

S T O R Y P A P E R S
COLLECTORS'

Vol. 44
No. 521

DIGEST

MAY
1990

LION

KING OF PICTURE
STORY PAPERS

3^D



79p

VIC PRATT



**ROBOT
ARCHIE**



**SANDY
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**CAPTAIN
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Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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VOL. 44

No. 521

MAY 1990

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Between Friends



MAYTIME ANNIVERSARIES

1990 seems to be full of anniversaries! Last month we mentioned Richmal Crompton's Centenary, and the *Eagle's* fortieth birthday. As Danny poignantly comments in his Diary this month, May 1940 marked the sudden and still lamented ending of the *Magnet*. The sense of loss which he describes was intensified for me in those long ago days when the *Schoolgirl* suffered the same fate. On a happier note, however, I am

attending the Ruby celebrations this month of the Northern O.B.B.C. (and my own Ruby wedding anniversary occurs this month too).

Another important event of 40 years ago was the launching of the post war *Schoolfriend* on 20th May 1950. Partly a picture-strip paper and partly made up of stories by favourite authors from the *Schoolgirl* and *Girls' Crystal* (L.E. Ransome, John Wheway, etc.), this was the first girls' weekly to sell a million copies. There is no doubt that its most popular feature was the front and back cover strip which ran for its first twenty issues: featuring the masked, hooded and robed secret society known as The Silent Three, this was drawn by Evelyn Flinders, who was one of the first women artists to work regularly on the pre-war Amalgamated Press girls' papers. (I am glad to say that she is a loyal and long-standing subscriber to the C.D.) The exploits of this charismatic trio of schoolgirls were created by Miss Flinders in co-operation with Stewart Pride (the paper's editor who had written secret society stories during the 1940s as 'Dorothy Page' for the *Girls Crystal*) and Horace Boyten. The latter (as 'Enid Boyten') had also experimented earlier with the theme of groups of schoolgirls who had to conceal their identities in order to right various wrongs.

The fetching and fair-minded heroines of 'The Silent Three at St. Kit's', and of several subsequent tales, were Betty Roland, Joan Derwent and Peggy West. Long will they live in our memories!

MARY CADOGAN

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.

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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.

STILL wanted Sexton Blake Second Series No. 453 'On The Midnight Beat' By John G. Brandon, J. ASHLEY, 46 Nicholas Crescent, Fareham, Hants., PO15 5AH. Telephone: 234489.



AROUND THE WORLD WITH SEXTON BLAKE
No. 5

by J.E.M.

The Hawaiian Islands! What a setting for glamour, romance, exotic adventure - and skulduggery. In *Poisoned Blossoms* (UJ 1305), Blake is on the trail of six mysterious diamond icons of incalculable value. So is June Severence, yet another of G.H. Teed's beautiful adventuresses, as well as a villainous half-caste by the name of Nigan. (For Teed, genetics was a very simple science: mixed blood always meant bad blood!)

In Eric Parker's drawing, Blake and Tinker, in Oriental garb, are turning the tables on Nigan with the help of the aforesaid Miss Severence, here in the guise of a hula girl.

The story was part of a series never properly wound up. Perhaps with so many other glamorous female characters - Yvonne, Roxane et al - at his beck, Teed simply got tired of La Severence. Intriguing, and rather a pity.



SEXTON BLAKE IN THE PENNY PICTORIAL

by John Bridgwater

MURDERLAND. NEW SERIES OF ARTICLES ON THE CONNO ATTRIBUTES. By E. D. MOREL.



I fancy that the cover of *Penny Pictorial* no. 429 of 17th August 1907 is the original of the well known 'Get me Scotland Yard, Quick' covers of *U.J.* and *Detective Weekly*. It is interesting to see the development of Blake from the early representation very few of us would recognise (1907), through the mild looking man with the pipe and bloodhound of 1911 to the keen looking chap of 1913 who is pretty close to the Blake of the 1930s - the definitive Blake for me. You can see similarities to all of them in Marcus Max.

(Editor's note: Mr. Bridgwater's article on Marcus Max will appear in next month's C.D.)

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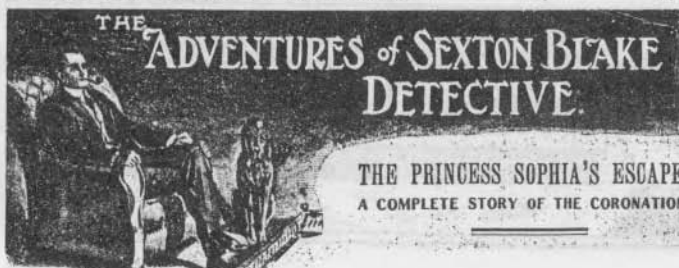
FOREWORD:

Sexton Blake, the famous detective, having been ordered to rest by his doctors, had temporarily forsaken Baker Street, and was living during the period of these episodes in a quiet little house at Surbilon, amusing himself by flower culture, the cottage having been lent to him by an old friend, a Mr. Dove, a retired official from Scotland Yard, who was absent on the Continent.



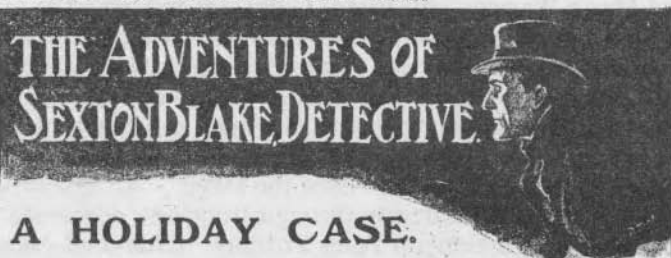
PENNY PICTORIAL 429 - 17/8/07

A STORY FOR READERS OF BOTH SEXES.



PENNY PICTORIAL 629 - 17/6/11

A STORY FOR READERS OF BOTH SEXES



PENNY PICTORIAL 737 - 12/7/13

NEW BOOKS FOR 1990

Forthcoming GREYFRIARS BOOK CLUB volumes scheduled to be published in the current year! Available directly from the Publisher at £18 per volume.

CLUB VOL. 90

Publication Date
January 1990

BUNTER'S BIG BROTHER by Frank Richards
Magnet issues: No. 290, *The Schoolboy Dramatists*, No. 291, *Quits*, No. 495, *Getting Rich Quick*, No. 466, *In Hot Water*, No. 457, *The Deserter*, No. 469, *Linley Minor*, No. 469, *Bunter's Big Brother*, No. 470, *The Fellow who Faked*. £18
ISBN: 0-7030 0230 9

CLUB VOL. 91

Publication Date
March 1990

THE HERLOCK SHOLMES OF GREYFRIARS by Frank Richards
Magnet issues: No. 250, *The Greyfriars Pantomime*, No. 471, *Sir Jimmy of Greyfriars*, No. 472, *The Great Fat Cure*, No. 473, *The Herlock Sholmes of Greyfriars*, No. 474, *Viscount Bunter*, No. 475, *The Prefects Plot*, No. 476, *The Greyfriars Flying Corps*, No. 477, *Harry Wharton's Rivals*, No. 478, *The Rebel*. £18
ISBN: 0 7030 0321 6

CLUB VOL. 92

Publication Date
May 1990

THE GREYFRIARS COLONIALS by Frank Richards
Magnet issues: No. 479, *Colonial Clums*, No. 480, *The Remove Election Campaign*, No. 481, *Head Of The Pool*, No. 482, *National Service at Greyfriars*, No. 483, *Sir Jimmy's Secret*, No. 484, *His Father's Honour*, No. 485, *Two Of The Sixth*, No. 486, *Peter Todd's Vengeance*. £18
ISBN: 0 7030 0322 4

CLUB VOL. 93

Publication Date
July 1990

THE DEFENCE OF HURREE SINGH by Frank Richards
Magnet issues: No. 495, *On The Wrong Track*, No. 499, *On The Make*, No. 500, *The Schoolboy Inventor*, No. 506, *Rivals Of The Chase*, No. 509, *A Gentleman Banker*, No. 512, *The Missing Skipper*, No. 514, *Four From The East*, No. 515, *Flap's Brother*, No. 516, *Looking After Inky*. £18
ISBN: 0 7030 0323 2

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**CLUB VOLUME 91
WILL BE
REVIEWED
IN OUR
NEXT ISSUE**



E.S. BROOKS AND THE ART OF REWRITING

by Mark Caldicott

"Dead Man's Warning" by Victor Gunn was published in 1949. Much later, in 1965, I was delighted to find this book on a market stall at a time when I was collecting avidly the "Ironsides" Cromwell series. This book has always been among my favourite Cromwell stories. A chance reception of a mysterious wireless message sends Cromwell and his assistant, Johnny Lister, to a deserted farmhouse where the pair have their first encounter with the inhuman "Dree the Devil". An inventive and fast-moving plot takes us breathlessly through Ironsides' desperate battle with Dree and his alter ego General Peter Zoffany. Cromwell comes close to death, and is almost sacked from Scotland Yard before, with the assistance of Hon. Algy Pirbright, a final trap is laid, and the redoubtable Ironsides emerges triumphant.

Having read this book several years before discovering that Victor Gunn was E.S. Brooks, and having always considered it to be a well-constructed and original yarn, it was a delight to find on acquiring recently Nelson Lee Library 2nd New Series nos. 4-8 that most of "Dead Man's Warning" had been originally a Nelson Lee series dated from 1930.

In the Nelson Lee series, Lee and the Detective Academy are battling against "Dacca the Dwarf" rather than Dree the Devil, and this story is much longer than the plot of "Dead Man's Warning". After skirmishes with Dacca in England during which the Cub Detectives are imprisoned in a rat-filled cage, and Lee and the Prime Minister are given deadly poison, the action moves to Balghanistan in Asia. Lee, Lord Dorriemore and the Cub Detectives battle with Dacca in his own country and eventually foil a plot to take India away from British rule. None of these latter incidents appears in "Dead Man's Warning".

It is a fascinating exercise to compare the Cromwell version with the Nelson Lee story. After staying close to the Nelson Lee plot for half of the book, E.S. Brooks begins to reconstruct the episodes, eventually resolving the Cromwell story with a completely original ending. The skill with which ESB did this, creating a novel which, when I read it, had no evidence of being patched together, is quite astounding.

This raises an interesting thought. Could it be that the Nelson Lee 2nd New Series stories have been underestimated? If it is true that, as E.B. Grant-McPherson wrote in his excellent tribute to ESB, "by the start of the Second New Series the stories were really poor" (CD Vol. 43 no. 515), then how is it that the plot is sound enough to survive as a favourite Cromwell story? The story which followed the Dacca series, "The Two-Headed Viper" (NLL 2nd NS no. 9), provides the basis of another Cromwell novel "The Borgia Head Mystery" (1951), and the next, "The Fatal Wager" (NLL 2nd NS no. 10), had a previous existence as the Sexton Blake story "The Wager of Death" (Union Jack 917) and a later reincarnation as the Cromwell novel "Nice Day For A Murder" (1945). Is it a heresy to say that I have thoroughly enjoyed reading the stories which resulted from Nelson Lee's temporary return to Gray's Inn Road?

E.S. Brooks was a past-master at rewriting his stories, and it is an entertainment in itself to compare versions in order to see how he did it. Many of the Norman Conquest stories written between 1943 and 1949 are rewritten from the Waldo the Wonderman stories in the Union Jack, and it is ingenious how ESB assigns to Conquest the combined activities of Waldo and Sexton Blake. On occasion this reorganizing does stretch the credibility of the plots, but most of the Conquest stories work well, and some, such as "Cavalier Conquest" (1944) adapted from UJs 1131 and 1132, are excellent.

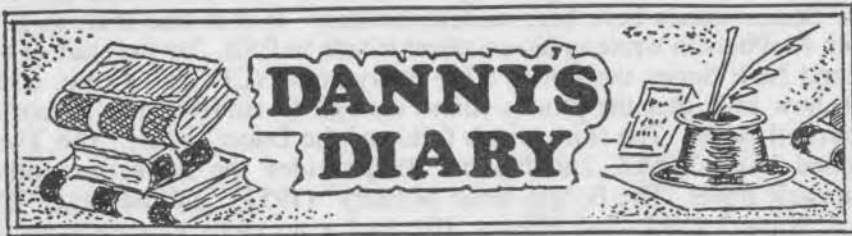
Incidentally, to return to "Dead Man's Warning", the only part of the book which is original introduces, ironically, a character who himself is a product of rewriting. The Hon. Algy Pirbright is introduced with a reference to the affair of the "black cats". This relates to a story in the earlier Cromwell novel "Three Dates With Death" (1947), itself rewritten from "The Case of the Three Black Cats" (UJ no. 1354) featuring the Hon. Algy's previous incarnation, "Useful" Eustace Cavendish.

In the art of rewriting, as with his other talents, I am left in awe of E.S. Brooks' powers of imagination and invention.

WANTED: Boys Magazine Sepia Paper Football Team Photographs issued 1922 to 1926. Phone 03212 - 4802.

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

WANTED: Modern Boys, bound or singles. Bound vols. of The Gem, Nelson Lee, Biggles and Captain Justice, Boys' Friends Library. Other bound volumes of Story Papers for my collection. Many Howard Baker volumes required. P. GALVIN, 2 The Lindales, Pogmoor, Barnsley, S. Yorks., SY5 2DT. Tel. 0226 295613.



MAY 1940

I've never before felt so terribly sad when entering my Diary for the month. The outbreak of War was awful, and there have been one or two other bad things since I started my monthly records. But this ---!

It's tragic! It's a disaster! And what's more, it's inexplicable! The Magnet has gone. It hasn't ended. It's just disappeared without notice. Vanished from the shops where it has been the main bulwark for goodness knows how many years.

The series has continued and ended about Wibley impersonating and taking the place of Sir William Bird of the Secret Service on holiday at Eastcliff Lodge. The month's opening tale is "The Spy of the Gestapo". Very topical and very exciting, with that old character, Soames, hovering in the back ground. This is a well-paid spy. And Bunter, suddenly, has lots and lots of money.

THE FIRST DAY OF TERM—AND HARRY WHARTON'S IN HOT WATER ALREADY!

The **SHADOW of the SACK!**



The next tale, the final tale in the series, is "The Nazi Spy's Secret". Alone, Harry Wharton sets out to shadow the real spy, but Wharton falls into the hands of the enemy. And Wharton is saved. By Soames. It turns out that Soames is a patriot, working for his own country, but still ready to turn a dishonest penny.

And then came the start of a new series in the third week of May. The opening tale is "The Shadow of the Sack". Back at school, and Wharton is in hot water immediately. He falls foul of

Mr. Hacker, and we are obviously all set to enjoy another series with Wharton as a rebel.

Or are we?

The new Greyfriars Gallery has continued with, in respective order, Wingate, Coker, and Tom Brown.

In his Editor's Chat, in this third issue of the month, the Editor says: "Like all other papers - dailies and weeklies - the Magnet has had to forgo some of its pages. This is only a wartime measure, of course, The jolly old Magnet will still play its important part in the country by appearing every week with its high-class stories which have done so much to kill the black-out blues.

"During the last Great War the Magnet was considerably smaller in size. Did it lose its popularity? Not the slightest bit! Neither will it this time..."

And "next week's" story is announced to be "The Battle of the Beaks", in which we shall continue with Harry Wharton's feud with the acid-tempered Mr. Hacker.

And after all that in his chat, "next week" never came - and that was in the middle of the month.

My Magnet hadn't come, that Saturday, so I went to ask our newsagent, Mr. Bragg, where it was. He said "It hasn't come in, Danny. It'll be in on Monday".

But when I went in on Monday Mr. Bragg shook his head sadly. It hadn't come in, and Mr. Bragg hadn't been told why.

Later I went to three other different newsagents. None of them had the Magnet, and none of them knew anything about it, where it was, why it had stopped, and whether it ever would come out again.

And that's how things are at the time of writing at the end of the month. It looks as though the Magnet is finished, with all its readers left wondering what has happened to it. I'm heart-broken.

On May 10th Mr. Winston Churchill became Prime Minister, and most people seem to think it is a good move. But Dad says he thinks Chamberlain was the right man up to now, giving us the time to be ready for war. Now Churchill will press on and win it.

Some good stuff at the local cinemas. Alice Faye is in "Hollywood Cavalcade", a kind of history of Hollywood from the old Keystone days. I enjoyed it, especially the early parts. It is in technicolor. Mum loved Ingrid Bergman and Leslie Howard in "Escape to Happiness", a love story about a violinist. A bit slow for me. A weird little affair was "The Return of Doctor X", starring Wayne Morris, with Humphrey Bogart as a monster. This one was an X film, for adults only, but I got in all right. A very long film was "The Women" with heaps of them led by Norma Shearer and Joan Crawford. Some lively backchat. Doug enjoyed it, but I was a bit bored. But I loved another long one - Charles Laughton in "The Hunchback of Notre Dame". Simply terrific is "Destry Rides Again" with James Stewart as a gentle sheriff, and Marlene Dietrich as a girl in a dance hall. Grand. Laurel and Hardy were lovely in "The Flying Deuces" - they join the Foreign Legion. Nelson Eddy warbled songs in "Balalaika", a kind of Russian affair. And Gary Cooper was fairish in "The Real Glory" about a bygone war in which America joined against Mexico.

There is a new William book out this month. My lovely Gran saw it in Colchester, bought it, and posted it straight off to me. It is called "William and the Evacuees" and it contains 8 terrific tales. The ones I liked best of all are the evacuee story, another one called "William and the Unfair Sex", and one called "The Man from Africa". He is Mrs. Brown's cousin and he comes from Rhodesia. Wow!

Some tip-top stuff in the Libraries. Once again there are 2 Greyfriars books. One is "Southward Ho!" in which Lord Mauleverer, Bunter, and Harry Wharton & Co. are in Egypt on holiday, to hunt for a buried treasure.

The second Greyfriars tale is "The Mystery of Study Number One" in which Dandy Sanders robs a bank and hides his loot up the chimney in Study No. 1. Both

these tales continue in next month's issues or so they say. After what seems to have happened to the Magnet, I shan't be surprised at anything.

The St. Frank's S.O.L. is "The Touring School" in which St. Frank's goes touring England in motor coaches - with lessons as usual.

I have 2 Sexton Blake Libraries, both pretty good. "The Eighth Millionaire" is by G.H. Teed and introduces the old criminal George Marsden Plummer and his girl friend, Vali Mata-Vali. My other S.B.L. is "The Mystery of the Red Tower" by Coutts Brisbane. A good mystery about a young inventor whose new diving invention falls into the hands of a gang of rascals.

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

For those of us who were around at that time in May 1940, and especially for those, who had bought the paper regularly for many years - since childhood, in my own case - the sudden end of the Magnet came to us, as it clearly did to Danny, as a sad shock and as a surprise.

Not only was there no notice of a cessation of publication. A new series had just commenced and the title, plus a synopsis, of next week's story was given in what proved to be the last issue of the Magnet. And not only that. In that issue, the Editor stressed that the Magnet had carried on through the previous war, and he promised that it would carry on in the same way in the present war. It was all in the Editor's Chat that week. Buy your Magnet next week! And there was no "next week". It was a mystery, and one that will never be solved now.

Years later, Mr. Down, who was editor at the time of the Magnet's demise, told me that the paper would have carried on, at least for a time, but there was a disagreement, or a misunderstanding of some kind, with the Magnet's author, so the sudden curtain was decided upon. Whether there was any truth in that, I do not know. But there must have been some vital reason for the happening.

Roger Jenkins, the greatest of all Magnet historians, expressed it all beautifully in his History of the Magnet. I cannot do better than quote Roger here. He wrote:

"... there seems to have been no other Amalgamated Press publication which stopped in so curious a manner, in the middle of a series, without warning, still advertising next week's issue. It seems certain that the paper shortage was not solely responsible for the permanent eclipse of what had once been so brilliant a star in the constellation."

Roger expresses the feelings of most of us down the years since that day when the Magnet did not appear and the newsagent said "Sorry, Danny! It may be in tomorrow".

S.O.L. No. 406, "Southward-Ho!" which Danny bought 50 years ago, comprised the first two and a half stories of the 8-story Egypt holiday series of the Magnet of the summer of 1932.

S.O.L. No. 407 "The Mystery of Study Number One" comprised the first two and a half stories of the "plunder hidden in the chimney" 5-story series from a little earlier in the Magnet's same summer of 1932.

The Leslie Howard - Ingrid Bergman film "Escape to Happiness", which Danny saw in May 1940, was released in the States under the title "Intermezzo", and, if it has appeared on British TV in later times, it would almost certainly be under the American title.

THE LAST EDITORIAL!

DON'T GET LEFT warned the Editor of the Magnet---

From this week's school yarn you will have learned that all is not well with Harry Wharton. He's fallen foul of Mr. Hacker, the acid-tempered master of the Shell. The happy thought in Hacker's mind is to pin Wharton down so effectually that Mr. Quelch will be unable to stand by his head boy. But it's easier said than done, as the Acid Drop finds out to his cost in this great Frank Richards masterpiece, entitled:

"THE BATTLE OF THE BEAKS!"

You're in for a real feast of fun and excitement in this super story of Greyfriars. Don't get left! Ask your newsagent to deliver, or reserve for you, a copy of next Saturday's MAGNET. It's the only way to avoid disappointment.

YOUR EDITOR.

BUT THE MAGNET "LEFT" US!

LOOK TO THE LION!

by Alan Pratt

I am rapidly discovering that this fascinating hobby of ours has very wide boundaries.

Most enthusiasts enjoy re-reading the papers and books that they subscribed to in their younger days and this certainly produces a cosy feeling of pleasant nostalgia. What, though, of those publications that we did not read? What of the periodicals that were published too early or, indeed, too late for us to have become acquainted with them first time around? When I read copies of The Magnet, The Gem or The Union Jack I am enjoying them for the first time - all of these papers ceased publication before I was born! This of course, does not, detract from the pleasure I take from them. I may not remember them but I have been mightily glad to make their acquaintance after all this time.

The Lion first appeared in 1953 thus arriving somewhat late in the day as it were for anyone currently over the age of 45. I did not take The Lion regularly as a boy but I have discovered, in hindsight, that it really was an extremely good weekly, worthy of mention in these hallowed pages. It was clearly intended to be A.P.'s rival to the enormously successful Eagle. Just as the Eagle featured Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future on its front page, so The Lion had its own front page space hero Captain Condor. The Condor stories, written by the excellent and prolific Frank S. Pepper, were told in strip cartoon form and were imaginative and entertaining. There were other strip cartoon stories inside, Sandy Dean's schooldays and Archie - the Jungle Robot to name but two. But The Lion, in those halcyon days, was far more than a mere picture paper. To complement the strips, there were plenty of written stories plus factual features, quizzes and puzzles. Written stories were also featured heavily in the Lion Annuals, the general theme being adventure in far away

places. Unlike The Tiger, which replaced the good old champion in 1955 and consisted almost entirely of sports stories, The Lion contained fast moving tales of pirates, cowboys and jungle adventure, just "over the top" enough to be entertaining without pushing the bounds of credibility too far too often. Hence we have characters such as Bill Young, the English schoolboy who rules a tribe of pygmies in the African Jungle and Sergeant Samson, the dauntless mountie who fights evil trappers and renegade Indians. There are tales of the South Seas and the French Foreign Legion, often told with an element of mystery or the unmasking of a villain in the "surprising" denouement. ("The mask was ripped away and the snarling features of M'Bobo the witch doctor were revealed to the startled natives.")

Sadly, but inevitably, The Lion did not retain the original mix of stories and strips. I enjoy the written stories because they are just like those printed in the story papers of many years previously, but to the comic-hungry boys of the late fifties they might well have seemed dated or unnecessary. In any event, the stories gradually disappeared from both the weekly paper and the annuals and The Lion carried on as an all picture paper into the Seventies.

For those readers however, who enjoy tales of rousing adventure in the furthest corners of the world, may I recommend that they beg steal or borrow one of the early Annuals; let your imaginations take you away to join Mr. X in his midjet submarine under the China Sea or The Mystery Highwayman as he thwarts the dreaded Black Jake and Ring-Eared Joe in their plans to rob the York Stagecoach. I feel sure that you will not be disappointed and it may even set you off on a new hunt for treasures of which you were hitherto unaware. Good hunting one and all!

WILLIAM WHIMSY No.1

by Norman Wright

I am a fairly new convert to the ranks of those who relish the exploits of 'The Outlaws' and in particular their leader, William Brown. I must confess that as a boy I did not like the stories, I found them irritating. Had I lived in William's village I would, no doubt, have signed many petitions to have him transported for life, or joined the Hubert Laneites. Fortunately, as an adult, I re-discovered Richmal Crompton's anti-hero and was surprised to find that the dialogue, once held in contempt by a William-aged schoolboy who fidgeted while his teacher read from the red-bound Newnes' volume, was witty and chuckle-inducing.

Half the pleasure of the William stories is derived from the illustrations and it seems an almost fantastic feat that Thomas Henry, who first drew William in the pages of "Ladies Home Magazine" in 1919, depicted the rascalion for more than forty years. William belongs almost as much to Thomas Henry as he does Richmal Crompton and the artist's superbly painted dustwrappers are a testimony to his love for the character.

When the first William book was published, early in the summer of 1922, "The Humorist" magazine carried a full page advert for the volume, promising readers "...A smile on every page..." Since that time over six generations of readers have discovered that the promise made was no idle boast.

ANOTHER BAD BOY'S DIARY

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you on your
holidays*



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on every
page*

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MAY 1990

Why is it that everything seems so simple in retrospect?

Now that the mystery has unfolded, the hols are over and we are all back at Cliff House everyone is saying they thought there was something odd about Julia Frankland, and somehow Hilary Gaynor never fitted in during the one term she was here, and why didn't Clara and Diana tell us about their suspicions instead of keeping the whole business to themselves. As though we'd have laughed at them! Well, not much, anyway. Even though it seemed incredible. But they are both back with us, heroines of the hour, after nearly being expelled and missing half the Easter hols. As Clara did. Diana was staying in London in any case so it didn't make so much difference to her. And didn't she enjoy the publicity! Clara says she'll never live down her interview on TV News Hour when she managed to trip up and then dislodged the little mike gadget they clip on you, but Diana took it all in her stride and positively gloried in it. Even her enemies have had to admit she was superb.

She would have gone on all evening if they would have let her, telling of how she'd suspected Julia Frankland right from the start, and after the lipstick affair she'd started to watch Julia every moment they were out of class or prep. And of course she nearly ruined Hilary's cover. We were all quite right when we'd been puzzled by Hilary. But not one of us had dreamed that she was actually a young detective from C.I.D., sent here on a very long shot to keep an eye on Julia because her father and uncle had come under suspicion some time ago of being two of the wiliest fences in the country.

Apparently they had a very up-market antique business of irreproachable reputation; nothing had ever been recorded against them, and they numbered some of the wealthiest collectors in the world among their clients. Until the police received a tip, from a disgruntled thief whose identity was never divulged, not even at court. This had happened over a year ago, and a long, frustrating surveillance began on Julia's family, all of which produced exactly nothing. Then, just as the police began to conclude that their tip-off had been a bit of spite without any foundation, Hilary discovered that their suspect's daughter was being sent to Cliff House School, and that the owner of a fabled collection of miniatures had bought a house almost next door to the school. So Hilary got leave to come to the school herself, as a schoolgirl. Primmy was the only one in the know, not even the Charmer had been told.

It was Diana who spotted Julia grubbing around the Clock Tower after the storm. Where the section of battlements and roof caved in, leaving a big crack down the wall just to the right of the clock, there was an old stairway that had been hidden in the thickness of the wall. We know now that this led down into the subterranean passage under the field that led to Cliff Top Manor. Of course we're all disgusted that it has been sealed off now, like the one we found ages ago leading to Ivy House. Anyway, Diana waited until Julia was elsewhere (in detention, actually) and she armed herself with a torch and went to explore. Then it was Diana's turn to be spotted, by Clara on her way back from a chinwag with Dulcia Fairbrother down on senior's playing field. So that was how the unholy alliance between Di and our Tomboy began.

They were both smarting after Julia's jolly little attentions, and of course Diana knew about the new owner of the Manor with her father having slight acquaintance with him, so when they discovered where the passage led, and added up Julia's previous nosiness about it, they decided to watch her.

Unfortunately, when they followed her the night the robbery took place they also got into Hilary's way and nearly ruined the biggest crime hunt of the year. It was Hilary who was responsible for the pair of them being parked in the isolation room with no contact allowed them, and having to remain behind while the school broke up and departed for the Easter hols. Of course it was partly for security, because the police didn't want any hint known of how much they knew. All the enquiries that took place the next day were simply for show. Actually the robbers had been followed every inch of their way and the arrests delayed until the vital link-up with the two master fences had been made. But afterwards Hilary gave Clara and Diana full credit for the valuable info they'd been able to provide. For obvious reasons she had had to make some pretence of obeying the school rules like the rest of the girls and while this gave more credence to her imposture it was also very hampering to her investigations. Once she learned from Clara and Diana of the destination of the underground tunnel she was able to visit the manor with a couple of her colleagues and make a thorough investigation of the layout and the secret entrances to what we now call Cliff House's Underground Network. But of course she couldn't warn them off without arousing their suspicions, and I think she'd already realised that neither Clara nor Diana are the girls to take kindly to being warned off by anyone once they've got their sights firmly on course for something. So she settled for encouraging the pair of them to find out everything they could about Julia's activities, sort of hinting that Julia had also caused her trouble with mistresses through sneaking.

Once Hilary was able to be herself and natural we all liked her immensely and were sorry to lose her. She must have been a great sport when she was at school. She's coming down this weekend for a super party the owner of Cliff Top Manor is giving for the Fourth. Bessie can't wait! She says he's nearly as rich as the Bunters so he's bound to put on a terrific spread of goodies.

After that, I suppose we shall all have to settle down and catch up with studies. Oh dear, life is going to seem very quiet after all that excitement.

* * * * *

DID YOU KNOW...?

by Elsie Effingham

Babs is the only junior girl in the whole school to hold full colours for both cricket and hockey?

An error in the Cliff House Encyclopedia removed Jemima Carstairs's Delma Castle home from Yorkshire to Wiltshire? (Heavy things to lift, old castles, what! J.C.)

Sara Harrigan's idol is Miss Bullivant? And her ambition is to come back to Cliff House as maths mistress? (Heaven help our successors!)

That the bronze gates of Cliff House were brought back from Europe by one of Wellington's army generals? (Amazing what can be stashed away in a jolly old kitbag, ahem.)

* * * * *

Next month I've been promised a piece for a new series about our early adventures, starting with one about Mabs, by our one and only Jimmy. So polish your eyeglasses, chums!

Happy reading,
BABS.

THE GREYFRIARS TREASURE SEEKERS (Part Five)

Chronicled by Leslie Rowley

Many a time and oft had Mr. Quelch's eyes been likened unto gimlets! Never had they more deserved that comparison than they did now, as they gazed at the Prior Anselm window. Quelch, who knew his Greyfriars like the back of his hand, was aware that the work was that of a reliable artist of Flemish origin whose skill had won many commissions throughout the country. That particular commission would have been executed in every detail as requested by Anselm. It was not an outstanding window such as those encountered at Fairford, Long Melford, or elsewhere, but it had survived! Mr. Quelch had, of course, looked at that window before; but he had not looked at it with the intensity of a youth struggling to keep awake through an over-long sermon! Now, as he exercised those gimlet eyes, Mr. Quelch became aware of certain imperfections, imperfections which were so small that he had not noticed them before. The unshod foot of the prior had, alone, excited comment from himself and others in the past. Now, he had to admit that Mauleverer's more recent and concentrated scrutiny of the window merited some explanation and, not being able to offer one himself, he recalled the point that Mauleverer had made about the possibility of Prior Anselm incorporating some message into the window he had commissioned in those perilous years of long ago.

The master of the Remove turned to the boy at his side.

"The defects are most definitely there, Mauleverer. Even if the glass had been damaged and fresh glass substituted, such defects would not have been affected by the substitution. We must accept the window as Anselm must have accepted it in his day. It is unlikely, extremely unlikely, that Anselm would have accepted the window if it was not as he had commissioned."

"If we accept that those flaws, or improvisations, are deliberate, sir, then surely there must be a reason for them!" Mauly replied with the certain knowledge of one who had been doubted and then found right. "I think, sir, that the prior was leaving a message behind for some member of his order who would see that the window would survive and serve to carry its message long after his own execution."

The two had closed the massive door of the Chapel behind them, bringing them back from the past of tyranny and sacrifice to the present of school life.

"The matter must be laid before the Headmaster, Mauleverer, and it would be as well if you were present. I know that you must be anxious to tell your friends, but they must wait for a little longer. Follow me."

A few moments later they were in the august presence of Doctor Locke, that revered and benign gentleman listening in silence as Mr. Quelch told him of Lord Mauleverer's interest in the Anselm window. Tactfully, Mr. Quelch omitted to explain that that interest had been due to boring and over-long sermons. Dr. Locke was under the opinion, sadly entertained by many others, that his sermons

entertained as well as instructed! Perhaps Quelch had been bored with them himself on occasion!

"You are to be congratulated on your powers of observation, Mauleverer", remarked the Head, in happy ignorance! "I understand, my boy, that you recently examined the Clarke family archives in the hope of furthering an enquiry instigated by the Board of Governors. You must find it gratifying, my dear Quelch, to have such a seeker after truth in your form!"

If Quelch had ever felt it gratifying to have Mauleverer in his form, he had forgotten it! Nevertheless, he weighed in with a word or two of appreciation.

"Mauleverer believes, and I subscribe to his opinion, sir, that Anselm has incorporated a message in that window. A message, sir, probably directed at those who survived him. Those followers, or survivors, sir, must have been acquainted with the possibility that such a message was intended, for they removed the window to a place that was secure from Cromwell's Commissioners."

"What, Mauleverer, do you consider is the purport of any such message that Prior Anselm may have conveyed in such a fashion?" The Head turned toward the Removite, a note of kind enquiry in his voice.

"I think that the Prior was trying to indicate the location of the Priory plate and other valuables for which he had found a hiding place secure from discovery by the people who executed him, sir", Mauly replied. "Septimus Clarke, in his family's archives, mentions encountering the Prior's likeness in the old Priory ruins. There is a kind of lower chamber, part of which is below ground level, which still has the tracery of a window intact. It was for that window that the Prior commissioned the stained glass which is now in the chapel..."

"And which was in the chapel whilst the boy Clarke was at Greyfriars, Mauleverer", interposed the Headmaster, "How, therefore, can you explain Clarke's seeing the likeness of Prior Anselm in what you call the 'lower chamber' of the ruins?"

"Thought transference, sir", came the unexpected reply.

"Thought transference is a theory entertained by members of certain societies interested in psychical phenomena", obliged Mr. Quelch. "It is not a subject in which I would expect a boy of my form to be interested. Mauleverer must have read about the matter in a newspaper article."

"My guardian, Sir Reginald Brooke, regards it as a branch of science", explained Mauleverer. "He calls it a 'continuing science' because so much remains, at present, unknown. What is known is that, given satisfactory and sympathetic conditions, it is possible for matter to be transferred from one period of time to another. I've been on the telephone to Sir Reginald and it is his opinion that Prior Anselm found that Septimus was ideally receptive. We know, from what Septimus has written, that the boy chose the priory ruins as a kind of sanctuary from school life. He was a swot; I beg your pardon sir, someone who had a taste for history and for classical languages. Just the kind of chap to whom Anselm would wish to pass on something pretty important. I'm sure that you would agree, if only you spoke to Uncle Reginald, sir!"

Mauleverer looked at the two faces before him. It was something new for a chap like him to be lecturing the beaks on a subject that others found difficult to accept. He wondered if he had gone too far and whether he would be punished for an insolence he had not intended! Anxiously, he watched as the Head and Quelch

looked at each other. To his relief there was no sign of gathering storm clouds on either countenance.

"Is it your contention, Mauleverer, that Prior Anselm was conveying, by some supernatural agency, that the window that he had commissioned should be returned to the place for which it was intended?"

"Something like that, sir. At least he was insisting that Septimus should see the window as it was in its original location."

"Any why, Mauleverer, should the Prior so wish to persuade Septimus Clarke?"

"Oh! That's simple, sir! The stained glass holds the secret to the whereabouts of the treasure. As Mr. Quelch has just said, he agrees with me that the window does convey a message from Anselm. And, sir, there cannot be any greater reason for conveying a hidden message than the whereabouts of the treasure for which Anselm gave his life!"

"I will certainly be speaking to your guardian, Mauleverer, but I can hold out no hope, no hope at all, that the Board of Governors will agree to the re-siting of the Anselm window in order to prove your theory, intriguing though it is. You may go, my boy, Mr. Quelch will excuse your preparation on this occasion but..."

"But Dr. Locke, it isn't necessary to re-locate the window to prove my theory! There is an easier way, if you will let me explain!"

"You may do so, Mauleverer, but be brief."

"I have taken several photographs of the Anselm window, sir, and from these it will be possible to make up a facsimile or mock window which it will be easy temporarily to install in the priory ruins. Nunky - that is, Sir Reginald, has the matter in hand, and I can expect the mock-up shortly."

"A most unusual boy, my dear Quelch!" commented Dr. Locke after Mauly had left the study. "Nevertheless, he is capable of reasoning beyond his years. A great pity that he does not practise his reasoning in class!"

That "most unusual boy" lost no time in joining the other seven who were strenuously engaged in trying to persuade Herbert Vernon-Smith to drop his idea of breaking bounds, after lights-out, in order to visit the priory ruins. They shared his anxiety that Soames should be prevented from barging in on what they considered their own private treasure hunt, but that anxiety did not extend to risking a flogging or the sack. They were prepared to wait and give Mauly's ideas - potty though they seemed to healthy fifteen-year old school boys - the chance of being proved right or wrong. But they knew their Smithy and, when that adventurous youth rose from his bed at a much later hour, it was to his chagrin that he made the startling discovery that all his clothes had disappeared. Keen as he was for adventure, even Smithy did not consider leaving the school at dead of a cold winter's night clad only in pyjamas. Perhaps the Bounder would feel grateful to his form-fellows for their kind consideration, but, as he snuggled down again between the sheets, it was extremely unlikely!

James Soames, as he focussed his lantern on the floor of the priory's lower chamber, was prepared to spend several hours in his examination of that cold, damp, and isolated place. In fact, James Soames was prepared, if necessary, to spend further lonely nights in what - he hoped - would end in a discovery that would make him rich for life. Although it was freezing cold, the man perspired freely as he probed and prodded with the tools he had brought with him. He had laboured strenuously and diligently for an hour and half when his labours were suddenly and

peremptorily interrupted! Soames felt his collar gripped in a manner that was familiar to him.

"James Soames", came the stolid tones of Inspector Grimes, "I am arresting you at the request of the Loamshire Police, who wish to question you regarding certain crimes committed in their area." There followed the snap of handcuffs.

Later, as he languished in the warmth and comfort of a cell in Courtfield Police Station, Soames may have felt grateful to the inspector for rescuing him from the bitter elements of a winter's night! Alas, like Herbert Vernon-Smith, any sentiments that Soames expressed were sentiments of dissatisfaction. But, in an imperfect world, it is impossible for everyone to be satisfied!

(TO BE CONTINUED)

"DENISE'S DIARY"

MAY 1940

by Dennis L. Bird

This was the month when everything happened. There was no more "phoney war". Parliament debated the Norway fiasco, Neville Chamberlain was forced to resign, Winston Churchill succeeded him as Prime Minister - and on the very same day Hitler unleashed his fury against France and the Low Countries. By the end of May, the Allied armies were evacuating from Dunkirk, and within seven weeks mighty France had collapsed. All this was still in the future - just - when we youngsters collected our four SGOL books on May 2.



I have long since lost the Cliff House adventure, "Babs and Co. at the Manor of Menace" (No. 729), but I still have the other three. The Marjorie Stanton story was "On Trial at Morcove" (No. 730), about the Everard sisters. Joan, aged 22, is the Fourth Form's new mistress on probation, in place of the formidable Miss Massingham who has moved up to the Fifth. Joan's 16-year-old sister Florrie suffers from an unnamed illness (tuberculosis? heart disease?), and Joan's salary is an

important factor in Florrie's health care. There was no National Health Service in the 1930s. But Joan's suitability as a teacher is somewhat suspect: "She had little of the sense of authority." She tries to be gentle and easy-going to everyone, until even loyal Betty Barton says in exasperation "I don't call that being kind; I call that being weak!" Some of the Fourth of course take advantage of Miss Everard's leniency - Cora Grandways, Diana Forbes, Ursula Wade. And there is a vindictive character determined to make trouble: an 18-year-old Sixth Former, Violet Corfew, a would-be teacher who wants Miss Everard's job. Naturally, all comes well in the end, and Miss Everard survives as Fourth Form mistress in all the later stories.

Ronald Fleming wrote both the other May books, under two of his pseudonyms. As "Renee Frazer" he contributed "The Spectre Marred Their Friendship" (No. 728). This featured Jean Stirling, who opens a riverside café in a reputedly haunted house, and her two friends Don Farrel and Frank Clinter. This is an example of a classic schoolgirls' weeklies plot: girl-plus-two-boys, each of whom in turn seems to be her enemy. I hope to write more on this theme later in the year.

Ronald Fleming was also "Peter Langley", creator of one of the most likeable detectives in all fiction. "Noel Raymond versus Rosina the Baffling" (no. 731) recounts his early encounters with the charming but dangerous jewel thief Rosina Fontaine, "that girl of swift wits and amazing resource" who tested his skill to the utmost.

The book consists of nine stories reprinted from the "Girls' Crystal" (two of them re-appeared in 1943). It includes Noel's first meeting with Rosina: "Noel found himself gazing into a pair of wide violet eyes... Her manner was so frankly ingenuous that Noel found himself smiling... 'I - Rosina Fontaine - have come all this way for nothing!...' In her excitement a trace of foreign accent crept into her tone." I could never make up my mind whether she really was of French extraction, as her name suggests, or whether it was just a pose.

She was always elegant, well-dressed, and attractive - but in the seventh story we see her at home, "up a flight of narrow, uncarpeted

NOEL RAYMOND versus ROSINA
 A Collection of Thrilling
 Detective Stories
 the BAFFLING
 by PETER LANGLEY



stairs, entering a barely-furnished room... 'What it is to be poor', she breathed, 'to have to plan and scheme and live from hand to mouth - when there is so much wealth in the world ready for the taking!'"

The stories include adventure in the air: Rosina is a stewardess who vanishes from a Croydon-to-Le-Bourget airliner - undoubtedly a stately Handley Page Heracles biplane which was once described as "safe as the Rock of Gibraltar - and just about as fast". One story takes place on an island off the Cornish coast; another - the last - in a film studio. Rosina shows a brilliant versatility in disguise, but Noel, often aided by the stolid Inspector Stannard of Scotland Yard, is usually a match for her. That last story - re-published in January 1943 as "Rosina the Film Star" - has two different endings. In the later version Rosina escapes, but in SGOL 731 there is a thrilling car chase in which Noel forces her into a crash, from which he gallantly rescues her. "A pity I had to send her to gaol", he mused later. 'Somehow one couldn't help liking her. But it was her own fault.'... and then, staring thoughtfully into the distance, 'I wonder if we'll ever meet again?'"

They did - but that is another story; in fact many other stories, up to 1948.

OUR BOOKSHELVES

THE DORKING GAP AFFAIR by **GLEN PETRIE** (Bantam Books).
Reviewed by Mark Taha.

A whole industry has sprung up around Sherlock Holmes, involving other authors writing Holmes stories of their own and their writing books giving leading roles to other characters from the canon (if that's the word I want): Dr. Watson, Moriarty, Lestrade, and Mycroft Holmes. This, the second "Mycroft" book I've read, tells of a case (with, of course, political ramifications in high places) investigated by a young Mycroft during the early 1870s, shortly after the Franco-Prussian war. A certain French Anglophile mysteriously disappears, Mycroft investigates, it turns out that the Germans are planning to invade England and that Bismarck's valet is one of the most dangerous secret agents in Europe - Mycroft's Moriarty, you might say.

It's a good story (told, unusually, in the third person) which I recommend, although it's not up to Conan Doyle; it's interesting that other writers have outdone him, so to speak, in the magnitude of the cases.

The characterisation of both Mycroft and Sherlock (who makes a couple of appearances) is excellent, giving a preview of the men we read about in Doyle; Sherlock, indeed, tells Mycroft that he's going to stay with a friend called Victor

Trevor in the Long Vacation (fellow-Holmesians-remember the "Gloria Scott"?) and Mycroft's already the corpulent, indolent deductive genius.

The title, incidentally, is of personal interest to me. Shortly after the Franco-Prussian War, Col. Sir George Chesney wrote "The Battle of Dorking", dealing with a German invasion of Britain. This book shows what gave him the idea: shades of Flashman!

Finally, a suggestion. After I read "The Red-Headed Leagues", the thought struck me that John Clay merits a book of his own. Is there a detective story writer in the house?

THE GREYFRIARS COMMENTARY AND BOOK OF VERSE. (296 pages. Published by the Museum Press, 30 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 8RT, at £7.00 - including postage, etc.) Reviewed by Mary Cadogan.

It is a great joy to receive this 8th volume of the Charles Hamilton Companion (18 years after the first volume appeared in 1972). John Wernham deserves our warm appreciation for his continuing dedication to the works of Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, Owen Conquest et al, and his determination to see that these achieve the place in literature which they merit.

As its title suggests, the book's emphasis is on commentary and verse although pictures by Chapman, Shields and others are also well represented. Verses by 'Dick Penfold', a variety of other fictional juniors and 'the Rookwood Rhymester' are reprinted with appropriately exuberant illustrations. There is also an interesting selection of original Greyfriars poems by Tony Rees. John Wernham, in whimsical mood, writes of Maully in love (with Bella the bun-shop girl) and, in a more serious article, on Charles Hamilton's narrative style. An evocative contribution from the late Esmond Kadish recalls his boyhood reading, cinema-going and wireless-listening during the 1930s; Roger Jenkins analyses the art of Hamilton's writing and of Shields's visual interpretations of the Greyfriars characters and settings.

Amongst the book's several further delights are an article by Patricia Hamilton on her grandfather, Richard (one of Charles's brothers), and the reproduction in full of *The Bully of St. John's*, a Hamilton story (in the pen-name of Clifford Owen) from an Aldine Diamond Library of 1908.



Many who enjoyed *The Master of Greyfriars* (Jeffrey Richards's BBC Radio 3 broadcast in October 1988) will welcome the book's inclusion of the text of this comprehensive and perceptive analysis of Charles Hamilton's literary achievements. Finally, and perhaps a little disconcertingly, it is intriguing to see a series of C.H. Chapman illustrations of *Nursery Rhymes* and *The Diverting History of John Gilpin* with a Greenaway-garbed Little Jack Horner bearing a distinct resemblance to Harry Wharton, and Curlylocks to Marjorie Hazeldene! Spaces does not permit a complete listing of the contents of this veritable box of delights but - like Bunter in the illustration above - I can vouch for its quality.

OBITUARY

EILEEN ALICE SOPER. 26th March 1905 - 22nd March 1990

Eileen Soper, whose lively illustrations added extra zest to so many children's books, has died at the age of 84. Daughter of George Soper, whose work in "Boy's Own Paper" and "Chums" will be well known to old boys book enthusiasts, she had the distinction of displaying work at the Royal Academy when only fifteen years of age.

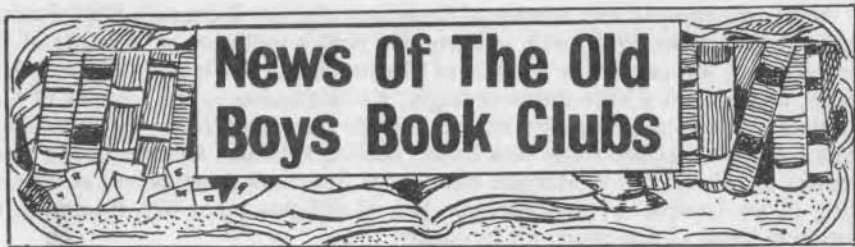
From the early 1940s she illustrated many books for Enid Blyton including all twenty-one titles in the 'Famous Five' series. She wrote and illustrated three books for children in the late 1940s before going on to write and illustrate a series of highly acclaimed natural history books dealing with the wildlife that inhabited her large, semi-wild, Hertfordshire garden. The sentiments and enthusiasm for wildlife expressed in "Wild Encounters", "Wild Favours" and "Wanderers of the Field", three



of her books dealing with her garden sanctuary, demonstrated clearly her whole-hearted commitment to the preservation of the animals and birds that came to trust her.

Her watercolours were extensively exhibited and she was a founder member of the Society of Wildlife Artists. But for millions of children she will always be remembered as the artist who brought to life the Enid Blyton Famous Five - George, Dick, Anne, Jullian and Timothy, the dog.

NORMAN WRIGHT



CAMBRIDGE CLUB

We met at the home of our Club Librarian, Keith Hodkinson of Willingham. After a short business meeting, Keith presented part 2 of a consideration of the way in which books and the cinema have portrayed the old West - in this case discussing films from *Stagecoach* (1939) to *High Noon* (1951), via *Union Pacific*, *Dodge, City*, *Jessie James*, *They Died With Their Boots On*, *Fort Apache*.

Keith mentioned the rather amazing fact that the many mid-victorian era novels that concerned western/frontier themes were being published whilst similar events were happening out in America.

ADRIAN PERKINS

LONDON O.B.B.C.

22 members arrived at the new venue at the Richmond Community College. The meeting got under way with birthday wishes to our latest octogenarian, Alan Stewart. Bill Lofts then impressed us all with a talk and display of artwork from his own collection, which included a C.H. Chapman Greyfriars drawing coloured in by no less a personage than Basil Reynolds. Bill Bradford read the newsletter covering the Richmond April 1970 meeting. Next, Don Webster's quiz covered general knowledge and old boys' books. Finally, Mary Cadogan gave a talk on W.E. Johns' famous character Worrals, this being the 50th anniversary come October.

Next meeting, Loughton on 13 May. Kindly inform Chris Harper if intending to be present.

GRAHAM BRUTON

O.B.B.C. NORTHERN SECTION

The Easter break, coupled with our moving the April meeting to third Saturday in the month for this one occasion, resulted in our having only 12 attending - with a number of apologies.

A very good evening had been enjoyed by the 14 attending The Stansfield Arms for our club informal dinner on 24th March. Plans were well under way for our Ruby luncheon to be held on 12th May and it looked as though we would have almost 40 attending. The evening would conclude at the home cinema of Michael Bentley for a "full supporting programme" of films of nostalgia.

David Bradley reported on the Biggles Meeting held in Watford on 31st March, which he and Paul Galvin attended, and he pointed out that the W.E. Johns' Meeting organised by the Northern Club would go ahead in Nottingham, in October. Joan Colman commented on the William Meeting, also held on 31st March, at Bromley. A superb day, and for those who arrived on the Friday evening, it was even more worthwhile.

Keith Atkinson presented an excellent paper on the life of Richard Jefferies who was born at Coate, Swindon, on 6th November, 1848. When at school Keith had been presented with a copy of WIND IN THE WILLOWS, and he was so enthralled by this aspect of nature, that he was keen to read more and was introduced to BEVIS by Jefferies. From then on, he was hooked. Keith brought along a fine selection from his collection of Jefferies' works - including some first editions in really superb condition. To conclude, Geoffrey read a poem composed by Keith which had recently been published in the Society's newsletter.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

ESCAPE

by E. Baldock

How pleasant and rewarding it is to escape for a while from the 'progressive' modern world with its shirring computers and press-button devices continually reverberating around us and, for a brief period to become totally immersed in the world of Greyfriars, that fictitious yet very real world wherein reside Harry Wharton and Co., Billy Bunter, Horace Coker, Wingate and Loder together with a score of other equally well known stalwarts covering every shade of character from lofty virtue to blatant villiany - the heroes and the outsiders. The whole under the rule of Henry Samuel Quelch, Master of the remove and Paul Pontifex Prout, Master of the fifth being pre-eminent on the teaching staff under the benign headmastership of the venerable and beloved Dr. Locke. A little world pursuing its scholastic way quietly year by year in the peaceful surroundings of the ancient foundation of Greyfriars. Storms and tumults, revolutions and uprisings may - indeed did - occur only too frequently in the great world beyond, yet the tremors they caused were minor to a degree and soon forgotten in the infinitely more important happenings within the confines of the school.

Sunshine and shadows there were in feuds, friendships and rivalries. Paramount questions (i.e. would the first eleven, George Wingate and his

merry men, defeat the ancient enemy St. Jim's on the field of battle) were of far greater importance than a whole string of explosions in some far away central American republic. Certainly of more significance than all the windy and verbose outpourings of politicians and their attendant satellites of doom. That Horace Coker could have the minutest chance of securing a place in the fifth form eleven in a comparatively unimportant inter form cricket match caused more stir and comment - and laughter - than any meeting between the respective heads of the great powers in the world beyond. The importance of any event is purely relative. It may be truly said that the large majority of Greyfriars fellows had their priorities remarkably "on target".

This world within a world created by Charles Hamilton in the early years of the century (although the concept must have been maturing in his mind at a far earlier date) was something unique. Was it not a fact that Billy Bunter, after an abortive introduction, was interred in, and ultimately resurrected after a longish period from the dusty recesses of a drawer in Hamilton's desk? A clear case of new wine improving with keeping. Schools and stories of school life were no innovation, as a study of the literature of the nineteenth century will show. But this little world of Greyfriars had in some magical way caught the imagination and held the attention of its early readers from its inception, and imbued them with remarkable loyalty and affection which glow no less brightly now towards the century's closing decade.

TWO PIMPERNELS AND OTHER FRENCH REVOLUTION TYPES

by Ray Hopkins

It is surprising, given the opportunity to indulge in heroics and high adventure, that more stories, with the highly colourful background of the French Revolution, did not appear in our old children's weeklies. In an effort to find some, I used the Lofts/Adley BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY listing as a starting point, and please remember I was weaving through a very long list of stories unknown to me, but hoping something about a title would SOUND as though there might be a connection with the French Revolution.

I came across BFL 310, 2nd Series, "The Shadow of the Guillotine", by George E. Rochester, a famous MAGNET serial of 1929, here reprinted in November 1931. My next "sighting" was BFL 512, 2nd Series, "The Shadow of the Knife", by Alfred Armitage, (William Murray Graydon) which Lofts/Adley interestingly reveal was purchased from the author with the same title as that of the earlier Rochester story. There is also a cross reference to BFL 567, 1st Series which, apart from being by the same author (Alfred Armitage) appears, by its title, to belong to a later period in history than the French Revolution. Its title is "Loyal to Napoleon". Perhaps Bill can explain this puzzling (to me) cross reference.

BFL 536, 2nd Series, "Ghosts of the Guillotine" by George E. Rochester, appeared in July 1936 and from here to the end of the BFL in June 1940, no other title suggests its contents may have anything to do with the French Revolution.

"A jostling, cursing, jeering mob, they (the Citizens of Paris) swarm upon the long wooden benches which run almost the whole length of each side of the room. Men and women, their grinning faces flushed with hatred and lust for blood, struggle, shouting and swearing, to obtain a better view of the cursed aristocrats who, throughout the day, have mounted, one by one, to that railed-in platform which stands in the centre of the floor, facing the table of the Citizen-president."

Thus G.E. Rochester sets the scene for the confrontation between the two boyhood chums who, three years later in Paris, are on opposite sides of the Revolutionary fence.

Paul Darc, a peasant, has risen to be Commissioner of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Armande de St. Clair has been arrested and brought to the court for judgement. The mob howls for his death by guillotine. Paul Darc interposes a word in defence of Armande. The court is infuriated and astonished but allows him to speak because he is a friend of the all-powerful Robespierre.

Armande, who has not seen Paul for three years does not at first recognise his old boy chum. When he does, Paul is astounded to hear himself addressed as a Cur who is "some leader of these red-handed, murderous wolves - a traitor to your God! Curse you, Paul Darc, curse you, I say! I have nothing to say except that in death I should find a happiness impossible in a life which I would owe to one so lost to manhood and to honour as Paul Darc!" Strong stuff, highly emotional and remembered by many, I'm sure, who first encountered it in the pages of the MAGNET.

This story has for a character one of those legendary, mysterious Englishmen dedicated to the rescue of worthy aristocrats from the avenging mob. Here he is called Will-o'-the Wisp. So it seems that our fearless old friend, the Scarlet Pimpernel, was not alone. This serial was illustrated throughout by the now celebrated artist, Terence Cuneo OBE.

"A large room, full of noisy people. The furniture, where it was not smashed, in violent disorder; rich window-hangings half torn down; the very walls and ceiling made unsightly by recent rioting. And all the

THERE'S NEVER A DULL MOMENT IN THIS VIVID STORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION



By
GEO. E. ROCHESTER.

noisy people restlessly pushing about while they chattered and chuckled, their faces weary, their eyes bloodshot; and yet the desire was still for fresh excitement."

The above is one of many colourful descriptions, scene settings if you like, to be found in the only title that I could locate in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY which concerns the French Revolution. It is "In the Days of the Terror", a serial in THE SCHOOLGIRL of 1929 and reprinted as SGOL 294 in April 1931. Written by Joy (actually Horace) Phillips, it is totally different from his better known work as the chronicler of Morcove School and, unless one knew, the reader would not connect this historical thriller in any way with the writer known as Marjorie Stanton.

This story recounts a nightmare journey across France taken by two girls, Rosalie Duval and her English friend, Amy Burbidge, the latter deserted by her elderly Companion after stealing all Amy's money. The girls are carrying some papers which will release Rosalie's mother and elder sister who are to be tried (and condemned) by the Revolutionary Tribunal in Paris.

Pursuing the two girls in an effort to obtain the papers is a highly menacing villain, Jules Lafaire, who must destroy the papers for he knows they will expose him as a monster who "has been betraying France even whilst he professed to be working for its salvation."

There is no Scarlet Pimpernel in this story; Rosalie and Amy have to do all the heroics themselves, but they do have a young family retainer who materialises to aid them when they are in dire straits.

In April 1963, in SGOL 399, 2nd Series, appeared "Sign of the Hawk". This is an amazingly late appearance by an author who first appeared with a "New and Original" school story, "The Secret of Study 11" in SGOL 89, 1st Series, in May 1926. Thirty-seven years later, after appearances in-between as Rhoda Fleming and Peter Langley, Ronald Fleming used his very earliest nom-de-plume, Renee Frazer, as the by-line for "Sign of the Hawk". Truly, the old Amalgamated Press staff writers seem to go on forever in one guise or another.

If this story appears to contain a fleeting reminder of the one by Joy Phillips it is only because of the coincidence that both French leading ladies share the same surname and both have an intrepid English girl to give them assistance and support. Lucette Duval's companion in her frightening endeavours to escape the clutches of Madame Guillotine is Susan Manning and both girls are pupils at Dame Thatcher's Academy for Young Ladies situated on the Kentish cliffs, from whence Lucette is kidnapped and taken back to France for trial. Susan Manning has a scholarly, eccentric, slightly older brother, Peter. He is a naturalist and is often away from his home near the Academy in search of material for his writings.

It is no accident that the English girl companion can be labelled as intrepid, one may even say heroic. Echoes of Sydney Carton's, "I go to do a far, far better thing..." occur when Susan changes clothes with Lucette (to whom she has given a powerful sleeping draught) so that she can be left in the condemned cell while the supposed English girl (Lucette) is carried outside to freedom.

This story has its Pimpernel, too. He is known as Red Hawk and, like the Pimpernel's "They seek him here, they seek him there..." Red Hawk has the

following piece of doggerel: "I ride with the storm/I fly o'er the sea---/A foe to the tyrant/a friend of the free!/The hawk swoops for justice and liberty!" which he chalks on doors when he wants to taunt the evil Gaston Lefour who hides himself in a long Dracula-like black cloak concealing an ugly scar on his cheek. Lefeur needs to dispose of Red Hawk because he alone knows that scarface is an aristocrat who has fled the country and returned to ally himself with the Republican Commune under an assumed name, a crime which can only lead to the guillotine if the authorities find out.

"The time has come", Susan is told by Red Hawk's young accomplice, "for you to know your brother's secret. He's the brave Englishman you've so often heard of - the one who's risked his life for so many out there..."

"Peter is Red Hawk! Oh, goodness, how BLIND I've been!" How romantic! How strange there weren't more of them!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY - BETTY, JOAN AND PEGGY!

by Marion Waters

From the very early days of 'School Friend' weekly, I was very impressed with the adventures of Betty Roland, Joan Derwent and Peggy West, the three fourth form schoolgirls who made up the secret society known as the 'Silent Three'. They immediately became my favourite story paper characters. Like most youthful readers I was at first attracted by the pleasing disguise worn by the girls. Both adult and juvenile fiction in the post-war period were adorned with a variety of masked and hooded figures, but there was something particularly appealing about the long green robes worn by our three friends. They looked attractive as well as mysterious.



As I grew older I became aware of the particular 'atmosphere' of the stories. Normally I don't care for fictional characters who are 'too good to be true', but there was something elusive about the characters of Betty, Joan and Peggy. They were kind and warm hearted as well as being brave and physically tough. Betty in particular could be moderately ruthless when it came to exposing a bully or trouble maker. The girls were utterly 'human', on occasions they made mistakes, and they had their weaknesses. This made them more realistic and perhaps more acceptable.

The adventures of the Silent Three were believable. They dealt with bullying prefects, crooked mistresses and other criminal small fry. Such people could have been tackled by a trio of brave and intelligent teenage girls. When schoolgirl secret societies are pitted against gangsters, foreign agents or the power of the Wehrmacht, I rapidly start to lose interest.

By the time the last of the 'original' adventures appeared in 'School Friend', in 1957, Betty, Joan and Peggy had become almost real people to me. In later years if

I had met a real life member of the group, I would have not been in the least surprised. This was a curious feeling. Mary, our editor has described the Silent Three picture strips as possessing a 'sense of character'. I can think of no better way of describing them.



TED BALDOCK (Cambridge): The April issue of C.D. has just arrived, and I read your remarks concerning 'Baggy Trimble' of St. Jim's. I am largely in agreement with you in that Baggy is/was by no means so attractive a character as W.G. Bunter. He was, as you say, rather an unpleasant fellow. Not having re-read many 'Gems' in recent years I am a little uncertain how I should view Baggy in these later days - much as before I imagine, Billy Bunter is, and always has been a particular favourite with me. I have always thought that there is far more in his podgy make-up than is readily visible.

JOHN LEWIS (Uttoxeter): I thoroughly concur with Mr. Heath's assessment of the Magnet's Lamb Series. For too many years this superb sequence of salmon Magnets has had to suffer the adverse criticism given it in the Charles Hamilton Companion vol. 1 (1972). Here it is averred that "No voice is raised to contradict the universal assertion that the Lamb series in Nos. 1660-1675 was too long. This condemnation is indeed well founded..."; and "On balance, therefore, the Lamb series was not a success...". Like Mr. Heath I too disagree with these authoritative statements and opine the above series - and indeed the whole of the Salmon era - cand stand comparison with anything from the other periods of the Magnet.

FOR SALE: SCHOOLGIRLS 16,17,18,19,26,140,179 - all in very good condition: 75p each, plus postage. Also no. 564, the last one, issued on May 18th, 1940 - complete but very battered - 25p plus postage. *The Popular Books of Girls' Stories*, 1930 - complete except that spine is missing, and *The Blue Book of Stories for Girls*, 1931, 50p each plus postage. *The Wonder Book of Why and What*, Ward Lock, 4th edition - £1.00 plus postage. *Ernest Thompson Seton; Billy, the Dog That Made Good* (with dust-jacket) and *The Biography of a Grizzly* (companion volumes with illustrated hard-covers) - 75p each plus postage.

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