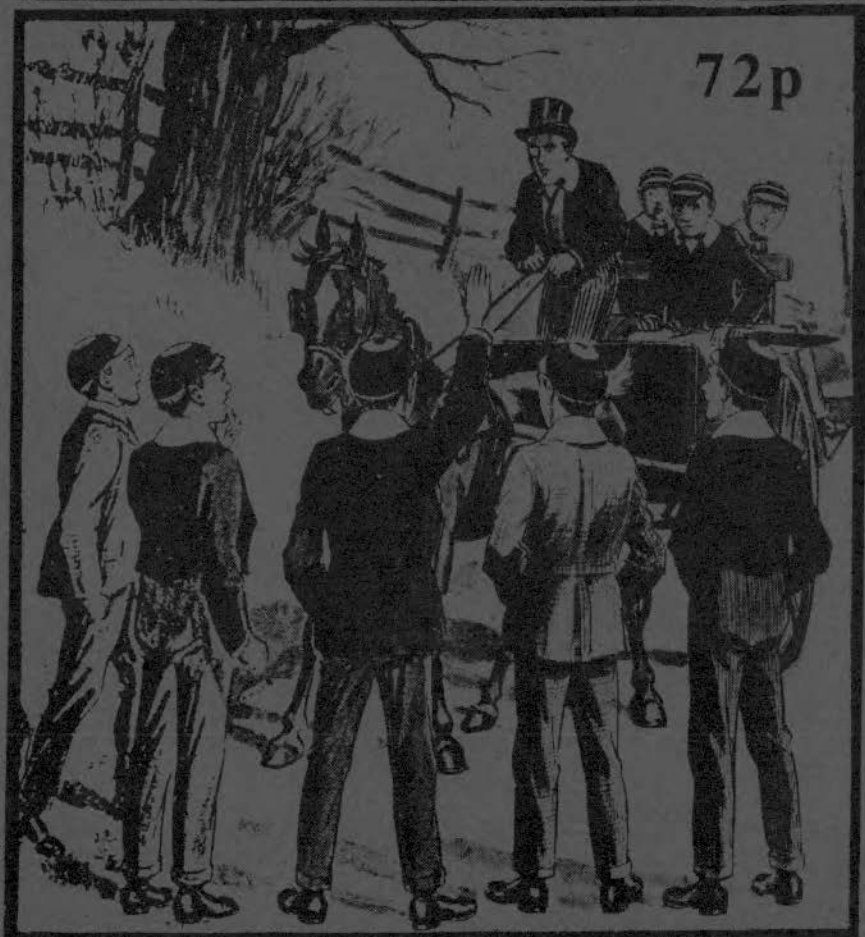


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VOLUME 43

No. 509

MAY 1989



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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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The Editor's Chat



MULTI MEDIA GREYFRIARS

I am constantly intrigued by coming across examples of how Charles Hamilton's Greyfriars has made the transition from printed fiction to other domains. It has become metaphor, been filmed, televised and adapted for the stage and, as many long-standing C.D. readers will remember, was the inspiration of two musical suites created by Mr. T.A. Johnson during the nineteen-forties. I understand that through the splendid offices of Mr. R.F. Acraman, the Curator of the Frank Richards Museum and Library at Kingsgate Castle, Mr. Johnson has been able to re-record his suites on cassettes. He has most kindly sent me a copy, which I am delighted to have, and I gather that copies might be available for interested readers, who should contact Mr. Johnson for details.

The recording includes a moving tribute to Frank Richards from the composer. The music is descriptive of the school, of Coker, Bob Cherry and the Famous Five; then comes a section on Bunter (whose notorious 'cackle' comes to musical life), a Quelchian theme, complete with swishing cane sounds, a dreamy Alonzo Todd interlude, and pieces inspired by Wun Lung, Dr. Locke, Mauly and the Bounder.

When Mr. Johnson presented records of his piano suites to the creator of Greyfriars, Frank Richards commented: 'They are a joy for ever, and I play them over before going to write, and they have an effect somewhat like "oiling" the machine. They produce what I might perhaps call the Greyfriars mood'. The original recordings (on disc) are now in the Kingsgate Frank Richards Museum. Letters about the Greyfriars Suites can be sent to Mr. Johnson, c/o the C.D., so long as the envelope is clearly addressed to him and, of course, stamped. (Naturally copyright of these cassettes has to be respected, and any copies provided for C.D. readers would be simply for their personal use.)

DANNY AS INSPIRATION

One of the most popular features of the C.D. over many years has been our DANNY'S DIARY. This is not only a mine of information but a satisfyingly evocative dip into certain aspects of social history. You will see that Danny's diligent delving into the old boys' papers of fifty years ago has now inspired another diarist to do the same for one area of the girls' papers. As DENISE'S DIARY will deal with the Schoolgirls' Own Library during the last year of its run (in common with so many other papers this ended in 1940), it will, of course, be unable to emulate the longevity of Danny's contributions. Nevertheless I am sure it will be much appreciated, as many C.D. readers now have become very interested in the girls' papers. Our new feature will be a tribute to its inspirers, to Danny, and the authors and editors of the A.P. girls' papers who provided so many of us with lasting delights.

MARY CADOGAN

A NOTE FROM BILL LOFTS

I greatly enjoyed Tommy Keen's article on Phyllis Howell (C.D. 508). I also thought she was a far brighter character than Marjorie or Clara. H.W. Twyman, who worked in Magnet Office before Union Jack editorship, was always of the opinion that she was based on Phyllis Panting, a beautiful dark haired editress of the comic 'My Favourite'. Staff were always ringing Phyllis and asking 'Are you my favourite?', and when she in all innocence said 'Yes' she got some very endearing replies! It was always curious to me that Charles Hamilton used the character which was created by a substitute writer. He must have either been so instructed by John Nix Pentelow, or else had read the Samways stories. Certainly I never cared for Archie Howell, Phyllis's brother. Another strange fact was that whilst Phyllis appeared in Cliff House stories (being mentioned, I think, right up to 1940) G.R. Samways was never once invited to write any tales featuring his creation in The School Friend, for which Phillips, Ransome and Kirkham all wrote in the early days. Phillips (Marjorie Stanton) in fact scorned to write any of the Greyfriars stories in The Magnet.



A SEXTON BLAKE GALLERY:

Number Three: Some of the Gals

(Illustrations by Eric Parker:
Montage and Captions by J.E.M.)

Yvonne Cartier, better known as Mlle Yvonne or just plain Yvonne, appeared on the Blakian scene just over seventy-five years ago in UJ 485. Avenger, adventuress, sometimes against the law, sometimes on its side (she was once even credited with being a member of the British Secret Service!), the glittering and glamorous Yvonne enjoyed understandable popularity with readers in the period 1913 to 1926. Here (1) she is menaced by one of Wu Ling's minions in *The Street of Many Lanterns*, UJ 1064.

Roxane Harfield, also better known just by her forename, was an updated, more exotic version of Yvonne. Her first appearance in 1930 was in the opening story of another saga with the theme of vengeance, *They Shall Repay*, UJ 1378. Roxane is depicted here (2) in a much later story, *The Affair of the Missing Financier*, DW 46.

Fifette Bierce (3) was the confederate and girl friend of Leon Kestrel, the Master Mummer, who first appeared in the UJ in 1915. Created by Lewis Jackson, they were both still going strong in their law-breaking activities twenty years later and are shown here in *The Monster of Paris*, DW 13.

Mary Trent was the doting if misguided associate of Huxton Rymer. Here (4) she pleades with Blake to help rescue Rymer from the evil Wu Ling in *Yellow Guile*, UJ 1438.

Another adventuress in the mould of Yvonne and Roxane - and, like them, created by G.H. Teed - was June Severance. In this illustration (5) she is exercising her charms on Blake. The story was *Poisoned Blossoms*, UJ 1305, part of a series which, intriguingly, was never completed.

Muriel Marl, glamorous Hollywood actress and gang leader, joined forces with George Marsden Plummer in *The Gang Girl*, UJ 1458. An even more unusual and exotic ally than the perhaps better known Vali Mata-Vali, Muriel Marl here (6) menaces Plummer (in fancy dress) in a scene from the above story.



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Time - the 1920's. Venue - a current issue of 'Union Jack'. Bill of fare - This week Sexton Blake and Lord Peter Wimsey combine forces to bring the villains to book. An intriguing thought but, alas, it never happened. Yet, apparently, it might well have done.

James Brabazon, in his splendid biography of Dorothy L. Sayers*, tells how, to while away time during a spell of illness, D.L.S., in correspondence with a woman friend, discussed the Sexton Blake saga in some depth and indulged in 'spooof' scholarship about the character and his exploits, in much the same fashion as do Sherlockians with Holmes.

This correspondence ensued before publication, in 1922, of the first Wimsey novel, 'Whose Body?'. Brabazon also reveals that among D.L.S.'s papers was an unfinished Ms of a story featuring Sexton Blake and Tinker, and introducing a *minor* character in the shape of one Lord Peter Wimsey. This Ms also pre-dated 'Whose Body?' and would seem to indicate, as some cognoscente have been aware, that D.L.S. had serious intentions of contributing to the Blake canon. That she did not do so could indicate the concurrent germ of an idea for a detective hero of her own creation, that of Peter Wimsey.

It is interesting to speculate on the idea of Blake, the consummate professional, joining forces with the inspired amateur Lord Peter from time to time in the pages of 'Union Jack', with all the opportunities for friendly rivalry between the two characters. It was not to be and, in the nature of things, perhaps not *meant* to be. As the subsequent Lord Peter novels show, it would have become increasingly difficult to confine Wimsey within the pages of 'U.J.' without an eventual 'power struggle' arising between him and Blake -- with who knows what effect on 'Union Jack' as we knew and loved it!

A missed opportunity -- or a lucky escape? Either way, it makes you think, does it not?

* 'Dorothy L. Sayers - A Biography' by James Brabazon (Gollancz).

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BOOKIES AROUND ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

Apropos Jack Greaves' list of Pubs and Inns in the February C.D.'s Nelson Lee section, what is more surprising is the number of bookmakers in the St. Frank's surrounding areas.

I have managed to list the following from my small collection:
Josh Nickson O.S. 147. Matt Page N.S. 135. Sam Riddell O.S. 382. Josh Small O.S. 173. Shelton & Jem Baker O.S. 204. Mike Bradmore O.S. 140. Bill Brice N.S. 130...

There are probably others throughout the Nelson Lee saga.

Judging from this great number of pubs and bookmakers, I am left wondering why Edwy Searles Brooks needed so many to create incidents for his stories. But I also realise that the suburbs of London of those times had as many pubs and bookies to the square mile as did Bellton and Bannington.

I do not know whether Mr. Brooks was a gambling man but his description of roulette in the SPENDRIFT series was very accurate giving rise, perhaps, to the thought that his knowledge was gained through use! In some St. Frank's yarns he would hold forth on the amount one could win, given that a horse won at certain odds.

Things have changed a lot now from those old times. One can enter an official betting shop in the U.K. without fear of police interference, but when the Nelson Lee Library was published it was illegal for bookmakers to do business openly. Readers old enough may remember the days when bookies surreptitiously received bets on scraps of paper on street corners, or behind doors, with a Jim Crow on the lookout for police either in uniform or plain-clothes. Weird and wonderful were the disguises the police got up to in order to capture the bookies!

Mr. Brooks' insight into betting in all its forms is commendable since the great majority of his school and adventure stories were written in the tiny village of Halstead, Essex, so far removed from the temptations and evils of the London underworld. Still it is acceptable for authors never to travel to get their facts. They can find infinity in a grain of sand.

This year, 1989, is Edwy S. Brooks' centennial year. It would be appropriate for those who loved to read and cherish his stories to mark the

occasion with a brief vote of thanks. Edwy was born on November 11th, 1889.

"THE SPORT OF KINGS"

by Jack Greaves

Many of our readers must, I'm sure, have enjoyed a "flutter" on the horses at various times.

During the span of school stories in the *Old Series* Nelson Lee, Fullwood & Co. would receive red-hot tips for horses which were "certs" to WIN at races to be held in the pleasant surroundings of HELMFORD and BANNINGTON. Usually, however, these "certs" didn't come up to scratch and Fullwood & Co. would return to St. Frank's full of gloom, and desperately short of cash.

Some of these fictitious horses had names equally as fascinating as those in real life. Here are some that E.S. Brooks mentioned in the *Old Series*: Golden Blaze (314), Jumping Bill (492), Little Tess (382), Long Jack (382), Marathon (492), Picture Frame (382), Sand Boy (382), Rough Rider (492), Tortoise Shell (381), Golden Rose (382), Black Bess (140), Swanee Whistle (381), Swanee River (242), Speckled Bess (486), Blue Gown (382), Blue Lightening (242), Carpet Sweeper (454), Theodora (382), Buckeroo (242), Water Lily (314), Winter Lily (382).

Still on the racing theme the following Racecourses and Races are mentioned by Brooks: Sandown (381), Kempton Park (419), The Derby (242), The Grand National (476).

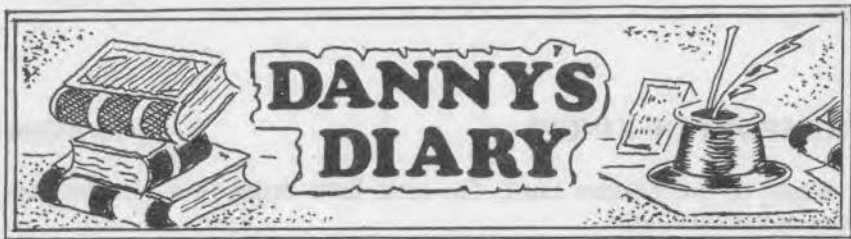
Last but not least I must mention the names of the seven Bookmakers who appear in the *Old Series*, and one could not meet a more disreputable lot, described mainly as big, bloated and very coarse: Josh Smale (172), Mike Bradmore (114), Will Sheldon (204), William Siggins (331), Sam Riddell (382), *Billy Monks (384), Josh Nickson (147).

(* Billy Monks, in business in Bannington, seems to be an exception as regards general appearance, for he was described as a dapper little man, very neat in appearance, attired in a blue serge suit, soft hat and a mackintosh, and looking more like a commercial traveller than a bookmaker.)

Later, however, he was accused of injuring a Cristowe money lender named Thomas Roper and stealing his bag of money (384).

This has been one of the many sporting themes mentioned at different times throughout the *Old Series*. Other articles could be written about these.

Meanwhile may I wish all C.D. readers better luck than Fullwood & Co. in picking their winners!



MAY 1939

I don't know why I always start my Diary with the Fourpenny Libraires. Perhaps it's because they are so wonderful.

The Greyfriars Schoolboys' Own Library this month is "The Greyfriars Tourists" and it brings to an end the series about our pals on their travels on board the Sea Nymph under the charge of Captain Cook. They are in the Mediterranean. Coker gets captured by brigands in Spain, and then Bunter tries to make a fortune at Nice, so there is plenty of fun and thrills. This S.O.L. ends with them back at school for the new term at Greyfriars, and there is a new boy named Traill who turns out to be a sleepwalker.

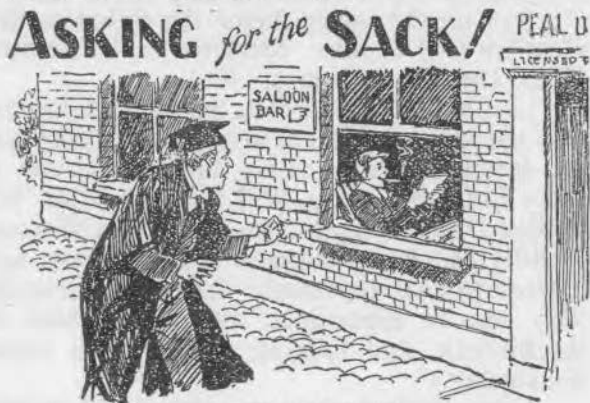
The second S.O.L. is "Asking For The Sack" which is about Len Lex, the schoolboy detective, at Oakshott School. Len has to discover why Eric Tunstall, Grandson of Sir Gilbert Tunstall, wants to be sacked from Oakshot. Good stuff. I remember reading it in a long series in Modern Boy a year or two ago.

The St. Frank's S.O.L. is "Yellow Menace". There is a new Chinese boy, Yng Ching, at St. Frank's, and some chinks are trying to kidnap him and take him back to China. And it's

left to Nipper and Nelson Lee to protect the Chinese junior from his enemies.

A lovely tale I had in the Sexton Blake Library this month. It is called "The A.R.P. Mystery" - so it is bang up-to-date, for the papers are full of A.R.P. these days. It is fascinating for introducing Raffles, the gentleman cracksman, in opposition to Blake. It is by Barry Perowne, and I love his tales about Raffles.

No. 371.—THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY.



By CHARLES HAMILTON.

Why does ERIC TUNSTALL, grandson of Sir Gilbert Tunstall, want to be sacked from Oakshott School? That is what LEN LEX, the schoolboy detective, wants to discover!

(Dad says that Raffles was originally created by a man named Hornung, about 40 years ago.)

I only had one Boys' Friend Library this month, and it is a very unusual one. It is called "The Schoolboy Magician" and it is about an American school. One of the boys at the school is Harry Houdini, who has amazing talent as a magician and an escapologist. They don't say who the writer is, so I suppose the story comes from the States. Mum says she remembers seeing Houdini in a serial, when the films were silent.

In Modern Boy the new long series about Captain Justice has continued all month, and concluded with the month's last issue. This is about Justice and his friends in the African desert, up against Sheik Hussein who has a great army of giant insects. The titles are "Tracker Ants" (Hussein has them harnessed like bloodhounds), "Cleaning Up El Ybarrah", "Vanished in the Desert", and "March of the Insect Army" which brings the series to an end.

There is plenty of variety in Modern Boy, and there is a series of school tales about Lowminster School, by someone called John Mackworth. But they are not really up the street of those like me, reared on a diet of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and St. Frank's.

And - in the real world. The government has introduced Conscription, which means that every young man will have to do army service. This is all on account of old Hitler. It looks as though he is out to conquer everything within reach. They wonder whether he will turn his eyes on Britain, and try to turn us all into little German sausages. A real old kilogrammer.

"Blue Peter" won the Derby, and my brother Doug, being a bit of a Vernon-Smith, had five bob on it. But we all shared in his good luck. He bought me a new school cap for 3/6; he bought Mum a woollen dressing-gown for 21/-; he bought Dad an umbrella for 8/6, and himself a pair of pyjamas for 8/11. Good old Doug.

The Magnet's opening story is the last of the Easter holiday series. "The Secret of the Sea-Cave" tells of Mr. Vernon-Smith and his son, the Bounder, being held prisoner in a cave on Blackrock Island by the rascally lawyer, Elias Rance, who hopes to get a big ransom out of the millionaire. Then, back at school in "Fool's Luck" we have one of those things which is a rarity these days - a single story. Coker has to bend over and take six from his form-master, Mr. Prout, and Coker's dignity is bruised. He decided to get his own back on Mr. Prout.

Then came what promises to be the start of a new long series. It is "The Mystery of Vernon-Smith". And there is lots and lots of Vernon-Smith in the Magnet now. Not only is there our Smithy. But he also has a double - his cousin, Bertie Vernon... The Bounder is in trouble owing to various people having seen his double and having thought it was the Bounder.

In the last of the month we have "The Bounder's Double". Bertie Vernon is entered at Greyfriars - and the Bounder does not want him there. So the Bounder makes himself very unpleasant. It looks promising. I remember other tales of doubles - Tom Merry once had a double, Reggie Clavering, and Billy Bunter had a double and changed places with him. Far-fetched, I'm sure, but all great reading. A bit of very, very modern flavour crept into the story I mentioned, "Fool's Luck". Bunter paints A.R.P. door of Study No. 1. He intends those unpopular capitals to mean "All Rotten Phunks!".

A mixed month in the local cinemas. "Stablemates", with Wallace Beery and Mickey Rooney, was good. Rather tame was "The Cowboy and the Lady" starring

Gary Cooper and Merle Oberon, about a President's daughter who fell in love with a rodeo cowboy. Will Hay wasn't really at his funniest in "Old Bones of the River" about a schoolmaster in Africa who accidently put down a native rising.

The Marx Bros. in "Room Service" was only so-so. About theatrical people who stay in an hotel with no idea how they are going to pay the bill. In it a terrified turkey gets chased round a room, which I thought very UNfunny. Lucille Ball is in this one. "The Dawn Patrol" with Erroll Flynn and Basil Rathbone is a good flying picture, though I remember seeing Richard Barthelmess in the same story once, and I feel sure that version was better. Not too bad was "Suez" with Tyrone Power as de Lesseps, the man who built the famous canal.

Best of the month was "The Citadel" with Robert Donat as a doctor who does well as a medico in the Welsh valleys, but goes astray when he takes up a fashionable practice in Harley Street. Rosalind Russell was also in this one.



And now for the Gem with its 3-pronged collected of tip-top tales. The new St. Jim 's stories continue with the chums on their air-trip to the Riviera. In "The Hidden Menace" we find that Gussy has brought peril to the party with the black box which was entrusted to his care before they left England. And one is very suspicious of Pawson, Lord Eastwood's man, who is in charge of the party, for they find that he is visiting the gambling casinos. Next came "The Secret of the Black Box", and a new enemy, Guiseppe Fosco, is also after the mysterious box. Then, in "The Hunted Schoolboys", the party lands in the Alps. Final of the month is "Trapped in Venice" which introduces Coker, Potter, and Greene of Greyfriars who are on holiday in Venice. This series is pretty good, and it continues next month.

The Gem's Cedar Creek tales start off with "The Haunted Mine". A mine, known as Bailey's bonanza, is for sale, and it seems to be haunted by a ghost, so Frank Richards & Co. investigate. Second tale is "The Ghost Hunters". The ghost is laid. He turns out to be Injun Dick who is secretly working the mine, and plays ghost to keep people away. Then "Frank Richards' Peril" is great. He can speak French, and is called upon to act as interpreter for a Frenchman, and finds himself

in great danger. Final of the month is "The Trail of Danger" with Frank's pals going to his rescue.

Now the Benbow tales, with the school ship in the West Indies. Opening tale is "Saved from the Sea" with the Benbow going to the rescue of a ship in distress, and Jack Drake saving a negro named Tin Tacks. Next "The Stowaway", in which Tin Tacks does not want to leave when it is time for him to depart from the Benbow. Then "Trouble in Trinidad", where Jack Drake & Co. take French leave, and, thanks to Tuckey Toodles, they land in trouble. This theme continues in "Drake & Co's. Night Out", with plenty of excitement in Trinidad.

ERIC FAYNE comments on this month's DANNY'S DIARY

S.O.L. No. 370 comprised the last two stories of the Easter holiday 5-story series in the Magnet of 1933, plus the following single story concerning Trail, the sleepwalker.

S.O.L. No. 371 comprised 5 consecutive Oakshott stories which had featured in Modern Boy in the summer of 1937.

The Cedar Creek tales in Danny's 1939 Gem had originally run almost consecutively in the Boys' Friend from the end of June 1918. "The Haunted Mine" had the same title on both occasions. "The Ghost Hunters" had been "Bailey's Bonanza" in 1918.

And now we come to why I just said "almost" consecutively. We come to the very first instance of a tale being omitted for no apparent reason. Earlier, a Christmas tale had been held over and then published at the appropriate season. But here, in May 1939, we find the story "The Schoolboy Actors" being dropped. It was a light tale in which Frank Richards started an amateur dramatic society at Cedar Creek, and they decide to stage "Julius Caesar". The Gem's programme just then decidedly tilted towards the adventurous type of tale, and one would have thought that a light story set at Cedar Creek school would have made a bit of variety. But "The Schoolboy Actors" was left out, and Cedar Creek passed to another set of thrills. Why was it omitted? Well, your guess is as good as mine. Maybe that single copy was missing from the A.P. files. Or, possibly, "Schoolboy Actors" was a sub tale, almost unknown in the long Cedar Creek saga.

I have re-read the tale, to ascertain whether or not it was a sub. I can only say tha it just "may" have been, but it was by no means certainly so. Maybe they picked it up for the Gem a bit later on. We shall see, as Danny progresses with his Diary.

"Frank Richards' Peril" had been "In Merciless Hands" in 1918, and "The Trail of Danger" had originally been "Tracked by Two".

The Benbow tales in Danny's Gem had appeared consecutively in the Greyfriars Herald from early August 1920. "Saved from the Sea" had been "Drake to the Rescue" in 1920. "The Stowaway" had been "The Stowaway of the Benbow" in 1920; "Trouble in Trinidad" in 1939 had been "Trouble at Trinidad" in 1920; "Drake & Co's Night Out" had originally been "Fallen Among Friends".

I am interested to see Danny's reference to the B.F.L. story purporting to relate the schooldays of the stage magician and escapologist, Houdini. I hadn't heard of it before. I wonder if any of our clan recalls the tale or possesses a copy. Danny's Mum remembered Houdini in a silent film serial. And I, too, remember it, 50 years after Danny's Mum. Once again I wonder - this time whether any member of our

clan remembers that silent serial "The Master Mystery" which I followed avidly as a child. Those were the cinema days before the double-feature programme became the accepted thing. We had one Big Picture, a serial, a 2-reel comedy, and the News (either Pathe Gazette, Gaumont Graphic, or Topical Budget). Plus a lovely orchestra to accompany the main film, and the relief pianist for the rest.

I can't remember the story of "The Master Mystery", which probably arrived Monday, and Tuesday, and Wednesday every week for perhaps 15 weeks. They changed the programme mid-week in those days. Mostly I went to the pictures twice a week, and I wouldn't change my childhood for all the Dallas on modern TV or the arson in our 1989 schools.

I recall Houdini as rather a stodgy actor in the serial, and anything but a matinee idol. But I reckon we loved it. And then home by a penny tram, plus a pleasant, quiet walk to our front door through the quiet streets and lanes. And, of course, no peril from muggers or sex maniacs to bother about. Those were the days - and I don't care who hears me say so.

Cliff House Corner by Margery Woods

BUNTER GOLD

So great a household name has that of the Bunter duo become that even those with little more than a nodding acquaintance with the stories of the most famous fat schoolboy and schoolgirl in the history of fiction could list the three main features associated with Bessie and Billy Bunter: food, fat, and postal orders. Alas for the ever hungry pair, there was never enough of the first, far too much of the second, while the third seemed doomed to perpetual non-existence. Until Hilda Richards took pity on the plump duffer of Cliff House.



LITTLE Tommy Snath looked so miserable that Bessie's heart was touched. "They're taking away all our furniture to pay the rent," he gulped. If only Bessie could help her friends!

One bright sunny November morning in 1934 a registered letter arrived for Bessie. Containing no letter, bearing as sender's address that of a firm of Courtfield solicitors, it held the astonishing sum of fifty pounds, apparently all for Bessie. It was not from any of the mythical titled relatives, of whom Bessie was wont to boast, nor could it be from Aunt Agatha in Australia, very rich but notoriously stingy despite having won a sweepstake. But the mystery was of small consequence to Bessie; fifty shillings would have gone to her head, but fifty pounds! The tuck shop called. Now she could show off her newfound wealth.

So with haughty mien and grandiloquent gesture, Bessie treats her chums, flourishing a casual fiver and preening herself with satisfaction at Aunty Jones' astonishment.

"I believe I owe you for two sausage rolls", she said.

"Yes, Miss Bunter."

"Pray take it out of that fiver", went on Bessie loftily, ignoring the grins of her chums.

Oh yes, Bessie is enjoying herself tremendously, even though Babs is concerned about the true source of this new mysterious windfall.

And Babs is right to be concerned for her plump chum, for soon there is trouble for Bessie in the shape of the Courtfield solicitor who arrives at the school to see Miss Primrose and accuses Bessie of receiving stolen money. At first the headmistress is inclined to side with Bessie, until Bessie admits she has spent most of the fifty pounds, and the solicitor tells them that a girl in his office has confessed to taking the money, sending it to Bessie, and that this was all part of a pre-arranged plan.

After this bombshell Miss Primrose, naturally, demands to know what Bessie has done with the money, and Bessie refuses to tell. Because Bessie has a very kind heart beneath all her faults, and is of a generous nature; it is hardly her fault that she rarely has the means of indulging this generosity.

Only that afternoon she has met her little friend Tommy Snaith, who had appeared with her in the film in which she had starred. Tommy had a sister called Judy, and Bessie had decided to pop in to see them. But outside the humble little cottage stands a big covered van, into which furniture is being loaded by two burly men. Inside the cottage Bessie has found great distress, Tommy the picture of woe, Judy in tears, and their mother ill in hospital. The two burly men are bailiffs, and the little family home is being broken up.

The Enterprise Studios, where Tommy had been burgeoning into a clever young actor and Judy had found work as a script girl, were now closed. The loss of work and the mother's illness had brought the little family close to destitution. All for the need of thirty pounds. Of course Bessie does not hesitate. The money is handed over, a receipt given, and Bessie indulges in a little more grandiloquence as she orders the men to bring all the furnishing back into the cottage and set it to rights again. So how can she tell Miss Primrose and the solicitor what she has done with

the bulk of the money? For they will immediately set about trying to recover it from Judy's landlord, and the little family will be homeless again.



Poor Bessie is banished to the detention room, from which, however, she manages to escape. With Ting-a-ling on a lead and her parrot and cage in her free hand, she stumbles along the road to Pegg, forlorn and weary and with no real idea of where she is going. Dusk falls and back at Cliff House the search begins for the missing Bessie. The mystery of how she got out of the detention room is solved when it is discovered that Bessie used her ventriloquial gift to assume Miss Primrose's voice to fool Ivy Finch of the Third into unlocking the door. Then Judy turns up, looking for Bessie, and bringing with her a girl called Alice Thorpe. Alice is the clerk in the solicitor's office, she is also Judy's cousin, and she had been tempted to take the fifty pounds, meant for another client, to help Judy's family. But she had nearly been caught and in desperation had shoved the money into the envelope for Bessie, which was to contain ten shillings from Aunt Agatha. Then Alice had panicked, and incriminated Bessie without realising what she was saying. The mystery is solved, but Bessie has to be found.

Meanwhile Bessie has been rescued by a fisherman, and has fallen asleep in his cottage. The police search reaches the cottage and Bessie takes fright and rushes out into the night, convinced she is going to be arrested for theft. The story climaxes with Bessie tumbling down the cliff, an exciting rescue and the wind-up of explanations all round. All ends happily, with more Bunter gold, for Bessie's fall over the cliff edge has dislodged a shower of rock and revealed the hiding place of a cache of treasure in the form of ancient gold coins. Bessie's share of the reward

repays the missing fifty pounds, the solicitor forgives Alice, Judy's and Tommy's mum comes out of hospital, and Bessie still has enough spondulicks left for a great and glorious feed. What more could a Bunter want?

LAUGHTER AND THRILLS No. 6 "Jimmy and his Magic Patch"

The "Beano" and the "Beano Books" 1944 to 1962.

by Norman Wright

A multitude of Thomson characters acquired magical tokens capable of fulfilling wishes, inducing invisibility or making time stand still. Such characters were almost a hallmark of the firm's comics and story papers. One of the most exciting, and certainly the most successful, was "Jimmy and his Magic Patch".

It was on New Year's Day 1944, in "Beano" No. 222 that young Jimmy Watson began his eighteen year stint in the "Beano" and the "Beano Book". While rescuing a cat from a tree he tore a gaping hole in the seat of his trousers. The old gypsy whose pet had been rescued repaired the tear with a patch cut from an old carpet. As the boy walked away she muttered 'Maybe I should have told him that was a magic carpet'.



Jimmy had only to wish and his patch would whisk him off through time and space. His adventures were wonderfully anachronistic, blending legend with a sprinkling of reality. King Alfred burnt the cakes, and Canute tried to order back the tide. In Jimmy Watson's world, Odysseus built the Wooden Horse and captured Troy: though unbeknown to Homer it was Jimmy's cough-drops, handed round to the closely confined Greeks, that prevented their discovery before the Trojans were sufficiently intoxicated to be easily overcome. Indeed, many episodes from history would have been entirely different had it not been for Jimmy Watson's timely intervention! He helped William Tell with fireworks, brought a stirrup pump to bear on the Great Fire of London, and assisted Robin Hood on no fewer than eight occasions (not counting reprints!). Poor Robin would have ended up on the sheriff's gallows with monotonous regularity if our young friend had not helped him out. He was a lad with very well filled pockets, and it was the contents of those well stocked handkerchief receptacles, together with his ingenuity, that usually brought

his adventures to a happy and successful conclusion with right, or at least mythical history, overcoming tyrants, rogues and bullies.

He was as at home in the fantasy fiction world of Sinbad, Santa Claus and Strang the Terrible as he was in helping out George Stephenson or Florence Nightingale.



The artistic talent responsible for the best of the Magic Patch strips was Dudley D. Watkins, the prolific genius responsible for so many successful strips in

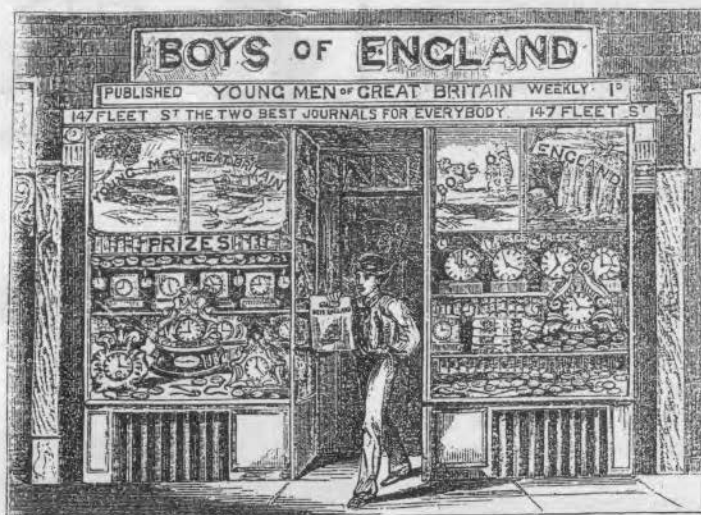
Thomson comics throughout the 1940's and '50's. He drew over seventy Magic Patch adventures for "Beano" between January 1944 and March 1949. In 1950 the series was taken over by Paddy Brennan, a talented adventure strip artist whose work was very much in the Watkins mould. Brennan drew some splendid strips for "Beano" but never really seemed at ease with The Magic Patch. Fortunately his skill was required elsewhere in the comic and Thomson began reprinting the Watkins strips for another generation of readers to enjoy.

Unfortunately the original strip was not reprinted and readers of "Beano" in 1955 must have longed to learn how Jimmy had come by his patch. The situation was rectified in 1957 when Brennan re-drew the first adventure, though why the original Watkins strip was not reprinted remains one of those mysteries peculiar to comics and boys' papers. In all, over half of the Watkins strips were reprinted, the last in October 1957. Two years later Paddy Brennan was back again with the final series of thirteen adventures. A further half dozen original Watkins strips and four original Brennan strips appeared in various "Beano Books", together with nine Watkins reprints, the last in the annual for 1963.

Which of us has not been stirred by classroom tales of knights and daring deeds, and wished ourselves back in those wildly exciting, adventurous days of Robin Hood and the like! Though we knew, even then, that they were the stuff of myth and imagination with just a modicum of truth and reality. In these topic-centred classroom times, children rarely learn of those heroes. It is a sad fact that if the strips were reprinted today few "Beano" readers would be familiar with the historical and legendary characters encountered by the resourceful Jimmy and His Magic Patch.

(Pictures copyright D.C. Thomson)

Books



THIS PICTURE REPRESENTS OUR PUBLISHING OFFICE, 147, FLEET STREET, WITH SOME OF THE PRIZES ON VIEW IN THE WINDOWS.

IMPERIALISM AND JUVENILE LITERATURE, Edited by Jeffrey Richards (Manchester University Press, £32.50). Reviewed by Mary Cadogan

Many C.D. readers will already be aware of Jeffrey Richards's attractive study of boys' school stories, *HAPPIEST DAYS*, which was published last year. Now he has turned his attention to the adventure tale and compiled another extremely interesting book. As he points out in his introduction, literature is not just a mirror of but an influence on the attitudes of society. The book comprises articles by a variety of writers on different aspects of imperialism in juvenile fiction. Imperialism, of course, merits more than one description, and not everyone will agree with some of the more critical aspects of this book. Nevertheless it provides stimulating food for thought about ways in which young readers might have been conditioned; it is also a good read, in which many people's favourite juvenile books are analysed.

Richards's introduction describes how the boys' adventure story came into being and how certain books which were favourites in 1888 still topped the polls in 1940. His own essay on G.A. Henty, Dennis Butts's contribution on *Flying Stories* from 1900-1950 and Patrick A. Dunae's article on early boys' papers are those which I most enjoyed. In addition there are studies of 'The Robinson Crusoe Story', 'Ballantyne's Message of Empire', the Harmsworth halfpenny papers of the 1890s and 1900s, 'Hunting and the Natural World...' and schoolboy literature and the creation of a colonial chivalric code. The book is rounded off by a chapter on

girls' fiction by J.S. Bratton. This is called 'British Imperialism and the Reproduction of Femininity in Girls' Fiction, 1900-1930', which, because it is concerned with imperial themes, concentrates largely on Girl Guide inspired stories.

However it also provides a lively analysis of the work of Bessie Marchant, 'the girls' Henty', an author who in my opinion deserves more attention than she usually receives.

Story papers and magazines as well as hard-backed books have been much drawn upon in IMPERIALISM AND JUVENILE LITERATURE, although some C.D. readers might feel that sufficient prominence has not always been given to the most popular papers and writers. However, I was grateful for fresh insights, some fascinating resumé's of stories and analyses of character. One wishes for more illustrations, particularly in view of the atmospheric nature of those which are provided.



"BBC CHILDREN'S HOUR" A Celebration of those Magical Years"
by Wallace Grevatt. (Book Guild Ltd. 1988. £14.95.)
Reviewed by Brian Doyle.

I have always maintained that BBC Radio educated me far more than school, especially in the fields of literature, drama and music. I was a keen and regular listener from around 1939 (when I was 8) and throughout the 1940s particularly, and my favourites were radio plays and serials, a taste fondly nurtured by Children's Hour, of which many readers, I'm sure, have happy memories.

Now comes a splendid book by Wallace Grevatt about the history and programmes of BBC Radio Children's Hour which was founded (in somewhat different format) in 1922 and ran until it was mercilessly killed off by incredibly stupid and insensitive senior BBC Radio controllers in 1964, who totally ignored public opinion, Press comments and hundreds of thousands of protest letters which flooded in to the BBC at the time.

What affectionate memories we have, who were lucky enough to listen to Children's Hour. My own favourites, of the 1940s, included Toytown, by S.G. Hulme Beaman (with the immortal Larry the lamb, Mr. Growser, the Mayor, Dennis the Dachsund, the Inventor, the Magician, and, of course, the dogged Ernest

the Policeman, notebook ever in hand and ready to 'take down some names and addresses'); Worzel Gummidge (who made his first appearance in the programme); Norman and Henry Bones, the Boy Detectives (played by Charles Hawtrey and Patricia Hayes); The Swish of the Curtain, by Pamela Brown, who was only 14 when she wrote it; all those historical plays by the enchantingly-named L. du Garde Peach: Biggles; Said the Cat to the Dog; Jennings at School; many adaptations of classic novels (I especially remember The Prisoner of Zenda) and, my personal all-time favourite, the serialization of John Masefield's magical The Box of Delights (broadcast on three different occasions, because it was so popular). And we musn't forget those marvellous nature rambles, Out With Romany, when you could almost smell the damp undergrowth of the woods and fields, despite the fact that they were all broadcast from the studios!

The book has a Foreword by David Davis, associated for so many years with the programme, and its final Head (and possessor, in my opinion, of the perfect radio voice). He is today in his eighties and has fond memories of the old C.H., but is still upset at the terrible way it was forcibly ended.

Wallace Grevatt was one of the programme's biggest fans and wrote regular letters to its producers when still a boy. His book was obviously a labour of love and runs to over 500 pages, listing, with details, what seems to be every play, serial and item ever broadcast in Children's Hour, with many evocative illustrations. He covers all the Regional variations too.

All veteran devotees of Children's Hour during its golden years will owe Mr. Grevatt a big debt for producing such a painstaking and detailed work.

It takes many of us back to those lovely late-afternoons when we sat in front of the coal-fire, toasting crumpets and sipping hot tea, as the cold wind whistled by outside, and we relaxed with a sigh of pure satisfaction and joy as we heard that most famous and much-loved Head of Children's Hour ever, Derek McCulloch ('Uncle Mac') say "Goodnight, Children - Everywhere..."

"A CHILDHOOD AT GREEN HEDGES" by Imogen Smallwood. Published by Methuen at £9.95. Reviewed by Norman Wright.

Like so many of my peers the dominant literary influence of the first twelve years of my life was Enid Blyton. The first books that I ever collected were her 'Famous Five' series, their exciting dustwrappers carefully preserved and savoured almost as much as the stories.

As an adult I have remained fascinated by the woman and read every book written about her. Barbara Stoney's official biography of Enid Blyton, published in 1974, was the first detailed study of the side of her life she kept hidden from her readers. Stoney drew a picture of an insecure woman who often retreated from the realities of life she found so difficult to face into an almost make-believe world dominated by her writing.

"A Childhood at Green Hedges" by her younger daughter Imogen consolidates the portrait painted by Stoney, fleshing it out with the memories and perceptions of her own childhood at "Green Hedges", the house in Beaconsfield where Enid Blyton lived from 1938 until her death in 1968. There is more than a tinge of bitterness in Imogen Smallwood's book as she recalls the loneliness of her early years, a small child in a large house whose busy mother found little time to share with her

daughters. There were moments of joy; Christmas, and holidays in Enid Blyton's beloved Dorset.

It is enigmatic that a woman whose writing brought joy to so many children fostered a brooding bitterness in one of her own. Readers of "Childhood at Green Hedges" must reflect on the evidence and decide for themselves the true nature of both mother and daughter.

(See picture on page 28)

JACK HUGHES WRITES ABOUT FRANK RICHARDS

Early in 1952 I was appointed as Junior Minister to a Methodist Church in Brisbane.

Among my duties I had to visit a number of aged parishioners as well as one who was terminally ill. This was a young man who was well known in church circles, having played a leading role in the denomination's youth work. But now he was wasted with cancer, bedridden.

I wondered how best I might cheer him. I had been warned that talk about heaven and eternity by my predecessor had not been happily received. I discovered, however, that the lad had a real love of books. He had been in the employ of the church retail book shop in the city. Thus here was an avenue of conversation and we pursued it with pleasure, and then I happened to mention how much I enjoyed the MAGNET stories of Frank Richards. Immediately his face lit up. He too had been a MAGNET reader. He would love to read some Greyfriars yarns once more. Thus it was an easy matter for me to allow his wish to be fulfilled. In his last days he read MAGNETS and HOLIDAY ANNUALS to his heart's content.

After his death, his mother returned the books to me with the grateful comment that the stories had cheered her son so much. I felt that any thanks rightfully belonged to the author and so to 'our Frank' I wrote to share with him.

A few weeks later I received the following very lovely letter:

October 20th, 1952

Dear Mr. Hughes,

I cannot tell you how pleased I was to receive your letter, sad as it made me feel for the young man under so heavy a trial. The knowledge that, in my own humble sphere, I have done some good, is something; but more than that, I am glad and thankful that God permitted me to be the means of relieving suffering, even if only a little and for a short time. If your young friend was able to forget his unhappy situation even for a few minutes at a time, in reading my writings, they were worthwhile. How very fortunate it was that you came in contact with him, and were able to

give him what he wished for: and if I may say so, how very kind it was of you to afford him so much comfort and consolation. I conclude from what you tell me that he died with the comfort of faith and hope in the here-after: the only real comfort when the last day comes. I am, as you probably know, a very old man: verging on eighty, and naturally have given much thought to these matters: and my serious conviction is that I would rather die a Christian than live an unbeliever. It is tragic to think of the poor boy passing at so early an age: but he is in God's hands, and his relatives have not lost him forever.

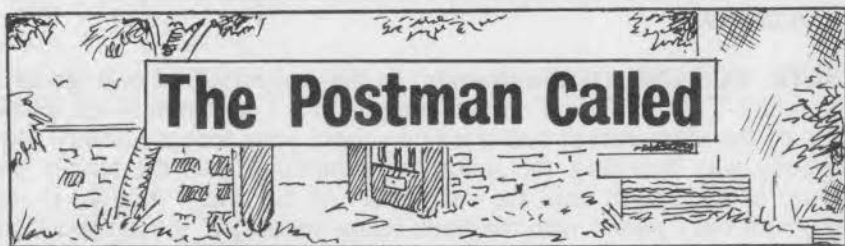
Thank you very much for the kind things you say about my books. And thank you still more, for having written and told me this, for though it has made me feel sad, it will always be a happy memory to me that, even in so slight a way, I was of some help to the dear lad in his suffering,

With kind regards,

Very sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

(See also Col. Digest Nos. 67 and 68.)



ERIC LAWRENCE (Wokingham): With reference to Danny's Diary in the March C.D. the story of the film "Alexander's Ragtime Band", was, as Danny says, about two songwriters and their rivalry for the affections of Alice Faye. Well, the story of the rivalry may have been based on fact but the songs featured were the work of one man, Irving Berlin, who wrote the music and lyrics for the entire film. This must cast some doubt on Danny's statement that it was a true story. Incidentally Berlin - real name Israel Baline - was 100 years old last year.

MALCOLM STUART FELLOWS (London): I would like to thank you for the lovely tribute to Arthur Marshall in the March issue of the magazine. I was a great admirer of his work. I never actually met him - much to my regret. I showed your tribute to Larry Grayson, the entertainer, who is a friend of mine and was a great friend of Arthur Marshall. I thought you might like to read what Larry wrote to me in his letter.

"What a lovely tribute by Mary Cadogan. I shall miss seeing him, miss his letters and phone calls. All very sad... dear Arthur... have wonderful memories of him and oh the laughs we had. I have all the letters he wrote to me which I never get tired of reading. I went to his funeral and it was just as he would have wished it to be, all very happy with everyone talking about him and laughing and one expected him to walk in at any moment into his lounge where we were all eating and drinking. And then we all walked over to the little church down the lane. It was a warm sunny day in that dear little village he loved so well."

I enjoy C.D. so much. Have you visited the Museum of the Moving Image, where one can see Bunter on an old television set?

EDWARD MURCH (Yelverton): Walk-ER! Colin Partis (March '89) may be interested to know that The Shorter Oxford Dictionary gives 1811 as the year when WALKER was first used as an expression of incredulity. This is 32 years before Dickens used it in *A Christmas Carol* when he emphasized the second syllable Walk-ER! In the original MS he capitalizes the second syllable and double underlines the E and the R.

The dictionary gives no indication of the origin save to say "Prob. a use of the surname Walker".

James Barrie used the expression in the title of his first play *Walker, London* in 1892.

LESLIE SUSANS (Gillingham): In the early 1920s I was given a book called 'The Liveliest Team at Templeton'. I can't remember all the details of the story except that it was a school yarn with a mystery plot; somebody was 'haunting' the school or something, and the reader was unaware of the culprit until the very end. At the time I thought it was quite good, but I parted with the book many years ago. I can't recall the name of the author or if he wrote any other novels. Does anybody know?

T.V. JONES (Longlevens, Gloucester): Recently I borrowed the brilliant book "Frank Richards: The Chap Behind the Chums" by Mary Cadogan from my local library. I am sure all our readers will be delighted to know that a red label was attached to the "due back" slip which read: "THERE IS A WAITING LIST FOR THIS BOOK. REGRET NO RENEWALS". It is very clear that the "Grand Old Man" is still very much with us all.

Editor's Note: Naturally I am gratified to hear this, and for the nice remarks which Mr. Jones makes about my book. I am still receiving appreciative letters about it from all over the world which endorses Mr. Jones's comment that the "Grand Old Man" continues to exercise his strong and happy influence.

"DENISE'S DIARY"

(with acknowledgements and compliments to DANNY!)

APRIL/MAY 1939

Having been following "Danny's Diary" of the Schoolboys' Own Library issues of fifty years ago, I thought it was time someone spoke up for the companion series. The Schoolgirls' Own Library also appeared on the first Thursday of every month - four volumes at a time, 96 pages, size 7 inches by 5-and-a-third. They cost fourpence each (less than 2p in new money), and they had distinctive yellow-and-black line-drawing covers.

I do not know when they started (I suppose some time about March 1925), but when I first met them in 1939 they had reached No. 685. I was then aged 8 - a schoolboy who was outgrowing "Playbox", "Rainbow", and Enid Blyton's "Sunny Stories" and was exploring the other children's literature that was coming into the house. These were the papers that my sister Joan, four years older, took regularly, and so - in addition to library books, "Popular Flying", "The Motor", and other material of my own - I grew up with the "Schoolgirls' Weekly", "Girls' Own Paper", and the "SGOL" books. Reading my sister's papers was an inexpensive way of augmenting my reading - and I was (and still am) a voracious reader.

There were also two other literary influences at work, neither strictly relevant here, but they may be of interest. In the house next door to where we lived, at Shoreham in Sussex, dwelt a family named Sindall - just like us in number, mum, dad, girl, boy. If the name strikes a chord with readers, it will be because of Biggles. Alfred Sindall was the artist who did the black-and-white drawings for Captain W.E. Johns' aviation stories (together with Howard Leigh, who did the fine colour frontispieces featuring real, recognisable aeroplanes). At the time of which I am writing, the Sindalls had just moved away, and our new neighbour was the son of Margaret Storm Jameson, the novelist. He was William Storm Clark, and rather excitingly he was an airline



pilot, flying De Havilland Rapides from Shoreham to the Channel Islands. He had a beautiful young wife Barbara, who was a great friend of my sisters. She had herself had some fascinating adventures like our story-book heroes; I still remember listening to her describe a recent visit to Germany, where she had been taking photographs unwisely and was thrown into a Nazi prison suspected of spying.

But I am writing about the "SGOL" books. Every month one of the four was a Cliff House story by "Hilda Richards" (John Wheway), and another was by "Marjorie Stanton" (Horace Phillips) about Morcove. Of course, neither my sister nor I suspected that the authors were men; it was not until The Editor's entertaining book "You're a Brick, Angela!" came out in 1976 that I learned the truth! Nor did we realise that most of the SGOL stories were reprints of serials that had appeared in schoolgirl papers, sometimes many years earlier. To Joan and me, they were fresh and new.

The other two stories each month covered a wide variety of topics, and certain authors specialised in particular fields. Elizabeth Chester, for instance, usually wrote about the South Seas or the Wild West. Hazel Armitage - another pseudonym for John Wheway - wrote exciting adventure stories based in this country, often showing girls competently handling cars or horses; a May 1939 issue from this pen was "The Schoolgirl Speed Star", about motor racing.

I am really cheating a little, starting this series of articles in April and May, because it was not until later in the year that my sister began buying the books regularly. But when publication ceased in 1940 because of the war, the Amalgamated Press cleared their warehouses of all their stock, and so I was able to buy some back issues.

The first book I have from those days is No. 677, published on April 6: "Must Morcove Expel Her?" It featured the stormy school career of Elsie Ashby - expelled from St. Monica's, on the point of being expelled from Morcove but finally cleared by Ursula Wade, the school sneak who, for once in her unlovely life, did the decent thing.

I have none of the other issues for April and May - a matter of special regret as regards No. 679, "Valerie's World-Wide Quest", by Isabel Norton. This featured Valerie Drew, the girl detective with the red-gold hair. She was a great favourite of mine; I dimly recall having read the story when it was serialised in the

**VALERIE'S
WORLD-WIDE QUEST**
by Isabel Norton

A THRILLING STORY
of the
FAMOUS
GIRL DETECTIVE

4^D
6-4-39

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY N°679

"Schoolgirls' Weekly" (probably in 1938), but all I have of it is the picture of the cover in an advertisement.

For the record, the Cliff House titles in these two months were No. 676, "The Fourth Form Mistress's Sister", and No. 680, "Rosa, the Rebel" starring the fiery Rosa Rodworth. Marjorie Stanton's May tale was No. 681, "Morcove's Riverside Holiday", and the miscellaneous books were:

No. 678 "The Schoolgirl Hotel Hostess", by Joy Phillips.

No. 682 "Treasure Trail of the Tremaynes", by Sheila Austin.

No. 683 "The Schoolgirl Speed Star", by Hazel Armitage.

After that, I have a fairly complete set, so month by month I can outline these schoolgirl delights until those sad days in the early summer of 1940 when SGOL, SBOL, "The Schoolgirl", even the mighty "Gem" and "Magnet" themselves became war casualties.

MORE LETTERS FROM THE GREYFRIARS ARCHIVE (contributed by Lesley Rowley)



MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. H.S. Quelch, The Remove Form, Greyfriars School.
From: Dr. Pillbury, Physician and Medical Adviser to the School.

At your request, I examined the Remove Form boy, WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER, today and the following are my findings:

The patient variously described the symptoms he had noticed as that of galloping plumbago, with burning daggers in both abdomen and limbs, and feelings of intense hunger coupled with an inability to take an active part in form work and at games. He supplemented his descriptions with a series of harrowing cries of pain and suffering, and volunteering the opinion that only complete rest from school work together with a more ample diet would prove successful. I do not concur with this opinion.

My own conclusions either lead me to the fact that this boy must be suffering from manifest complaints not yet known to medical science, or that he is malingering in the hope that he may be excused both class and games. The more I am acquainted with the patient, the more I subscribe to the latter view, the cure for which, Mr. Quelch, lies more in your hands than in my own. I may say that I feel entirely confident in your choosing the appropriate medicine for this perplexing case. In addition I am of the opinion that the boy's obesity is some matter for concern and that a strict diet should be followed until the boy assumes a more normal weight. A copy of the diet sheet I have given the Matron is attached, may I ask you to supervise its enforcement?

B. PILLBURY, M.D.

MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Pillbury
From: Mr. H.S. Quelch, Master of the Remove Form.

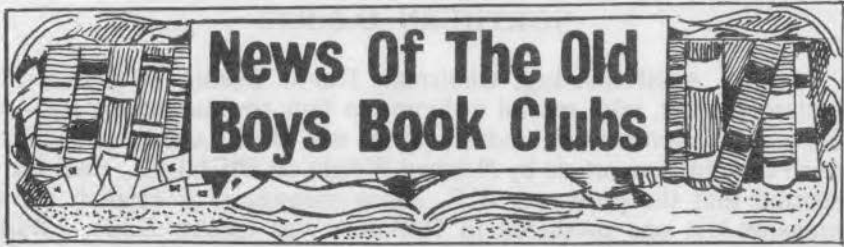
I concur with your diagnosis of Bunter's manifold complaints and, acting on your advice, I administered the appropriate medicine before class began this afternoon. The results were immediate and apparently beneficial for the feeling of inertia Bunter had previously shown has completely disappeared, together with all other aches and pains, real or imaginary (mostly the latter). I have expressed to Bunter that I trust the cure is a permanent one, failing which the same punishment, that is medicine, will be inflicted but with an increased dosage.

I further agree with what you advise regarding Bunter's obesity, and the diet has been introduced already. Today's menu included steak and kidney pie for which Bunter has hitherto shown a great fondness, calling for four helpings. Today he had no helpings at all, just a little beef tea. One day he may feel grateful to you for your very helpful suggestions, but I feel that that day is a long way off.

H.S. QUELCH



*Enid Blyton with her daughters Imogen and Gillian
(a picture from the very interesting book reviewed on pages 21 and 22)*



O.B.B.C. MIDLAND SECTION

There was another poor attendance for our March meeting, with seven, compared with six at our February meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Tom Porter, Joe Marston and Pater Masters.

We began with a lengthy discussion on book collections, and which hobbyists might have the largest and most comprehensive collections. Some thought Eric Fayne's collection was second to none, though our own Tom Porter would surely run him close.

Tom is by no means confined to collecting Charles Hamilton, having also a complete file of E.S. Brooks's NELSON LEEs. It was pointed out that as no complete set of MAGNETs has been put up for auction their present financial value was unknown, although surely very high.

After the excellent refreshments provided by Betty and Johnny Hopton, Christine Brettell and Ivan Webster, we had a puzzle from our acting chairman, Geoff Lardner, with a deceptively easy first part but a more difficult second. Your correspondent then gave a 20 questions quiz which depended more on intensive reading than mental acumen. It included that most pertinent question in Latin "Qui Bono?". I always include one question in that language as Charles Hamilton was steeped in it. There was regrettably no time in the end for the reading promised by Ivan Webster.

It was so delightful to see Betty and Johnny Hopton again that we forgot to be downcast at the small attendance.

JACK BELLFIELD

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

Our April meeting was at the Willingham house of our secretary, Keith Hodkinson. After a brief business discussion, we listened intently as Bill Lofts reminded us of some of the characters from juvenile literature who had made it onto the silver screen, and reminisced about the multitude who had not. Later, Keith showed a British comedy film compilation ranging from the silent days to the 1950s, from Jack Hulbert to Kenneth Moore, via Will Hay, of course.

ADRIAN PERKINS

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

At our April meeting, Chairman David Bradley welcomed the eighteen present, with special welcome to four people making their first visit to us. Comment was made about the new Books and Maps magazine which contained an article by Norman Wright on BIGGLES. Paul Galvin reported that the proposed W.E. Johns magazine in English (to run alongside the one produced in Holland) was taking shape. Darrell reported that the WILLIAM MEETING to be held in Norwich on 22nd April would have 35 people attending, with a full programme organised for the day.

Our special guest for the evening, was Mr. Jim Marks, an aficionado of DICK BARTON. He illustrated his talk by playing some brief excerpts from a few radio productions. There were 711 episodes from 1946 until 1951, and Dick Barton had been played by three actors over the years, the most celebrated being Noel Johnson. Other famous actors and actresses had taken parts and many of the scripts had been written by Edward J. Mason and Geoffrey Webb who went on to *The Archers* fame. The B.B.C. had a strict code of practice: no drink to be mentioned, no gambling and certainly, Dick Barton was not allowed to have a girl friend!

After refreshments, Paul Galvin presented his Desert Island Books, the eight books he would throw into his travel bag if he had to abandon ship. Paul brought a varied selection to indicate his taste and interests, but, in the hobby field, he brought "Biggles Goes To School" as this was the first Biggles book he read when at school, and furthermore it was quite a good school story in itself. "Biggles Fails To Return" was his second choice because he thought it a good story. "William The Gangster" was selected because Paul thought it one of the most humorous in the series.

There is an amendment to our May programme because of Michael Bentley's being indisposed. We cannot therefore attend his home cinema for a film evening. (This will be at some future date to be announced.) On May 13th we shall meet at our normal venue in the centre of Leeds, when we shall be delighted to welcome Barry Hill who will tell us about "O.R.C.A." - Old-Time Radio Show Collectors' Association.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

LONDON O.B.B.C.

Our April meeting was at the Harper family home at Loughton, Essex, with a good attendance despite the absence of Roger Jenkins because of hospitalization.

Norman Wright took the chair in Roger's absence. Mark Jarvis read from Arthur Edwards's 'A Case of Wrongful Dismissal', a work dealing with Mr. Quelch's sacking from Greyfriars because of alleged Marxist

leanings. Alan Pratt gave a wide-ranging quiz which was won by Norman Wright. Bill Lofts gave a very good talk on the Holiday Annual, Leslie Rowley gave us his Desert Island Books selection, and we ended with a discussion initiated by Don Webster, on the hardback book we would most like to acquire.


As usual, a warm vote of thanks for generous hospitality was extended to our hosts. NEXT MEETING; Walthamstow Co-op Meeting Room, 342 Hoe Street, Walthamstow, on Sunday, 14th May. Bring your own comestibles.

MARK JARVIS

N.B. In last month's report, Graham Bruton was reported as deputising for Norman Wright: the latter is of course our Treasurer, and not our Chairman as the report erroneously indicated.



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