the casual buyer.

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 171 - Holiday Annual 1932

The Holiday Annuals were of widely varying quality so far as the Hamiltonian content was concerned. Generally speaking, the earlier editions from 1920-28 on the thin paper were compiled with considerably more care than some of the later issues. The thick, almost cardboard-like paper used between 1929 and 1941 gave a false impression of the quantity of the reading matter therein, and in many years the amount of genuine Hamiltoniana was limited to merely one or two stories. To pay five shillings for reading matter inferior to two twopenny Magnets was very much a bad bargain, but of course Holiday Annuals in their stout binding outlasted most copies of the ephemeral weekly publications.

One issue that was in my own home from my early recollections was the 1932 volume. I must have read it so many times that I almost knew it by heart. Yet as I look over it now, I can see that only "The Vanished Eleven" was a genuine story, a reprint of a red Magnet in

which Temple arranged for the Remove team to be kidnapped so that the Fourth could play the visiting St. Jim's cricketers. Even as a boy I thought horrifying was the only word to describe the way in which the Bouncer stopped the car that was carrying them away by plunging a penknife into the driver's neck and warning him that he had better stop before it reached the jugular vein. Life was a little more civilised than that in the Magnets of the nineteen-thirties.

I imagine that Samways deserves the credit for the remainder of the stories about the Hamiltonian schools, especially as they were all on the short side. "Putty's Priceless Prank" (pretending to be hypnotised) and "My Little Mistake" (Clarence Cuffy in the first person) were certainly never by the real Owen Conquest, and neither was "Reforming Mauly" by Hamilton, despite its wealth of classical allusions. The St. Jim's stories - "Making Game of Gussy" and "The Third Form Crusoes" were equally suspect, especially as the second story mentioned such almost-forgotten characters as Kerruish, Piggott, Jameson, and Frayne. Substitute writers seemed to enjoy resurrecting the past (at all events, it certainly proved that they had done their homework) and typical of this habit was "The St. Jim's Inventor", a description of Glyn's and Skimpole's inventions in the days of the blue Gem. Samways' most successful contribution was undoubtedly the fantasy at the beginning entitled "The Old Boys' Dinner", supposedly set in 1959 when the Famous Five and others return for a re-union at Greyfriars.

An unusual item was a story by Brooks, "The Rivals of St. Frank's", starring K. K. Parkington and the Red Hots. It dealt with a picnic hamper that was commandeered by one group after another in a series of raids, and showed Brooks in his lightest vein. St. Frank's was a rare visitor to the Holiday Annual and it is interesting to ponder on the reason for its appearance in 1932. Perhaps Hamiltonian readers were being prepared for the coming serials in the back of the Gem.

THE MAGNET'S "INFAMOUS FIVE"

by Len Wormull

They were around before Harry Wharton & Co. became famous, just waiting on the sidelines to be introduced. They were a disreputable lot, always, with never a good word on their behalf. Maligned and outlawed, they lent their support to some of the finest school stories in the

repertoire. They were, of course, the public-houses, in and around Friardale. Never in the history of the Magnet did Frank Richards owe so much to so few. Five in number, and all strategically backed on to the towpath of the River Sark; designed, no doubt, to facilitate the quick entry and exit of erring schoolboys. The Magnet was not yet one year old when the 'worst place in Friardale' set the pattern, irrevocably, for the future ...

THE RED COW, answering to the above description, came into prominence with the sacking of Ernest Levison (Expelled, No. 46). A none too convincing tale, in which both Levison and Wharton are caught on the premises by Mr. Quelch. If you can accept that Wharton would leave a warm bed late at night to pluck Levison from the burning, as it were. If you can accept that Mr. Quelch would hang around the place after closing-time, on a bitterly cold winter's night. But these were embryo days (and nights), and one should not perhaps cavil. Levison, a good-at-heart rascal who liked his liquor, exonerates Wharton, and pays the penalty. He was later to turn up at St. Jim's.

THE WATERSIDE INN, another from red Magnet days, played a key part in the expulsion of Carberry, a Sixth Form bully who had ruled the roost from the beginning. Bunter's ventriloquism was used to good effect here, making Carberry think he had been spotted there by the Head, thus giving the prefect enough rope to hang himself (The Cad of the Sixth, No. 107). The Magnet was growing up and it was time for a change. Gerald Loder, waiting in the wings, seized the opportunity and became a star. A turning point indeed.

THE CROSS KEYS gave such invaluable service, if you'll forgive the paradox, that one hardly knows where to begin. Certainly, Friardale's Terrible Three - Cobb the landlord, Hawkes the card-sharper, Banks the bookmaker - had much to answer for. High drama, expulsions, floggings, tragedy - all can be laid at their doorstep. How it all comes back ... If only Bulstrode minor had kept away that fateful and rainswept night ... If only Harry Wharton had not sunk to going there, to flaw his character and the First Rebel diamond ... If only Wingate minor had not been inveigled into going there by Loder, thus losing his brother the captaincy to him, with a prefects' beating to boot ... If only! But what gems would have been lost to us.

THE FEATHERS, of early 'twenties vintage, caught the spotlight when Ernest Levison returned for a brief spell. Now a reformed character, he had come over to be near brother Frank, who had ended up in the sanatorium after running away from school. It quickly develops into a 'living down the past' theme, with Hazeldene coming to the fore. Hazeldene, a weak and whining character, and a pain in the neck to me personally, gets into trouble with a bookmaker at the Feathers. Levison goes there to settle for him and gets caught. The mud sticks, and his old associates lose no time in trying to make him the bad lad he once was. Needless to say, he comes through it all untarnished.

THE THREE FISHERS, the most serious rival to the Cross Keys, was very much of the 'thirties. Known for its prize-fights, cock-fighting, and Joe Banks's second home, it could accommodate 'hundreds'. I shall always remember it for comedy, on the one occasion it was found not guilty of schoolboy corruption. Loder, stalking the "Co." along the towpath, thinks they have entered the place, when in fact they had climbed the fence and up into a tree. Loder raises the alarm and causes the place to be surrounded with prefects. Meanwhile, the chums go on to Courtfield, where they meet and fete Mr. Quelch - the key witness! Loder becomes the laughing-stock of the school. Great stuff, "A Lesson for Loder". The Stacey and Second Wharton Rebel series were others with a Three Fishers backdrop.

And there we are, with just the tip of the iceberg. Infamous they were and had to be, but how well they played their part in that wonderful world of Greyfriars.

Postscript: Basil Reynold's map of Greyfriars sites a BIRD IN HAND, off Oak Lane. This I have failed to trace. Anything known?

* * * * *

WANTED: "Jane" books by Evadne Price.

DARRELL SWIFT, 22 WOODNOOK CLOSE, LEEDS, LS16 6PQ

* * * * *

WANTED: I need only Pluck No. 129, "The Reformation of Marmaduke" to complete my St. Jim's file. Would a kind possessor consider taking photostat copies of the entire issue for me? Naturally I would pay well for it, or I have plenty of Charles Hamilton and other author's material for exchange. Of course, will buy or exchange for the original, but I do not expect to be that lucky. Please write first.

S. SMYTH, P.O. BOX 284, RYDALMERE, 2116, N.S.W., AUSTRALIA

The Postman Called

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

FRED OAK (London): I discovered an error in the "Magnet Companion". Issue No. 1219 is listed with the title of "Bandits of the Line", whereas the correct title was "A Cracksman's Reward".

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Just a slip. "Bandits of the Line" was a railway serial running in the Magnet at that time.)

WILF GREEN (South Australia): Wherever I go, I am full of hope that some old Story Papers and Comics will turn up. At least there is pleasure in anticipation, even if nothing comes of it. Besides the Gem and Magnet, I have an association of memories of Film Fun, Funny Wonder, Boys' Cinema, Champion, Triumph, Rover and Adventure. Such is the wonder of the mind. I hope that Collectors' Digest will continue to bring happiness and interest for many more years to come.

Mrs. JOAN GOLEN (Sutton Coldfield): You mentioned the Wallace case in C.D. and as my second interest is criminology, I must recommend that you read "Who Killed Julia Wallace?" by Jonathan Goodman. It really is well researched and he has even gone to the trouble of finding out what became of all the leading figures in the case. I have read the Y. Bridges' version and others, but cannot say they come anywhere near the Goodman version. I expect interested people will argue this case forever and in my case, I incline towards the innocence of Mr. Wallace. He lost so much when he lost Julia and the motive for such savagery isn't to be found. Anyway, we all have our pet theories, but do try to read this excellent book.

As usual the C.D. always seems to find other interesting themes apart from our hobby and I must say you are a man of many parts and your Editorials are a joy to read and only in the Wallace case have you ever written anything with which I cannot really agree - a very good record with such diverse membership.

Miss E. MAGOVENY (Belfast): Re your article on the Wallace Case, I read about it, years ago, in the Empire News. Of his Life Story in "John Bull", the first part was entitled "The Hell I have Lived". I feel quite

sure he was guilty. His wife probably stitched the money in her corsets to keep it from his greedy fingers.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Well, there we have the views of two of our ladies. I believe the Goodman book was the most recent on the case, and that we reviewed it a few years back in C.D. My point about the money in the corsets was that Mrs. W. was shown to have a savings bank account. So why didn't she place the money there? Her husband was away from home most of the day, so she could have gone to a post-office without his knowing.)

W. T. THURBON (Cambridge): With regard to John Bridgwater's letter I never saw the Jack, Sam and Pete film, because it never reached Cambridge. I suspect it was rather a flop. But I well remember the amount of "puff" it got in the "Marvel", with many editorial references, and later on still photographs from the film. I remember Ernest Trimmingham was "Pete", but I think some of the earliest references to the film said that "Jack" would be played by Jack Daring - presumably a nom de theatre. I also think that the plot was used by Clark Hook for a late B.F.L., whose title I cannot now recall. But it was the last original J.S. & P. B.F.L. I read, and was very poor stuff. I can recall only one newspaper reference to the film after it was released which rather damned it with faint praise.

Mrs. J. PACKMAN (East Dulwich): The Princess's articles are always welcome, and I greatly enjoyed reading about her drinking habits. My Bebe likes to drink from the wash basin in the bathroom, so I have to keep a supply of clean water ready for her, as well as a bowl of water in the garden from which a variety of pussies indulge themselves. What would we do without our cats to entertain and love us? Bebe has taken to sleeping at night on top of my wardrobe which she reaches by means of a chair, onto the mantel piece and then a leap on to the wardrobe. An odd place to sleep, eh?

T. A. JOHNSON (Neston): Can anyone help me? I am trying to locate a Chinese serial I once read in the early twenties. It wasn't in Magnet, Popular, or Young Britain, but I also took Champion. Was there a Chinese serial in Champion at that time. It absolutely thrilled me as a boy. Re Free Gifts, a set of film star postcards was issued with Cinema Chat, a magazine of 1919/20 which lasted about 18 months and then was amalgamated with Home News.

ERNEST HOLMAN (Leigh-on-Sea): Boys' Magazine, in red, was about the size of C.D. Falcon Swift was certainly the most memorable character - with a 'typical urchin' lad, Chick Conway, as assistant. Swift's quarters were filled with sporting trophies and most of his enemies were crooks acting as sportsmen. He spent a good deal of his time boxing, when he wasn't regularly saving Chick from the clutches of kidnappers. 'Lost Civilisation' stories were plentiful in this paper, which often included a school series. One individual from the latter was a Fatty Norton and any boy of unusual proportions in my boyhood circle was either a 'Billy Bunter' or a 'Fatty Norton'. The publishers also produced a weekly rival to 'Tit-Bits', 'Pearson's Weekly' and 'Answers' which they called 'Ideas'. Hulton took over Boys' Mag. eventually; presumably the Amalgamated Press later 'moved in', as Messrs. Adley and Lofts 'Old Boys' Book Catalogue' mentions that this publication was incorporated into 'Champion' in 1934.

I have a vague recollection that the 'Cake Walk' started out as a rather unusual or 'way out' Negro Dance. I also have in mind a 'jig' or 'rag' that went by the title of 'Golliwogs' Cake Walk'. Why 'Cake' was used in the description of the Dance I know not - and no doubt by the time that Jack Blake gave his popular rendering, the Dance had been 'toned down'.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: According to one reader, a cake was given as a prize. I suppose that might be the origin of "taking the cake". Two readers, living very far apart - Mr. Neil Lambert of Surbiton and Mr. Bert Holmes of Barrow - have mentioned that, in fun-fairs of some fifty years ago and more, there were devices known as "cake walks". A kind of shifting platform with planks going backward and forward. But that could hardly be the cake walk that Blake danced in the concert.)

M. S. FELLOWS (London): Congratulations on the fine Editorial on "Cavalcade". It was most moving.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Grateful thanks to dozens of readers who have written in as a result of our "Cavalcade" editorial. Some may be interested to know that "Cavalcade" is returning to the Redgrave Theatre, Farnham, for a further run from 8th October to 31st October. If anyone should plan a visit there, it should be noted that it is essential to book without much delay. Half the seats for the run have already been sold. The International Herald Tribune critic wrote of it: "Farnham has achieved the impossible ... a theatrical tapestry many of us had thought lost for ever."

W. O. G. LOFTS (London): I did not mean to be unkind to Mr. C. H. Chapman with my views on his boat drawings, as I have always had the deepest respect not only for his enormous output but for the man himself. I met him many times at his home when we discussed not only his own work, but that of fellow artists. He was often bemused by the idolatry poured on him from old Magnet readers, and was honest enough to admit that his work did have faults at times in perception - like many fellow professionals. In his case the main fault was having far too much work to do with tight deadlines - consequently he had no time for proper revision or corrections. He once did a drawing of a sailing boat on a Magnet cover (reproduced years ago in the C.D. or Annual) that was shaped more like a coal barge. Mr. Truscott mentions the 'Water Lily' series, in this case a good example. The 'Water Lily' varied a great deal in size through the series, once looking like a small rowing boat on a children's boating pool! It was supposed to hold not only the Famous Five, but Bunter as well, not forgetting all the camping equipment and gear. One stage it is doubtful if it would have held the Fat Owl of the Remove for long! Whether youthful readers noticed all this at the time is unlikely, and the drawings were after all for their interest.

LES ROWLEY (Penzance): I was most interested in Bill Lofts' article "Old Father Thames" for I had long thought I recognised some of the scenes in the 'Water Lily' series. Perhaps I had been influenced in knowing that Mr. Chapman lived on the Thames. I was born on the Thames, myself, and can also bear witness to the authenticity of some of Frank Richards' locations in this series.

In 1969 I hired a cruiser and followed the course of the 'Water Lily' as near as I was able. It was rather breath-taking to read the stories once again to the soft lapping of water against the boat!

JIM MERRILLS (Alberta, Canada): The covers of the monthly issues are most interesting and bring back memories of a long gone time. Right now I am looking at a picture of the FIREFLY on the cover of the April issue. It makes you want to rush out to the nearest News Stand and look through all the copies in the hope that by some miracle a few of those old papers will be there on display for purchase. No such luck.

Keep up the good work of Collectors' Digest, one of the few links

with the good old past.

R. H. CUSHING (Kimpton): I was interested to read your contributor's observations in this month's C.D. re 'The Boys' Magazine'.

I read this journal avidly as a boy and would point out to Mr. Glynn that Falcon Swift - known and feared by his adversaries as the 'Monocled Manhunter' and ably assisted by his intrepid assistant, Chick Conway, was the inspiration of John Hunter, who I feel has not received the recognition his versatility as a writer of boys' fiction truly merited.

I would also like to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of your editorial on the subject of 'Cavalcade'.

* * * * *

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

CAMBRIDGE

The Club celebrated its tenth anniversary on Sunday, 17 May, 1981, when a good gathering of present and former members met in the "Backhouse Room" of the Cambridge Y.M.C.A., together with a number of guests, well known in collecting circles, and several former guest speakers.

Lunch at noon was followed by informal discussion. Much interest was shown in a display of a variety of books and papers, covering most of the present century, as well as many 19th century papers. There were many happy reunions, and among former guest speakers the club was pleased to welcome Bob and Mrs. Blythe and J. T. Edson.

The formal proceedings began at 2 p.m. when the visitors were welcomed by the President, Bill Lofts.

In the last minute absence of the founder of the Club, Danny Posner, Jack Overhill described how the club was formed ten years ago, with a brief account of its history.

Maurice Hall intrigued the gathering with the question "did Charles Hamilton use an index to his numerous schools and characters, or did he depend entirely on memory?" This item aroused an animated discussion.

Vic Hearn spoke of a "Boy's dreamworld in the 1930's" discussing his reading from "Puck" to the Thompson papers, and a late appreciation of "The Magnet". Mike Rouse showed a magnificent series of slides of comics ranging from the beginning of the Century to the 1950's.

Keith Hodkinson spoke about and showed numerous slides of stories in the Thomson papers during the 1940's. Adrian Perkins gave a talk about the king of the 1950's papers - "The Eagle", and showed slides of the artists at work and of last year's Eagle Convention held in London. Perran Newman startled, horrified and absorbed the audience with a talk and slides on the more recent publication "2,000 A.D." - a comic of the savage seventies.

At 4 o'clock the meeting broke off for tea. Mrs. Ruth Wood cut the tenth anniversary cake, which had been made and iced by Mrs. Adrian Perkins. Then Bob Blythe gave a talk on the history and contents of the E. S. Brooks Collection, illustrated with slides. Members found items Bob passed round to be of great interest. Jack Overhill, a writer and teacher of Pitmans Shorthand for well over fifty years, expressed his admiration of the wonderful shorthand written by Mrs. Brooks. Bill Thurbon, speaking as an Archivist, stressed the value of members' collections as materials for the social historian, since any collection of books or papers reflected opinions held at the time they were written.

Keith Hodkinson showed the film he had made to celebrate the centenary of the foundation of "The Boys' Own Paper", which is, in effect, a history of a century of boys' papers.

Chairman Vic Hearn thanked all those who had taken part in the success of the celebration - and the gathering reluctantly broke up, with memories of old friendships renewed and new friendships made, to look forward to the next decade.

K.H. & W.T.T.

MIDLAND

Meeting 19th May, 1981

A well attended meeting took place at Dr. Johnson's House, Birmingham.

Officially, it was the A.G.M., but the formal business was soon over, the officers being re-elected 'en bloc', and a vote of thanks moved

and seconded on their behalf.

With Tom Porter present after last month's absence our usual features, Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item were on show. The A.N. was Magnet 481 dated 19th May and 65 years old. The title was 'His Father's Honour'. It was a 'sub' story by G. R. Samways. The C.I. was No. 1 (n. s.), Greyfriars Herald, dated 11th November, 1919.

A paper was passed round for members to record what they had been reading since last we met and also a paper recording their wants. It is very much the purpose of our club to help collectors.

A game called, "Complete the Name" was won with ease by Len Berg who looked fit and well after a spell in hospital.

A reading by your correspondent, carefully cut down to ten minutes (now a club rule) was taken from the 1927 Holiday Annual. Bunter is on the run after hurling a case at Quelch in mistake for Walker of the Sixth. The reading concerned Knowles of the Rookwood Sixth who gave Bunter a record tanning after the fat fool had been spoofed by Tommy Dodd into going into Knowles' study and eating a special tea prepared for Knowles' friends and himself.

Another game called "Complete the Title" based on "Take a Letter" was won by Ron Gardner and Geoff Lardner.

If any wish to visit us make a note of the July meeting date, the 28th.

All good wishes to O.B.B.C. enthusiasts everywhere.

JACK BELLFIELD - Correspondent.

LONDON

What turned out to be a garden party gathering at the Wokingham home, "Greyfriars", of Betty and Eric Lawrence was thoroughly enjoyed by a good attendance and this was materially aided by a glorious day of sunshine.

Both Eric Fayne and Madam were present as were Ron and Kit Beck, who had made the journey from Lewes, and Dr. Peter McCall who quickly made friends with everybody.

Roy Parsons gave an excellent discourse on the Goldhawk paper

backs which featured St. Jim's. He called the talk "Goldhawk Revisited". There were eleven issues in the series, very good stories of the chums of St. Jim's.

Eric Lawrence conducted his musical quiz which featured eight 'pop' tunes of yesteryear and the result was a replica of Roger Jenkins' Initial Quiz of last month as Roy Parsons was the winner and gave the anagram, 'Monteith' first. All credit to Ron Beck who only had two correct answers, but managed to give the correct anagram.

From "The Spendthrift of St. Frank's", Ray Hopkins read a couple of amusing chapters. More E. S. Brooks' old correspondence was read by Bob Blythe.

The Alphabetical old boys' papers and books quiz was won by Ben Whiter. His knowledge of the comic papers helped him considerably to achieve first place.

Thus with the happy time spent in the garden and the good meeting indoors, it was a very enjoyable gathering.

Next meeting at the Ealing home of Bill and Thelma Bradford on Sunday, 12th July. A full tea will be provided. BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 13th June, 1981

Being holiday time, at least two of our stalwarts were missing, including Harry Barlow, our Chairman.

A special welcome was given to Mr. Ian Dewhurst, the Librarian of the Reference Section at Keighley Library: he had joined us for the evening to give us a talk. Geoffrey Good told about the successful day spent at Cambridge Club's Tenth Anniversary, congratulating the Cambridge Members for a very eventful programme. Mention was made that in the Cambridge Club, a wider spectrum is covered, for they also get involved in comics, as well as old boys' papers.

Harry Blowers brought a newspaper cutting showing us that our local evening paper was shortly to produce a citizens' guide and was asking various organisations to submit details. This was a good opportunity for our Club to get some publicity, and this would be actioned by our Secretary.

Harry presented us with an acrostic - and it certainly kept our members quiet for fifteen minutes!

After refreshments, Ian gave an entertaining and enlightening talk, A FEAST OF NOSTALGIA. Although not directly associated with our hobby, the talk did refer to some of the old advertisements that had appeared in the papers of years gone by. Ian was mostly interested in local history and his fifty minute talk was over too quickly. It was a very enjoyable meeting - and thanks were expressed to Ian for coming along to join us.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

* * * * *

MY MEMORIES

by Horace Dilley

Each month I eagerly look forward to the "Collectors' Digest". One of the delights of sheer nostalgia is the Diary of fifty years ago, when at that time I was a lad of 14, and I can so vividly recall many of the happenings which are so faithfully recorded.

In my very early days, I had to be content with the weekly copy of the Magnet. Times then were fairly bad but somehow or another, through doing various jobs, I was able in due course to add the "Gem", "Popular" and the "Nelson Lee" to my weekly collection.

I went to school in the village where I was born and I used to run home from School at "dinner time" so that I could get at least a glance through the old papers before I went back. When on an occasion now and again, my young mind was particularly stimulated by the "Magnet", etc., somehow or another I didn't feel too well and I was allowed to skip going back to school in the afternoon. Of course, I didn't get away with that on many occasions!

I used to keep my collection of the Magnets and Gems, etc., in an old tea chest, which I believe was made of some type of ply-wood with an edging of tin, which could be pretty lethal.

When the war broke out and there was an urgent call for waste paper, I gave up all of my papers. How I have regretted many times that I did so - although perhaps they did help the war along. I suppose on modern prices, they would have been worth over £2,000. The real loss, however, was the delightful reading.

Five and a half years in the army and three and a half years

abroad - with all of its adventure - and the antics of Bunter and D'Arcy and the others I suppose went complete from my mind.

However, some few years after the war, I can so vividly recall being in a toy and book shop. The shop was so cluttered up that there was hardly room for many customers to get inside. An old gas lamp bravely, but not very successfully, endeavoured to bring light to the shop. There was a smell of news-print, which as far as I am concerned, is pleasant and savours of expectancy.

I looked at the counter, where a variety of periodicals were on display, and I spotted a book - I think it was a Goldhawk - certainly it was about St. Jim's and Talbot. In that brief moment, the clock stood still - then the years went back - and once more I was back at St. Jim's and Greyfriars, etc.

Since then, I have gradually built up my collection of the "originals" and of course, the Howard Baker issues are excellent.

We cannot turn back the clock, but memories of years ago can be very, very precious. I can recall having a joke published in the "Magnet" - I believe for that I got a fountain pen. I once requested back numbers of the "Nelson Lee" and got an avalanche of replies. On two occasions I wrote to Edward Oswald Handforth and received published replies. Once I requested a pen pal - and the correspondence was kept up for several years.

And perhaps, finally, I recall that little shop of the newsagent in my village. It was a little cottage down the bottom of a hill. The shop was round the back - really it was one of his living rooms. It was spick and span - with displays of so many periodicals. There was an atmosphere there which was almost unique. It never seemed to be closed - I can recall going there at ten o'clock at night time in the dead of winter.

Memories can be very precious - and some of them are revived monthly as the Collectors' Digest is pushed through the letter box. So may I say "Thanks for the memory".

SNEAKING REGARD FOR A SNEAK

by Tommy Keen

Skinner, Snoop, and Stott were not three of the most pleasant of the Greyfriars characters, although I think I remember reading at one

time that Frank Richards rather cared for Skinner. Actually, Skinner was just the mean, vicious type of cad one must have in a place such as Greyfriars, to help show to advantage the utter nobility of Harry Wharton and Co. I may have the wrong impression, but I don't think Skinner was quite so evil in the 1930's, as he had been in the 1920's and previous.

Snoop, also, was quite contemptible, more so, I should imagine, during the earlier days of Greyfriars.

William Stott, the least important of the three, always rather interested me, and often wished that something more would be made of Stott. Actually, I liked the name.

To my knowledge, Stott only featured once in a Magnet story, during the time as a schoolboy when I was besotted by the Magnet (and of course, I still am), but I have since learnt that this story, "The Supreme Sacrifice", Magnet No. 788, was written by a substitute writer, W. S. S. Hope. Stott was not at all a pleasant character in this story of long ago, and it was his cousin, a Clifford Stott, who paid 'the supreme sacrifice'.

Stott was inclined to just follow Skinner and Snoop, although at times he demurred over too much trickery. However, all through the Greyfriars Saga, Stott was a minor character, and although he did not entirely vanish from the scene, as did Bulstrode, Trevor, Treluce, Dick Rake, Hillary, Jimmy Vivian, plus of course Pentelow's Piet Delarey, he never amounted to anything.

Pity, with all the numerous people who kept tumbling into the Sark, that Stott wasn't allowed to show some pluck, and save somebody from a watery grave.

Or was he?

FOR SALE: SOL's No. 303, "Schoolmaster Spy" (St. Frank's); 323, "The Six-Gun Schoolmaster" (Packsaddle); 351, "Valley of Gold" (St. Frank's); "Cock o' the Walk" (St. Jim's sub); all splendid copies, all £1.50 each. Howard Baker facsimiles of the first Holiday Annual (1920) and "The Barring-Out at St. Frank's". Both in brand-new condition, £2 each. Postage extra on all items. Write: ERIC FAYNE (no reply if items already sold).

£7 each offered Sexton Blake's 1st series No. 184, "The City of Apes", 197 "The Yellow Face". Many early 2nd series wanted, from £2 each offered. OWEN, 28 Narcissus Rd., London, N.W.6.

WANTED: Looking for 1931 to 1956 Wizards with stories of an Iron Robot called "The Smasher". Will pay your price or exchange for Magnets or other periodicals.

BILL WATSON, OLYMPIUS, SANDFORD MILI RD., CHELMSFORD, ESSEX