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SILVER JACKET

A MAGAZINE
FOR BOYS

No 2

6^D

1953



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VOL. 41

No. 491

NOVEMBER 1987

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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The Editor's Chat



LOOKING BACK ...

The mellow mistiness of autumn is a wonderful time for dipping deeply into our old books and papers. These, of course, are instant time-machines into our personal and communal pasts, and the vividness of recreated moods and memories. In a quotation sent to me recently by our reader Don Hardman from Australia, that great story-spinner John Buchan writing of 'the mystery of time' says that 'the abiding things lie in the past ...'. I like to think that not only

are these projected by memory into the present but that today - just like our yesterdays - will one day also have its own nostalgic golden glow.

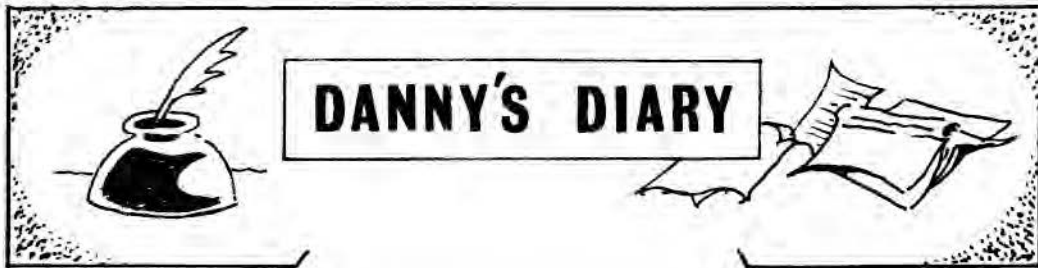
LOOKING UP ...

Our cover-boy this month is Captain W.E. Johns's Biggles, who seems to be in the limelight these days. Letters about him pop up regularly in my postbag; in 1986 we saw the well made film of his exploits; and last month the second annual gathering (in Nottingham) of enthusiasts of W.E. Johns's stories attracted visitors from far and wide, including C.D. reader Bert van Vondel from the Netherlands, who produces a quarterly magazine called Biggles News (I hasten to add that although much of this is in Dutch it includes items in English, as well as an attractive range of illustrations whose appeal, of course, is not limited to any one language group). So, like so many story-paper heroes, Biggles (whose launching pad was Popular Flying in the 1930's) is still flying high!

LOOKING FORWARD ...

You will see that we are anticipating the festive season in this November issue of C.D. by publishing the first part of E. Baldock's story Christmas at Wharton Lodge. This is an 'appetizer' for our grand December number, which will, we hope, bring the true spirit of Christmas into all your homes. So too will our C.D. Annual. Last month we 'trailed' a few of its contents. Some other items are an intriguing article by Eric Fayne on Charles Hamilton in the Wild, Wild West!; a perceptive view of one of Hamilton's most charismatic schoolboy characters by Roger Jenkins; a delightful new look at Diana Royston-Clarke, the firebrand of Cliff House, by Margery Woods; articles on W.E. Johns's characters by Norman Wright and Paul Galvin; on the continuing fascinations of St. Frank's by Jim Cook, and dips (by your Editor) into the Never Failing Delights of various Annuals. And there is much, much more. Don't forget to order your Annual soon if you have not already done so (£6.75 for the U.K.: £7.35 for overseas - post and packing included in each case).

MARY CADOGAN



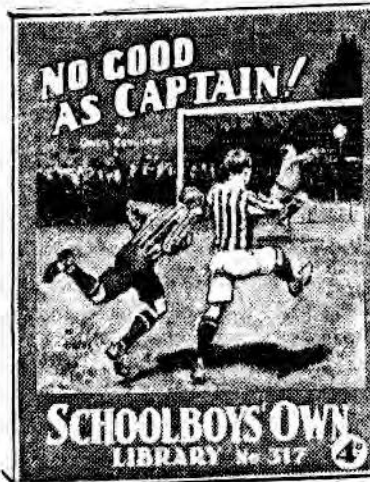
NOVEMBER 1937

Another magnificent series about the Rio Kid has started in Modern Boy. The Rio Kid thinks he has successfully dropped his old identity and said good-bye to being an outlaw. He is now Mr. Carfax, foreman of the Lazy "S" ranch. Then suddenly comes the shattering news that the Texas Rangers, led by his old implacable enemy, Mule Kick Hall, are hot on his trail. The titles of this month's gorgeous western stories are as follows: "Rangers on His Track", "Night Alarm", "Hunted Down". ("Let me see your face" said the Rangers' captain. "Reckon I've seen you before somewhere".) And "False Trail". Common sense told the Rio Kid to ride away from the Lazy "S" - yet he stayed to face almost certain capture by the Rangers. It goes on next month. I can't wait.

The other great series in Modern Boy at this time is the Captain Justice one. For ages the secrets of the High Lamas of Tibet have been known only to the Lamas. Now those secrets are known to young Midge - and he is in deadly danger as a result. The stories this month are "Seven Bells of Destiny", "The Vault of Amazing Secrets", "The Trail of Smoke", and "Sky-High Rescue". Awful farfetched but I like 'em!

In the Schoolboys' Own Library this month we have come to the final long part of the Lancaster series. "The Boy From the Underworld" makes a magnificent climax. The half-reformed "Wizard" of the underworld is faced with exposure by the famous detective, Ferrers Locke. Towards the end, Lancaster saves Ferrers Locke from death, and is badly injured himself. So Lancaster left Greyfriars to go to hospital, and later went to Wharton Lodge to convalesce for a while. And Harry Wharton wondered whether he would ever see Lancaster again.

The second S.O.L. is "No Good as Captain". Having become junior captain of Rookwood, Mornington proceeds to enjoy himself. But he is lazy and careless and is soon made to realise that he's no good as skipper. The St. Frank's S.O.L.



is "The Schoolboy Inventor". Kidnapped by enemies to force him to reveal the plans of his new invention, Dick Goodwin, the new boy, has a hard task to keep his secret safe. But Nelson Lee and the boys are on the trail. Exciting tale set in London and Lancashire.

Thanks to a tip from my Gran who lives in Layer Marney, I was able to buy the Boys' Friend Library containing "Pirates of the Pacific", a Ken King story. A lawless gang of pirates are causing much trouble and trembling to lonely craft on the high seas. So King of the Islands takes a hand. In the Sexton Blake Library I had "The Mystery of the African Expedition" by Rex Hardinge, a good detective novel set mainly in Africa.

Some time ago a little girl named Mona Tinsley disappeared. A man named Nodder was proved to have abducted her and he was sent to prison for a long term, the judge telling him that if the body of the little girl should be found Nodder would be up before the court on a much more serious charge. A month or two ago the body of Mona was found in the River Idle. So, this month, Nodder has been before the court again, this time charged with murder. He has been found guilty and sentenced to death.

The Gem's opening story in November is "The Mystery of Mossoc". The strange behaviour of the French master causes a sensation at St. Jim's, and Levison, the cad of the school, takes advantage of it. Mossoc has been going to a pawnshop. It seems he needs money for his family who have returned to Paris after being bombed in their home near Bilbao owing to the Spanish Civil War. The next tale is "The Worst Form at St. Jim's". That form is the Third. Mr. Selby has to be away with a severe cold, and nobody can manage that unruly form. So Marie Rivers, the school nurse, is put in charge of it, and is a great success. Fairly good fun but a bit daft. Then came "Gussy's in Love Again!" - awful title, methinks.

The young lady is the messenger girl for a big store in Wayland. The final tale of the month is the runner-up for the Christmas tale, and the opening tale of the series is "Tom Merry's Holiday Party". Ten juniors, including Gussy, of course, set off for Paris. Also, at the back of the Gem, they are serialising an early Magnet tale, "The Great Christmas Pudding Competition".

In real life, Mr. Baldwin has laid down the reins of Premiership, and Mr. Neville Chamberlain is now our new Prime Minister.

Some grand films in the local picture palaces this month. To start off we had a sequel to the lovely "Thin Man" drama, this one being called "After the Thin Man". It stars William Powell, Myrna Loy, James Stewart, and Elissa Landi - and, of course, the gorgeous dog Asta. The married couple, Nick and Nora Charles, solve another murder.

Next came a lovely one, "The Prince and the Pauper" from a book by Mark Twain. It stars Erroll Flynn and Claud Rains. It is set in Tudor London, when the young prince Edward VI changes places with a street urchin who happens to be his double. Reminds you of Tom Merry's double. Another we all liked a lot was Joan Crawford and Robert Montgomery in "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney" about a con-woman in British high society. This was from a famous play, of course, and plays are not always good on the screen, but this one was. I remembered seeing Norma Shearer as Mrs. Cheyney in an earlier version when I was younger.

A magnificent film (though very long - it lasted 2 hours) was Ronald Colman in "The Lost Horizon", from a James Hilton novel. Four people escape from a

revolution in India and are taken to a perfect spot in Tibet where everybody is kind to one another and all live to a great age. Finally, a bit dull was "They Gave Him a Gun" starring Spencer Tracy and Franchot Tone. A war veteran turns to crime, and comes to a messy end. But, all told, a marvellous month in the cinemas.

A very startling thing has happened to the Magnet. They have replaced the much loved cover of two colours on white paper with a plain one on tinted paper. The editor says they have gone back to the original Orange-Coloured cover. He says that readers have been writing in and saying that the two-coloured cover is not so conspicuous as the orange cover used to be.

I rather doubt whether he is speaking the truth. For one thing the Magnet's cover was never orange. I have seen a good many of the early Magnets - I have several - and the covers were red, not orange. For another thing it is a great many years since those days of the red cover, and I am sure that few Magnet readers have ever seen one. For a third thing, the new cover is not orange; it's pink. I'm not sure whether I like it or not. I suppose we shall get used to it. And, after all, the stories are the main thing, and they are unchanged - simply great. The long series about Skip, the pickpocket, who is now at Greyfriars has gone on all through the month.

The opening tale is a Guy Fawkes story - "The Big Bang at Greyfriars". Skip, of course, plays a big part, but Vernon-Smith is in the lead. It also introduces Miss Bullivant of Cliff House, who meets up with a man named Crake - swindler, thief, and worse. Next tale is "The Schoolboy Sleuth". Vernon-Smith has the firm belief that Skip is at heart the same dishonest young rascal he was before he came to Greyfriars - and he means to prove it. Next, in the first of the pink-coloured issues, we had "The Runaway Schoolboy". In this Skip is accused of stealing a banknote from the French master. And it is the Bounder who is able to clear him.

Final of the month brings "Skip's Lucky Break", and the end of the Skip series. It turns out - what a surprise! - that Skip is the long lost brother of Miss Bullivant who was stolen as a small boy by the man Crake. So Richard Bullivant stays on for a few days as Bullivant of the Remove, and then Miss Bullivant takes him away to place him somewhere where nothing can be known about his unfortunate childhood among thieves.

ERIC FAYNE Comments on This Month's DANNY'S DIARY.

S.O.L. No. 316 "The Boy from the Underworld" comprised the final 2½ stories of the Lancaster series. This 11 story series which had originally enhanced the 1933 summer in the Magnet had fitted beautifully in the four editions of the S.O.L. It was one of Hamilton's greatest achievements, a striking answer to those who would query the claim that Hamilton was the world's greatest writer of school stories. In many ways a re-run of the early Talbot stories in the Gem, this later series was infinitely superior, excellent and popular though the early Talbot tales were.

Lancaster was older than Talbot, which helped the credibility of the later series, the theme was much more compact, and, at the end, Hamilton wisely

removed Lancaster from the scene, thus avoiding the likelihood of his "past" cropping up ad infinitum as happened to take the gloss off the memories of Talbot.

S.O.L. No. 317 "No Good as Captain" continued the series concerning Mornington replacing Jimmy Silver as junior captain, which had started in the S.O.L. a few months earlier. The volume contains 7 stories from the late summer and autumn of the Boys' Friend of 1919. In passing this was the heyday of the Boys' Friend, containing as it did at that time the best of Rookwood and the best of Cedar Creek. And my bound volumes of mint copies of the Friend at that time are a sight for sore eyes all these years later. Years ago I bought several hundred of these mint Friends from one of the A.P. artists. Actually, in the S.O.L. the captaincy series ended about two thirds through the book, and two more Rookwood tales were tacked on as makeweight. Superb S.O.L.

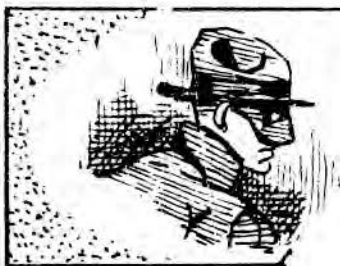
The 1937 Gem story "The Mystery of Mossoo" had been "Looking After Mossoo" early in 1915. In the original tale Mossoo had been trying to help his family, bombed out in Paris by the Germans in the Great War. In 1937 the family was quite neatly transplanted to Bilbao to be bombed out in the Spanish Civil War of the late thirties.

"The Worst Form at St. Jim's" had been "Master Marie" early in 1915. "Gussy's in Love Again" had taken a leap ahead and had been "Gussy and the Girl" towards the end of 1915.

And now, after that leap ahead, they took an amazing bound backwards. "Tom Merry's Holiday Party" had been "Tom Merry & Co. Abroad", the first story in a 3-story Christmas series as early as 1909. I discussed this phenomenon in my History of the Gem years ago, and we will look at it again next month when, I feel sure, Danny will have been reading the reprints of it all.

So it is exactly 50 years since the Magnet adopted its salmon cover. The editor said that readers had been clamouring for a return to the tinted cover of early years, and the editor was clearly pulling our legs. I have no doubt that the new covers were cheaper than the two-colour variety, and the change was for the purpose of economy.





BLAKIANA



WHAT NOW, SEXTON BLAKE?

By Raymond Curé

It is the year of Our Lord 1987. As it draws to a close, one word high on the list of talking points is 'REDUNDANT!' It is a powerful word in the sense that it can bring fear into the hearts of those affected by it. Loss of job can mean loss of income, leading, for some, even to the loss of their home. It is indeed a word to be feared. People of all ages and classes of society have been and are being affected by it, and they ask - WHAT NOW? Someone has said 'Today's invention is tomorrow's redundancy'.

You may ask 'What has redundancy to do with Sexton Blake?'. The answer is 'very much'. Let me go back in time to the hey-days of Blake, and I mean hey-days! Here was a detective whose name was known almost as well as that of Sherlock Holmes. Now, when I speak of Holmes, I am conscious that this great character had tremendous support, his creator being the well-known author of many other great works of fiction (which like Sherlock Holmes have also reached the screen, both silent and talkies). Holmes captured the heart of London, and from there a world-wide audience. Some really classic stories, to say nothing of top films, with top actors and directors, have given him a head-start over other fictional sleuths. Reproduced on television, these films alone have deservedly caught the imagination of our generation.

Enter - Sexton Blake! If we are to investigate his claim to fame, we shall have to consider his work and his background. We shall find that Blake came up the hard way. Take his creator: I doubt, apart from a handful of enthusiasts in the hobby, if anyone would be able to name this author - even to win a car on a popular T.V. quiz game! Some writers in the Union Jack (the main promoter of the Sexton Blake saga) contributed just one or two tales and then disappeared from view. The passing of time produced writers of greater possibilities, such as Gwyn Evans, Edwy Searles Brooks,

Anthony Skene and a few more, who became household names.

Sexton Blake began climbing the ladder of fame with wireless appearances, followed by stage and film features. Not as spectacular as those of Sherlock Holmes, who has had the benefit of excellent modern films and T.V. productions. The majority of today's youth gets its image of Holmes from these; I doubt if many of these viewers have read any of Dr. Watson's case books.

I began by referring to this year of Our Lord 1987. I shall close with it too. Before 1987, Sexton Blake had had his moments. Even after the demise of the popular old boys' weeklies, Blake strove on in monthly issues, and some hardbacks, until slowly these ceased publication. As regards the media and the publishing world Sexton Blake is 'redundant'. (Editor's Note: But we must not forget that Jack Adrian's marvellous collection of classic stories SEXTON BLAKE WINS, issued by Dent towards the end of 1986, is still going strong!)

Those of us who know our way about are aware that if we seek we shall find, among the pages of old boys' books, the amazing adventures of Sexton Blake. Some of these tales would make a series of T.V. features, half an hour to one hour in length, equal to or better than some of the Sherlock Holmes stories. The name of Sexton Blake would then be on everybody's lips, because today it is this kind of media exposure which makes or breaks. Until this happens, at least temporarily so far as the world outside of our hobby is concerned, Sexton Blake is redundant. (Author's Note: The writer welcomes criticism and comment.)

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COLLECTOR REQUIRES PRE-1960 CHILDREN'S BOOKS - Bunters, Williams, Jennings, Biggles, Savilles, Elinor Brent-Dyer, Elsie Oxenham, D.F. Bruce - 1sts and reprints in dustwrappers. ANY PRE-1950 ANNUALS, especially Fudge, Felix, Radio Fun, Film Fun, Dandy, Beano, Knockout, Japhet & Happy, Tiger Tim, in fact any comic-related annuals, also card games, badges, etc. Also interested in pre-1960 comics and story papers, especially Beano and Dandy. Pre-1965 Broons, Oor Wullie, Dennis the Menace, Beryl the Peril. ENID BLYTON'S pre-1950 1sts in dustwrappers, Sunny Stories magazine, pre-1960 strip books and Noddy items. Pre-war items particularly wanted. MOVIE CAT BOOKS ILLUSTRATED by Allison Uttley, Kathleen Hale (Orlando), Racey Helps (Barnaby Littlemouse books), Molly Brett. RUPERT ANNUALS Pre-1966, any pre-war Rupert books/items illustrated by Mary Tourtel or Alfred Bestall. WALT DISNEY/MICKY MOUSE pre-1943 annuals/books and related items (toys, games, etc.) SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN annuals and libraries pre-1950. Any intact cut-out books (Puffins or similar), any Baby Puffins. Pre-1960 Wisdens - any condition provided complete. P.G. Wodehouse 1sts and pre-war editions in dustwrappers. Collections/single items purchased. Top prices paid for fine copies (e.g. £100 plus, for pre-war Rupert Annuals). Some exchanges available. Phone evenings 0273-477555 or write John Beck, 29 Mill Road, Lewes, Sussex, BN7 2RU.



The St. Frank's 'Boys Friend Library' Mystery.

by W.O.G. Lofts

Edwy Searles Brooks wrote several completely original stories for the Boys Friend Library (see Lofts/Adley latest Catalogue) but there was none so mysterious as No. 633 dated 30th September, 1922 entitled "The Idol of St. Frank's". Over the years several articles have been written about this puzzling story, the majority taking the view that it was not penned by the creator of St. Frank's. Opinions ranged from it being a very poor story (though Edwy was only human like most other writers and could write a pot-boiler from time to time), to it not being his style; to boys in wrong forms, as well as a curious mixture of Brooks and another writer.

The story was anonymous, but under the title heading on the inside page it does explain that: - "It was specially written by the author of the St. Frank's stories appearing in the Nelson Lee Library, assisted by the editor of the Boys Friend Library".

Now the editor of The Boys Friend Library at that period was Balfour Ritchie - who curiously had penned a few St. Frank's stories (along with Fred Gordon Cook and E.J. Murray) that were paid for but seemingly not used. Astonishing as it may seem Ritchie had written at least two tales entitled "Handforth Minor" and "The Jew at St. Frank's" many months before these titles appeared and which are known to have been penned by E.S. Brooks. This suggests that he (Brooks) had rewritten these stories by some arrangement.

Unfortunately there is no official record of who was the author of the "Idol of St. Frank's" as the stock book was missing when I was able to peruse the back files when the old Amalgamated Press building was standing some years ago. One can only give the opinion that it was probably an original story by Balfour Ritchie, but rewritten by Edwy Searles Brooks, on the evidence I have.

Balfour Ritchie certainly wrote boys' stories, under the name of "Basil Baldwin" in a number of A.P. papers - usually of the

adventure type, when strangely his favourite theme was of temples and stories of a mysterious flavour. "The Idol of St. Frank's" was about the type of image found in temples in the Far East - and not a boy who was idolised by his schoolfellows!

When questioned about the story in his lifetime, Edwy Searles Brooks said simply that he 'wrote it' - which may be true to some extent as he would, perhaps, not go into all the details of a rewriting explanation.

The blurb of a joint authorship was possibly correct on "The Idol of St. Frank's" but certainly the creator (like Charles Hamilton) never needed any assistance to write a story - it would have been the other way round!

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ALL FOR SIXPENCE

by J.E.M.

Cheap popular reading has never been confined to story-papers and periodicals. Even in the era of the old "penny dreadful" it was possible to buy good, entertaining, low-price books. For instance, around 1880 the firm of Chatto and Windus (still going strong) started to publish popular novels by such authors as Wilkie Collins, George Manville Penn, Thomas Hardy, 'Ouida' and, from overseas, Mark Twain and Emile Zola. These reprints cost sixpence each and, over the next forty years or so, sold in hundreds of thousands.

Not long ago, in a short book celebrating the era of these "sixpenny wonderfals", Chatto slyly pointed out that they had anticipated the famous Penguin paperbacks of the 1930's which also originally appeared at the same price. This, however, was not an entirely fair comparison since sixpence (six old pence, of course) was worth rather more in the earlier period and, therefore, the Chatto's "cheaps" were, in reality, somewhat more expensive than the later Penguins.

In any case an even more remarkable sixpenny series appeared in the late 1920's and early 1930's - the famous Readers' Library whose only retail outlet was the popular sixpenny store of Woolworth's. The RL volumes had "hard" covers - admittedly not very substantial ones! - in attractive dark maroon with gilt lettering and decoration plus full-colour dust covers.

Some of the titles derived from the cinema, either as stories adapted from screenplays or as reprints of original novels on which films had been based; and each of these carried eight photo "stills" from the film concerned. These illustrations were not just padding for shorter books. Some of the film versions were, in fact, very long stories. For example, I have a Readers' Library copy of Burning Daylight by Jack London which is the original full-length novel, the "stills" coming from a screen version made many years after the book's first edition. Even with the mass market Woolworth's commanded, it is hard to see how such an enterprise was ever profitable. Our old favourite monthly "libraries" - Schoolboys Own, Schoolgirls Own, Sexton Blake et al - though only fourpence, could hardly be regarded as better value for money.

Other RL film stories included The Singing Fool (Al Jolson), The Gaucho (Douglas Fairbanks), The Fleet's In (Clara Bow), Show Girl (Alice White) and The Red Dancer of Moscow (Dolores del Rio). The bracketed names are, of course, the stars of the original films and all appear in the photo illustrations.

Famous best-sellers not in film editions included such titles as Anna Karenina, Hard Times, The Mill on the Floss, King Solomon's Mines, Three Men in a Boat, The Lodger, The Ghost Train, Limehouse Nights and Metropolis. In fact, the RL list included books from almost every famous or popular author from Tolstoy and Dickens to Edgar Wallace. They are not all that easy to come by nowadays, though they are rarely expensive when you do find them. I have been a collector myself for many years and I don't doubt that many Digest readers are also familiar with this unforgettable series. (Incidentally, if anyone has a copy of Broadway, complete with stills, which he or she is prepared to sell I shall be more than willing to pay a good price!)

Footnote: Chatto's Sixpenny Wonderfuls, published in 1985 was reviewed in C.D. No. 466.

CHRISTMAS AT WHARTON LODGE

by E. Baldock

Part I: Anticipation.

It was going to be a genuine, old-fashioned holly and mistletoe Christmas at Wharton Lodge. Upon that point everyone agreed. Bob Cherry had, in an excess of exuberance, announced that this Christmas they were going to leave 'Dingley Dell' standing at the post in terms of jolly times; all this without the assistance of their own particular fat boy. Bob should have known better than so grossly to underestimate Billy Bunter. To equate him in any way with Mr. Wardles 'fat boy' was rather akin to comparing water unto wine - or an even more potent liquid.

The Famous Five had already mapped out a strenuous programme of activities although the term had another fortnight to run. Lord Mauleverer and Vernon Smith and one or two other fellows were coming along for a few days. Then Billy Bunter had graciously informed Harry that he would be able to spare him a day or so over the 'hols' ("So many other pressing invitations you know old fellow - but there it is, I just cannot be spared long from Bunter Court, the Pater relies on me so much...") only to be warned



of dire consequences should his fat figure show itself anywhere within a hundred miles of the Lodge over the holidays. But, not withstanding, Wharton had with rare sagacity and forethought warned the Colonel and Aunt Amy that in all likelihood Bunter would be joining the party. Due preparations would be put in hand - especially in the commissariat department. The fact that he was 'de trop' did not give the Owl a passing qualm.

Harry's warning gave the Colonel time to have a quiet and tactful word with the imperturbable Wells, his butler, requesting him to exercise - in so far as he was able - patience and restraint with Master Bunter when he arrived. Many times in the past had the tranquil nature of Wells been tested to the limits of his well trained domesticity. Yet never once (I believe) had he been observed to lose one iota of that suave urbanity which is so much a part of the ideal butler. Legend has it that John the footman, on one memorable occasion, after being driven to distraction by the demands of the fatuous Owl, had relieved his feelings by actually kicking him. Domestic uproar naturally followed: John was officially reprimanded by Wells, who then, below stairs and privately, had clapped him on the shoulder and congratulated him upon his initiative in carrying out an action which Wells would dearly have liked to perform himself.

Appreciation had been the order of the day when - as was inevitable - news of the feat (or outrage) percolated above stairs. Everyone was bucked, with the possible exception of Bunter, and as he was the unfortunate kickee this was perhaps not un-natural. Even the Colonel was observed to take himself off to the library on the pretext of smoking a cigar, smiling with grim approval. John's status in the lower regions soared to unprecedented heights. Only Aunt Amy, it must be recorded, remained silent and made no observations upon the incident.

It was Bob Cherry who, leaping from his bed in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars and rushing to the window on the last morning of the term, was greeted by the glorious vision of thickly falling snowflakes which had already transformed the ancient quadrangle into unfamiliar terrain. The branches of the old elms were dropping under the weight of snow which had been falling steadily while Greyfriars slept. Bob's stentorian roar of delight brought fellows tumbling from their beds and rushing to the windows, pushing and jostling. It was noticeable that competition for the wash basins was far less fierce than usual that morning. Even Bunter was forgotten, and allowed to snore on undisturbed until the last

moment.

Breakfast - as always on the last day of term - was a jolly affair. Even the crusty features of Mr. Quelch were a little less severe than usual as he contemplated the smiling faces around him, and thought of the coming festivities, and likely enough of the rest he was about to enjoy from those excellent fellows who comprised his form. Billy Bunter for once was not reproved for requesting an extra rasher of bacon and more toast. Only two 'schools' that morning, and then the 'hols' really began. Most of the fellows were already well ahead with packing, some having made a tentative start on this happy task a fortnight earlier. "When are you fellows leaving?" squeaked Bunter as he encountered the Famous Five on the Remove landing. "I haven't quite finished packing my trunks yet. Perhaps you chaps might care to lend a hand?" The 'chaps' displayed a marked lack of enthusiasm at this felicitous suggestion; in fact they merely grasped Bunter and sat him down far from gently on the landing, and left him roaring. They were all extremely non-committal concerning packing, train-timings and departures at this delicate juncture, which demonstrated clearly how well they knew their Bunter.

A few hours later the old school was quiet and deserted. An empty school ceases to be a school; it becomes a shell vibrating for a while with the echoes of recent activity. Thus it was with the old buildings of Greyfriars when the last fellows had departed from classrooms and studies; bare corridors, and windows letting in the pale winter light upon blank areas of floor and wall, rows of desks, sentinel-like black-boards, discarded books and dusters, half open doors - with only the low eerie whining of the wind through the spaces of the quad and playing-fields.

('Arrival', Part II of this story, will be published next month.)

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STILL WANTED. Sexton Blake Second Series. No. 411 Tragedy of West End Actress. No. 469 Downing Street Discovery. 453 On the Midnight Beat. All by John G. Brandon. J. Ashley, 46 Nicholas Crescent, Fareham, Hants, P.O. 15 5AH. Telephone Fareham 234489.

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FOR SALE (SEND S.A.E.) Guinness Book of Records 1980. Chardin Master Pieces in colour offers. 25 Eventful years in Pictures, 1910 - 1935. £3.00. A Prospectus Greyfriars School £2.00. Billy Bunter comes to Tea-Volume 6, £2.00. Tom Merry's Own, £2.00. Billy Bunter's Own/Goes Sailing, £2.00. Magnet Reprint 1079, 50p. William Does His Bit, 50p. Sexton Blake, 70p each. No. of LP records £1.00 each. (T. Bennet, F. Sinatra, T. Hancock, Eckstine, P. Como, B. Crosby, J. Jones. Best of Bob Newhart. Single - J. Cagney, Yankee Doodle Boy. W.G. Watson, Olympus, 1 Cartbridge Close, Walton on Naze, Essex. CO14 8QJ.

THE "FLICKS IN THE STICKS"

by Rev. J.P.H. Hobson.

Today, even large towns in Britain are without a cinema, but in the small country town of Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire, (pop. 2648) a unique cinema still flourishes and is the only cinema in England called by the original name "Kinema".

The Kinema in the Woods is situated in the woods near to the former Spa Baths, and was once a concert and tennis pavilion used by the guests at Petwood House which was the home of Sir Archibald and Lady Weigall.

It became a cinema in 1922 and it is unique, being the only cinema in Britain which has always had back screen projection. The best seats are therefore in the front, like a theatre, and, up to 1953, these front seats were deck chairs! Today it has comfortable tip-up seats everywhere. For years there was a Wurlitzer organ at the side of the stage but this has now been replaced by an even larger Compton cinema organ which was formerly in the Super Cinema in Charing Cross Road, London. Its illuminated console rises up on a lift in front of the stage in the traditional manner.

While it is a great treat for older cinema goers to listen to a cinema organ again, it is amusing to think that young people, who live in London and other big cities, have to come to a Lincolnshire village to see and hear one being played in a cinema!

During the war, airmen and W.A.A.F.S. from the many R.A.F. airfields nearby visited the Kinema in the Woods which was affectionately known by them as the "Flicks in the Sticks"! Also Petwood had become an hotel and was the Officers' Mess for the Dambuster Squadron No. 617. The remains of a "Bouncing Bomb" are near the entrance of the hotel which still has a "Squadron" bar.

On May, 17th 1987 a large stone memorial to the 201 members of the Dambuster No. 617 Squadron, who lost their lives, was unveiled in Royal Square, Woodhall Spa. The dedication ceremony was attended by survivors of the squadron from all over the world who marched from the Petwood behind an R.A.F. band. The service of dedication was taken by the Chaplain in Chief of the R.A.F. and the memorial was unveiled by Air Chief Marshal Sir David Craig just as a lone Lancaster bomber flew low over the square. Richard Todd, star of the Dambusters film then read a passage in praise of those brave airmen.

FIFTY YEARS OF MAGIC - AND MIRTH!

(Walt Disney's SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS and D.C. Thomson's DANDY and BEANO have now been around for half a century, and two scrumptious celebratory books mark these anniversaries.)

"SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS" by Richard Holliss
and Brian Sibley (Published by André Deutsch at £9.95)

Reviewed by Mary Cadogan

When Disney's first full-length animated cartoon burst upon our cinema screens in 1937 it wasn't only juvenile 'Silly Symphony' fans like myself who were bowled over. SNOW WHITE was not only entertaining



but fascinating as a herald of what this exciting art form could and would be able to achieve in the future. As a film it had everything - fairytale magic successfully translated from book to movie; wonderful music; comedy; pathos - and sheer joy. All this is recaptured in Holliss's and Sibley's lively and informative text, and in the full colour illustrations which lavishly adorn this excellent book.

"DANDY BEANO - THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS". (Published by D.C. Thomson at £4.95.)

Reviewed by Norman Wright.

There can be few adults who can truthfully say that they have never read a copy of "Beano" or "Dandy". The two comics share the distinction of achieving fifty years of continuous publication, a feat surpassed by only a small handful of veterans like "Illustrated Chips" and "Comic Cuts". To celebrate "Beano" and "Dandy's" golden anniversary D.C. Thomson have published a bumper sized book packed with nostalgic moments from the comics' past.

"Dandy" number one was published on December, 4th 1937. It had a bright, eye-catching cover featuring the first adventure of that master of mirth and mime "Korky the Cat". His feline form was very lean in those early issues, but his figure filled out over the years - nourished by the huge quantities of purloined fish he consumed. A free 'Express Whistler' was presented with that first issue. Another longstanding favourite who made his debut in December 1937 was "Desperate Dan". His first exploit occupied only half a page. Later he took over a whole page, and during the 1940s his adventures often extended over many weeks. During the war years he battled with Hitler and his cronies. A collection of Desperate Dan strips appeared in annual form in 1953. He did not enjoy the luxury of his own annual again until 1979!

Other characters in that first issue of "Dandy" included "Keyhole Kate", "Our Gang" (based on the Hal Roach films), "Hungry Horace" and "Freddy the Fearless Fly", all of whom stayed with the comic for many years. The "Dandy Comic" was so successful that a companion paper, "The Beano Comic" was launched a few months later in July 1938. The cover character of the new comic was an astute ostrich named "Big Eggo", drawn by Reg Carter. In issue 327 "Big Eggo" was replaced by "Biffo the Bear". Biffo remained cover character until 1974 when he was replaced by "Dennis the Menace". Dennis, created early in 1951, had been grooming himself for stardom since the fifties. He started off with half a page which soon crept up to two thirds. 1953 saw him celebrating a full page and nine years later he made it to the back cover. These days he seems to dominate the whole comic! "Big Eggo" may not have stood the test of time but "Lord Snooty" certainly has. He appeared in the first issue and still causes eyebrows to rise today!

"Dandy Beano, the first fifty years" traces the history of the two comics with a collection of key strips. The images are often very evocative of their time. The 'At War' section is particularly memorable - Lord Snooty outwitting the Luftwaffe and Hitler, "Pansy Potter the strong-man's daughter" capturing a gang of German paratroopers. The "Musso", and "Addie and Herry" strips poking fun at the German and Italian leaders.

The section on the annuals offers a mouthwatering display, in full colour,

of some of the early, extremely scarce issues.

When I started having the two comics in the mid nineteen fifties I was first and foremost a fan of the historical adventure strips. The "Ripping Yarns" section of the book deals with the profusion of swashbuckling adventure strips that regularly thrilled readers until 1975 when the comics' contents went "all comic". The most memorable, as far as I am concerned, is "Jimmy and His Magic Patch". Jimmy Watson, owner of a pair of trousers repaired with a patch cut from a magic carpet, has only to wish to find himself whisked back to some exciting historical or mythical age. He was the creation of Dudley D. Watkins, Thomson's superlative and prolific artist. A complete 'Jimmy' strip from two "Beano's" of 1948 is reprinted in the book. We also glimpse two of Watkins' other 'adventure' creations - "Danny Long Legs" and "The Shipwrecked Circus". Many of his comic creations, including "Lord Snooty", "Biffo the Bear" and "Desperate Dan", are well represented in the book. Watkins was the only artist that the Thomson organisation allowed to sign his work.

"Dennis the Menace" is undoubtedly the most popular character still featuring in either of the comics and his exploits, together with those of his pets Gnasher and Rasher, are given ample space. After Dennis the "Beano" spawned a succession of menaces, most of whom receive some attention. "Minnie the Minx" and "Little Plum" were the creations of Leo Baxendale, though the strips selected for "Dandy Beano, the first fifty years" are the work of later artists. Both characters though originally inspired by Dennis have their own unique qualities. Baxendale created a whole class full of menaces in "The Bash Street Kids", now perhaps the comics' second most popular feature. A menace with more subtle methods is "Roger the Dodger", creation of the late Ken Reid, whose greatest creation for "Beano" was, in my opinion, "Jonah" who sank every ship he set foot on, even if it was on dry land! When Ken Reid ceased working for Thomson in the mid 1960's "Jonah" was discontinued, though his exploits were recently reprinted in "Buddy".

The final section of the book is for me the least interesting, dealing as it does with the more recent comic characters to appear in the two comics. "Dandy Beano, the first fifty years" is a 'must' for anyone who has a fond memory for comics. Its 140 pages burst with a profusion of colour and nostalgia as it traces the history of the characters that have made "Dandy" and "Beano" the comic success story of the last 50 years.

* * * * *

Your Editor says—



It helps the C.D. if readers advertise their WANTS and FOR SALE book and story-paper items, etc. in it. The rates are 4p per word; a boxed, displayed ad. costs £20.00 for a whole page, £10 for a half page or £5 for a quarter page.

* * *

NO1 DEC. 4 1937 EVERY FRIDAY 2

THE DANDY COMIC



NO1 EXPRESS WHISTLER FREE INSIDE

ORIGINS OF THE B.F.L. (Lofts/Adley)

Reviewed by Jack Adrian

In many ways -- certainly for the student of genre fiction -- the monthly Boys' Friend Library is a far more enticing prospect than its Sexton Blake equivalent. With the SBL, you know exactly where you are. Every issue stars Blake; every issue features some kind of criminous situation. That's it. And although, especially during its early days, the writers sometimes ventured into the realms of fantasy (Blake battling supercrooks in mechanical moles, Blake being outwitted by invisible men, Blake discovering strange lost races deep in the heart of forgotten jungles), by and large there are few real surprises. The BFL, on the otherhand, is full of surprises. Month after month, through two series and for nearly 35 years, the BFL poured out all kinds of fiction. School stories, detective stories, fantasy, SF, Western yarns, smuggling yarns, tales of the South Seas, the Polar Seas, the Sargasso Sea, cricket and football yarns, boxing yarns, Gothic terror tales, historical romances, tales of treasure hunts to every corner of the globe, under the earth, and all the known planets of the Solar System, not to mention one or two unknown ones as well. Quantities of the stuff, too. The BFL (originally a solo vehicle for the prolific S. Clarke Hook was to write a new Jack, Sam and Pete 80,000-word novel every month to accompany a JS&P reprint, and then decided, perhaps wisely, that he wasn't quite up to it and cried off), started in September, 1906, at two issues a month, peaked in the early-1920's at five issues, then dropped to a more manageable four and continued thus for the next eighteen years, finishing in June, 1940. In all, 1,488 issues, each containing rarely less than 70,000 words (often, far more): a feast of fun and fiction, thrill and chill.

The roll-call of writers is a fabulous one, containing the names of some of the greatest yarn-spinners of the first 40-odd years of this century: Charles Hamilton (under four or five pen-names), Cecil Hayter, John Hunter, G.H. Teed, Major Charles Gilson, George Rochester, E.S. Brooks, Andrew Soutar, Eric W. Townsend, Robert Murray Graydon, Henry St. John Cooper, Captain W.E. Johns, Alfred Edgar, Jack North, D.H. Parry, S. Walkey, Francis Warwick -- one could go on like this for several pages.

Surprisingly, a definitive Catalogue has never been published. There have been attempts in the past, all suffering to a greater or lesser extent from being put together from personal collections. Years ago, when I was working at Fleetway House and had access to the archives, I compiled a full list of both series from the bound volumes. It was purely for my own use, enabling me to pinpoint the work of authors I collected, and as I was aware that most of the BFL was reprinted from serials in the weekly papers it did occur to me to trace back to source all the issues I was particularly interested in. The idea lasted no longer than about ten seconds. I don't mind research, but the prospect of trawling through tens of thousands of copies, hundreds of thousands of pages - not only of the obvious papers like Boys' Friend, Boys' Realm, Boys' Herald and so on, but comic papers too (they all had serials), non-Amalgamated Press papers (like Boys' Magazine: fertile ground, I knew), and even adult papers (I'd already discovered two serials by the noted fantasy writer Fenton Ash in, of

all places, the Sunday Circle) -- was too appalling to contemplate for more than that. It seemed to me too daunting a task for anyone.

Now, however, the old firm of Lofts & Adley, undaunted, have gone where more sluggardly souls such as I were loth to tread. For their Origins of the BFL they set out systematically to trace the original serialisations of all the issues in both series of the Library. They admit that 34 stories have eluded them -- but I have to say that 1,454 stories traced out of 1,488 is not bad going. What fascinates me is how much of the BFL was original material: well over ten per cent, which for a supposedly 'all-reprint' Library is a lot. There are nearly 200 issues which were not serialised anywhere beforehand but written expressly for the BFL, and many novels bought by the BFL on a second-rights basis from the States by popular Pulp-writers such as J. Allan Dunn, Oscar Schisgall and Albert R. Wetjen (not, incidentally, 'A.E. Witzen') which are thus UK 1st Editions in their own right.

As one prowls through the columns of titles distinct patterns inevitably emerge, trends set off not only by the popular taste in mainstream fiction but also in the real world outside. During the mid-1920's, for instance, there are all at once an awful lot of novels to do with wireless and the cinema, sparked off by the post-War technological boom. In the mid-1920s Great War flying stories, mainly written by those who'd actually flown, such as George E. Rochester and Hedley O'Mant, suddenly start appearing. But the most striking trend is to be seen in the sudden upsurge of interest in thrillers. Detective fiction had featured strongly in the BFL from the very beginning but by the late-1920's, due to the enormous influence of Edgar Wallace on the adult market, a dramatic sea-change in popular taste had occurred. Leonard Pratt (editor of the SBL) created the heavily Wallace-oriented weekly Thriller, and throughout the AP's papers Wallace-style plots -- with the emphasis not on Holmesian deduction or Edwardian melodrama but on brooding atmosphere, old dark house with secret passages, car-chases punctured by the squeal of tyres and the rattle of gun-shots, and the villain-as-least-likely-suspect -- were the norm, although some writers found it easier to adapt to the Wallace way than others.

When Charles Hamilton, for instance, was ordered to Thriller-ise his Greyfriars stories in the Magnet, he came up with the notorious Ravenspur Grange series, which had very few good points and rather a lot of bad ones (the mawkish ending, in which the previously uncompromisingly vicious killer suddenly, with his dying breath, begs forgiveness for his crimes, was hardly Wallacean). More sympathetic scribes, however -- like Francis Warwick (Warwick Jardine), John Hunter, Donald Stuart (Gerald Verner) and John Sylvester (Hector Hawton) -- embraced the new regime with fervour, and from 1929 onwards the results of their Wallacean efforts, as reprinted from the weekly serials, are much in evidence in the BFL.

That there was at this time a distinct editorial policy regarding the publication of thrillers is now clear, and Bill and Derek's excellent Origins of the BFL has solved a problem which has puzzled this commentator for years. In August, 1929, an anonymous thriller called Crooked Gold appeared which was later discovered to be Leslie Charteris's first Saint novel Meet The Tiger (originally

published a year earlier by Ward Lock). No one could understand why the BFL should suddenly pinch (there seemed to be no other word for it) a thriller that had already been published elsewhere. But it can now be seen that Crooked Gold was not an aberration and does not stand in seemingly murky isolation. In the period June to December, 1929, not just one adult thriller was published anonymously by the BFL, but four. Anne's Secret and The Black Magician, both by R.T.M. Scott and published by Heinemann in 1927 and 1926 respectively, were issued anonymously as Smith of the Secret Service (2nd, 193) and Black Magic (2nd, 197); then came Crooked Gold (2nd, 204); and finally The Terror of the Gang (2nd, 218), which now turns out to be Hugh Clevely's 1928 best-seller from Hutchinson, The Gang-Smasher.

Nor were these books 'pinched'; it was all perfectly legitimate, the AP having bought them from each of the publishers on a reprint basis. It has been said that Charteris himself knew nothing about Crooked Gold until he picked up a copy of the BFL by chance, realised it was his own novel, and became enraged at the perfidy of the Amalgamated Press. This story has a number of holes in it.

For a start Charteris was, at this time, writing flat-out for the AP (during the Thriller's first year he wrote nine 25,000-word stories for the paper), was visiting Fleetway House regularly, consulting with editors, and was on extremely friendly terms with Monty Haydon, editorial director of the juveniles department. It is hardly to be supposed, therefore, that he was in complete ignorance that Crooked Gold was due to be published. In any case, even if he didn't know, he could hardly kick up a fuss when he did find out since, like all beginner-writers (he was, after all, only 22), he'd sold the copyright to Meet The Tiger to the original publisher Ward Lock for what amounted to a flat fee, and Ward Lock could thus do what they liked with the book -- including selling reprint rights to the BFL without consulting its author.

Mind you, this is not to say that odd things didn't happen from time to time in the BFL... that chicanery of one kind or another never occurred. It's certainly the case that unscrupulous -- or perhaps it might be fairer to give them the benefit of the doubt and say, extremely hard-up -- writers on occasion had work published that wasn't their own, and that editorial staff sometimes themselves profited from the twenty or thirty-year old endeavours of others. From the actual enjoyment angle, I suspect that an enormous amount of the BFL's output would, today, not only be unreadable but actively sleep-inducing, especially the early stories. Even so, what riches are left: Hamilton's Rio Kid and King of the Islands stories, Robert Murray's splendid tales of Captain Justice; stacks of stuff by E.S. Brooks under one guise or another; quantities of hugely readable fantasy and science fiction by such as Lester Bidston, Leslie Beresford ('Pan' to the women's market), Alfred Edgar, the father-and-son partnership of Sidney and Francis Warwick, Sidney Drew, and Coutts Brisbane; and full-blooded adventure yarns from every topline writer of the period you can think of.

There are, alas, errors to be found in this booklet which really ought not to have been perpetrated by so distinguished a pair of researchers. For instance, The Terror of Tibet (2nd, 254) is certainly not by Edwy Searles Brooks

but G.H. Teed; The Man From Space (2nd, 330) is not an original but a reprint of a 1928 SF novel The Man From Up There; and I rather think that the author of the only St. Jim's sub story in the BFL, The Silent Three (1st, 153), was not S. Clarke Hook but his son, H. Clarke Hook. There really ought to be an Index. To look for one's favourite authors means ploughing through every entry over 71 pages; after a while one begins to clench one's teeth and mutter under one's breath. I do think, too, that someone ought to have sorted out the difference between a common-or-garden plural and the possessive case.

Nevertheless Origins of the BFL is a highly useful reference tool which ought to be on everyone's shelves. One thing I would urge to Bill and Derek -- get yourselves a word-processor. These days, most of the checklisting that gets published benefits from state-of-the-art technology, and it's wonderful how computer-typesetting can cheer up one's efforts. Apart from anything else, you can get twice the amount of information on one page (using both Roman and italic) at by no means twice the cost. The admirable Checklists produced by Richard Williams of the Dragonby Press are a model that will soon, I believe, become the norm.

FOR SALE: A number of rare loose items. Magnet No. 1310 (good copy but cover soiled) £1.00; THE BOYS' JOURNAL NO. 20, early 1914, very nice copy: £1.50; PLUCK Nos. 236, 262, 350, 371 (1909 - 1911) £1.00 each; SCHOOL FRIEND No. 33 "Ghost of Holly Hall" (the S.F.'s first Xmas No.) very rough but very rare: £1.00; Halfpenny UNION JACKS Nos. 171 (1907) 270 (1909) containing respectively "Captain Nemo" and "Sunk at Sea" by Chas. Hamilton: £1.00 each; MODERN BOY (No. 3 new series, 1933) one of the short run of large format issues: nice copy but owing to size would have to be posted folded: £1.00; TRIUMPHS Nos. 796 and 803 (each containing St. Jim's) 1940, corners slightly damaged £1.00 each; YOUNG BRITAIN Nos. 26, 45, & 48 £1.00 each; UNION JACKS No. 517 "The Secret Report" (Blake v. the Scorpion) rough but rare £1.00; No. 914 "Judge's Experiment" (cover damaged) £1.00; THE HOME MIRROR No. 1. (1919) rare girls' paper: £3.00; DREADNOUGHT & WAR PICTORIAL (1914) Nos. 2 & 5: £2.00 each, and No. 10 with damaged cover but good copy £1.50; THE SPORTS LIBRARY (rare item, 1914) £1.50; VANGUARD (1909) Nos. 90, 95, 97, 127, 134, £1.00 each; THE HAPPY MAG (1933) containing "William's Prize Guy": £3.00. Postage extra on all items. PLUS a Magnificent Collectors' Item; the coloured comic paper PUCK, Nos. 493 to 518 (the first part of 1914), lovely well-preserved copies in newly bound volume in maroon with name in gold on the spine: £40, plus registered postage. And hardback "Acton's Feud" by Fred Swainson (1901): £1.00 plus postage. Write ERIC FAYNE, Excelsior House, 113 Crookham Road, Crookham, Hants. (No reply if items already sold)

WANTED: Anything about W.E. Johns - Biggles, Gimlet, Steely, Worrals, magazines such as The Modern Boy, Popular Flying (pre-war) etc. All letters will be answered. Bert Van Vondel, Sleedoornweg, 84 - 9674 JK Winschoten, The Netherlands.

MORCOVE MINIATURES



PAULA CREEL

By TOMMY KEEN



Paula Creel, the beloved duffer of the Fourth Form at Morcove, featured in the stories in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN right from the first issue. However, it was a very different Paula in those early stories from the popular and delightful character she later became... not very much later either.

When Betty Barton arrived, lonely and friendless, Paula Creel was the captain of the Fourth, a snobbish and languid girl, not at all vindictive like the two Grandways sisters, Cora and Judith (who appeared to have far more influence over the rest of the girls than Paula did); she was thoroughly lazy, and appalled that such 'dweadful' girls as Betty Barton should be allowed at Morcove', Betty, in Paula's eyes, being 'dweadful', because she had attended a northern Council School, and because Betty's mother even did 'charring'. How such a girl as Paula ever became captain was not explained, but in issue No. 13 of the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, she is denounced by the Headmistress, Miss Somerfield, as being a disgrace to the school, incompetent, unreliable, and hopeless at sport. So Paula is informed that the captaincy is no longer hers, and that a new captain will be elected. Paula is not too dismayed, but neither is she too happy when Betty Barton is elected as the new captain. This, she is sure, will mean more games, as Betty and her new found friends, Polly Linton, Madge Minden, and Trixie Hope, are beginning to make the Fourth Form girls more sports conscious.

But Paula is beginning to tire of the Grandways girls, and their continual enmity against



Betty, and on one or two occasions attempts to make friendly overtures to the new captain. These however are rejected by Betty, believing that Paula is still a close crony of Cora and Judith. Cora Grandways, now rapidly losing her following, organises a picnic, hoping to encourage the girls to remain her friends, but whilst the picnic is in process, a dreadful storm arises, and Cora and Co. rush back to the school. Paul in her haste, trips and sprains her ankle, but the other girls rush away, heedless of Paula's predicament. Then, from nowhere it seems, appears Betty Barton, complete with mackintosh (the other girls are all in summer dresses), and, putting the mac around Paula, she lifts the helpless girl, and carries her back to Morcove.

The result is that Betty becomes seriously ill, and Paula is heartbroken. Betty is in the sanatorium, and Paula calls at Polly Linton's study. To Polly she says, "She was such a bwick, don't you know, and weally, it is coming home to me how cwuel I often was". Paula, like Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's, could not pronounce the letter 'r'. Or could they? From then on, and for the rest of the Morcove saga, Paula becomes Betty's devoted friend. In time, she becomes good at games, although always 'pwestwate' after a game of hockey, and from the time when H.R.H. Naomer Nakara arrives at Morcove, Paula is teased mercilessly by the dusky Naomer, and by Polly Linton. In spite of her protests, Paula does not really mind.

She showed her courage in many series, especially when at one time she was kidnapped, and taken as a prisoner to Gull Island, off the coast of Morcove. She never slipped back into her old snobbish ways, and, to show how much she was appreciated, in one series she became captain of the Fourth again, whilst Betty was temporarily away from Morcove. Described as being fair haired, very pretty and very fashionable (even in a gym-slip), she was a great favourite with all the Morcove girls, and, presumably, also with all the readers of the splendid little SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN.

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WANTED: Original Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, especially 1937. Bunter books, 1st editions with dust-wrappers. Thriller Picture Library Books. Richmal Crompton's WILLIAM books, particularly 'William the Lawless'. James Gall, 49 Anderson Avenue, Aberdeen. Tel: Aberdeen 0224 - 491716.

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NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS BOOK CLUBS

MIDLAND O.B.B.C.

An attendance of 9 gathered for our first very enjoyable meeting in September after the summer break. There were apologies for absence from Tom Porter, our Chairman, from Christine Brettell and Johnny Hopton.

Our own monthly newsletter will not be mailed before the next meeting on October, 29th as Geoff Lardner, our Editor, is taking a long holiday in the U.S.A., but a double September/October number will be published in November. We enjoyed the excellent refreshments provided by Betty Hopton, Joan Golen and Ivan Webster. A new 15 minute talks feature was introduced by Geoff Lardner, who dealt with Edgar Rice Burroughs (1875 to 1950, the famous author of Tarzan and the Apes, who also wrote science fiction). Because of his powerful imagination, this great story-teller's credibility (and the rules of grammar) sometimes went by the board in his stories. Some people sneer at this sort of writing, but a schoolboy scarcely notices these faults because he is so enthralled by the stories. Geoff was roundly applauded for this splendid talk. A 15 questions quiz by your correspondent was won by Betty Hopton, who received the prize of a copy of Yaroooh. The final item was Ivan Webster's reading from Gem 1618, chapter 6, in which Gussy - attempting to help a charitable cause - gets involved in gambling with the notorious Joe Banks.

JACK BELLFIELD

SOUTH WEST O.B.B.C.

In superb sunny weather we met as usual at the home of Tim Salisbury at Weston-Super-Mare on 27th September. Bill Lofts made his customary welcome appearance, and when our guest, Mr. Charles Skilton, also appeared there was no doubt that we were in for a very interesting meeting. Mr. Skilton, the original publisher

of the famous yellow covered Bunter books, gave a fascinating talk on the world of publishing, from the receiving of the original script from the author, to the finished hard-back book. He emphasized the hard work needed to promote and sell a book.

Bill Lofts, always with something new up his sleeve, gave us two talks. The first was on the magic world of the Boys' Friend Library, and the second about the old 1930s markets where comics and boys' books were every lad's buy, as well as the home-made sweets, toffee-apples and hot chestnuts. Mr. and Mrs. Salisbury put on their usual superb tea; then St. Frank's was the School in the Spotlight. The meeting ended at 6.15 p.m. in time for all to wend their way home after a gathering which would certainly have inspired Charles Hamilton to record that 'all was merry and bright'.

TERRY JONES

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

Our October Meeting took place at the home of Malcolm Pratt in Lode, just outside Cambridge.

Howard Corn gave another of his meticulously researched talks on the "Rise and Fall of Express Weekly".

Begun in 1954 as a newspaper - like publication, Junior Express, it gradually changed into a comic over the months, so that by early - 1956 it went into direct competition with the Eagle. Now called Express Colour Weekly and carrying a sequel to BBC radio's Journey into Space, along with many then-current film adaptations, it carved out a huge readership over its 8 years of life. Specimens of its various formats, videotapes and audiotapes of some of its characters were used to demonstrate that it was just the right mix for the TV age, but the format/layout was always out of tune with what the readers wanted.

Malcolm then presented us with a character actor faces (from films and TV) identification quiz.

ADRIAN PERKINS

NORTHERN O.B.C.

At our October meeting, Chairman Keith Smith welcomed the nineteen people present, especially four visitors, including Associate Members Geraldine and John Lamb, and David Bailey, all three of whom had made the journey from Cheshire. Secretary Geoffrey was on holiday, and we were sorry to hear that Arthur Fortune had been in hospital, but glad that he was now at home, hopefully on the road to recovery. Because of work commitments, Paul Galvin was also absent. David Bradley reported on the W.E. Johns meeting to be held soon in Nottingham. The organisers were pleased with the response so far.

Bill Lofts, our special guest for the evening, spoke about the Bath Magnet Club. It was only recently that information concerning this had come to light although it had been in existence long before the advent of the O.B.B.C.'s, being a club formed by schoolboy readers of the Magnet, Gem and other Companion papers. After refreshments, Bill spoke about his researches into the author of the Fu Manchu series - Sax Rohmer. Bill mentioned his initial enquiry from the U.S.A. and his subsequent visit to a north London graveyard to seek the grave of this author and his family. Apparently Sax Rohmer was born Arthur Henry Wood, in 1883, of Irish extraction. Very little was known of him, even though his stories were so famous. After his talks, there was plenty of opportunity for members to put to Bill their own queries and comments.

Our next meeting is brought forward by one week, to 7th November, when we shall meet at our Chairman's home. The theme will be 'Bonfire Night', and members are asked to bring along papers, comics, books and magazines on this theme. We shall also have a firework display. Our Secretary will be pleased to forward details.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

LONDON O.B.B.C.

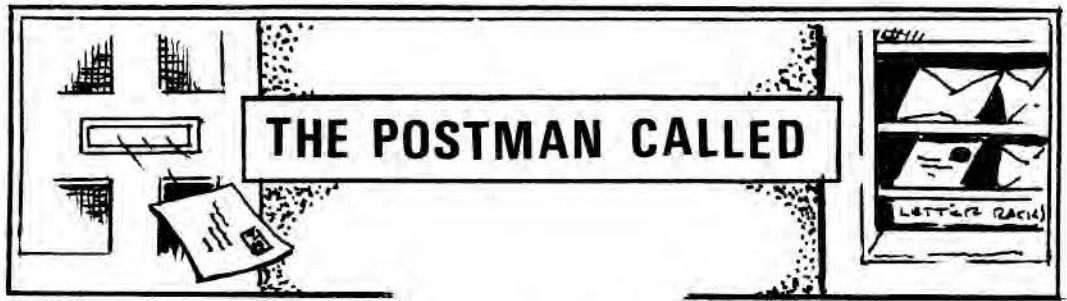
The October meeting was held at the home of Isaac Litvak at Ashford, Middlesex. In the absence of Norman Wright, regrettably unwell, Don Webster took the chair, expressing anxiety at the absence of our Secretary, from whom no communication has been received. Horace Owen volunteered to call at the Whiter home to make enquiries.

Mark Taha offered his choice of Desert Island Books, reading a short extract from each. These were Stalky & Co. by Rudyard Kipling, Mike and P. Smith by P.G. Wodehouse, and the Stacey series from Magnets 1422 - 1433. Don Webster then conducted an original and provocative quiz covering many aspects of our favourite papers. The winner was Winifred Morss. After a sumptuous tea, supervised by Isaac's son and daughter-in-law, Bill Bradford talked about the last issue of the Nelson Lee, and the subsequent St. Frank's stories in the Gem between 1933 and '35, six of the serials therein being original stories. Alan Stewart then presented a quiz in which the names of various school characters were cunningly concealed in an essay devised by the Stewart Clan! Don Webster was the winner.

Votes of thanks were accorded to Isaac for his excellent hospitality. The next meeting will be at the Walthamstow venue on Sunday, 8th November. Tea will be provided, but members should bring their own food.

BILL BRADFORD

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BILL LOFTS (London). Recently whilst visiting my friend Peter Haining the well known author, we drove around various parts of the Suffolk/Essex border, and especially to see the old site of Borley Rectory, the most haunted house in England. This was partly destroyed by a fire in 1939, then reduced finally to a ruin by high winds in 1943, so the ghost of the tormented Nun is seemingly now laid finally to rest. Around the area E.S. Brooks used to live, using the locality of Halstead especially as one of his pen-names. But what was astonishing was that, almost opposite where Borley Rectory used to be, was now a large imposing house set in spacious grounds, its name being BUNTERS! Unfortunately there was no time to stop and make enquiries as to how it got its name.

LESLIE LASKEY (Brighton). A vote of thanks is due to the compilers of the "Boy's Friend Library" Catalogue. A very interesting and useful reference book.

"Danny" described as "delicious" (July, 1987, Diary) the "Magnet's" 1937 series about Lord Mauleverer's lost £10 note. I agree entirely with Danny's assessment of this Greyfriars story which I would rate as the best "short" series (3 weeks) that I have ever read in "The Magnet"...

I have recently perused three "Knockout Fun Books" (Annuals) from the 1950s. Two of them contained written Greyfriars stories with illustrations (regrettably not by C.H. Chapman). Both read like genuine Frank Richards writing. They are amusing "jape" stories involving such things as tins of green paint and bottles of gum. "Bunter and the Bounder" in the 1957 Annual was a very neat little story. I had been under the impression that Charles Hamilton wrote no more for the Amalgamated Press after May, 1940. Were the "Knockout Annual" stories genuine new stories from The Master?

DAVE HOBBS (Seattle, U.S.A.) It delighted me to see Pip, Squeak & Wilfred on the cover. I brought with me when we emigrated (in 1925) small, stuffed toys of this famous trio. Nieces & nephews played with them, also our own children. Pip and Wilfred are still with us --- 'showing-their-age' as is the writer: Squeak we lost track of, somewhere down the years, I'm sorry to say. But I, at least, remember her kindly!

(Editor's Note: We received many enthusiastic letters from readers who welcomed renewing their acquaintance with Pip, Squeak and Wilfred.)

TERRY JONES (Gloucester) I have been following the adventures of our favourite friends in the "Gem" and "Magnet" since 1932 and read myself to sleep every night with Quelch, Prout, Coker and Bunter, then switch to Arthur Augustus, Merry, Blake and Figgins. I try modern novels but it is no use. I soon return to my dear friends of Greyfriars and St. Jim's. Living alone, as I do, they are a great comfort and, it doesn't matter how depressed I feel at times, as soon as I go through the gates of St. Jim's and Greyfriars I start to chortle. What a magic therapy the Hamilton writings always are!



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BEN WHITER

Last month we received the sad news that Ben Whiter, the much loved Secretary of the London Old Boys' Book Club had passed away. 'Uncle Ben' will be remembered by us all for his warmth and kindness, his untiring work and tremendous enthusiasm for the Club, of which he had been Honorary Secretary since its beginnings nearly forty years ago. Ben was a wonderful embodiment of the values and standards of the old papers, and it is almost impossible to realise that he will no longer be present at all our meetings, to guide and encourage us all, or to continue to conduct the world-wide correspondence through which he kept so many people in touch with our collecting world.

The London O.B.B.C. is publishing a special News Letter of tributes to Ben. **I am receiving letters from several C.D. readers who write glowingly of his friendship and helpfulness. I can only endorse the words of Mr. James Hodge from Bristol who writes that Ben 'always signed off his letters with "Semper Fidelis". THAT is my memory of him: he always was, and will be'.

As we say 'au revoir' and 'thank you' to Ben, our loving thoughts go out to his wife Lilian, in her great loss.

MARY CADOGAN

** Copies of this News Letter can be obtained on application to the Chairman of the London Club, Mr. Norman Wright, ~~80~~ Eastbury Road, Watford, Herts, WD1 4JL. (Please send S.A.E.) 60

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