

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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The Editor's Chat



ANNIVERSARIES

1990 seems to be a year full of anniversaries which are of special interest to collectors of old papers and children's books. The Richmal Crompton centenary was mentioned in our last issue, and books marking this event (including my own) are reviewed in our pages this month by that doyen of children's publications, Brian Doyle. *The Eagle*, a paper which truly changed the face of juvenile publishing in this country, was launched forty years ago, and is assessed this month in an appreciation by Norman Wright, whose interests range over both old and new comics and papers. This year also includes two very important anniversaries for girls' stories (see our next issue, as the editors of our old magazines often so tantalizingly

commented in their own trailing of attractive forthcoming items).

NOT IN THE SAME MOULD

I have been furthering my acquaintance recently with *The Gem*, a wonderful paper, despite its occasional curate's egg nature through long periods of substitute writers being involved. For the first time I have read of Baggy Trimble's coming on the St. Jim's scene (in *Gems* 1558 and 1559 which reprinted the original stories). I have to say that I really don't like Baggy at all, and I feel sure that Charles Hamilton **meant** in him to create a thoroughly unappealing character; even the way in which that

specialist in portraying elegant schoolboys, Macdonald, drew the ungainly Trimble suggested the character's coarseness of manner and disposition.

What intrigues me is that although every Hamilton school had its statutory fat boy (or girl), these are by no means stereotyped. Bunter, despite his self-centredness, cunning, conceit and connivance, has sufficient appeal to make us rejoice when he fails to receive his just desserts from furious masters or form-mates. Also, of course, he has the saving grace of being the pivot of so many humorous incidents in the Greyfriars saga. Tubby Muffin at Rookwood is far from being an unmitigated rogue and, as with Fatty Wynne of St. Jim's, we can often sympathise with his various escapades. Baggy, however, seems unlikely to have many admirers. But perhaps I am wrong in saying this. I should be most interested to hear if any C.D. readers can be numbered amongst his fans.

What Trimble **does** illustrate, when compared with Bunter, Muffin and Wynne, is the versatility and subtlety that can so often be found in Charles Hamilton's writings.

MARY CADOGAN

CHARLES SKILTON
A Tribute by Darrell Swift

The death of Mr. Charles Skilton in January 1990, has been reported in **THE BOOKSELLER**.

It goes without saying that Mr. Skilton had been a tremendous asset to our hobby. It was as a young man in his 20s that he approached Charles Hamilton with the idea of producing Greyfriars stories in novel form. It was this initiative and enthusiasm that gave "Frank Richards" the break that made him famous and brought again the writings of the world's best school story writer to the fore - to the delight of the general public. Through Mr. Skilton's fairness (in insisting that Charles Hamilton take royalties rather than a single lump sum on the sales of his books) this popular author was able to live comfortably again.

I had the fortune of meeting Mr. Skilton on two occasions, one of them being at his kind invitation to members of the South Western Club. We met at his home, Banwell Castle, Weston-Super Mare. He was a quiet person, and a gentleman in every respect. He told us how he became involved with Charles Hamilton, and it was a fascinating story. Mr. Skilton had eventually sold out the publishing rights of the books to Cassell simply because the project became too big for him to handle. In the succeeding years he concentrated his publishing interests to those of producing picture post cards. He left Banwell Castle about three years ago, and went to Scotland.

Charles Skilton's death is a sad loss to our hobby: latterly, he did not pay a prominent part, but his contribution is invaluable for without him and the Bunter books we would not have the interest and enthusiasm that exists today. Thank you Charles Skilton: you contributed more than you ever knew.



AROUND THE WORLD WITH SEXTON BLAKE
Number 4

by J.E.M.

One of Sexton Blake's most memorable encounters with 'tec-turned-crook, George Marsden Plummer, took place in Egypt, as recorded by G.H. Teed in *Prisoner of the Harem* (UJ 1471). Here we see Blake, in suitable disguise, keeping an eye on his long-time adversary in a Cairo dive whose character is so well caught by artist Parker that we can almost smell the place!



I have found that artists usually prefer to talk about the work of fellow artists, and especially their own favourite ones, rather than their own contributions to the old magazines. Certainly C.H. Chapman did, when he rated Leonard Shields far greater than himself. Warwick Reynolds was another favourite of his, having several originals stored away from the First World War period. Also he greatly admired the first Rookwood artist, G. Gatcombe, hoping to take over from him in *The Boys Friend*, until G.W. Wakefield secured the job.

Eric Parker, the King of Sexton Blake artists, in reply to my question on who was the best illustrator the old Amalgamated Press ever had, replied "Why Eric Parker of course!". But, seriously, he liked Warwick Reynolds, Kenneth Brooks (who was a personal friend) J.H. Valda and especially one of the Brock brothers who was, like himself, fond of historical stuff. This artist was still working at the A.P. in the sixties on the Picture Libraries. Eric had no time for comic artists, such as C.H. Chapman whom he always called the Billy Bunter man.

Eric Parker never mentioned Alfred Bestall, the famous Rupert Bear illustrator of *The Daily Express* to me in our many meetings, but when I was discussing with Mr. Bestall the merits of old Amalgamated Press artists, I was surprised to learn how much he admired Parker's work. Both seemingly at one time attended the same art school, though Bestall was six years older. Both started at the Amalgamated Press at the same time, Eric to work on *The Union Jack*, and Bestall on the girls papers under R.T. Eves. It should be mentioned that Alfred was extremely gifted and versatile, drawing for *Punch* and *Blighty* as well as for the Schoolgirl Annuals. Alfred had become very friendly with H.W. Twyman, editor of Sexton Blake in *The Union Jack*. 'Twy', as I know, was an expert in art (he used to talk to me for hours at his cottage in Surrey on the merits of various artists) and Alfred Bestall well remembers 'Twy' showing him a picture Parker drew of a prone figure, face downwards, that is the most difficult thing anyone could draw to look lifelike (readers should also look at a similar illustration in S.B.L. NO. 133. "The Case of Lord Greyburn's Son" by Derek Long).

In Alfred Bestall's opinion, the long running series of Sexton Blake owed an enormous debt to Eric Parker, whose brilliant 'real life' illustrations did a great deal to sell the publications in question. He had an enormous gift of visualising men 'in the round', with never a flat cardboard figure in any of his drawings.

Both Eric Parker and Alfred Bestall drew cartoons for *Gaiety* magazine in the twenties, a fact that may be unknown to their admirers. Eric died in March 1974, aged 76, whilst Alfred Bestall lived to the great age of 93, passing on in January 1986.

Part 2

SEVEN ACTORS WHO HAVE PORTRAYED SEXTON BLAKE IN FILMS

C. Douglas Carlile	(1909; 1912)
Henry Lorraine	(1915)
Douglas Payne	(1919)
Langhorne Burton	(1928)
George Curzon	(1935; 1938)
David Farrar	(1944; 1945)
Geoffrey Toone	(1959)

FIVE ACTORS WHO HAVE PORTRAYED SEXTON BLAKE ON TELEVISION AND RADIO

Laurence Payne	(TV)	(1967-68)
Jeremy Clyde	(TV)	(1978)
George Curzon	(Radio)	(1939)
Arthur Young	(Radio)	(1940)
William Franklyn	(Radio)	(1967)

FOUR ACTORS WHO HAVE PORTRAYED SEXTON BLAKE ON THE STAGE

C. Douglas Carlile	(1907)
Horace Hunter	(1908)
James Duncan	(1915)
Arthur Wontner	(1936)

FOUR ACTORS WHO HAVE PORTRAYED TINKER IN FILMS

Neil Warrington	(1919)
Mickey Brantford	(1928)
Tony Sympson	(1935; 1938)
John Varley	(1944)

FIVE ACTORS WHO HAVE PORTRAYED TINKER ON TELEVISION AND RADIO

Roger Foss	(TV)	(1967-68)
Philip Davis	(TV)	(1978)
Brian Lawrance	(Radio)	(1939)
Clive Baxter	(Radio)	(1940)
David Gregory	(Radio)	(1967)

(To be Continued)



THE SCHOOLBOY CHANNEL SWIMMER

By E. Grant-McPherson

With the Channel Tunnel in the offing, what better event to turn our thoughts to than channel swimming.

Our story starts when Vivian Travers of the St. Frank's remove gets a large hamper. This would normally be an ordinary occurrence. But it happened to be a Thursday, and on this particular Thursday all the leading lights of the remove happened to be broke. So when Nipper and Co. saw the carrier bring a large hamper through the gates, they descended upon him like a pack of wolves, and, upon seeing that it was addressed to Travers, promptly took charge of it, for what could such a fine looking hamper contain except tuck?

Arriving at study H, their numbers having swelled on the way by about a dozen other removites, Nipper asked Travers if they might unpack it for him. "Go ahead" says Travers who was relaxing in his armchair. When the hamper had been unpacked it turned out that there was nothing eatable enclosed, as the contents proved to be a complete Movie Outfit.

Most of the fellows want to have their pictures taken immediately, but Travers suggests that they wait until the next half holiday and, with the assistance of the Moor View girls, make a proper movie film.

After a long discussion it was decided to make a visit to the Gull Sands, a sandbank about 5 miles off the coast where there was an old, wrecked galleon. These sands were only uncovered for a few hours at low tide but otherwise would be ideal for their purposes of making a pirate film.

So on the next half holiday the party of boys and girls set off for the sands in Tom Burton's motor boat. It being a lovely hot day Archie Glenthorne decides to take a spot of the 'old dreamless' in the shade of the galleon. All goes well until too many of the actors on one side of the galleon cause it to heel over, crushing the motor boat and trapping Archie under a beam. Fortunately he is not badly hurt but is unable to get free. To complicate matters they realise that the tide has started to come in, and that their position, and in particular that of poor Archie, is becoming perilous. Then they see a sail in the offing heading towards them. They all wave and shout but to no avail, and the boat turns away.

Tom Burton decides to try and swim towards the boat to see if he can head it off and attract its attention, but unfortunately before he can reach it the boat again changes course and sails further away. So as he is already heading for the shore he thinks that the best thing to do is to keep on going.

The Bo'sun has almost reached the shore when he is seen by Mr. Fielding, a local sportsman who owns a powerful motorboat, and who on hearing of the plight

of the juniors immediately speeds to their rescue. On the way, realising the distance that Tom has swum, and how fresh he is Mr. Fielding suggests that Tom should try swimming the Channel. The Bo'sun thinks that his leg is being pulled, and laughs at the idea.

When Fielding and Tom arrive at the sands, the tide has covered the juniors, but all the girls and boys are still swimming, the weaker ones being supported by those who are better swimmers. Mr. Fielding is able to take them safely back to Caistowe.

A few days later Burton gets a letter from his Uncle who is in financial trouble. When he reads in the paper that a prize of £1000 is being offered for the first British boy or girl under 20 to break the record for swimming the Channel, he remembers the remarks made by Mr. Fielding and goes to see him about it. At first Fielding is not too pleased, but when he realises why Tom wants the money he promises to help him, goes to Dr. Stafford, and arranges for Tom to spend some time at his house, and to start training. All is going well when they see in the paper that a young American lad, who is a bit of a wonder at swimming, is going to make an attempt and is expected to break the record.

Being afraid that this might happen Mr. Fielding plans to make a race of it, so Tom's training is speeded up, the Head gives permission for a few of his friends to accompany the Bo'sun, and Fielding takes them all to France on his boat where the two rivals meet on the shore. The other lad proves to be a young giant, but Nipper tells Burton not to worry as size is not everything. After wishing each other good luck the swimmers start off.

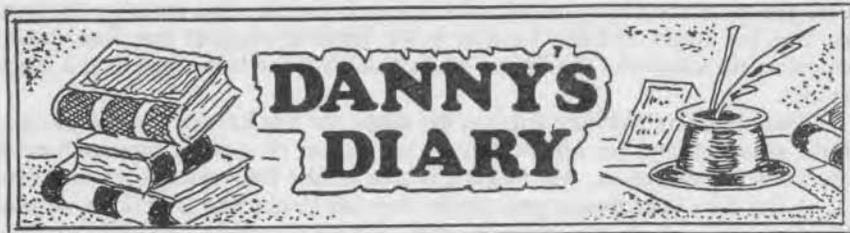
Tom drops into his steady overarm stroke, but the American lad, who is named Earle Stanton, starts off at a much faster rate, and in about 3 hours is out of sight. The juniors shout to Tom to keep going just as he is. This proves to be good advice, as before many more hours have passed the Stanton boat appears on the horizon. The St. Frank's swimmer gradually overhauls this and then the juniors see through the binoculars that the American swimmer is being helped into his boat.

The Bo'sun keeps on with his steady swimming until, when the coast is about a mile off, he begins to show signs of distress, and appears to be swimming mechanically. Mr. Fielding rows the dinghy nearer: "We must get him out" he says "it's not worth letting him injure himself". However, the Bo'sun seems to come round, demanding "How much farther?" "About a mile". "I must finish" cries Tom, and putting his head down he forges ahead. The St. Frank's juniors cheer and several don costumes and dive in to swim beside him.

Before long they touch bottom and as Burton stumbles slightly, they go to help him, but he waves them away, and wades to the beach on his own before he finally collapses.

He had broken the record, and so he won the prize and was able to help his uncle. Of course everyone made a fuss of him, but Tom wanted none of this. He had done what he set out to do and was quite satisfied.

This story was published in June 1928, New Series No. 111, and at the time we all thought how improbable it was that a schoolboy could swim the channel. But just 60 years later, in September 1988, a young lad of 12 named Tom Gregory swam the English Channel in just under 12 hours. How pleased Edwy would have been to know that yet another of his tales had come true again.



APRIL 1940

It's a rummy old war. Apart from the blackouts and the food rationing things seem weirdly quiet. The big air raids they warned us about haven't come - so far, at any rate. But the news from the continent is worrying. The Huns seem to be penetrating into France, and the allied forces appear to be falling back in front of them. Let's hope the Germans don't run all over France and reach the Channel. They might be daft enough to try to get over here and throw their weight about.

My Mum has started taking a weekly magazine called "Illustrated" which has just come on the market. It has plenty of pictures and war items.

As for me, well it's Greyfriars for ever. An astonishing thing is that there are TWO Greyfriars Schoolboys' Own Libraries this month. I'm sure it has never happened before. The first one is "The Man From the Sky" and it brings to an end the long tale about Jim Valentine, who was once a clever forger in the underworld. Help comes to Valentine in the shape of a man who drops from the clouds, and who helps Valentine to escape from the crooks who wanted him back in the gang - and from

No. 403.—THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY.

THE MAN FROM THE SKY!



A grand, book-length story of the Chums of Greyfriars, starring JIM VALENTINE, the boy from the underworld.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

the police who wanted him for his old crimes. So Valentine gets away to the Amazon where his uncle is ready and willing to give Valentine a new start in life. Actually this tale finishes before the end of the S.O.L., and the remaining pages are occupied with a tale about Bunter who goes to an auction and bids for an armchair which he thinks is £1-5s, but is really £15. In the finish they find the proceeds of a robbery hidden in the chair, so all is well.

The second Greyfriars S.O.L. is "The Secret of the Silver Box". It starts off with Bunter trying to get £5 an uncle has promised him if he wins the Latin Prize. So Bunter copies out an extract from Horace, and tries to pass it off as his own

composition. Then the main story gets in full swing. It is about the strange happenings to a moonstone which was stolen from Popper Court, and it's fascinating reading, covering the Easter vac at Wharton Lodge.

The third S.O.L. is "The St. Frank's Caravanners", and it's a delicious tale of Nipper & Co. of St. Frank's on a caravanning holiday.

There was nothing in the awful Knockout Library or Bullseye Library to appeal to me, but I had no less than 3 excellent Sexton Blake Libraries this month. "In the Grip of the Gestapo" found Sexton Blake in "Jairmany" as Lord Haw-Haw calls the place. It was exciting, and was written by Stanton Hope. Another very topical one, this time by Gilbert Chester, is "The Case of the Dictator's Double". In this a man appeals to Blake for help, and as that man leaves Baker Street he is murdered. But the one I like the best is "The Mystery of Sherwood Towers" by Donald Stuart. About a ghost! Very creepy indeed.

My brother Doug said he was taking his girl friend, Freda Glucose, to see the new Deanna Durbin film "First Love". I kindly offered to go with them, but Doug said "Certainly not". So I told him I didn't care much for Deanna Durbin, though she sings all right. So I went to another cinema and saw a much better horror film. It was Bela Lugosi in "Dark Eyes of London", a British film about a man who runs a home for the blind and also employs a monster to drown his victims who have been insured. Nearly as creepy as that Sexton Blake Library I was talking about.

Some good stuff at the picture palaces all the month. A bit slow was George Raft in "I Stole a Million", about a taxi-driver who became a criminal. Mum loved Bette Davis in "Juarez" about a revolution in Mexico. A good British one is Michael Redgrave and Margaret Lockwood in "The Stars Look Down", about a coal-miner who tries to become a Member of Parliament. Ginger Rogers was good in "Fifth Avenue Girl". A rich man persuades an unemployed girl to pose as a gold-digger, to spite his greedy family.

An unusual romantic tale was Irene Dunne and Charles Boyer in "When Tomorrow Comes", about a waitress who falls in love with a famous pianist who has a mad wife. Then brother Doug relented and took me to the new Greta Garbo film "Ninotchka". Melvyn Douglas is also in this one. Doug swooned over it, but it was a bit heavy for me. But I just loved a spooky film "The Cat and the Canary" about a man who leaves a weird will. This one had Bob Hope in his first starring part and Paulette Goddard was also in it. Luvverly.

Arthur Askey and lots of British stars were in a lively little picture "Band Waggon" about a radio station set up in a haunted Scottish castle. This one comes from a long-running series on the wireless. Finally, really lovely in technicolor is the fairy tale "The Wizard of Oz" with Judy Garland and lots of other spiffing players. The tunes are toe-tapping and lovely. Dorothy runs away from her home because she is unhappy - and then finds that happiness, after all, is in her own home. Gorgeous film.

And so I come to the marvellous Magnet. All through the month we have enjoyed a holiday series - the Easter vac set at Eastcliff Lodge on the south-east coast of England. Wibley is disguised as Sir William Bird, who as well as being Loder's uncle, is in the Secret Service. The real Sir William is away on the continent, and Wibley, disguised as Sir William, is giving the enemy the impression that the old gentleman is still in England. It is very much a wartime series, with food rationing and spies and air raids to add to the atmosphere. In the first story "The Mystery

Man of Eastcliff Lodge", that mystery man turns out to be Soames, who I remember featured in a splendid series as a criminal, long ago.

The next tale is "The Unseen Enemy", and the boys find themselves in peril and they are saved by that cool customer Hurree Singh. Then came "Billy Bunter's Hair-Raid". All the boys are pledged to keep very secret the fact that Sir William at Eastcliff Lodge is really the disguised Wibley - and Bunter lets the cat out of the bag. And to make matters more complicated Loder calls in unexpectedly to see his uncle. Far-fetched but breathtaking reading.

Finally "The Man from Germany", in which Wibley finds himself in the merciless hands of the Hun. And Bunter's ventriloquism comes in handy for once. This thrilling series continues next month. Thank goodness for the Magnet to brighten the darkness of the war time.

In the Magnet a new Portrait Gallery has just started. Dicky Nugent is Number One. These new portraits are drawn by Mr. Chapman.

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

In April 1940 we come to the first time, so far as I can bring to mind, that there were two Greyfriars stories published simultaneously in the S.O.L. Clearly there were no more St. Jim's or Rookwood stories which the powers-that-be considered suitable for the medium. Of course, the history of Rookwood was very much shorter than that of either of the two other schools, while the story of St. Jim's had been marred with long, long periods during which the sub writers had taken over completely. It makes one wonder whether, war or no war, there would have been changes in the make-up of the S.O.L.

And now, to those which Danny enjoyed in that far-off April. S.O.L. No. 403 "The Man from the Sky" comprised the last two stories of the over-long 11 story "Dick the Penman" series which had started in the closing weeks of 1932 and ran on well into the Spring of 1933. As Danny comments, the story ended about two-thirds of the way through S.O.L. No. 403, and a story entitled "All Through Bunter", which had appeared in the Magnet a few weeks later in 1933, was tacked on as a fill-in.

Long ago, when I bought the S.O.L. regularly, I used to think sometimes that it was a mistake to tack on another story, as a fill-up, in this way. I felt that it destroyed the balance of the main story, and that it would have been better to print the whole issue in larger type and thus avoid the need for a fill-up. All these years later, we probably would not have wanted anything different from what things were.

No. 404.—THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY.



Why is HARRY WHARTON being shadowed and waylaid by a gang of crooks? It is a mystery to the Gums of Greyfriars—until they discover that the key to the problem is held by none other than BILLY BUNTER!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In S.O.L. No. 404 "The Secret of the Silver Box" we have a similar occurrence but with a difference. In this case the "odd story out" came in the first third of the S.O.L. It was entitled originally "Bunter, the Prize Hunter" and it appeared in the Magnet in the late Spring of 1930. This was followed by the Silver Box pair, which had comprised two Easter Holiday stories which had appeared the two previous weeks in the Magnet of 1930, as mentioned above. In this case, with the odd story coming first, the balance of the main section was not affected. It was just how I happened to look at things in those days. Did you have any views on the subject? Was a series reprinted in the S.O.L. ever slightly marred by having a single tacked on as a fill-up?

HAPPY FORTIETH BIRTHDAY "EAGLE" by Norman Wright

Forty years ago, in the second week of April 1950, a new comic appeared on newsagents' counters. It was called "Eagle" and it was to revolutionise the reading habits of a million young readers. A blaze of publicity accompanied the launch and soon the comic was required reading for half the schoolboy population of the country. "Eagle" offered its readers something different; a mix of fact and fiction with plenty of action, all served up in a colourful well printed wrapper. Once the eager reader had paid his three pence for "Eagle" number one he could sit down and enjoy the feast.

"Dan Dare", the comic's cover strip, was an instant success, but other quality features jostled for recognition inside the comic. "P.C.49", Alan Strank's famous radio 'beat basher', occupied page three and anyone familiar with the radio series could not have failed to notice that the comic strip scripts had the same keen edged dialogue. Fortynine really came into his own when the artwork was taken over by John Worsley. At the same time as Worsley took over the illustrations, the P.C.'s image was brushed up. Joan Carr, his long-time girl-friend, vanished from the pages of "Eagle" and for the rest of his comic strip exploits Archie was assisted by "The Boys' Club", a gang of tenacious youngsters who were always on hand when it came to a 'rough house'. Archibald Berkeley-Willoughby patrolled the pages of "Eagle" for almost seven years before the comic pensioned him off for a spot of well deserved leave in March 1957.

"The Great Adventurer", on the back page, was the opening episode of the life of St. Paul. It was action-packed stuff and shattered the myth that bible stories could not be made appealing to young readers. It was so successful that for many years "Eagle" continued the tradition of serialising, in strip form, the lives of famous figures from history. The inside back cover carried an advertisement for Walls Ice Cream, cleverly disguised as an exciting adventure strip.

There was more colour inside the comic on its centre pages. In the first issue, five features shared the four pages. The first was "Seth and Shorty Cowboys" - 'A tale of heroism and hardship in a lawless land,

DAN DARE

PILOT OF THE FUTURE



'NIGHT ALL

CHEERIO
ROB

GOODNIGHT
CONWAY

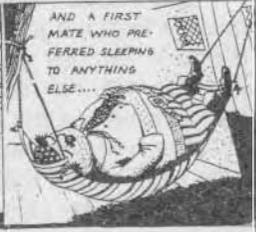


PUGWASH

THE STORY OF A
BAD BUCCANEER
& OF THE MANY
STICKY ENDS
WHICH NEARLY
BEFELL HIM



AND A FIRST
MATE WHO PRE-
FERRED SLEEPING
TO ANYTHING
ELSE....



SETH



AND SHORTY

DO I GET THE CHANCE, CHIEF?

I'M AFRAID NOT,
FORTYNINE. YOU'D NEVER
DO FOR UNDER COVER
WORK- THERE'S COPPER
WRITTEN ALL OVER
YOU



PUTTING YOU
IN PLAIN
CLOTHES
WOULD BE
LIKE SENDING
OUT THE
POLICE BAND
IN FULL
REGALIA

P.C.49

South-west Texas sixty years ago.' The strip was very much a 'traditional comic western', based more on Saturday morning cinema matinees than reality. The tone was firmly set by the speech bubble at the end of the first episode.

"...Dogone! Sure this range is gonna hum!..."

Seth and Shorty quickly rode off into the sunset and were replaced by "Riders of the Range", based on Charles Chilton's popular B.B.C. radio show. The early exploits of Jeff Arnold and Luke were drawn first by Jack Daniels and then by Angus Scott. But it was the strip's third artist, Frank Humphris, who really ensured its success. His work gave "Eagle" readers not only exciting western strips but also a fairly authentic picture of some of the West's most picturesque characters.

The centre spread was occupied by two features but it was the cutaway drawing of "The New Gas Turbine-Electric Locomotive", drawn by L. Ashwell Wood, that dominated the pages. Wood's name became synonymous with the "Eagle" centre page cutaway illustrations, and although other illustrators contributed to the series none was as good as L. Ashwell Wood at his best. Many were removed from the comic and pinned up on bedroom and classroom walls by science minded boys. Ashwell Wood's career as a technical illustrator for boys began long before "Eagle". He had drawn cutaway illustrations for "Modern Wonder" before the Second World War, and during the late 1940s he had contributed some superb full colour work for all three issues of "Odhams Wonder Book in Colour" (1946, 1948 and 1949). His influence continued after "Eagle" in a series of "Inside Information" books that he wrote and illustrated for Benwig Books.

The cutaway drawing shared the centre spread with "Skippy The Kangaroo", a foreign reprint, that was later replaced by Hergé's "Adventurers of Tintin". A home grown strip, "Luck of the Legion", written by Geoffrey Bond and drawn throughout its run in "Eagle" by Martin Aitchinson, took over in May 1952. Sergeant 'Tough' Luck and his side-kick, Legionaire Bimberg, battled it out against all manner of horrors for nine years in their adventures set in French West Africa.

For several years the fourth centre page consisted of a couple of half page factual features. There was a whole succession of them with such titles as "Heroes of the Clouds", "Great Headlines of the Past", "Ships Through the Ages" etc. The first long running strip to occupy the page was "Jack O Lantern", a 19th century swashbuckling adventure. Jack began his adventures in the comic in January 1955 and he continued to appear every week until July 1960, when he was replaced by "Fraser Of Africa", a strip superbly drawn by Frank Bellamy.

Once the coloured pages had been read there was still a lot of good 'black and white' reading left. At the bottom of page five "Captain Pugwash", John Ryan's cowardly pirate, lurked in the first of a short series of exploits. He was replaced by another wonderful Ryan creation, "Harris Tweed", the pompous and bungling 'Extra Special Agent', whose chuckle-

inducing escapades continued in the comic for many years. The complement of fiction strips was completed by "Rob Conway".

For those boys who wanted something a bit more meaty to read there was "The Spy Who Saved London", first of a series of real life spy stories. "Plot Against the World" and "Lash Lonergan's Quest" were a couple of serials that completed the comic's helping of fiction. For good measure there were several more factual strips, a competition and an editorial page. All in all, "Eagle" number one was a very good threepence worth.

CLIFF HOUSE DIARY

Edited by Barbara Redfern
(and Margery Woods)

April

My goodness! This has been a term of trauma --- and it isn't quite over, as kind chums keep reminding me with a distinct air of schadenfreude. But there has been a strange atmosphere in the school ever since the year began. Even the mistresses have been edgy, and it certainly hasn't improved Miss Bullivant's temper. She's really had it in for poor Clara, ever since that day when Julia Frankland knocked the Bull's cycle over and then vanished as Clara went instinctively to help gather up the things that fell out of the little basket on the carrier. Admittedly the Bull's hat was in a bit of a state when Clara rescued it from a puddle and was trying to brush it clean when the Bull came out. She just refused to listen and blamed it all on Clara, accusing her of skylarking. Usually Miss Bullivant is fair, even though she's so prone to red rags, but not this time. And to make matters worse, Julia apparently thought it all a huge joke.

Soon after that it was Diana's turn. She lost her lipstick, a lovely gilt and jewelled one, somewhere and of course we're not supposed to wear make-up, except on special occasions now that Miss Primrose has yielded before the tidal wave of the twentieth century and allows the older girls to use a natural foundation and the merest whisper of lip tint at weekends but never in class or dining hall. Unfortunately the Firebrand's lipstick is out of a fitted make-up case her father gave her for Christmas and contains the whole range for glam, from diamond frosted nail lacquer through blushers to a positive artist's palette of eye-shadows, and the lipstick is a glowing coral that is not in the least bit discreet. Again, unfortunately, it had to be Julia who found it and simply marched into class and handed to the Charmer with a careless, "I found this in Great Hall, Miss Charmant. Should I put a notice on the board in Hall?". She sort of smiled and shrugged as though to say she couldn't possibly go round asking everybody.

The Charmer was disgusted, we could tell, even though she couldn't very well say so. She hates sneaking as much as we do, but a mistress she is bound to uphold discipline. She did the best she could and told Julia very coldly that she would deal with the matter and there it rested. But Diana is absolutely seething and vowing vengeance. I'm afraid Julia has made a bad mistake; Diana is one of the most dangerous girls in the Fourth to make an enemy of.

The Clock Tower is out of bounds. Workmen have moved in to repair the damage caused by the storm and the building is swathed in scaffolding and materials. This, however, has not deterred the more adventurous spirits of C.H. from

endeavouring to explore. Janet is positive that the big crack in the fabric of the south wall, just below the great gaping hole in the roof, has bits of an ancient stairway within. Time will tell. Meanwhile, it is strictly off limits.

* * * * *

I had intended to include a new feature from Elsie Effingham (she used to write articles for our now defunct Cliff House weekly, but we all got too busy with living --- quite apart from the odd moments given over to learning! --- to get our popular magazine to press on time each week) but something so dreadful has happened I must hold Elsie's piece over until after Easter. The school is still reeling from the events of the last two days. The robbery at Cliff Top Manor has the area inundated with police and insurance investigators, some of them have been making enquiries at C.H. But the unbelievable is that Diana and Clara --- Clara, our sports captain and dearest chum --- are in the detention room, awaiting expulsion after breaking bounds two nights ago --- the night of the robbery --- and no-one is allowed even to see or speak to them. We all just wander around hopelessly, wishing we could do something, but what? And all the questions that no-one can answer. Why Diana and Clara? Both hotheads and strong-willed, but not two girls one would speak of in the same breath. Did they break out together? If so, why didn't Clara tell us that something was up? If we had only the vaguest hint of what took Clara out of the school dorm in the middle of the night we could try to follow her line of reasoning. With Diana it could be anything. There was a dance on at Courtfield that night but no one had heard Diana mention wanting to dust off her dancing shoes. Most of the girls look quite shocked, others look frightened or disbelieving. Lydia and her cronies are not bothered, of course, and Julia Frankland actually looks quite pleased. The other new girl this term, Hilary, really looks worried, which is strange, as she's been pleasant to all but not made any close chums. Jemima remarked this morning how strange it was that we'd not noticed how old Hilary looks. More like a Sixth former than a fifteen-year old about to move up into the Fifth. And we don't know if Clara is going to be with us for the Easter hols. We break up the day after tomorrow. It's going to be a dreadful Easter... Love as ever from your very worried chum, Babs.



HAMILTONIA ALL TYPES: WANTED especially Holiday Annuals all years, Howard Baker Press and Club volumes, Dustwrapped Biggles, Bunters, Williams, Enid Blyton, Malcolm Saville, Jennings. Generous prices paid. Contact: COLIN CREWE, 12b Westwood Road, Canvey Island, Essex. Tel. 0268 693735, Evenings 7.15 - 9.30 p.m.

WANTED by Collector: Pre-1970 Williams, Bunters, Blytons, Biggles, Brent-Dyers, in dustwrappers. Also Rupert and other Annuals, Comic giveaways, Original artwork, associated Ephemera. High prices paid, or exchanged. JOHN BECK, 29 Mill Road, Lewes, Sussex.

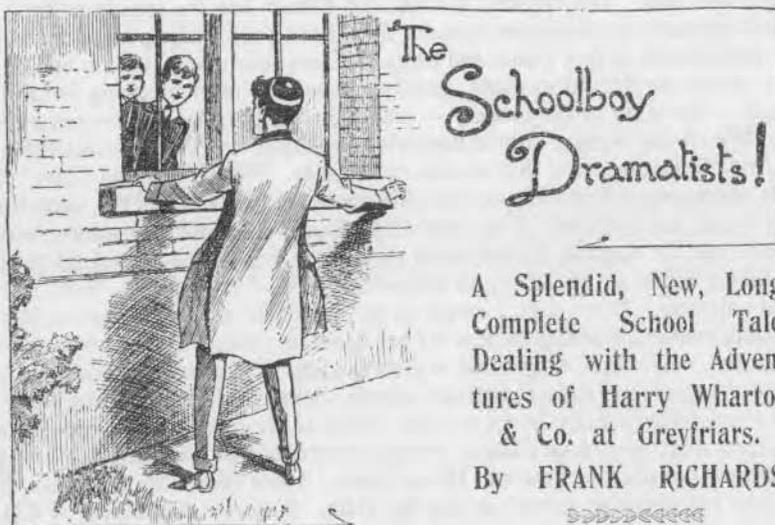
ANOTHER TREASURE FOR YOUR COLLECTIONS

"BUNTER'S BIG BROTHER"
Reviewed by Eric Fayne

Frank Richards. (Howard Baker
Book Club special £18.00)

Here we have a volume of absorbing interest, comprising 2 Red Magnets from the halcyon summer of 1913 followed by 6 White Covered Magnets consecutive from the start of 1917 in the middle of the war years.

The first tale is "The Schoolboy Dramatists", one of those lovely single stories, full of fun and action which were enjoyed so much in those days. We start with a shipwreck, in which our heroes rescue three sailors who have lost everything in the storm. Coker has the idea of putting on an amateur performance in aid of the sailors, but Harry Wharton & Co. do the trick with a performance of "King John" - in spite of Coker. Heart-warming reading throughout.



A Splendid, New, Long,
Complete School Tale,
Dealing with the Advent-
ures of Harry Wharton
& Co. at Greyfriars.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

~~~~~

Next comes "Quits", a famous tale in its day. And again, a gorgeous read. Sheer melodrama, this one, and none the worse for that. Bob Cherry is the star. Major Cherry has fallen on hard times, and is in the hands of the wicked moneylenders, chief among whom is Vernon-Smith's pater. Bob will have to leave Greyfriars, but Mark Linley suggests he should try for a scholarship. This is hilarious, for our Bob is really no scholar. But in a beautifully told finale Bob helps Vernon-Smith who is in grave peril on the cliffs. And Smithy asks his father to forget the debt of Major Cherry. "My father will do anything I ask him", says the Bouncer. So he and Bob Cherry are "Quits".

Very much a tale of its period, but splendid reading. One of the best of 1913.

And now the volume takes a big leap forward to 1917, in the thick of the Great War. The Red Cover has gone, of course, and the number of pages slightly reduced, but one has the feeling that, so far - nearly 3 years into the war - war has had but little effect on the papers we loved so much. Remarkable, when one considers how,



bite at last. The Magnet was to retain the 3 columns per page right up to its finish in another war, many years on. Personally, I like the 3-column lay-out. The Gem, after the war, reverted to the 2-column page. Idly, one wonders why! The story of the fellow who funked is a good one, though it has the familiar theme of the chap who left his comrades who were engaged in a fight against odds with old enemies - and was accused of funking the fight. Actually, he had gone to assist someone in greater need, out of sight of the others. (Shades of "Misunderstood" in the Blue Gem.)

Frank Nugent is the star, and is slightly miscast as one with stiff-necked pride who refused to explain why he had acted as he did. Pride was more the failing of Wharton than of Nugent. Grand reading, all the same. Curiously enough, this tale, so far as I can recall, was the last time that Nugent played a leading part in any story. Yet that was way back in early 1917.

So, to sum up. A superb volume, with a binding so splendidly worthy of the world's finest school story paper. And packed with hundreds of points to catch our interest. Lovely!

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## " DENISE 'S DIARY "

APRIL 1940

by Dennis L. Bird

With the "phoney war" now seven months old, on April 4 the Prime Minister, Mr. Chamberlain, made a speech, a sentence of which has become famous. Speculating on why Hitler had not used his overwhelming strength to attack the Allies, he said "Whatever might be the reason, ..... one thing is certain: he missed the bus". Seldom has a political gibe been so swiftly and so devastatingly answered: five days later the Nazis invaded Denmark and Norway, and the real war began.

Its effect on wood imports from Scandinavia was to prove fatal to the SGOL books, but that was still a little way in the future when the four April volumes appeared on the same day as the Premier's unfortunate speech. Three of them I no longer have, and only the haziest recollections abide in memory. The Cliff House story, No. 725, was "Too Much of a Madcap!" but I have no idea who she was. Doris Leslie's "Princess to Save Leiconia" (No. 726) chronicled "the fascinating adventures of a plucky English girl in the Balkans who was asked to impersonate the future Queen" - a Ruritania-type story of a kind more usually written for the schoolgirl papers by Margery Marriott ("Princess on Probation", "Guardian to the Royal Fugitives"). Perhaps Miss Leslie and Miss Marriott were the same author?

No. 727 was "Susie - Champion of the Rebels" by Elise Probyn. I think Susie was a factory worker who led a justified strike - strong stuff for the SGOL in those days of high unemployment, but it was written with a light-hearted touch.

The one April book I have retained was a classic, and a great favourite of mine. This was Isabel Norton's "The School on Haunted Island" (No. 724), and is the only full-length Valerie Drew story I have ever owned. As I wrote in the 1988 "Collectors' Digest" Annual, I first encountered the intrepid girl detective when I was eight, and I became a devoted admirer; she seemed, in my imagination, almost like an elder sister.

Created in 1933 by John William Bobin ("Adelie Ascott"), her character was developed and matured by other writers, notably by "Isabel Norton" (probably

Reginald Kirkham, as our Editor Mary Cadogan records in the 1989 "C.D." Annual). Valerie's strong personality comes across on every page of SGOL 724. She is quick-witted, resourceful, resolute, versatile - but also kind-hearted and sensitive. She is a good-looking girl too, with her red-gold hair and violet eyes. "Red-gold" was an inspired description - so much more distinctive than "ginger" or even "auburn".

"The School on Haunted Island" was originally a "School-girls' Weekly" serial in the summer of 1938. By that time her detective career had prospered greatly; she could afford a "delightful Park Lane flat" in London, and she owned her own aeroplane - clearly recognisable in C. Percival's excellent illustration as a three-seat de Havilland D.H. 80A Puss Moth.

The school of the title is Edenview, a superior boarding establishment on a remote rocky island whose location we are never told (Cornwall? The Hebrides?). The headmistress is deeply worried by inexplicable happenings: polluted water, phantom figures, a sea-monster. Valerie is engaged to investigate. She flies to the island with her

clever Alsatian Flash and her friend and former adversary, the reformed French jewel thief Marcelle Dauphine, whom we met in SGOL 679, "Valerie's World-Wide Quest".

The two girls are instantly taken on the teaching staff as games and French mistress respectively (I wonder what their academic qualifications were?) More and more mysterious are the happenings: explosions, disappearances, the collapse of the school clock-tower, sailing dinghies which move in a flat calm and suddenly blow up. The villains are at once apparent: wealthy engineer Horace Raydemann (his German name making him an obvious suspect), a sulky girl pupil called Linda Conway who turns out to be his niece, and Stimpson the school porter. But what are they up to? Valerie eventually unravels a topical plot to create a secret underground refuelling depot for German U-boats in time of war.

It has to be said that the story line is unconvincing. Surely the police and the armed forces would have been investigating - not just a private detective and her friend with a dubious past? And there is a memorable example of the Houdini or "With-one-bound-our-hero-was-free" style of writing. Valerie and Marcelle are trapped underground when a heavy door closes behind them (the incident shown on the cover). That must have been the end of a weekly instalment; we never know what followed, for the next chapter merely refers to them "finally escaping from their prison". How easy it sounds! But, as with so many SGOL books, it is not the



events that really matter so much as the characters, and my dear Valerie will always have a special place in my memories of a wartime childhood.

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## "THE GREYFRIARS TREASURE SEEKERS (Part Four)

Chroniced by Leslie Rowley

With a sharp intake of breath, Vernon-Smith halted in his tracks at the sound of the voices ahead. The hour of midnight had come and gone and he was on his way back to School from an excursion to the "Cross Keys". The hour was late, and the millionaire's son had played billiards and cards until both his patience and money were exhausted. His head and his lungs were both heavy from cigarettes smoked by himself and those who had taken his cash. The original thrill of his escapade had long since gone, and his one thought now was to reach the safety and comfort of his bed in the Remove dormitory. Now, as he halted in the shadow of a hedge, he heard the voices which he recognised as belonging to Loder, Carne and Walker!

The Bounder smiled a bitter smile. It was just his luck to be returning home from a visit to the "Cross Keys" at the same time as the bad hats of the Sixth were returning home from a visit to the "Three Fishers"! Silently, he hoped that they had suffered the same ill-fortuner as he had himself, but he realised that he had better approach the School from a different direction. He had just passed the stile that led to the priory ruins and Friardale Wood. It was quite a step out of his way, but it was safer than risking detection, even by such a trio of scoundrels.

The voices of the three prefects died away as Smithy negotiated the stile, and ran on quietly. Soon he was skirting the trees and looking for the broken outline of the ruined priory. When he spotted it, he thought that he caught a glimmer of light. There it was again: a second, brief, flicker, as though it came from a shielded lantern. His pulse quickened but his pace did not. Local people might keep their distance from such a place, but the cool, hard-headed Bounder had no time in his consideration for old wives' tales of ghosts! That guarded light ahead, more likely came from a poacher anxious to snare a rabbit for tomorrow's lunch. Smithy ran on, his feet making little or no sound on the carpet of grass beneath them. He was abreast the ruins when the light flashed again, and he realised that it came from the so-called "lower chamber" that he and the others had recently visited. He came to a stop, then stealthily approached. Hidden by a broken archway, he stared down into the room below, and was rewarded with the sight of James Soames on his knees, examining the flagstones with the aid of a shuttered lantern that the Bounder had seen from afar. Silently, Smith watched as the former valet examined the paving stones through a magnifying glass. Did this mean that the man was on the same trail for treasure as he and the others? If so, there was little enough he could do to dissuade Soames in the circumstances, but that little he immediately proceeded to do. Bending down and feeling for a loose piece of fallen masonry, his fingers encountered a chunk the size of a cricket ball. Taking careful aim, Smithy threw the lump in the direction of the lantern. There came a sudden sound of breaking glass followed by the descent of complete darkness and the uttering of an exclamation by James Soames that was far from suitable for the young ears that heard it. By the time the startled Soames had gathered his scattered wits, the Bounder was well on his way to Greyfriars School. There was no sign of Loder, Carne and Walker, as the

Removite made his way through the shadows, and was climbing on to the leads outside the Remove box room. Within fifteen minutes the Bounder was in bed, and snuggling down into the sheets.

"Soames must have got wind of the story of Anselm and his giddy treasure."

Smithy had cornered Wharton after the rest of the form had left the dormitory, to let the form captain know what he had witnessed at the Priory in the early hours. Harry Wharton was familiar with the nocturnal adventures of the Bounder, and barely hid his contempt as he listened. Only the other day Mr. Quelch had ruled that visits to the ruins should be made in broad daylight, and here was the Bounder glibly admitting that he had been there long after midnight! But any words of admonishment would be wasted on the headstrong Smithy.

"Whether he is after the treasure, or not, Soames is up to no good", he replied, "After you disturbed him this morning, he will probably wait until dark before he re-visits the spot...."

"And when he does, he will find little old us there - ready to teach him a lesson to stay away." Always ready for a row, the Bounder looked hopefully at Wharton. "Soames has got to be warned to keep off the grass, Wharton, and the only time to do it is when he thinks that we good little boys are asleep in our beds!"

"Not all of us are so ready to flout the rules of the School and so risk the sack, Smith", Wharton pointed out. "Even in the normal course of events we would be risking a flogging if we were caught. But, since this would be open defiance of a ruling from Quelch, it would be the order of the boot!"

"So Soames is to be allowed to get away with it", sneered the Bounder, "simply because you and the others funk breaking bounds at night! Well, if you won't come with me, I'll go on my own, but all I ask is that you put it to the others first. You can leave our Mauleverer, he wouldn't be much help in a scrap anyway, but the rest of us could handle Soames. Ask Nugent, Cherry and the rest, and I'll tackle Reddy".

"I'll do what you ask and, in spite of what you say, I'll tell Mauly as well. Don't expect any great enthusiasm in this chance to join you in catching an early train home after the Head has given us the sack!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Henry Samuel Quelch looked surprised! Life is full of little surprises, and Quelch had had his full share of them but seldom had been as surprised as he was now. Mauleverer of his form had not previously demonstrated a thirst for knowledge, far from it! With the possible exception of William George Bunter, Mauleverer was the laziest member of the form! Now he was seeking guidance from the master of the Remove and, surprised as he was, Quelch was willing to help, and gratified by the boy's newly acquired interest in history. Perhaps the day that Mauleverer had spent going through the Clarke family archives had awakened some dormant affection for the subject!

Mauly listened with more attention than he had ever displayed in class, and the expression of surprise on Mr. Quelch's speaking countenance gave place to one of benign approval. Even in the Remove, it was accepted that Quelch was a whale on most subjects in the School curriculum, and on the subject of history, Quelch out-whaled all other whales, so to speak. His "History of Greyfriars School", long in preparation though it had been, would set the academic world by the ears some day, some happy, distant day!

Mauleverer had no difficulty in guiding the Remove master to answer questions on the good Anselm, although Quelch then realised the reason for this sudden interest in the past. If the Remove master entertained any belief in there being any hidden treasure, he had been slow to show it. Now that he knew the reason for the boy's sudden interest in such an entrancing subject as history, some of the amiability faded from Mr. Quelch's face. Still, history was history, and the boy had come to him for help. That help, Quelch felt he was bound to give.

"Yes, Mauleverer, it was unusual for a person to commission a stained glass window with himself as the main subject, but such rarities do exist. There is ample record showing Anselm as a pious and unassuming man, so it is difficult to divine his reason. Whatever it was that prompted Anselm, it was not conceit. That Anselm was concerned about the safety of the window is evidenced by his instruction to others to dismantle it before it could suffer destruction in the same way as the Priory itself."

"Is it possible, sir, that Anselm was leaving behind a message of some kind."

"Stained glass windows were certainly a recognised means of communication, Mauleverer. Many bear messages that are as true today as they were centuries ago. They brought to congregations the stories of great men and women who suffered martyrdom for their beliefs, as did Anselm himself. We must remember that, in the past, many people were illiterate, and pictures had to take the place of words which so many could not read. It is possible that windows could convey some covert message, but normally they were used as medium of information. The so-called magic lantern of our own lifetime was just a continuation of the principle of showing a light through coloured glass to tell a story on the white sheet beyond."

"I believe that Anselm commissioned that window as some means of conveying the whereabouts of the Priory plate, sir", Mauleverer spoke deliberately and with conviction. "Can you tell me, sir, whether the records show that Anselm was deformed or disfigured in any way?"

"There is no mention of any such deformity in what records have survived, Mauleverer. Why do you ask?"

"When we are in Chapel, sir, I sit very near that window of St. Anselm. In fact I have had the habit of concentrating my attention on it so as to keep myself from nodding off if the sermon is a bit long. There are several things about the window that do not seem to be right. For instance, Anselm appears to have five fingers and no thumb on one hand and three fingers and two thumbs on the other. Then there are his feet! One is wearing a sandal, the other is not. If Anselm wasn't deformed in any way, sir, why did he commission a likeness that showed him in the way I have described?"

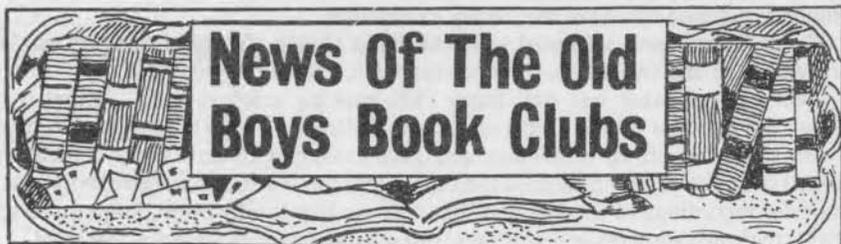
Mr. Quelch looked long and hard at that member of his form. The earnestness in Mauleverer's voice disarmed him.

"My boy, I am sure there must have been some simple explanation for the discrepancies you describe. Stained glass, when it has been removed - often at times of great peril as poor Anselm must have known - may lose a piece or pieces in the process. Such fragments may be replaced by pieces of inferior glass or design. You must not allow yourself to be persuaded that there is anything so romantic as a clue to hidden treasure in such a circumstance." The Remove master hesitated. He had been about to dismiss Mauleverer yet, on second thoughts, it could do no harm to humour the boy's theory. When he spoke, it was quite graciously.

"Very well, Mauleverer. You may come with me to the Chapel and show me the peculiarities you think that you have found in the Anselm window. Perhaps we can set your mind at rest, or perhaps you can convert me to your theory." Mr. Quelch smiled a tolerant smile, as he and the schoolboy earl left the study.

(To be continued)

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### CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our March meeting we met at the home of member Roy Whiskin. Roy discussed cowboy characters in the popular fiction of the 30s/40s/50s and mentioned their book, comicbook, comic and juvenile magazine appearances, sometimes in relation to their initial appearance in other media, such as films. Some emotive names: Hopalong Cassidy, Tom Mix, Tex Ritter, Gene Antry, The Lone Ranger, Kit Carson, Billy the Kid, Jeff Arnold, Buffalo Bill .....

Later, Bill Lofts gave us a short account of Leslie Charteris and his modern Robin Hood, The Saint. Absolutely fascinating. Finally, visitor John Worton gave some details of the various activities connected with the 40th Birthday of *The Eagle* in April 1990, and the large exhibition on this theme (and, of course, Dan Dare) which is being mounted in Southport for four months.

ADRIAN PERKINS

### LONDON O.B.B.C.

23 members attended the March meeting, in Spring weather, at the Ealing Liberal Centre.

Mary Cadogan gave an informative talk on the Richmal Crompton Centenary celebrations. These are now well underway. Alan Pratt took us back to the Old West, with a talk on the classic cowboy stars such as Tom Mix. This continued with the various authors, some still writing 'Westerns' to this day. A further talk came from Bill Bradford, on Admiral G.R. Evans, who wrote for *Chums*, and included the accounts of Scott of the Antarctic.

The April meeting is at a new venue - RICHMOND ADULT & COMMUNITY COLLEGE, Room 20, Parkshot, Richmond, on 8th April from 3 p.m. Please note there will be no Hamilton library.

GRAHAM BRUTON

## NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Chairman Joan Colman welcomed the 18 present at our meeting on Saturday, 10th March. We were particularly pleased to welcome Brian Simmonds, the Hon. Sec. of The Friars' Club.

Arrangements were made for our informal Club Dinner to be held on Saturday evening, 24th March, at The Stansfield Arms at Apperley Bridge. It appeared things were working well for our Ruby Luncheon to be held on 12th May, and Catherine Humphrey outlined details of the library exhibitions.

Keith Normington informed us of Midland Club's afternoon meeting on 28th April which he and two others from Northern Club would be attending.

Our guest speaker was Mr. Barry Hill, making a return visit. Barry is the founder and operator of The Old Radio Show Collectors' Association. He fascinated us with some old off-air recordings and gave examples of how radio comedy had changed over the years. It seemed incredible that the B.B.C. had destroyed so many wonderful recordings of the past and that now we had to rely on individuals coming up with their privately made recordings, often using unsophisticated equipment.

Keith Smith supplemented the presentation with a selection of radio related books and magazines from his private collection, completing a very entertaining and stimulating evening.

Our next meeting will be on the third Saturday in April, the 21st.

A very limited number of tickets will be available for the Ruby Luncheon on 12th May. For details please send S.A.E. to Mr. D. Swift, 37 Tinshill Lane, LEEDS, LS16 6BU.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

## MIDLAND O.B.B.C.

We understand that there will be a meeting of this Club towards the end of April. All friends are invited, but first please check with the Hon. Secretary, Mr. Jack Bellfield, 65 Bridge Court, Cradley Heath, Warley, West Midlands, B64 6LW, who will supply details.

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**WANTED:** £20 each offered for "*Boys Friend Libraries*" featuring BIGGLES. £15 each offered for Biggles jigsaw puzzles. £3 each offered for "Happy Mags". £15 offered for B.F.L. no. 204, "Crooked Gold. Original artwork of Bunter, etc., always wanted. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, WD1 4JL. Telephone: (0923) 32383.

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**WANTED:** Weekly issues of GIRL and SCHOOLFRIEND from 1950's/60's. SUSAN CHAMBERS, Holly House, Bleasby Road, Fiskerton, Newark, NG25 0XL.

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THE WILLIAM COMPANION, by Mary Cadogan (with David Schutte, and Contributions from Kenneth C. Waller). Macmillan London Ltd. £14.95.

Mary Cadogan's new publication THE WILLIAM COMPANION has already joined those favourite bedside books that heap comfortably by my pillows: THREE MEN IN A BOAT, THE DIARY OF A NOBODY, THE ANNOTATED SHERLOCK HOMES, Denis Gifford's GOLDEN AGE OF RADIO, David Frith's THE PAGEANT OF CRICKET, E.S. Turner's BOYS WILL BE BOYS, a Howard Baker MAGNET Reprint series, THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS, a Volume of THE CAPTAIN, an E. Nesbit story, a P.G. Wodehouse or two, and one or two others.



As a lifelong William fan (I read my first in the series, WILLIAM - THE GOOD, when I was about 9), I can honestly say that I enjoyed every page and every illustration (and there are over 150 of those, mostly featuring the inimitable drawings of the one-and-only Thomas Henry, some of which have never appeared in book-form before).

1990 is William creator Richmal Crompton's Centenary year and it is appropriate that this marvellous book should appear to commemorate and celebrate the occasion. The very first William story, 'Rice-Mould', appeared in HOME MAGAZINE in 1919; the final William book was published posthumously in 1970. In between there were 38 William books comprising several hundred short stories (and one full-length novel), plus stage, film, TV and radio versions. Richmal also wrote some 40 adult novels and short story collections, mostly 'light' family stories and excellent in their way. But it is for the eternal 11-year-old schoolboy, William Brown, that she will forever be remembered.

THE WILLIAM COMPANION provides an A to Z of who's who, what's what and where's where of the William saga (including complete lists of every story, in what magazine it first appeared, and in which William book it later appeared) and Mary Cadogan brilliantly and hilariously describes plots and characters, situations and places and people, with an elegant wit and warm-hearted flair that remind the reader of the writing of Richmal Crompton herself. Once you start reading you'll find it impossible to put the book down. This is one of the publishing treats of the year.

Congratulations are due to Mary Cadogan (author of the standard biographies of Richmal Crompton and also of that other wonderful writer for the young-of-all-ages, Frank Richards, as well as several definitive studies of girls' fiction) and thanks for the enormous amount of research she has obviously done to produce this comprehensive literary guide to William and his world (with 'assists', as P.G.

Wodehouse used to say) from David Schutte and Kenneth C. Waller (who has a detailed William map coming out later in the year).

The only small reservations I have follow (and they're really 'nit-picking' and suggestions for things perhaps to include in a future revised edition). But don't take them too seriously, folks - I really love this book!

I feel that a section headed 'Reprints' or 'New Editions' might have been included, spotlighting the paperback editions by Armada and Merlin, especially the newly-titled WILLIAM THE GLOBETROTTER, WILLIAM THE ANCIENT BRITON, WILLIAM THE CANNIBAL and WILLIAM AND THE MONSTER (and why they were thus re-titled). Also detailing the Collins hard-cover reprints in 1972 (there were six, with WILLIAM AND THE BRAINS TRUST becoming WILLIAM THE HERO), with new Introductions by Richmal Ashbee, Richmal Crompton's niece.

It would have been useful under 'Newnes' or 'Publishers' for telling us about William's original and long-standing publishers, George Newnes (for over 40 years, I think) and who took them over (Hamlyn's?) and how Macmillan's became the latest William publishers.

There is no section about the many William overseas editions in translation, including publication in many countries, such as Iceland, Israel, Czechoslovakia, India, Sweden, Norway, France, Italy, Spain and Germany (where the William books have apparently been used as school-books, complete with explanatory footnotes! One can just imagine them. 'Vot is ze licorice water und ze jumble zale?')

I could find no mention of the William books being banned from certain public libraries in the North of England for a period. And I feel that Ginger, Douglas and Henry (playing such important 'co-starring' parts in the saga) should perhaps have had their own separate entries, instead of being lumped together under 'The Outlaws' section.

And, in his item on 'Schools' Kenneth C. Waller throws no light whatever on a matter which has slightly irritated me for many years: William's school cap (and those of his friends). Thomas Henry's illustrations showed William's cap as sometimes having three dark rings, and sometimes two. Also, if all four Outlaws were at the same school, why did William wear a ringed cap, Ginger a plain light-coloured one, and Douglas and Henry dark plain caps?



And, to all those of us who were brought up on the William books during and just after World War Two and collected a long row of those slim wartime editions with a grinning and saluting William figure on the dust-jacket spine, it is that picture that probably sums up our own personal pictorial image of William. But, sadly, that famous William illustration - practically a trade-mark - is nowhere reproduced in the book.

But congratulations to Kenneth C. Waller for so painstakingly tracking down the probable locations of William's village and such places as Hadley and Marleigh. Hadley is Bicester, off the Banbury Road in Oxfordshire, with William living at nearby Somerton (though Waller never mentions that there was a Professor Sommerton, a geologist, featured in one of the William stories - another clue here, surely?)

In the 'William in Performance' section of the book, I feel I should point out some inaccuracies, if only for the sake of possible future editions. Concerning the

films: Roddy McDowall is spelt thus (and not McDowell). David Spenser is spelt thus (and not Spencer). Garry Marsh played Mr. Brown in the two 1940s films (not Garry Walsh).

Mary Cadogan refers readers to Bill Lofts' and Derek Adley's WILLIAM - A BIBLIOGRAPHY for further details on the media versions of William. But, with great respect to those two great researchers, there are several mis-spellings and inaccuracies in those sections of their otherwise excellent book. They do not mention, for instance, that one of the most popular characters in the BBC Radio series of the late 1940s was specially created for it and doesn't appear in the books at all; he was the pushy, rude and loud-mouthed Cockney, Egbert Huggins, whose catchphrase "Ullo, you lot!" (voiced by the young actor who played him, Michael Dear) swept through the school playgrounds of Britain at the time (I should know, as I was a schoolboy myself at the time, and together with my friends, used it constantly as a raucous greeting).

I particularly enjoyed Kenneth C. Waller's piece on 'Discrepancies' in the stories. Fascinating and amusing. But did he have to use such a word as pseudepigraphic? I have never ever come across it before in a lifetime's reading and had to look it up in the dictionary, which tells me that it means 'spurious writings'. A spurious word, Mr. Waller, surely? And the use of it must make you a sesquipedalianist (look it up Ken!).

But it is first and foremost Mary Cadogan's polished knack of summarising so many of the William stories' plots and characters that finally and triumphantly makes THE WILLIAM COMPANION so lively, entertaining and amusing.

In fact, the Crompton magic has rubbed off on her so remarkably and so successfully that perhaps she should treat us all to some new and original William stories herself one day (God and the Richmal Crompton Lamburn Estate willing, of course!)

"Crumbs!" as William might say, "that's a jolly good idea - stands to reason, people wud have ter read 'em, wudn't they?" Adding darkly: "Or I'd jolly well make 'em..."

Pass the liquorice water, Ginger....

#### (Editor's Note:)

Naturally I much appreciate the flattering thing which Brian says about my books. To answer some of his points, my publishers limited the size of The William Companion and to have written about the reprints, publishers, translations or library bans would have meant being less able to give details of stories, characters, situations, events and backgrounds.

I rather enjoyed Ken Waller's use of the word "pseudepigraphic" which worked well, in context, I thought, and trips tantalizingly off the tongue!).

**WHAT'S WRONG WITH CIVILIZATION** by William Brown (and Richmal Crompton). With a foreword by Mary Cadogan. Macmillan £7.95.

This is a collection of a dozen humorous pieces by 'William' (really, of course, by his creator, Richmal Crompton) which originally appeared (with one exception) in magazines (mostly HAPPY MAG.) in the late-twenties and early-thirties and which have never before appeared in book-form.

"Typical titles include "I'll Tell You What's Wrong with Christmas", "School is a Waste of Time" and "The Job I'd Like Best" (a pirate, as it turns out!) and they're all written in William's own inimitable style.

Here's a sample of his thoughts on day-to-day living, from the title-article: "...caves are a jolly sight better than houses any day. You don't have to wipe your feet before you go into caves an' there aren't any ornaments to knock over or carpets to get muddy or things to get sticky if you only jus' put a finger on them by accident like what there are in houses."

The book is profusely and delightfully illustrated with over 40 of Thomas Henry's heart-warming original drawings of William in varying moods (though Henry does not receive a credit on the title-page for some reason). It is certainly one of the funniest books of this or any other year and will be a 'must' for anyone who has ever read and enjoyed a William book (and who hasn't?).

A final thought from William (this time one education): "Where should we all be now if Nelson had spent his time doing sums and Latin unseens instead of fighting the battle of Waterloo?"

Where indeed!

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By  
ROGER M. JENKINS

### No. 234 - Holiday Annual 1927 - "What Happened to Bunter"

There was a good deal of dross to be found in the pages of the Holiday Annual over its two decades: substitute stories, some indifferent contributions from other authors (P.G. Wodehouse being a notable exception), and reprints from old Hamilton stories, some of which saw the light of day again and again over the years. But among all this comparative dross were to be discovered nuggets of pure gold, new stories of a high calibre, specially written for the Holiday Annual by Charles Hamilton himself, and "What Happened to Bunter" was a highly successful original contribution.

Bunter was a very unsympathetic character at this time (the change was to begin in the Whiffles Circus series) but his outrageous proceedings still provided compelling reading. In an attempt to escape from Walker, who was angry about a missing cake, Bunter concealed himself in the box-room. When he heard a heavy tread on the stairs, he seized Mauleverer's valise and hurled it as the door opened. Unluckily it was Mr. Quelch who had come to check on possible cigarette smokers, and so Bunter, not heeding the call to stay to be flogged and expelled, joined the Remove football team who were going to St. Jim's, and then contrived to remain behind. When St. Jim's became too hot to hold him, Bunter turned up at Rookwood.

Some beautiful vignettes are to be found in the twenty-one chapters of this story. Mr. Quelch and Dr. Locke exclaiming at Bunter's behaviour ("Unprecedented!" "Unpardonable!" "Extraordinary!") was a delight, as was Bunter's telephone conversation with his form-master. Possibly the height of Bunter's effrontery was when he realised that Dr. Holmes had received a telephone call from Mr. Quelch appraising the St. Jim's headmaster of the true state of affairs at Greyfriars. Ever resourceful, Bunter said, "I hate to mention such a thing, sir, about a Greyfriars master, but the truth is, sir, he drinks."

Of course, the theme was not a new one. D'Arcy had visited other schools when he 'retired' from St. Jim's in the Gem a few years previously and at about the same time, in the Magnet, Bunter himself had gone to St. Jim's and Rookwood, but if the theme was not original the particular incidents certainly were. Moreover, the Holiday Annual story had the advantage of greater space, which gave the writer elbow room to write in such an amusing style. Furthermore, there were the incomparable illustrations of Chapman at his best, including two full-page pictures. Needless to say, owing to a lucky accident, Bunter managed to escape the promised flogging. As he had previously informed the Removites that he was delicate, perhaps this was just as well.



"I could lend you ten shillings, Buntah, if that's any use," said D'Arcy. Bunter held out his hand. "Thanks," old chap, it's not much—but, of course, you St. Jim's fellows are not wealthy. I forgot that!"

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**WANTED:** Rainbow Comic, nos. 2, 3 and 4 to complete long run. Also Mistress Mariner by Dorita Fairlie Bruce: Girls Crystal Annual 1940: Popular Book of Girls Stories 1935, 1936, 1941, Ovaltiney Rule Book also wanted, and the following post 2nd World War Schoolgirls Own Libraries (1940-'50s series): 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,12,14,15,17,18,19,20,26,28,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40, 42,44,45,46,48,50,51,52,53,54,55,56,58,59,61,62,63,65,66,68,69,78,79,80,86,105,1 13,242,285,288,295, 314. MARY CADOGAN, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 2PY.

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**WANTED:** "The Modern Boy" Bound Volumes or Singles. Bound Volumes of The Gem, Nelson Lee, Boyfriend Library. Howard Baker Volumes. Good Prices Paid. P. Galvin, 2 The Lindales, Pogmoor, Barnsley, S. Yorks, SY5 2DT. Tel: 0226 295613.

GOSLING'S LAMENT

I've been porter at Greyfriars for ages  
And the years have expanded my girth,  
But through all my career  
Wot I says is this 'ere,  
All boys should be drowned at birth!

Young rips tries their tricks on old Gossy,  
And I'm not so much given to mirth,  
I reports them severe,  
Wot I says is this 'ere,  
All boys should be drowned at birth!

With tight-fists like Fish, Snoop and Bunter,  
In 'anding out tips there's a dearth.  
With refreshment so dear  
Wot I says is this 'ere  
All boys should be drowned at birth!

I likes just a wee gin and water  
As I settles in front of my hearth.  
As I sits like a peer  
Wot I says is this 'ere  
All boys should be drowned at birth!

I owns that I likes Lord Mauleverer.  
'E's a toff, and the salt of the earth.  
But I must make it clear  
Wot I says is this 'ere,  
All boys should be drowned at birth!

My 'appliest 'ours spent at Greyfriars  
Is 'oliday times. Them is worth  
All the rest of the year.  
Wot I says is this 'ere,  
All boys should be drowned at birth!



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**WANTED:** Those free gifts given away with the pre-war boys' papers, booklets,  
cards, puzzles etc. Ben Bligh, 55 Arundel Avenue, Hazel Grove, Cheshire, SK7  
5LD. Tel. 061-483-7627.  
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Editor: Mary Cadogan, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 2PY.  
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