

STORY PAPER

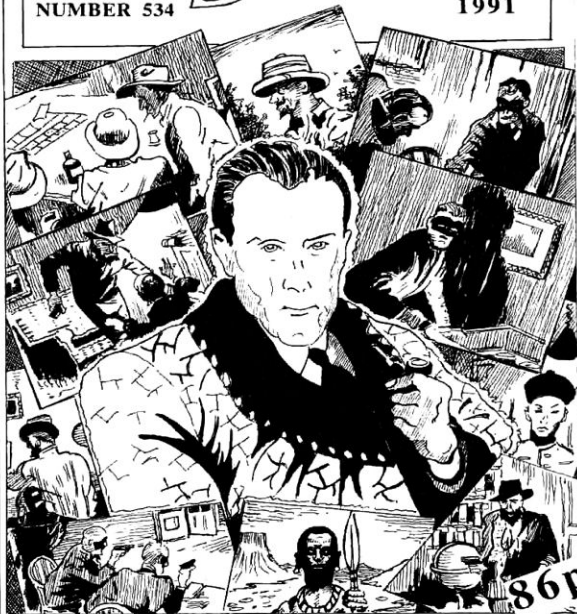
COLLECTORS'

VOLUME 45

NUMBER 534

DIGEST

JUNE
1991



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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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THE EDITOR'S CHAT



I feel sure that most readers will agree with the sentiments expressed in an article by Mr. Ian Godden in this issue about reading for sheer pleasure. He is challenging a point made by some reviewers and feature-writers in whom, apparently, the reading of popular fiction produces guilt rather than enjoyment.

Certainly this has not been a problem for me. I

have never measured into spoonfuls my intake of reading for entertainment and balanced this against the number of 'serious' books which I've been absorbing in parallel. Reading, since early childhood, has always been a joy, an exploration and a pushing out of one's imaginative horizons. No-one gives us better opportunities for this than the 'popular' writers whose achievements seem at times to stimulate irritation, wrath and, perhaps most of all, envy in critics who take their subject and themselves rather too seriously. However much they may be denigrated, it is often the stories of the great band of popular school, crime, western, adventure, historical and romantic writers which provide unique fascination and excitements.

I feel that to try to divide fiction into 'popular' and 'serious' is essentially a mistake. We have many examples of yesterday's pops becoming today's classics, and of what started out as ephemeral becoming collectable over two or three reading generations.

A newish magazine which unashamedly celebrates a wide range of addictive fiction is MILLION. This attractively produced bi-monthly is not yet easily obtainable in all bookshops and newsagents but it is available on subscription (£12 for six issues) from Popular Fictions, 124 Osborne Road, Brighton, BN1 6LU. I am one of the magazine's advisory editors, and my recent contributions include reviews of romantic fiction, articles on Baroness Orczy and Ethel M. Dell, an 'in depth' interview with Dame Barbara Cartland and a fresh browse through E.M. Turner's *Boys Will Be Boys*. MILLION's enterprising editor, David Pringle, feels that many readers will welcome a magazine which concentrates entirely on popular fiction, and so far the response has been extremely encouraging.

Most of the articles and interviews are devoted to adult rather than juvenile fiction (although authors such as Frank Richards, Richmal Crompton and W.E. Johns will certainly get a showing too). From the three issues already published it is difficult to pick out specially succulent gems from the many good things provided. Authors interviewed include Dick Francis, Colin Dexter, Joan Aiken and Leslie Thomas, and there have been articles on (amongst many others) Dennis Wheatley, Marie Corelli, Judith Krantz, George MacDonald Fraser, P.C. Wren, Arthur Conan Doyle, Sax Rohmer and Rider Haggard. There are some interesting re-assessments of books about popular fiction which have stood the test of time, notably Richard Usborne's CLUBLAND HEROES and Colin Watson's SNOBBERY WITH VIOLENCE, as well as information about sequels 'by other hands' and relevant aspects of films. Altogether MILLION seems to me a wonderfully intriguing mixture of mystery, adventure, romance and western, and of old and new. Several C.D. readers have asked me about this magazine so I am taking this opportunity of describing it.

MARY CADOGAN

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SEXTON BLAKE AND DETECTIVE WEEKLY
Number 5

by J.E.M.

Africa was the favourite setting for most of Rex Hardinge's Blake stories but *The Tramp in Dress Clothes* (DW 7) has a solid English background and kicks off on the Hampshire-Sussex border with a couple of singularly unpleasant tramps, "marked by all the evilness of years in the gutter". Why one of them is clubbed to death and found hanging from a tree in dress clothes; how and why a beautiful girl is kidnapped from a train, and what important secret is held by a folder marked X4:M147-154 provide a genuine puzzle for Sexton Blake to solve.

This is a suspenseful mystery that moves with style and pace. The opening chapters are especially impressive and show the skills of a true story-teller. Though Hardinge was an expert on Africa, I always found his famous Losely-Lobangu stories formulaic and often tedious. For me, he performed far better on home territory, as in this yarn, and I shall come back to him again, later in this series.

Parker's atmospheric drawing nicely catches the flavour of *The Tramp in Dress Clothes*.



The man walked like an ape, his shadow grotesque and hideous on the wall. Carefully Joe followed.

The story by C. Malcolm Hinks entitled **THE RIDDLE OF THE ROVERS** that ran in **THE BOYS' REALM** in 1927 was memorable on two counts. It was a serial featuring Sexton Blake and Tinker, and it dealt with football as the background to a murder mystery.

Two supporting illustrations to this exciting tale are reproduced here. The second of these is unique as it depicts Blake displaying his prowess as a soccer striker with excellent ball control.

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RIDDLE OF THE ROVERS!
 BY C. MALCOLM HINKS

Opening chapters of a striking new story of football and detective adventure.
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No. 18. (New Series.)

Every Wednesday.

November 1916. 1927.

When the body of Roland Crane, ex-chairman of Northport Rovers Football Club, is found below the cliffs, William Baldock, a director of the Club, suspects foul play although the police are treating the death as suicide. Baldock sends an urgent summons to his old friend Blake to come up to Northport in Yorkshire to investigate the case. So, assuming

the name of Stanley Brett, Blake arrives at Northport accompanied by Tinker posing as his valet.

Baldock introduces 'Brett' to the officials and players of the Rovers team as a man of means, who is an artist and a footballer as well. The detective joins the team in a training session for a trial. The manager of the Rovers is suitably impressed by his obvious skill as he twists in and out among the players. (Tinker in fact mentions that Blake was a Varsity soccer blue.) The upshot is that 'Stanley Brett' signs amateur forms for Northport Rovers Football Club.



PRETTY PLAY! Tony Green sent forward a perfect pass to Burton Blake. Finding his road to goal blocked by the back, the detective smartly back-heeled to the young forward who was rushing up to support him.

WANTED: 'Magnet' Greyfriars Press volume No. 16 'Harry Wharton's Enemy', No. 17 'The Black Sheep of Greyfriars', No. 29 'The Mystery of the Moat House', No. 39 'The Ghost of Polgelly'. Greyfriars Book Club volume No. 9 'The Boy from the Underworld'. Must be fine or very good condition. Also other volumes.

W.L. BAWDEN, 14 Highland Park, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 2EX.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Annuals 1939, 1939, 1940, 1941. A very good price paid for the set of all four in good condition.

TERRY BEENHAM, 20 Longshots Close, Broomfield, Chelmsford, CM1 5DX. Tel. 0245 443059.



WAS THIS BROOKS' BEST SCHOOL STORY?

by H. Heath

Serials which featured School Barrings Outs were prominent in the writings of Charles Hamilton and Edwy Searles Brooks.

In my opinion the most memorable Barring Out story appeared in the Nelson Lee in 1921/22; the Communist School series which ran to 13 issues in the Old Series, nos. 336-348. It went on to feature in the Monster Library (no. 19), and then finally in four issues of the S.O.L. (nos. 354, 357, 360 and 363) in 1938/39.

It is interesting to note that in the S.O.L. the key words of "Communist" and "Soviet" used in the Old Series were omitted altogether, and replaced by the expression of the "Brotherhood of the Free".

The new Science Master at St. Frank's, Mr. Hugh Trenton, is endeavouring to achieve the dismissal from the school of Dr. Stafford, the Headmaster. He is engaged in systematically drugging the Head who, as a result of the drug, reacts violently to pupils on the slightest pretext. On several occasions Dr. Stafford punishes victims by the savage use of the cane.

Such treatment naturally causes bitter resentment in the school, and particularly in the Remove whose allegiance is split between those loyal to Dr. Stafford and those who are against him. Although Nipper, Handforth and Company remain loyal to the Headmaster and Nelson Lee, the remainder, led by a previously shadowy Timothy Armstrong, call themselves Rebels and plot the seizure of the Ancient House. With Timothy Tucker supplying the ideas, the ultimate aim of the Rebels is to take over the running of the School.

After the seizure of the empty Ancient House towards the end of the Christmas Holidays, the Rebels defeat two attacks on their "fortress". Eventually through an intended joke that went wrong, victory is conceded to the Rebels and Tucker's ideas are put into operation.

Actually St. Frank's is only one Public School in the Country affected by Communism/Brotherhood of the Free, as Mr. Hugh Trenton is only part of an Organisation devoted to changing the school system. Needless to say the experiment of running St. Frank's on vastly different lines is a horrible disaster, and of course Mr. Trenton is finally unmasked.

An article in the C.D. some years ago made an interesting observation on this Serial. In E.S. Turner's book, "Boys Will Be Boys", it is the only story by Charles Hamilton or Edwy Searles Brooks to be reviewed at some length.

Although I have read only a small percentage of the Nelson Lee, I am convinced that this series is very probably one of the greatest written by Brooks.

It is ironic that of the three Nelson Lee facsimiles published by Howard Baker, one did feature an earlier Barring Out story. This was the much shorter Howard Martin Series which in my view did not reach the high standard of the "Brotherhood of the Free". It is likely that the latter was considered for inclusion in the facsimile programme, but was ruled out on account of its great length. This is all too understandable as, alas, the Nelson Lee Volumes could not have sold well in the facsimiles.



FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE

by W.O.G. Lofts

After Sherlock Holmes, Sexton Blake, and Nelson Lee, I would venture to suggest that easily the next best known detective for C.D. readers, and especially Magnet enthusiasts, was Ferrers Locke. He was created by Charles Hamilton way back in the early days of his writing school stories for Amalgamated Press Ltd., and it may surprise some readers to know that he originally appeared in the blue covered Gem before switching over to the Magnet.

According to 'Frank Richards' in his Autobiography, Locke was based on a very alert, keen-looking Director, whom he once saw walking along the corridors of Fleetway House, though he never named him. Editors of the old A.P. whom I saw in post-war days, (including the Magnet editor) told me that without question this must have been William H. Back. Head of the Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee Departments, Back not only looked like a detective, but acted the part in real life. He was instrumental in building Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee into household names.

In his days at St. Jim's, Locke's most memorable performance was in a pair of stories in 1912 concerning the mysterious 'Mr X', otherwise Captain Mellish. This was probably his last appearance at the famous Sussex School.

Ferrers Locke was related to Dr. Locke, the Headmaster of Greyfriars, though I'm certain that Frank Richards never exactly defined the relationship, theories being that Ferrers was his younger brother, cousin, or nephew. Confusion was increased by substitute writers, and editorial columns in answer to readers.

Why Ferrers Locke was switched to Greyfriars is not known, though it was most fortunate for Magnet readers, as he appeared in some great stories, for example that glorious China Series where he played the part of a Sea Captain in charge of the expedition to China. Locke also had roles in the 'Ravenspur Grange' and 'Cavandale Abbey' series. Amongst so many more series, one must mention the 'Slim Jim' series, where Mr. Quelch was kidnapped and imprisoned.

Jack Drake was Locke's recognised assistant in Magnet days. How he achieved this role can be read in the extremely rare 1921 Greyfriars Boys Herald series. Drake had originally been at St. Winifred's School, temporarily on the floating school 'The Benbow'. Later when the school broke up, Jack Drake and his friend Dick Rodney went to Greyfriars. By that time the Remove was getting cluttered up with boys, so consequently 'Frank Richards' rather cleverly (after Drake's Father had lost all his money) made him assistant to Ferrers Locke. Dick Rodney was just dropped from the Greyfriars saga.

It was in the early twenties that Ferrers Locke was taken over by other writers, chiefly Hedley O'Mant, the Chief Magnet sub-editor. The character was to be used in detective stories and serials to supplement the long Greyfriars tales. To say that the creator was annoyed about this was to put it mildly. In a letter to me in the late fifties, Mr. Hamilton expressed the view that 'they had stolen his character, lock, stock, and barrel', the main culprit being 'Hedley Scott' the pen-name used by O'Mant for his stories. However, later investigations indicated that other writers who used the character included George E. Rochester, Francis Warwick, Stanton Hope, Percy A. Clarke and F.W. Young, probably commissioned by O'Mant to pen the series.

There seems no doubt that Ferrers Locke was a very popular character, for even old Sexton Blake stories were reprinted in the early 'thirties in the Boys Friend Library with the name of Blake being changed to Locke! Living in Baker Street, with the great Sherlock Holmes and Sexton Blake as neighbours, Locke has been criticised at times unfairly for 'not noticing the obvious in some cases'. But one must not forget that Locke was created for the schoolboy story market, and not for the Agatha Christie crime novel field. Locke was the ideal detective in a boy's mind. Young, alert, placid, strong, athletic, fearless, brilliant at disguises, and fully understanding boys (even Bunter!), Ferrers Locke will always be remembered as a first class supporting character, to give strong support to the mystery themes at Greyfriars.

HALCYON DAYS

by Alan Pratt

I expect that most CD readers have fond memories of particular comics or story papers that they enjoyed as children.

Nothing can truly replace the magic of those early years when everything seemed new and fresh, when the adventures of favourite heroes seemed so real and uncritical innocence made acceptance easy.

In the fifties, when I was a boy, there was a pretty wide range of publications available and I liked so many that it is hard to single out a favourite. It was really a case of "horses for courses".

The Eagle was a polished and well produced weekly and had great merit socially in that it was taken by vast numbers of my schoolfellows. The latest developments in the current Dan Dare or Luck of the Legion serials were discussed at length in the playground and, at one time, Eagle awareness was almost a prerequisite for group acceptance. I, personally, had little interest in the technical drawings of aeroplanes and ships splashed across the centre pages but had to admit that they helped give the Eagle class!

Of course the Eagle was essentially a quick read and was designed for immediate impact. The opposite, in fact, of the four Thomson story papers that had a rather quaint, old-fashioned appearance and were bought only by avid readers seeking longer bouts of escapism. I found (and still find) the format fascinating and looked forward to the Wizard being delivered with the morning paper. The stories were invariably well written and sometimes very witty in a down to earth sort of way. Wizard heroes were almost always of humble origins; working class lads, gypsies, orphans, etc. but often possessing marvellous athletic or sporting skills. I found the stories about Wilson, the master athlete who lived for hundreds of years on roots and herbs absolutely riveting and I loved reading about Bouncing Bernard Briggs the goalkeeper who never conceded a goal. Some readers may recall that Briggs travelled around on a clapped-out motorbike with a bath as a sidecar to aid him in his occupation as a junk dealer. Like most prominent Thomson stars he was always falling foul of pompous bureaucrats who either succumbed (eventually) to our Bernard's native wit or were subsequently found to be crooked!



Two comics that afforded me great pleasure in the mid-fifties were the Sun and its companion paper the Comet. For me, these two really took off when the price was increased from 2d to 3d and the papers were given an entirely new look with coloured covers and centre pages. I particularly enjoyed the extremely well drawn western strips about Billy the Kid and Buffalo Bill and those spooky Dick Turpin serials were just too much. To add even greater appeal both of these papers were printed on unusual, high quality paper that had a most distinctive and pleasant smell!

Like almost everyone else at the time, I enjoyed the Beano and the Dandy (these were almost compulsory reading) but I found the comic strips in Film Fun a whole lot more satisfying. Somebody once sent me a heap of old back numbers when I was ill in bed and studying them at leisure, I was astonished at how much background detail was packed into each frame. The captions under the pictures were usually

good for an added laugh, often containing excruciating puns and truly nonsensical observations of a kind found in no other comic of the period.

I have written in a previous article about my great passion for the British reprints of the Fawcett western comics. Suffice to mention here that the best source of these locally was a second-hand bookshop which opened only when the elderly owner felt up to it. All collectors will understand my anguish at seeing much wanted treasures heaped invitingly in the window of a closed shop. I spent hours sitting on the wooden step waiting, in vain, for opening time. When I struck lucky it was pure joy!



From *Dick Turpin and the Phantom of the Highway*

There were other papers of course. At one time or another, I probably enjoyed (to a lesser or greater degree) just about every one that was available. There were some good strips in the *Knockout* (Billy Bunter, Our Ernie and Stonehenge Kit) and *Chips*, coming to the end of a long run, still featured Weary Willy and Tired Tim, Homeless Hector and Casey Court.

I seem to remember a particularly gripping written western serial appearing in *Radio Fun* but couldn't possibly name it. There was a story in *Adventure* about an alien spacecraft which landed in Trafalgar Square. The memories though vague are both timeless and endless.

As an adult, I enjoy re-visiting these gems of the past albeit in a more critical way. My criticisms, however, are always tempered by memories of the hours of total pleasure that these wonderful old papers gave me when the world and everything in it was young.

THE DELIGHTS OF READING FOR PLEASURE

by Ian H. Godden

Mark Caldicott's article in the January C.D. *Sunday Morning With The League Of The Green Triangle* is an absolute delight:

"I took an extremely large pot of tea, a full toast rack and a quantity of marmalade out into the garden and settled down to read E.S. Brooks." This is splendid, superb, marvellous and just the way it should be.

Some time ago I came across a reviewer, in a newspaper which shall remain nameless, who prefaced her remarks with this:

"There is a slight feeling of guilt associated with the enjoyment of light reading; the words 'readable' and 'amusing' in a critical assessment always have a slightly censorious tone."

What absolute drivel this is. The reviewer had, apparently, enjoyed the crime fiction she was reviewing and felt guilty about it. It's amazing the number of so-called educated people who feel the same way. It makes one wonder about the value of education, doesn't it?

This reviewer's guilty squirmings about enjoying something so obviously beyond the critical pale as mystery stories is similar to E.M. Forster's saying that liking stories is in bad taste. This is arrant nonsense, as is his comment about waiting for our brains to decay before we can claim to like reading stories. This sort of attitude is anathema to me. I've read thousands of books and story papers and never felt a single twinge of guilt. There must be something wrong with me... probably a lack of 'proper' education!

One reason why I have such a high regard for William Vivian Butler's marvellous book *The Durable Desperadoes* is that it is an unashamed paen of praise to some of the great characters of popular fiction: The Saint, The Baron, The Toff, Bulldog Drummond, Blackshirt, Norman Conquest and others.

In his Preface to this book Anthony Lejeune says "No author who gives pleasure to his readers can properly be dismissed as a bad writer". Lejeune also quotes Frank Richards "...that great and good man" who, when interviewed on his 80th birthday, was asked, rather patronisingly, if he had never wanted to do anything better and replied, "There is nothing better". Just so...

It's time now to get the tea and toast ready and then I'll settle down to one of ESB's Archie Glenthorne stories. What could be better?

A tyrant throned in lonely pride,
Who lives himself, and cares for naught beside;
Who gave thee, summoned from primeval night,
A thousand laws, and not a single right...

HOLMES

Sir Hilton Popper, Bart. A choleric old gentleman of indeterminate years, and Lord of broad acres designated as 'Poppers Policies'. The self appointed Lord of other areas of heath and woodland which, ab initio (according to his Lordship) to state the case mildly tend to be grey areas over which his stewardship is - or could be - in law extremely suspect. Chief among these is 'Poppers Island' (so called) lying in one of the broadest stretches of the river Sark not far distant from Greyfriars school.

'Poppers Island', a green oasis surrounded by murmuring waters of the river. Thickly clothed with Willow, Ash and Oak trees, one mighty specimen of the latter standing in the centre of the island, a giant among its fellows. It has from time to time played a not unimportant role in the Greyfriars story, affording shelter for fellows who regard the island as 'fair game' and use its facilities or jolly picnic parties during the summer term. It has also frequently provided temporary sanctuary and hiding place for sundry doubtful characters, bank robbers, burglars, etc. on the run from the forces of the law. A blatantly bold notice by the landing place stating that the island is 'private property' and 'strictly out of bounds' is ignored by most Greyfriars fellows with an adventurous spirit. Horace Coker for example has loudly announced on many occasions that he cares 'not a jot' for old Popper or his impertinent notice board.

Thus has Sir Hilton's claim to the island been doubted and flagrantly ignored. The observation has been made that the mere glimpse of a Greyfriars cap among the trees along the river has a similar effect upon him as a red garment to a temperamental bull. The origin of this disrespectful remark has been traced to Harold Skinner of the Remove whose astuteness (not always a particularly admirable trait in a junior boy) is close to the target in this case. Sir Hilton's bellow following such a discovery is remarkably akin to that of an angry bovine. It seems likely that the bucolic baronet entered into a state of irrational adulthood at one fell swoop, completely side-tracking boyhood and youth, so little patience or tolerance does he display on the occasions when an unfortunate victim falls into the hands of either himself or those of any of his numerous keepers.

Sir Hilton Popper, Bart. claims to hold ancient deeds granting his family and its heirs rights of possession of the island for all time. These documents enjoy a shadowy (indeed an invisible) existence, for no one has ever set eyes upon them.

Sir Hilton is a governor of Greyfriars, and possibly the snowy aspect of Dr. Locke's hair is in a large degree attributable to the constant stream of criticisms and complaints he receives from this peppery gent whose ancestral seat lies almost adjacent to the school bounds. Sir Hilton has but to stalk across his park and along Friardale Lane to arrive upon the School's doorstep, intent upon ruffling its calm and scholastic atmosphere.

When in conversation Sir Hilton is always intent on asserting his opinions forcibly and imperiously upon his fellows, most of whom he regards as underlings. He does so by a series of barks, snorts, roars, and ferocious glares from an eye which habitually sports a monocle. A curious idiosyncrasy of sharply terminating each utterance with 'What - what', although disconcerting, has been parodied up and down the school these many years. It is possible that it is intended to intimidate those who are, in his lofty view, lesser mortals. Happily the majority of Greyfriars fellows remain singularly unimpressed.

Sir Hilton may hardly be classified as a lovable old gentleman. Colonel Wharton and other members of the governing board, together with Dr. Locke, usually manage by the exercise of Job-like patience and Solomon-like diplomacy to placate the more outrageous outbursts and ramblings of this fiery old warrior. They are fairly constant in steering him away from extreme views to their own more moderate and calm reasoning.

Over the years 'Old Popper' has played only a minor role in the Greyfriars story. He is hardly eligible for any laurels for popularity among the Greyfriars 'men'. But he is a fact of life. Without him the picture would be incomplete, although life would be a deal less harassing - particularly during the summer term when the fellows roam far and wide in the woodlands and along the river. At these times many of them wish that Popper Court were located more distantly; in the next county perhaps, or, for preference, several counties farther afield.

Let William George Bunter have the final word on the ferocious Baronet. Wailed he on one painful occasion "I say you fellows, that old buffer actually whacked me on the bags with his wretched crop, me you know, a Public school man. Is that the action of one gentleman towards another? I jolly well nearly knocked him down but ..."

BOYS' MAGAZINE

by Leslie Vosper

I find it difficult now to put into writing just what my feelings were when, on opening last October's issue of the C.D. at page 10, I saw the reproduction of the front cover of the *Boys' Magazine*.

My mind paced back about seventy years. In those days there was no such thing as school dinner; you had to get home as quickly as you could, enjoy to the full Mum's beautifully cooked meal, and be back in the playground by 2 p.m. But on this particular day in 1922 or '23, being first out of school and dashing like mad

through the big, wrought iron gate I came face to face with an individual guarding a well-crammed sack. Before I could say "WOW!" or whatever else may have been the current slang, I found a bunch of "mags" pushed into my hands. I didn't know what they were; I just accepted the gift and continued my marathon-like pace for home. And when eventually, for a moment, to get my second wind, I stopped, with heart pounding, I was able to glance at the bundle bestowed upon me. I discovered about a dozen *Boys' Magazines!*

They were all rubber-stamped in strong purple - "Gratis: Not for Re-sale" or words to that effect.

Quite obviously they were back-numbers and formed the subject of a publisher's advertising scheme. Of course, the intention must surely have been that these copies should be distributed at the rate of one copy per boy; the gent at the gate, however, had but one thought - to get rid of his sackful as quickly as possible.

But here was my introduction to this grand little book, and before long I was hooked. I was already an avid reader of *The Magnet*, *The Gem* and *The Nelson Lee*, with the green *Boys' Friend* as an "occasional". Dare I ask my parents for more pocket money? Fortunately, in our family reading was greatly encouraged, so the *Boys' Magazine* became a "regular" for quite some time.

To this day I still remember the serial "The Raiding Planet"! Miles in advance of its time, it told the story of the planet "Thor", the inhabitants of which were able to control the course of their world throughout the Universe. I forget just how!

The Thorians, who were armed with pistols which fired a death ray, had devised lethal, mobile towers which did not rely upon wheels for their means of progression, but on spheres; or rather, one very large sphere.

On "our side" we had a professor (I forget his name) and his two nephews. Our chief piece of armament was the "Atom Destroyer" invented by the professor. This weapon, too would appear to have been a ray gun, for from the illustrations which

LONDON HELD TO RANSOM. SEE INSIDE.



STAGGERING LONG TALE of the MONOCLED MANHUNTER

Vol. XI—No. 307—January 21, 1928.

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went with the stories this masterpiece resembled a large type of hypodermic syringe measuring about eighteen inches in length.

I seem to remember one bloodthirsty instance. One of the professor's nephews, possibly through capture, was aboard one of the Thorians' travelling sphere-towers. He was armed with an enemy pistol. Finding himself about to be attacked by a single adversary he fired his pistol. His opponent was cut clean in half! Ugh! How could they think this up in 1922?

For the life of me I cannot recall what finally happened to Thor and the Thorians. Perhaps one of our readers can fill in a few blanks? At all events, our Earth still continues in its usual orbit, so the professor and his nephews must have triumphed!

Then there were a couple of school stories which stand out. The leading character in one was a certain Jimmy Duggan - schoolboy film star (talkies had yet to be invented): the outstanding character in the other was a "Sprucer" Smith, humorist par excellence, and something of a detective into the bargain.

I seem to remember a barring-out set of stories with Jimmy Duggan, the film studios, a rope ladder all involved to obtain more food supplies for the dwindling stock. What happened next?

Happy days!

DOROTHY CARTER: NOVELIST OF THE AIR - Part Three by Squadron Leader Dennis L. Bird, RAF (retired)

"Sword of the Air" was first published in May 1941, and D.L. Mays' cover is a good representation of a Hawker Hurricane. The book most effectively captures the drama of that first weekend of World War 2 in September 1939 which those of us who lived through it can never forget. Captain Duncan, now back with Imperial Airways flying Ensigns into Croydon, is bringing in loads of Continental refugees from Hitler, who has just invaded Poland. Mrs. Duncan, unrealistic as ever, is full of hope: "There won't be a war... he wouldn't dare!"

Marise takes a different view. "Better, surely, to have a war and be done with it than this incessant wondering, living on the top of a grumbling volcano." Sentiments that might not be universal in 1991!

The Prime Minister broadcast next day, and "what Mr. Chamberlain said that Sunday morning all the world knows." Britain was at war with Germany - and the air-raid sirens wailed ten minutes later. (Fortunately it was a false alarm.)

Since January 1939 Marise had been training girls who had joined the Civil Air Guard (a kind of "Dad's Army" of the air which enrolled both the elderly and the female). Now she tries to join the Women's Auxiliary Air Force: "I suppose my flying experience is of no use?" she said rather wistfully. "None at all!" said the Sergeant cheerfully.

To her annoyance, Marise is turned down - but this is because she is wanted for other duties: ferrying aircraft from factory to squadrons. Commodore Sir Gerard d'Erlanger had formed Air Transport Auxiliary in the autumn of 1939; Dorothy Carter has slightly anticipated the involvement of women pilots. In reality, Pauline Gower was not authorised to recruit the first eight women until January 1940, by which time Marise had mastered the art of flying Hawker Hurricanes and delivering

them to the RAF. She even takes a Short Sunderland flying-boat to a Coastal Command base, where she meets her old stunt-pilot friend, now Flight Lieutenant Jim Grant. (However, four-engined flying-boats were the only kind of aircraft the ATA girls did not fly - not because of any doubts about their competence, but because of the risk of landing in bad weather and having to spend the night aboard, with men!)

Soon she is flying fighters to France, where two more old friends are now RAF officers: Jim Custance and Tony Arcoll, her fellow-instructors from Bonnington Flying Club days. A spell of leave sees them all, with Jim Grant, at Aldington, where Mrs. Duncan's war work consists of running a hostel for evacuee children. And we hear of the other "Mistress of the Air" folk. Lady Wilhelmina Williams is running a canteen in Folkestone with her "niece" (presumably her grand-daughter Pauline is meant), and General Barclay is organising the local ARP (Air Raid Precautions).

That happy weekend is soon followed by grim news for Mrs. Duncan; fortunately the General is on hand to comfort her. Marise ferried a Hurricane to France, in fog, and is missing. In fact, her fighter was damaged by anti-aircraft fire, and she has force-landed behind the German lines. She sets fire to the Hurricane (the subject of D.L. Mays' cover picture), and embarks on a series of complicated adventures hardly typical of an ATA pilot. She meets her father, now "Herr Ebermann" and working for British Intelligence, and soon she too is in the espionage game, working as "Magda Vorenstern" at a Messerschmitt 110 factory. "The Duncan family had always been good at languages... Marise spoke German fluently." Eventually Jim Custance and Tony Arcoll rescue her - in a Vickers Wellington, landing in a field at night without runway lights! And how did fighter pilots manage to acquire a bomber?

"Sword of the Air" really goes beyond the bounds of the possible, but the people ring true, and as always Dorothy Carter is convincing on detail. There are accurate references to the Air Ministry "in Kingsway", ATA girls from "across the seas", low cloud "described by meteorologists as QBI" - even to Kennards' store in North End, Croydon! And the aircraft are satisfyingly real: Airspeed Oxford, Dornier 17, "a flight of Wellesleys".

*

For the last two books, D.L. Mays was replaced as illustrator by Newton Whittaker, who was soon to become known also as the artist for Pamela Brown's five "Blue Door Theatre" books.

In her last two adventures Marise has feminine colleagues again. There were women aircrew in the Red Air Force, and in "Comrades of the Air" (1942) she makes friends with Katya Vanevska, a Russian girl air-gunner. Marise is in the USSR at the request of "The Chief - the woman who was responsible for the network of women pilots" (clearly Pauline Gower, though not named). Captain Duncan is in Russia already; so are the two Jims and Tony Arcoll, as part of the (real) RAF Hurricane wing there. Its CO was our sector commander when I received my first RAF posting in 1950: Group Captain H.N.G. Ramsbottom-Isherwood. Thus does Miss Carter intertwine fact and fantasy!

A German attack necessitates evacuating the aerodrome, and Marise finds herself flying "one of the medium bombers, S.27". This is a rare instance of the author being imprecise about aeroplanes. I think she must mean a Tupolev SB-2, a

twin-engined machine "as sweet to fly as one of Marise's own Beauforts". She shoots down an ME 109, which "hit the ground like a fountain of fire. I hope he was dead first".

COMRADES

OF THE

AIR



D O R O T H Y C A R T E R

The rest of the story is too complex to summarise, but there are revealing sidelights on Marise's personality: something arouses "all her native obstinacy", and Jim Grant says "I know your argumentative temperament". She is a lifelike character, even if some of her exploits become improbable!

*

"Marise Flies South" (1944) is the last we hear of her. She is in Australia this time, so "East" or "South-east" would be more appropriate. And why did Miss Carter abandon the series title when "Cobbers of the Air" would have served well?

Her fellow-pilots this time are Cicely Newton of Australia and an American, Janie Holmes. Marise has flown a Liberator bomber out to Darwin, and the three girls are now ferrying Hawker Typhoons across to Port Moresby in new Guinea. Newton Whittaker's painting shows Defiants, but I do not think either of these fighters was ever used in the Far East.

More believably, the girls are soon taking Bristol Beaufort torpedo-bombers. Marise "knew they were building Beauforts out here" - true: 700 of them in Australia. On one flight over New Guinea she is attacked by "three Zero fighters" - the formidable Mitsubishi S-00, or A6M as it is called nowadays. Incredibly, she shoots them all down before she herself crashes. It takes a great effort to imagine the slow Beaufort with its light machine-guns as a match for the cannon-armed "Zero"!

Marise and her colleagues are now stranded in the dense New Guinea jungle. They meet a missionary couple, Revd. Thomas Maitland and his sister Laura (re-incarnations of the Withersprings in "Snow Queen"), and then all are captured by the enemy. But rescue is at hand, in the shape of a German officer on a military mission to the Japanese. This turns out to be Marise's father, now Major Duncan, in disguise. To maintain his impersonation, he has to treat the captives quite harshly, to Miss Maitland's indignation. There are also tensions between both Duncans and the undisciplined American girl, Janie, and these personality clashes add spice to the narrative.

Finally they are all picked up by a Beaufort, and our last glimpse of Marise is in discussion with her American friend Lieutenant Pete Wilkie. "As long as we (the English-speaking people) stand together we ought to be able to do something for this silly old world. And not in the war only, but in the peace afterwards." For, she adds, "Peace will come".



Beaufort 1 (1945) of No. 42 Squadron.

Earlier, the same Pete had given his view of her: "I know what to do on every occasion, and I've noticed you're a bit that way yourself, Marise". So she was: an attractive individual, resourceful, competent, and thoroughly likeable. I was very fond of her, and I often wondered what happened to her afterwards.

UNUSUAL OR NOTABLE FACTS BEHIND THE NAMES OF SOME BOYS' WRITERS

by Brian Doyle

- KENT CARR, author of several excellent boys' school stories in the early-1900s, was a woman - Gertrude Kent Carr (1871-1955).
- HERBERT STRANG, prolific writer for boys during the first 30 years of this century, was a pseudonym for two authors - George Herbert Ely (died 1958) and James L'Estrange (died 1947). Both worked for publishers - the Oxford University Press - and wrote around 50 books together.
- R.S. WARREN BELL, popular author of many boys' school stories, became the first Editor of THE CAPTAIN magazine when he was only 28, in 1899. He was the original 'Old Fag; (who wrote the monthly Editorials) and was Editor for 10 years.
- E.F. BENSON, author of the classic school story DAVID BLAIZE (1915) was probably the only school story writer actually to have been born in a famous

- public school! He was born in Wellington College, where his father was Headmaster (and later Archbishop of Canterbury).
- F.W. FARRAR, author of those famous school stories ERIC, OR LITTLE BY LITTLE and ST. WINIFRED'S, was the grandfather of Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery, famous World War Two leader.
- SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, creator of Sherlock Holmes, contributed several stories and a serial to the BOYS' OWN PAPER in the 1880s, before writing his first Holmes story.
- GEORGE HAMILTON TEED and GWYN EVANS, popular and prolific Sexton Blake authors, once shared a flat together (though not, it is thought, in Baker Street...).
- PERCY W. EVERETT, first Editor of THE SCOUT magazine in 1908, later became Deputy Chief Scout to Robert Baden-Powell, and subsequently received a knighthood.
- HYLTON CLEAVER's (popular school story author) son, Peter Hylton Cleaver, is today a leading BBC Television producer, specialising in sporting and outside broadcast programmes. Like his father, he was educated at St. Paul's School, London.
- SOMERS J. SUMMERS was Editor of MARVEL, UNION JACK and PLUCK, around 1894, when he was only 18! He subsequently died when he was 29.
- CHARLES HAMILTON (Frank Richards, Martin Clifford et al), the most prolific boys' writer of all time died on a Christmas Eve (1961). GEORGE HAMILTON TEED, the most prolific Sexton Blake author of all time (299 Blake stories) also died on a Christmas Eve (1939). Hamilton was 86, Teed was 61.
- GUNBY HADATH's (popular school story author) twin sister was Matron at Dulwich College for many years.
- THOMAS HUGHES, author of TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS, was a Liberal M.P. for 9 years, and later a County Court Judge.
- G.A. HUTCHISON was the first Editor of the BOYS' OWN PAPER at 37 and his reign lasted for 34 years - from 1879 until 1913 - a record in this field.
- H. PHILPOT WRIGHT created a schoolboy character named Billy Bunter in a popular school series in the VANGUARD between 1907-10, featuring Blackminster School - a year or so before Frank Richards created Greyfriars' Billy Bunter in THE MAGNET in 1908...!

WANTED: £20 each offered for "Boys Friend Libraries" featuring BIGGLES. £15 each offered for 1950's Biggles and Famous Five jigsaw puzzles. £3 each offered for "Happy Mags". £15 offered for B.F.L. no. 204 "Crooked Gold". Original artwork of Bunter, Tom Merry, etc. always wanted.

NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, WD1 4JL.

Sifting and sorting through my collection in the ever-losing battle to find space for everything, I have come across a small pile of copies of *The Cococub News*. I don't recall reading anything about this paper in previous C.D.s, so am writing this in the hope of stirring some readers' memories. My copies were published between 1936 and 1939, and the cover reproduced here was, of course, in celebration of the Coronation

of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. This is an event which I and most children of my generation will remember with much warmth; for weeks, probably months, ahead of the great day we read in newspapers and heard on the wireless about the wonderful ceremony, and the no less wonderful array of visitors from colourful, far-away lands who would be attending it. I remember making scrapbooks of everything from story-paper give-aways to flimsy paper bags bearing pictures of King, Queen and Crown which were in use at our local shops.

The Cococub News was basically an advertising paper, produced by Cadbury Bros. Ltd. and prominently featuring their Cococubs Leagues. I remember being the proud possessor (indeed I still am!) of their badge, and several of the toys which were given away in tins of Bournville Cocoa during the 1930s. As well as Club News, the paper contained picture riddles, letters to and from readers, photos of members and their pets, articles on astronomy and natural history, a serial story and, naturally, regular articles about the quality, production and distribution of Cadbury's chocolate. The back page was usually taken up with pictures, sometimes of



MFBEP5

ISSUED BY
CADBURY BROS. LTD., BOURNVILLE.No. 14
MAY JUNE, 1937

CORONATION DAY!
You may make your own coronation model of the Coronation Coach just like the one Coronado here in this picture. Learn how to do it on page 70.

animal cartoon-strips, and sometimes, under the heading *Worth Knowing*, giving historical facts deemed to be of special interest to children.

The full-colour covers were usually extremely attractive, and so too were the double-spread centre page cut-out models, which often featured some aspect of cocoa or chocolate. A mouth-watering little magazine to browse through!

IT'S THAT BEAR AGAIN!

by Mary Cadogan

Rupert the Resilient from the pages of the *Daily Express* remains a great favourite with many of us, and I am delighted to see that the excellent Rupert Index prepared by Lofts and Adley 12 years ago has now been reprinted in a more lasting format. It contains more illustrations than before and has been perceptively updated and revised by John Beck, with full permission and cooperation from the original compilers.

THE NEW RUPERT INDEX



I find this not only a tremendously useful information book but an extremely attractive one. *The New Rupert Index* is clearly printed and set out, with a full-colour cover picture which has been specially drawn by John Harrold, who is, of

course, the current Rupert artist. He brilliantly perpetuates the Tourtel/Bestall traditions, and his illustration of Rupert & Co. in their sunny, woodland setting, reading this new index is a delight.

The book is available direct from John Beck, its publisher, at 29 Mill Road, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2RU, at £8.50 which includes the cost of postage and packing. It gives up to date information about all the *Daily Express* stories, and books of Rupert's adventures, published since the first edition of the index appeared in 1979. It is an essential handbook for both collectors and dealers, as it simplifies identification of all Rupert publications. It incorporates an alphabetical index so that the six hundred-plus different story titles used since 1920 can be cross referenced to their original appearance.

Other advantages of *The New Rupert Index* are that artists' names are now assigned to the original newspaper story appearances, and a Mary Tourtel strip, hitherto unpublished in book form, is reproduced. Coming so soon after the sad death of Derek Adley, this revised index is a tribute to his work and dedication, and also, of course, to that of Bill Lofts, the indefatigable and enthusiastic researcher into so many branches of book, comic and magazine collecting.

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE HENTZAU AFFAIR - David Stuart Davies (Ian Hay, 1991). (Reviewed by Mark Taha).

One of the traditions of Holmes pastiches is to involve the great detective with either real-life cases (e.g. Jack the Ripper, Dreyfus) or other "fictional contemporaries" (e.g. Dracula, Jekyll and Hyde, Fu Manchu). In this book, he's involved in a sequel to "The Prisoner of Zenda" - the second, one might say, remembering "Rupert of Hentzau". The preface reveals that Ruritania was one of those countries that disappeared with the First World War; the story features characters from the original Rudolf Rassendyll, Rupert of Hentzau, Queen Flavia, Colonel Sapt, and Fritz von Tarlenheim, and it's first-rate.

Three years after the "Prisoner of Zenda", King Rudolf has finally gone mad after proving an unfit monarch. Rupert's out to seize the throne and will, if the truth comes out. Naturally, Rassendyll's services are needed again - unfortunately, he's disappeared (no prizes for guessing who was responsible - for once, it wasn't Moriarty). So Sapt naturally turns to Holmes. Holmes foils Rupert's plans in England, but then has to finish the job in Ruritania. Before going, of course, he meets with his something-big-in-Whitehall brother Mycroft, the British Government sees Ruritania as a stabilising influence which it wants to keep that way.

What follows, described by Watson as "Holmes' greatest challenge", is an excellent adventure. Holmes shows himself to be a deductive genius and also a master of disguise (guess who impersonates Rudolf this time). The only disappointments are that the author doesn't give Holmes, the master swordsman, a duel to fight and that Queen Flavia is described as having black hair; those of us with memories of the radiant Madeleine Carroll in the 1937 film...

There are also a couple of amusing in-jokes, with Watson using the alias Anthony Hawkins (the real name of Anthony Hope, writer of the original book) and Holmes, disguised as King Rudolf, meeting the King of Bohemia (remember "A

Scandal in Bohemia"?). The great man even admits to guessing rather than deducing at one point!

In short, I highly recommend this book; Davis is no Doyle but he's way above North. He even gives us the one thing the "Prisoner of Zenda" lacked - a happy ending.

MARMADUKE SMYTHE (An ECHO of a recent "DANNY LOOKS BACK") Comments by Eric Fayne.

Recently I was privileged to comment on an extract from DANNY'S DIARY in which Danny looked back at the arrival of Marmaduke Smythe in the first St. Jim's stories which appeared in PLUCK before the Gem came on the scene. I mentioned how Marmaduke became a member of the famous trio of Figgins & Co., making the trio into a foursome.

Marmaduke soon dropped from the scene, but I mentioned that I felt sure that he paid a return visit to St. Jim's, though I could not trace just when it happened - or, in fact, whether my memory was playing me tricks.

I have now received a letter from Roger Jenkins who writes: "Concerning your interesting piece in the C.D. about Marmaduke Smythe, I have now traced his return to St. Jim's back to the Boys Friend 3d Library, "Tom Merry's Conquest", which is all about rivalry with the Grammar School. This story was reprinted in Gems of the blue cover era, and again in the 1930's reprints. Oddly enough, the earlier 'boys' Friend Library', entitled 'Tom Merry & Co.' was never reprinted at all".

I am much obliged to Roger for solving the little problem about the second appearance of Marmaduke Smythe, over which my own ancient memory had let me down. Those two Boys' Friend 3d Libraries were quite remarkable in their way. Each was a very long story, running to 120 pages of smallish print, with not an inch of space taken up with pictures or advertisements. Each was a story of a new school, Rylcombe Grammar School, recently opened near St. Jim's. Each is a trifle too "wordy", with a good deal of padding in the form of schoolboy chatter, which, though amusing in its way, can become just mildly tedious. For these two long stories to have appeared at all is proof of the great popularity which Tom Merry was enjoying among readers. Both appeared in 1908, while the Gem was still a halfpenny paper. "Tom Merry & Co." was in B.F.L. No. 30, and "Tom Merry's Conquest" in No. 38, a few months later.

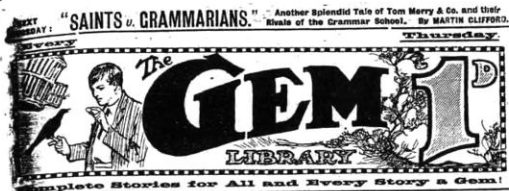
Roger, however, is not quite correct when he says that "Tom Merry & Co." was "never reprinted at all". Actually it was reprinted in the Gem, now a penny paper, in the autumn of 1909. It appeared as two consecutive stories, No. 72 entitled "Tom Merry's Triumph" and No. 73 entitled "Played Out". These two turned up again in the Gem's reprint period - in the year 1933 to be exact, under the respective titles "The Rival Schools" (No. 1315) and "St. Jim's For Ever" (No. 1316).

In the story (or stories, as they later became) Tom Merry decides that the leader of the Grammar School juniors, Frank Monk, son of the Headmaster, has the advantage of leading one big Co. of juniors. (Gordon Gay had not yet come on the scene. I am now racking my brains as to just when he first put in an appearance.)

Tom Merry says that at St. Jim's they are handicapped with several small Cos. - the Terrible Three, Blake & Co., Figgins & Co. Tom suggests that they shall pool

the resources of their brains against the new school, under the name Tom Merry & Co.

Next Tuesday: "SAINTS v. GRAMMARIANS." Another Splendid Tale of Tom Merry & Co. and their Rivals of the Grammar School. By MARTIN CLIFFORD. Thursday



Complete Stories for All and Every Story a Gem!

Readers are informed that the characters in the following Story are purely imaginary, and no reference or allusion is made to any living Actual names may be anachronistically mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no address personal or reflective is intended.



The . .
Rival . .
Schools



Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of TOM MERRY & CO. and FRANK MONK & CO., of Rylcombe Grammar School.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

So we come to the second of these B.F.L.'s, "Tom Merry's Conquest". This subsequently appeared in the Gem in mid-1911, under the respective titles "The Rival Schools" No. 167 and "Saints versus Grammarians" No. 168. In the much later reprint period they became, in March 1934, "Rival Ragers" No. 1359, and "What Price Victory?" No. 1360.

At the start of this episode, Figgins, in a long chapter of rather excessive verbiage, states that he does not agree that all the juniors should be, collectively, "Tom Merry & Co." but suggests that certain fellows should separately plan a plot against the Grammar School crowd. So Lowther, Blake, Gussy, Figgins, and Tom Merry should each have a go - and the most successful should give his name to the large company of St. Jim's juniors. And, of course, the result will be that Tom Merry & Co. will become Figgins & Co.

Figgins adds that Marmaduke Smythe is coming back to St. Jim's for a few weeks while his father is abroad. And Marmaduke will resume his old place in the New House, in Figgins' study, and as a member of Figgins & Co.

It strikes the reader, perhaps, as a rather unlikely contrivance for Marmaduke to return in this way. At any rate, Marmaduke alights at Rylcombe Station in a chapter very reminiscent of the occasion when he first turned up in PLUCK. He is his original purse-proud self, and this time is carried off, for a jape, by the Grammarians. However, his old "reform" surfaces again when he arrives eventually among his old friends at St. Jim's.

One wonders why Hamilton revived Marmaduke for this one story in the Boys' Friend Library. One chapter is even headed "Marmaduke & Co.". At any rate, at the end of a fun-packed and incident-packed story, Tom Merry emerged as the obvious leader of St. Jim's juniors. It can be added that these two B.F.L.'s were very long, and, even when bisected, each half was very long for the penny Gem at a time in history when Gem stories were at their longest.

Clearly these two yarns were specially written by Hamilton for the B.F.L., as a result of the popularity of Tom Merry in the Gem. In the Gem versions there is a certain amount of abridgement, and some re-writing for the separate stories, but they read well in the Gem, and I have little doubt at all that Hamilton carried out the work himself.

A precious possession in my bookcase is a bound volume containing "Tom Merry & Co." and "Tom Merry's Conquest", plus a third B.F.L. "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays". The last named had run as a serial in the Empire Library, and had been reprinted, some years later, as a serial in the Gem.

The Empire Library! And Gordon Gay! Further fascinating facets in the wonderful Hamilton story. And, of those facets -- More anon!



LESLIE S. LASKEY (Brighton): What a delightful word portrait of summertime in the garden of "Rose Lawn", in days gone by, was provided by Mrs. Una Hamilton Wright.

Reading her article recalled to mind my sole visit to Kingsgate, Kent, a year or so ago. A fine, cloudless November day. Long Percy Avenue, running straight down to the sea. The houses with the "port-hole" windows, and the one with the commemorative plaque on the wall - quickly identified. How many of Frank Richards' absorbing stories of school and adventure were conceived and typed under that roof.

Down on the sea-shore the attractive sandy beach, below the chalk cliff, was totally deserted on a November day. There was a distinct chill in the breeze from the North Sea, despite the warmth of the midday sunshine. The emptiness of the scene was somehow akin to that of a stage where the curtain has fallen and all the players have gone.

Later in the afternoon the setting sun highlighted the autumn tints in the charming Kentish countryside around Chartham and Chilham. Shallow mists were already forming over the dusky fields as our train ran across Romney Marshes, and the lights of Rye appeared ahead.

It was the end of a golden autumn day. More than that, it was the end of a brief excursion into a vanished era.

LES ROWLEY (Chingford): I share Ernest Holman's interest in establishing the location of Greyfriars School ('A Five Star Problem' - May C.D.) but feel that it is an interest that will never be geographically satisfied. I think that the best map of the area is the one that is in one's mind at the time of reading a particular story. After all, reading is intended to encourage the imagination. Ten years ago I wrote in the Annual ('A School For All Seasons') a descriptive piece about Greyfriars and its environs in which I said: "this is the setting for the best and most loved school in fiction. Give or take a point of the compass or two, it is a part of Kent familiar to men and women the world over. Some may approach from a different direction, or appreciate from another vantage, but I am confident that all will recognise what others find on the way".

Thank you for calling to mind 'Billy Bunter's Bunk' (May C.D.). The fat Owl's concern for his mother redeemed him a little in my eyes. Redemption that was due to be short lived, however.

JOHN LEWIS (Uttoxeter): In three of the maps depicting the topography of the Greyfriars region (J.S. Butcher, G.B. Reynolds, and that given in Magnet 1672) the course of the River Sark, from Friardale to Courtfield, is shown as flowing, more or less, in a northerly direction; with Greyfriars School and Popper Court always sited on the right bank of the Sark when going up river towards Courtfield Bridge. I have just been reading the excellent Cliff House series (1528-30). Therein a narration of a boat trip up river from Friardale to Popper Island, undertaken by the Misses Trevlyn, Hazeldene, Jobling and Bunter, in which the following statement occurs: "'There's Greyfriars!" said Bessie suddenly. She gave a nod towards the grey old tower rising over the trees on the LEFT bank of the Sark'.

My mental picture of the Greyfriars environs was again shattered when I later read, in the same series, a description of that reach of the Sark wherein lies Popper Island that it was 'shut in by Popper Court Woods on one side and Lantham Woods on the other'. Surely this is a case of 'I look'd towards Lantham (BIRNAM) and anon, methought, the wood began to move', or how else did Lantham Woods move some ten miles eastwards and end up on the opposite bank of the Sark to Popper Court?

ARTHUR EDWARDS (Manor Park): Both 'Danny', and Eric Fayne, in the April 1991 hinted that the master had made a mistake in referring to a 'striped cricket shirt'. It seems that they assumed that cricket shirts were, in 1907, only made for cricketers to wear on the field. I suggest 'cricket' indicated the style of shirt, viz one with a collar attached, rather than one made for wearing only on a cricket field. I have a book with pictures of early Test Teams. One of the 1878 Australian Eleven clearly shows them in a variety of dress: one player wears a check shirt, others shirts ending with the neck band. One of Lord Harris, an early England captain, shows him clearly wearing a stiff collar and dark tie, while batting. As late as 1907 a few Test Players still wore ties but, as one could hardly play one's best

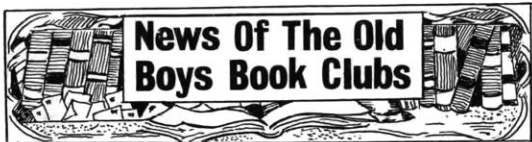
wearing a stiff collar, all seemed to wear shirts with a soft collar attached. I suggest that around 1907 the style of shirt worn by cricketers was popularly known as a 'cricket shirt', but not worn exclusively by sportsmen, and some with stripes may have been made for the fashion conscious, who never intended to get near a cricket field. Thirty years later the same style of white, or cream shirt was as often called a 'Tennis Shirt', as a 'Cricket Shirt'. There is no evidence that Herries wore the offending shirt while playing cricket.

PETER PEATFIELD (Leighton Buzzard): In DANNY LOOKS BACK, C.D. 532, Danny is writing about Marmaduke's adventures and how on arrival at St. Jim's he needs a change of clothing and, his own not being available, Herries gives him some old clothes of which one item is a striped cricket shirt. Danny then writes 'who ever heard of a striped cricket shirt. Surely even in 1907 they played cricket in whites like they do today!!'. Well, in 1907 they most probably did, but a few years earlier coloured, spotted and striped shirts had been worn by professionals and amateurs, and were not replaced fully by whites until the end of the nineteenth century. So if the shirt Marmaduke was wearing was an old second-hand one, perhaps belonging to Herries's father in his schooldays, it could well be striped. Perhaps Frank Richards saw striped shirts when watching cricket as a younger man.

MARK TAHA (London): In wonder if I might add a tribute of my own to W. Howard Baker? Quite simply, although I'd already read various Bunter books, it was reading the Howard Baker facsimiles that really got me into the hobby, and I'm sure I'm not the only one. I honestly believe that he did a very great deal for the survival of Hamilton's works and the long-term survival of the hobby. On another point, did he write under the name of W.A. Ballinger? If so, one of the books I most enjoyed was his 'Call It Rhodesia'. (Editor's Note: Yes, I think Howard Baker was Ballinger - doubtless readers will correct me if I'm wrong.)

J.P. McMAHON (Hailsham): It is sad news to read that Howard Baker has passed away... Probably like many hundreds of other collectors, my reawakened interest in the early school stories of Charles Hamilton has been entirely due to Mr. Baker's hardbound facsimiles ... The pleasure of receiving another volume to add to the collection went on year after year. I'm hoping the full story of the ups and downs, and start of the great idea, will somehow be written up ... Since I've been subscribing to *Collector's Digest*, it carries all the flavour of anticipation associated with the Howard Baker volumes.

Wanted to purchase: H.B. book Club Vol. 1 'The Worst Boy at Greyfriars' and H.B. Vol. 18 'The Stacey Special'; also 'A Strange Secret' (Museum Press publication). All postage will be paid; write to NAVEED HAAQUE, 152 Spadina Road, Richmond Hill, Ontario, L4B 2V2, CANADA.



CAMBRIDGE CLUB

We met at the home of Robert Smerdon in St. Neots for our May meeting.

We were quizzed by a video tape from Paul Wilkins showing forty female cinema/TV stars from the past three decades. So familiar, but oh so difficult to put a name to!!

Next we watched another instalment of "Comics: The Ninth Art" - this was an episode dealing with the Forties, specifically on the rise of the American Superheroes.

Later the multivoiced Robert treated us to several 1923/1924 'Magnet' readings demonstrating the wit of Frank Richards. Even the most sceptical members present had to admit the prose was humorous - maybe the writer was really a playwright.

ADRIAN PERKINS

LONDON O.B.B.C.

Our May meeting took place at the Loughton home of Chris and Suzanne Harper. Brian Doyle got things under way with an interesting article on Rin Tin Tin, the wonder dog of the movies. This was followed by a television quiz, courtesy of Mark Taha, the first three places going to Alan Pratt, Don Webster and Roy Parsons.

After tea, Roger Jenkins provided a word search puzzle with members hunting for the names of twenty-four characters from Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood and St. Frank's. The first correct entry received was from Mark Taha. Members then listened to a recording of a recent B.B.C. radio programme, Famous for Fifteen Minutes, which featured an interview with Gerald Campion. This contained many amusing anecdotes and was greatly enjoyed by all, Ray Hopkins rounded off the proceedings by reading an amusing sequence from Gem No. 211 regarding the arrival of Redfern, Owen and Lawrence at St. Jim's.

Thanks were expressed to the Harpers for their kind hospitality and a first class tea.

ALAN PRATT

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Chairman Joan welcomed those present. Unfortunately, our Secretary Geoffrey had a cold so could not be with us and we were all very upset to hear of the recent death of Bruce Lamb. Joan and Darrell had attended the funeral in Macclesfield on

the previous day, and all our thoughts were with Geraldine and her family. Bruce had organised such a good Club programme for us this year.

A number of our members had seen a recent episode of "Perfect Scoundrels" on T.V. written by one of our own members, the author Willis Hall. A report was made concerning the recent very enjoyable WILLIAM MEETING held in Bury. Our next one will be at St. Elphin's School, Matlock, Derbyshire, on 2nd May, 1992.

We had a slight revision of our programme: a recording was played of the recent Radio 4 broadcast of Gerald Campion in the programme "Famous for Fifteen Minutes".

After refreshments, Darrell presented his "Hobby Reflections" in which he brought along items from his personal collection that had a particular meaning to him. An original painting of a Sexton Blake Library cover, a "Pic Magazine" from Frank Richards' own collection (from which he had torn out pages, presumably to light his pipe!) and a Holiday Annual from the files of Amalgamated Press were among the varied items he showed and spoke about.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

TEA FOR TWO, AND TWO, AND TWO AND...

by Barrie Stark

William George Bunter puffed his way along Market Street, Latham, arriving at the Pagoda Tea Rooms in a fine state, almost like an exhausted traveller reaching an oasis. Well, so he was, for he must have walked all of half a mile, and consequently he was fearfully hungry as well as hot and thirsty.

Bunter pushed open the Pagoda door, puffed his way to a table and flopped into a chair, causing some raised eyebrows amongst the several customers who usually kept their eyes on their own plates. Bunter knew what he wanted, and precisely knew what his one pound would buy. He wished though, he had been earlier, when he could have had four five bob three course lunches, but instead it had to be - "Ten teas and five one shilling ice creams" he instructed the waitress; almost a command, in fact.

"Yes, sir" acknowledged the Nippy, in her own mind also reckoning that ten teas meant ten people and quite likely ten thrup'ny tips, a whole half-crown. Not at all bad. "We shall have to ask you to move across to the long table, please."

"Waffor?" questioned Bunter, casting a baleful eye at the waitress. Really, these menials! And why didn't she say 'Sir'? "Well, er..." the waitress was slightly non-plussed: "Er-well, the other people. Are they coming soon? Only there won't be room for them..."

"Other people? What other people? There ain't nobody else, only me!" Bunter wanted his teas, and didn't have time for patience or politeness. "The teas are for me - and I've got the money, too, see", demonstrating his whole pound-note with a quick and lordly motion of his hand.

"Oh, er, yes sir", and too surprised to say much more, the waitress turned away to give the order.

Bunter contentedly munched his way through bread and butter thick with jam, several cakes, gulped down with many cups of tea, and he slurped his way through five large shilling ices, though the last one needed a rammer to push it down. After a while, when he felt it was safe to move, Bunter signalled for the bill. With some effort he waddled across to the cash desk, paid, and moved slowly into the street.

The waitress went across to the table and gathered up the crockery still somewhat bemused by Bunter and his order for ten teas - why, that was twenty rounds cut into halves, making forty triangles of bread and butter (with jam, of course), ten cakes and ten pots of tea with hot water - at least **three** cups per pot. Where **had** he put it all - oh, and then there were the five large ices as well!

With an order such as that and all the work it had caused, there would be a tip, of course, but not the half crown she had hoped for. Still, it would be at least one and six, which wouldn't be too bad she thought, as she cleared the table, lifting each saucer and plate expectantly.

Then she came to the last plate, and, lifting it up, she saw ---- nothing!

[NOTE: In Magnet 1331 page 19. Bunter has a pound to spend on teas, and my suggestion above is what he could have got for his money in 1932. Perhaps he should have gone to a Transport Caff?

But, alas, the poor waitress!]

WANTED: The book "Sexton Blake Wins". S.A.E. with details to DENNIS BRUNSKILL, 45 Lambourne House, Eugenia Road, London, SE16 2QS.

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