

HAPPY CHRISTMAS

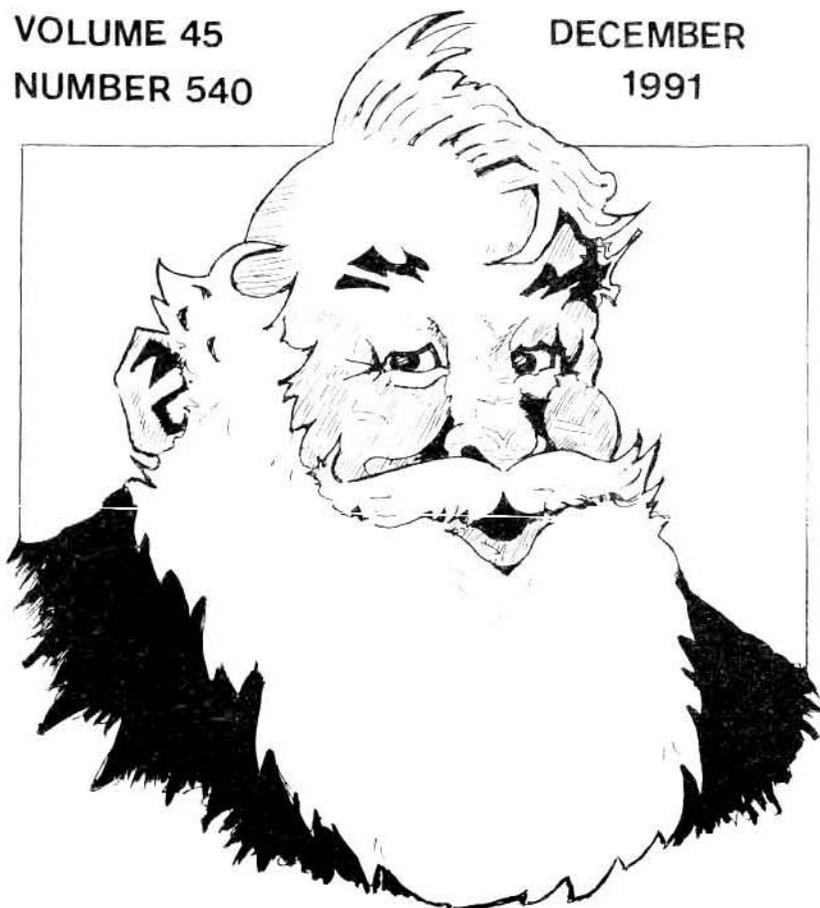
HAPPY CHRISTMAS

STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS'
DIGEST

VOLUME 45
NUMBER 540

DECEMBER
1991



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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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CHRISTMAS PRESENT AND CHRISTMAS PAST

Once again the time has come for me to wish you the compliments of the festive season, and to offer you this Christmas number of the C.D. I think you will agree that it is an extremely attractive one, and that our contributors have done us proud. Mr. Henry Webb has not only provided us with a splendid Christmassy cover but also with a back-cover Yuletide vignette.

Many aspects of our hobby are covered this month, and something of the warmth and cheer of the Christmas stories in the old papers lives again through our magazine. This is, of course, a time for memories both happy and serious. As well as joyous remembrances of childhood and times past, many of us will be thinking of absent friends. In particular, we shall be thinking of Charles Hamilton who passed away thirty years ago on Christmas eve in 1961. As has so often been remarked, it was a strange irony that he should leave us on that day, because he, as much as Charles Dickens, seemed to encapsulate the spirit of Christmas so magically in his seasonal stories.

There is no doubt that his work has been a cornerstone of our hobby, and a constant inspiration. Although we appreciate the stories of many authors,

he will always hold a very special place in our affections. We are pleased to be able to publish this month an article by his niece, Una Hamilton Wright, which touchingly recalls the happenings of thirty years ago. Elsewhere in this issue are pictorial and written recollections of his wonderful Christmas stories.

Our Nelson Lee column this month also strikes a poignant note. William Lister, who was a regular contributor to the C.D. for many years, died this year in the early autumn. He sent me a Christmassy article some time ago, which I am publishing now as a tribute to his memory. Charles Churchill, our other Nelson Lee contributor this month, wrote to me soon after Bill Lister died that 'he was a very amusing writer... In the past we often had an article by each of us in the same C.D. When this happened he always wrote me at once and said "We have gone snap again".' It is good, although it is for the last time, to see Mr. Lister's and Mr. Churchill's names linked in the Nelson Lee column.

I was saddened to hear recently of the passing of another long-standing C.D. subscriber, Mr. R. Hunter from the Isle of Wight. I shall miss his frequent warm and encouraging letters.

However, I now leave aside poignant memories and turn to what Bill Lister describes as 'happy talk'. I hope that all the joys of the season will be yours in abundance, that your Christmas will be truly merry, and your New Year happy and peaceful. I hope too that over the Christmas holiday you will find time for plenty of reading of books both old and new. This festive issue of the C.D. carries my warmest greetings to you all.

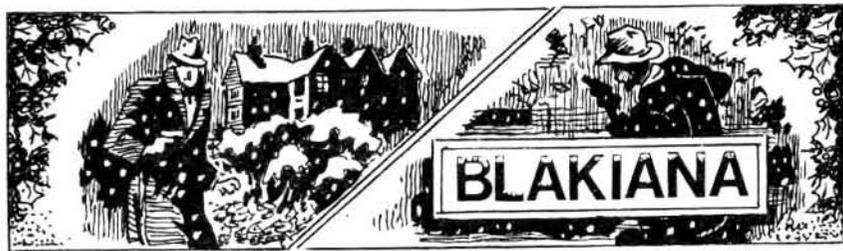
MARY CADOGAN

COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL

A reminder that there is still time for you to order your copy of the C.D. Annual if you have not yet done so. I have already written about some of its contents; further attractions include an article by Mark Caldicott about E.S. Brooks entitled A PRIDE IN HIS WORK, Margery Woods's CHRISTMAS AT CLIFF HOUSE and Reg Hardinge's consideration of some Dickensian moments in THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS. The cost of the Annual, including postage and packet, is £8.50 for U.K. readers and £10.00 for readers from overseas.



WANTED: The Gem No. 57, The Ranger - 1931, The Thriller 1937-38, The Champion 1940, The Triumph 1940, Girls Own Paper 1940-1947, Collins Magazine for Boys and Girls 1950, The Junior Mirror 1954-1956.
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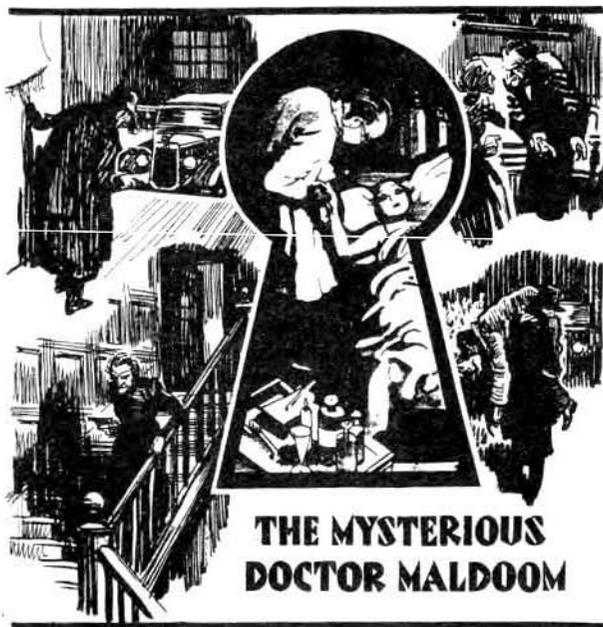


SEXTON BLAKE AND DETECTIVE WEEKLY **Number 10** by J.E.M.

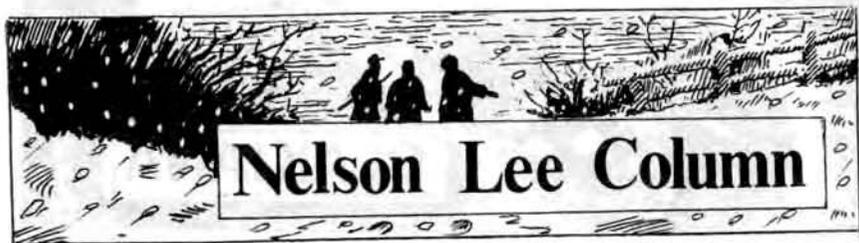
One of the signs that the DW was losing its grip on readers, even before the end of its first year, was possibly its experimentation with the cover design. The single dramatic illustration was replaced by a montage of several drawings relating to different incidents in the main story. Perhaps the aim was to make the graphics more "cinematic" in their effect. Certainly, Eric Parker produced some fine visual "shots" for covers of this kind.

I am winding up this series with a look at one of the most interesting of these efforts. In its time, it must surely have been an eye-catcher on any bookstall display. And if Parker's illustrations could not save Sexton Blake, I'm not sure what could - certainly not the story in this particular issue. *The Mysterious Doctor Maldoom* by George E. Rochester (DW 50) is a shameless derivation (I won't call it a crib) from the Hollywood film, *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, made the previous year.

After *Maldoom*, Blake lasted another eighteen months or so before disappearing from the DW altogether. He "returned" only in repeats from the old UNION JACK and, not long afterwards, the DW itself disappeared. Over the years, the death of Sexton Blake in weekly form has been frequently lamented and its causes vigorously debated. What do present-day Blakians think about it?



END OF SERIES



CHRISTMAS NOSTALGIA

by C.H. Churchill

When December came around many years ago we readers of popular boys' magazines began to look forward to the publication of the Xmas numbers of the particular books we were interested in. We used to look at the newsagents and booksellers to try and pick out which paper we favoured amongst the large variety on show. All the covers of the Xmas issues were very attractive, some more than others, of course.

NO. 237. — Grand Xmas Story, specially written for this Number!

1½^d THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY 1½^d



Dorrie's Christmas Party

A Story of Holiday Life and Detective Adventure, introducing NELSON LEE and NIPPER and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "The Sinner of the West Wind," "Victory for the Rebels," "Eat the Vengeance," etc. (Illustrated 20, 1911.)

As regards the Nelson Lee Library, these were really in the lead because they were usually printed in two colours. Most Lee covers showed plenty of snow scenes and had a border of holly, etc. although probably this was blue or yellow!

The first Xmas Lee was No. 78 old series dated 2/12/16 and the story was "A Christmas of Peril". It was a pre St. Frank's one and featured several of Lee's enemies such as Zingrave, Jim the Penman etc. The cover showed Eileen Dare left for dead in the snow while the villains were running off.

The next Xmas number was the longest story of all, 64 pages and was "The Phantom of Tregellis Castle". Here Lee took the chance of revealing his and Nipper's identity to Montie, Watson

and Lord Westbrook. Lord Dorrimore and Eileen Dare also appeared in the story. It is my favourite Xmas story of all time. It did not contain any Xmas festivities like those of later Xmas Lees.

Another favourite of mine is No. 446 old series, dated 22/12/23 "The Schoolboy Santa Claus". Here a party of the boys spent Xmas at St. Frank's and a few of the Moor View girls did likewise at their school for various reasons. There was a plot within the plot, as it were. It told how John Hewitt, a local who had run away years before, returned apparently penniless to his old mother living in Bellton poorly off. He appeared "broke" to see what his reception would be like from the locals. This made interesting reading and, of course, all was revealed in the end to the discomfiture of the likes of Farmer Holt and friends. Hewitt was wealthy and bought up a large house in Bellton, so all was well.

The very next number was different: "The Ghost of St. Frank's", a very creepy tale. One chapter was a lead to the next series about Dr. Karnak - a huge figure followed Willy Handforth up Bellton lane in the dark. It was all very thrilling!

It is good to think about all these tales and, if one has copies in hand, all the better. Read them with the lights low and the atmosphere will be very haunting.

A very happy Christmas to all readers of this.

HAPPY TALK - About Christmas

by William Lister

It's Christmas, so let us take the advice of the singer in 'South Pacific' who encourages us to have "a little happy talk". The song goes on to say: "You've got to have a dream, and, if you don't have a dream, how are you going to have a dream come true?".

How about a dream of Christmas past? I choose Christmas past for my dream, as it appears that in these modern times people talk as if it's a Christmas nightmare! They talk of getting away from it all - getting away from what? I understand the trouble there is about over-expensive gifts, of trying to keep up with all the credit card payments, etc., of crowded airports, and traffic jams. Have the courage to break free and have a Happy Christmas in the old time away!

Every mature person has his or her own dream of Christmas. Let me talk about one of my Christmas dreams (I have many - but space only allows for one). Brought up with Christmas surrounded with holly, mistletoe and Christmas trees, with friends, neighbours and relatives wishing one and all a Merry Christmas, I have a dream of the Yuletide Seasons shared by a host of fictional characters, created by Charles Dickens, Charles Hamilton, Edwy Searles Brooks, Gwyn Evans and a host of 'Union Jack' authors, these worthy men capturing the true spirit of Christmas in the seasonable stories they provided for us.

Did they starve us of descriptions of Christmas food? Did they keep us short of Christmas snow? Was there ever a shortage of ghosts (of all kinds and descriptions), of parties, of skating, of snow-balling? The answer is 'No, a thousand times - No!'.

What we wanted, was that they should provide us with Christmas reading to fill in the quiet spots amid all the home-made fun. And this they did - quite handsomely.

Among the characters who shared my Christmases were Scrooge, Sexton Blake and Tinker, the Greyfriars boys, led by Bunter, and my particular favourites, the Boys of St. Frank's of 'Nelson Lee' fame; the creation of Edwy Searles Brooks.

As I write I can see once again the newsagents' counter, laid out with wondrous fictional fare. Lack of cash during the year confined me to my favourites, the 'Nelson Lee' and 'Union Jack' but at Christmas extra cash or gifts brought in the 'Magnet' and a couple of Annuals, the Holiday Annual being the most welcome.

Christmas in the 1980s and '90s! Age takes its toll, many friends and dear ones are no longer here, many things we did, we can do no longer, but we can talk about the years gone by, Happy Talk, I hope, about things you and I used to do. Remember, "You've got to have a dream" to make a dream come true!

And so here's one old man; if God spares him yet another Christmas, who will be sitting by the fire, his old dog by his side, at the close of the day. Two or three old copies of the 'Nelson Lee' and other Old Boys' papers on a nearby table will help him to make a dream come true.



SUPERINTENDENT FLAGG & 'KNOW-ALL' NEWALL

These two worthies were the creation of W. Murdoch Duncan who wrote many stories for **THE THRILLER** in the late thirties and went on to write 220 crime novels, which made him the biggest producer of all, except for John Creasey. Duncan was the last of the crime writers who wrote in the true tradition of Edgar Wallace and these two characters owe much to Wallace. Flagg, for example, is similar in many ways to Elk, one of the few policeman created by Wallace who appeared in more than one book.

Under the name John Cassells, Duncan wrote 36 books all of which, except for a couple of early titles featured Insp./Supt. Flagg. (Just to confuse the issue there were also 21 books under the Cassells name which featured the Picaroon.)

Flagg is one of the most memorable of all fictional policemen. A huge man of 20 stones, with a commanding presence, outspoken, irritable, disrespectful of his superiors unless, like him, they have risen from the ranks and always yearning for the good old days in police work and everything else too - that's the redoubtable Flagg. He is a man who speaks his mind and does not suffer fools gladly. he is a hard taskmaster and drives his subordinates relentlessly but for all that he's a fine cop who solves his cases through sheer hard work and natural cunning.

Flagg has been a policeman for a great many years, "At Central Office Flagg was something of a fixture. He had been there as long as anyone remembered". (THE WATERS OF SADNESS). He must be near retiring age and one wonders how he'll cope with retirement at home with his wife and seven daughters.

Flagg's assistant is Insp. Noel 'Know-All' Newall, and in THE CLUE OF THE PURPLE ASTERS we are told, "Newall had appeared throughout the provinces as 'Know-All-Knew-All' Master of Memory" and still entertains at police smoke nights with his amazing photographic memory for the printed word. He is a veritable walking encyclopedia and will trot out all sorts of erudite information whenever the conversation reminds him of something he's read. Newall is a morose man and who wouldn't be with Flagg as his superior. In THE CIRCLE OF DUST Flagg says to him, "Stop complaining. If there's one thing that gets me down it's a fellow who's always complaining". Which is a trifle rough because Flagg is a pretty good complainer himself.

These two mystery-solvers are marvellous characters and the books are rich in knockabout humour and provide splendid reading for the mystery addict who likes something a little different from the usual.

CHRISTMAS MAGIC IN "MAGNET" AND "GEM" - THE '30s

by Norman Wright

Last year in Collectors Digest I looked at the Christmas issues of MAGNET and GEM from the early decades of the century; an age of double numbers that must have taken their readers the best part of a week to read. We trod the Painted Room with Arthur Augustus, watched for the Ghost of St. Jim's with Tom Merry and Co. and read "A Christmas Carol" with Bunter. There is little doubt that Christmas in those years belonged to St. Jim's and the GEM. Certainly I can re-read many of the GEM double numbers and still feel the flesh creep on my neck, a sensation that few MAGNET issues of the period can bring about.

But things changed. In mid 1931 the GEM began reprinting the Tom Merry stories and there were no 'new' Christmases until 1939, the paper's final year. In the MAGNET things were on the up and up, and a whole covey of superb Christmas stories and series were waiting to happen.

"Billy Bunter's Christmas", in MAGNET no. 1919, was at Cavandale Abbey, an establishment very much to Bunter's taste. The Shields cover shows Bunter living in the lap of luxury with liveried servants ministering to his every whim. Inside lurked mystery in the form of a mystery gunman intent on snuffing out Lord Cavandale's life. His attempts are thwarted by Bunter who stays for Christmas. The issue ends with a hilarious scene as Bunter's 'borrowed' dinner suit bursts at the seams, unable to stand the strain of its new occupant any longer!

Christmas 1931 was the superb Mauleverer Towers series, a much reprinted tale that deserves its popularity. I remember it with affection as the first MAGNET Christmas series I ever read when it was reprinted as an Armada paperback in 1965. It stretched to only three issues, but all the snow and adventure that you wanted were there. The covers were rather disappointing, but the internal illustrations were splendid: Bunter discovering the entrance to the secret passage, his flickering match casting a huge

shadow of his bulky, owl-like shape onto the wall. Mauleverer falling victim to the mysterious assailant, Bunter loaded above the Plimsoll line with clothes he has borrowed from Mauly, etc. etc. As with all good MAGNET Christmases, the tale ends with Bunter a welcome guest and swelling with pride at his own importance.

1932 is often considered the MAGNET'S finest year and there certainly were some fine series culminating in the legendary Wharton the Rebel series that came to its conclusion in the Enlarged Xmas Number. After weeks of being at loggerheads with his chums, Harry is finally reunited with them, thanks to the Fat Owl who arranges things with a view to spending Christmas at Wharton Lodge. A less seasonable note came earlier in the story when Wharton and Mr. Quelch had faced death together at the hands of the incoming tide. It says a lot for Hamilton's skill as a writer that he could write such scenes with complete conviction. The following week, in the issue dated 24th December, Mr. Quelch has another near miss when the taxi he is travelling in is involved in an accident. He wanders in the snow looking for Wharton Lodge but becomes lost in the dark. He is saved from freezing to death by Jim Valentine, one of Hamilton's best 'underworld schoolboys', who eventually becomes a pupil at Greyfriars, where his past attempts to catch up with him.

HARRY WHARTON & Co.'s Thrilling Tale... THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY!



"The Ghost of Wharton Lodge", second episode of the 1933 Christmas series, was Bunter who had camped out in the attic hoping for an opportune moment to make his presence known in the hope that he would be accepted as a guest. As with his foray at Cavendale Abbey the Owl displays a trace of bravery and prevents Colonel Wharton falling victim to an old enemy. The festive season ends with Bunter, as usual, trying to lord it over the Famous Five.

Christmas 1934 was a rather unseasonable affair in the MAGNET, but 1935 had all of the traditional seasonal trimmings set at Polpelly, "The House of Mystery". The cover of issue no. 1454 must be one of my favourites. It depicts Bunter standing in a larder packed with good things. He contemplates the feast ahead, while a cat eyes the Fat Owl. The caption reads, "They'll think it was the Cat!".

Rushing on a few years we come to a series that I often feel is under-rated, the Soames Christmas Series of 1938. The setting is once again Wharton Lodge and the suave villain James

Soames makes his re-appearance, this time seeking twelve hundred pounds in stolen bank notes. The cover of the Grand Christmas Week Number bears a splendid illustration of Bunter in costume 'Doing the Lambeth Walk, Oi!'. By the time Soames solves the clue

to the loot's location, the Famous Five have found the money and handed it over to Inspector Grimes. Soames disappears, ready to turn up again like the proverbial bad penny.

The last MAGNET Christmas Number was entitled "The Phantom of the Moat House" and was part of the long Lamb Series. Despite its length I have always enjoyed this series and find the Christmas segment very much in keeping with the best MAGNET Xmas series. There is snow, mystery, Wharton Lodge and, for added good measure, Ferrers Locke is lurking, looking for the kidnapped Mr. Quelch. All in all an excellent series.

So there is is then, a feast of Christmas reading to enjoy when, like Bunter, one is full to bursting with turkey and mince pies. There is such a lot of good seasonal reading material in the Xmas MAGNET and GEM series that it is always possible to find something to suit one's taste while waiting for the jelly, cream and trifle part of Christmas day to begin. And, if one really cannot find something there, then there are always the Christmas comics... but more of those next year.



A CHRISTMAS-TIDE OF SCHOOLGIRLS by Margery Woods

When contemplating the wealth of fiction for schoolgirls (and perhaps their brothers!) which was published by the Amalgamated Press during the twenties and thirties, inevitably the first to come to mind tend to be the stories featuring those two great schools, Morcove and Cliff House.

So popular did they become that soon they each had their own annual. Morcove's appeared first, in 1923, THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN ANNUAL, and ran until 1942, although the weekly magazine ceased publication in 1936 and the Morcove stories were transferred to THE SCHOOLGIRL. But Marjorie Stanton (Horace Phillips) the creator of those endearing girls, continued to contribute to the Annual until the 1939 issue, when the final Morcove story appeared.

Perhaps it was an omen of that fateful year to come, but at least Morcove went out with a big bang. The school was having a November 5th celebration and each form was to have its own setpiece for the great firework display. Much secrecy reigned to keep setpiece plans in the dark, but of course trouble and treachery in keeping with the traitorous anniversary cast their shadows over Madcap Polly Linton, who got the blame for setting off the firework display in advance. Then insult is added to injury when the Fifth's guy setpiece is doctored to guy the Fifth's Captain. It all looks like leaving a

cloud over poor Polly's head at Christmas, when her chums join her at Linton Hall. Of course her cousin Clarice is behind much of the mischief, but in true Morcove happy-ending style all is resolved in this evocative and seasonal tale of Betty Barton and her chums.



THE SCHOOL FRIEND ANNUAL made its debut in 1927 to begin a sparkling series of beautifully produced books full of articles and features as well as stories of the Cliff House girls, mostly with a good helping of Christmassy fare. The Annual kept its attractive format until the mid thirties, when the quality gravure paper gave way to thick white spongy paper and line drawings. For Cliff House there was a slight hiccup during the three years when Cliff House disappeared after THE SCHOOL FRIEND ceased publication and THE SCHOOLGIRL took its place, revamped with serials and short stories of new characters. Then Cliff House returned, to become more popular than ever from the wonderful pen of John Wheway, and the Annual continued to feature the girls right up to the start of the war years.

But there were two other popular annuals put out by A.P.

At first glance THE POPULAR BOOK OF GIRLS' STORIES sounded like a general compilation along the lines of the many fat books

put out by Collins, Blackie, Deans, Nelson, and O.U.P. Produced on that thick white paper --- again! --- which seemed only one step removed from blotting paper, the Popular Book seemed somewhat rootless. Its brief editorial and title page carried no reference of allegiance to any magazine, but browse through its stories and all the lively schoolgirl adventuresses from THE SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY awaited the reader. By 1930, year of the first Annual, this magazine had begun to shake off the mill-girl-and-orphans atmosphere it tended to carry during the twenties. Now the brilliant team of regular writers which A.P. had attracted was introducing a whole host of fascinating heroines.

The thirties brought Autograph Anne, whose collection today would attract international interest should it be auctioned at Sothebys, The Silent Six, arguably the best schoolgirls' secret society ever, Denise the Dancer, Quick Change Pearl, Tessa of Tarrantos, whose exploits catered for the avid interest of young readers in all things pertaining to the entertainment world. There was Cora, the Girl Animal Trainer, and Zena of the Zoo for the animal lobby section, and Dawn and her thoroughbreds. There was Little Lady Bountiful who ably lived up to her name, and the hauntingly written

stories of The Mystery Maid of the Mountains, along with many more, not forgetting the character who became SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY'S greatest star, Valerie Drew, the Girl Detective.

By 1934 The Popular Book owned up and carried an advert on its rear board informing its readers that the popular heroines within had all won fame in the pages of the SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY --- every Wednesday, price 2d.

The selection of stories was always well balanced and included both Christmas and holiday themes. At 2/6 it was the most modestly priced of the four big annuals and this was reflected in its having only one colour plate. The spines were flimsy, and cracked at the slightest provocation, but the covers were bright and inviting and the book's presence in the Christmas morning haul of goodies must have gladdened many a youngster's heart --- as well as ensuring a few hours peace and quiet for over-stressed parents.

The fourth member of A.P.'s girl's books was THE GOLDEN ANNUAL FOR GIRLS. It first appeared in 1925, and throughout its run never deviated from its distinctive cover design of bright orange, green lettering, and the motif illustration in full colour cut out and silhouetted against the orange expanse. The price was 3/6, and for the extra shilling the reader got a smoother paper, alas to give way as did so many thirties publications to the white "blotting" paper, and three colour plates. In that first issue the artists included C.M. Dodshon, whose girls were so charming one wondered why he turned poor Bessie into such a freak during the early years of Cliff House, Savile Lumley, and W. Taylor. A dip into the contents page reveals many familiar authors of the twenties decade: Enid Earle, Mildred Gordon, Ida Melbourne, who was of course our great favourite L.E. Ransome; Gertrude Nelson, who with Adeline Ascott was John W. Bobin, later to create Valerie Drew; Louise Essex, Ruth Maxwell, who was author of many original stories --- that is not previously serialised --- for THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY series, and several others whose aliases are not known to me. Reg Kirkham contributed, as Joan Vincent, one of his characteristically humorous tales of two sisters, and Joan Inglesant (Draycott M. Dell) opened the book with THE NEW GIRL AT ST. NAOMI'S.

A characteristic of GOLDEN ANNUAL was the delightful vignette which closed each story and initialled the chapter headings. Christmas atmosphere was not forgotten, and besides the seasonal touches, snow, snowballs and sledging, there were the ghosts, without which no Christmas annual was complete. John Wheway, in the guise of one of his earlier pseudonyms, Gladys Cotterill, gave us The Ghost of Greylands; Rene Frazer contributed The Schoolgirl Ghost Hunters; while Wanda Smallways added Ghost Hunters. Then there were the ghosts of Holly Towers, and Storm Barton Castle, and the Gallery, aided and abetted by Binnie's Christmas Ghost. But they were all quite innocuous, not likely to raise dark scary shadows on the way up to bed on Christmas night.

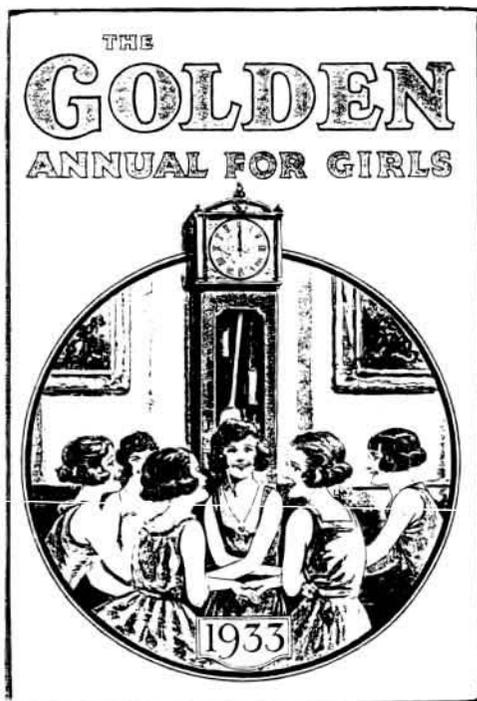
Several links with the magazines did creep into the Annual; Ida Melbourne's intrepid schoolgirl pilots, Joan and Kit, from THE SCHOOLGIRL, Adeline Ascott's Bess of the Backwoods, a serial heroine, and one or two others.

In the 1934 issue the colour plates had dwindled to a frontispiece. The stories began to get rather less cosy and moved towards stronger adventure and sporting themes, but no less entertaining for that. The Editor's introductory letter each year remained along the familiar lines of his assurances that this year's annual was as attractive as ever and his appeal to readers to be sure to write in and tell him what they thought of it --- market surveys were not needed then! But on one occasion he deviated...

In 1932 he made an observation which, read today, takes on a particularly touching significance. He remarks of the sovereign: "This was one of the most precious things in the days before the Great War. Now this little yellow coin has faded into the past."

Sixty years on, the sixpence, the shilling and the halfcrown are also long gone to join their illustrious British ancestor in some celestial museum, and now the sole survivor of our currency heritage is threatened. That long ago editorial chat strikes a topical but sad note on the even of 1992.

But collectors have at least one answer: go to your shelves, select your favourite memories, draw up your chairs to the fire and let the golden age of schoolboy and schoolgirl fiction bring you all the traditional joys of true Christmas spirit. Happy Christmas!



WANTED: Modern Boy 324, 335, 337, 338, 339. Any reasonable price paid.

ROY PARSONS, 'Foinaven', Church Hollow, West Winterslow, Salisbury, SP5 1SX.



Grand Christmas Number!



Christmas
from your
Favourite Authors

Frank Richard



Oliver Conquest



Martin Clifford



THE POPULAR.—No. 258.



ROSE LAWN REVISITED: Where has all the laughter gone?

by Una Hamilton Wright

"In the bleak midwinter..." never did that carol seem more appropriate. The winter of 1961-62 was a harsh one, even in sunny Kent. On Christmas Eve, just six weeks after I had moved into my new home in Sutton Coldfield, far away from all the haunts where I had been brought up, I heard the stunning news that uncle had died early that morning. Edie Hood, his latest housekeeper, had rung my mother. I had not known that he was ailing, other than that he was experiencing the symptoms of old age. I also remembered that he had had two mild strokes in the past eighteen months. I was still sufficiently young to think of him as indestructible and I was not prepared for him to go so suddenly. My husband and I had not completed our moving-chores - a somewhat slow business with two toddlers in the offing.

Getting down to the coast had been a difficult task for me during the last few years and so I could only be sure of seeing uncle once a year. We had all visited him in September. Little did I realise that that was to be the last time I was to see him. I was numbed with the shock and all the more forlorn when I realised that I should be going to Kent for the funeral on New Year's Day. I should be going to Kent, but not to see him. I felt guilty. How I wished I could put the clock back and work in one extra visit while he was alive. There was a pall of sadness over Christmas which the children were too young to understand. My husband took them over while I looked after Mother, who was staying with us for our first Christmas in the Midlands.

As we were so newly removed to our new home we had babysitting problems, so it was arranged that my husband should stay at home and mind the children while mother and I travelled on New Year's eve from Sutton to Birmingham, to London, to Margate, by train. There Miss Hood had ordered a car to meet us. Sadly we recognised all the familiar sights on the drive to Kingsgate - landmarks with pleasurable associations. Now they seemed to mock.

The weather was freezing and it took us most of the day to get to Thanet. We arrived at Rose Lawn in time for supper with Miss Hood. She welcomed us warmly and bustled about in her accustomed way, although rather more slowly than in her youth. I had noticed each summer when I saw her that she seemed to be shrinking, now the effect was even more pronounced. To arrive at Rose Lawn and know that no brother or uncle was inside was very difficult for my mother and me. The frozen snow outside did nothing to help, it only reinforced the sense of misery and loss. I realised that however quiet the house was and however hard I strained my ears I could never hear the sound of uncle moving about. The typewriter was silent, it had died with its master.

We didn't bother to see the New Year in. We didn't want it. One always thinks of New Year as bringing a possible change of fortunes for the better. The idea of paying one's last respects to uncle on the first day of the year was grotesque. After supper Miss Hood dutifully asked after my husband and children and told us more details of uncle's last moments early on the morning of Christmas Eve.

Visiting the house without the children I had more opportunity to look around and notice the changes that had been made. Much of uncle's and mother's furniture had gone and Miss Hood's pieces stood in their place. The colour scheme of the lounge had altered from the fresh lavender and white to indeterminate beiges and greens. My portrait was no longer over the fireplace. The 'actors' door between the hall and the lounge had been bricked up, but the proscenium arch over the little stage was still in place. A strange piano graced the wall opposite the window in place of the little French upright which uncle had kept from the flat he shared with my mother before her

marriage. The whole atmosphere of the room had changed; it was now stuffy rather than fresh. It saddened me to think that uncle had given all his post-war interviews in these surroundings which were not of his choosing and did not represent his taste. Whereas my memories of Rose Lawn were of a cheerful sunny house, it now looked as though it could never have had a joke cracked in it.

We went up to bed quite early, tired and overwrought. I thought I would take a last look at uncle's study for old time's sake. I had so many happy memories of interrupting his work! As I opened the door Miss Hood filled the doorway. "I'm not letting anyone in here tonight!" she informed me. "It's all got to be left, Mrs. Leresche (uncle's literary agent) has got to come and go through his papers." I was taller than Miss Hood so I took in quite a lot of the room over her head while she was speaking. The shelves of books were still opposite the door, the corner cupboard that housed uncle's collection of Magnets and Gems was still not quite shut. I left her to her guard duty.

Sleeping arrangements were quite a problem that night. Mother was given the best front bedroom where Miss Hood usually slept. When I had last had the run of Rose Lawn that room was my uncle's. The little front room still belonged to me even after Mandeville had been acquired. I was touched to find that uncle had moved into that little bedroom, I took some comfort from the thought that he had chosen **my** room as his own. I was shown to the little back bedroom which had always been very cold and inclined to dampness. Miss Hood slept in the study. I was restless and couldn't sleep for some hours and I glanced at some of the books on the mantelpiece, selecting at random. I gave way to nostalgia musing on the fact that here were some of mother's books dating from the time when brother and sister shared a flat and books were common property. Eventually I snatched a few hours' sleep before the dreaded New Year's morning.

We had hoped the freeze would thaw a little, but no luck. The roads were like skating rinks and the journey to Charing Crematorium was even slower than a normal funeral pace. The countryside was bleak, the fields snowclad and the bare iced branches of the trees creating fantastic shapes. We made a pitifully small cortège - isolated by the weather. There were just five mourners: my mother, Miss Hood, Mr. Norman Franks, uncle's solicitor, Mr. Eric Fayne and me. Mr. Franks made a heroic journey over from Folkestone and Mr. Fayne was equally brave, coming down from Surbiton. Mother and I appreciated their efforts enormously and it comforted us a little to realise that people would endure so much to pay their last respects to uncle.

The journey to the crematorium was worrying and uncomfortably cold. The simple service was quickly over, in a matter of minutes the long life of a man who had given pleasure to millions was consigned to the next world. Outside the flowers in the wreaths and the sheaves seemed to glow their approval.

It was growing dusk when we got back to Rose Lawn. My mother and I set off for the Midlands after a quick tea and I was glad to get home to my husband and children. Their warmth rekindled my sense of normality - for I still could not really believe what had happened. Deep inside I felt that part of me was missing and I had no idea how long the wound would take to heal - if at all.

The subsequent story of Rose Lawn makes dull reading - the glory had departed and it reverted to being mere bricks and mortar. Uncle had pensioned off his previous housekeeper, Miss Beveridge, with the gift of his cottage in Hawkinge and he wanted to treat Miss Hood equally well. At the end of the war he only had Rose Lawn left and he had intended it to go to me as it had originally been bought on my account. He solved the problem neatly by leaving Miss Hood the life tenancy and then the house to pass to me on her death. After eighteen years she entered a retirement home at Broadstairs and

Rose Lawn was sold and the proceeds invested to provide her with additional income. While the house was up for sale my husband and I visited it. Walking round the empty echoing rooms I was reminded of my very first visit when I was only four years old. So much life and activity had flowed through it. For over half a century it had sheltered its holiday inhabitants and echoed to their joys and sufferings, their triumphs and their losses. Tearfully I turned to my husband and asked him, "Where has all the laughter gone?"

THE FIRST HOLIDAY ANNUAL

by Eric Fayne

In recent months, as a result of the musings of young Danny of Diary fame (or notoriety), we came, in our travels, on the Holiday Annual. And that gives me the excuse to look back, with pleasure, for a few moments, at the very first Holiday Annual of them all.

The 1920 HOLIDAY ANNUAL



This Book belongs to Eric Fayne ..

Dated 1920, it was published in the autumn of 1919. At that time I was, as Shakespeare once described me, a "whining schoolboy creeping unwillingly to school". Not quite accurate, maybe, for though I daresay I "whined" - many boys do - I always loved school and never went "unwillingly".

The Great War was not so long over, and, in some ways, its effect on the Companion Papers was still in evidence. For instance, Warwick Reynolds drew the attractive cover of the Annual. And he illustrated the long St. Jim's story, reminiscent of the war years when he drew for the Gem after the regular artist, Macdonald, had gone into the Navy.

The publication of the H.A. in 1919 and thereafter was a remarkable tribute to the immense popularity of the Hamilton schools. In his "introduction" at the start of it all, the Editor wrote: "The favourite characters in the MAGNET, the GEM, and the BOYS' FRIEND have been brought together in

one volume; and this permanent record of their schooldays should make an irresistible appeal, not only to the readers of the journals aforementioned, but to every boy and girl who revels in clean, wholesome fiction...

To nearly every British boy the names of Harry Wharton, Tom Merry, and Jimmy Silver are familiar as household words."

How true! Aren't you glad that you were born while that was so? I am! I would not want to be young today. But I would dearly love to be young again in 1919.

That first Holiday Annual comprised 360 pages, between stiff covers. It cost six bob. Even if there was such a treat in 1991, it would cost something like £16. Let's drink - in lemon squash - to the GOOD OLD DAYS. What a time to be young!

Charles Hamilton seems to have written, as the main attraction, a new long story of each of the schools.

The Greyfriars tale was "Ructions at Greyfriars". A light affair, full of fun, and a delight. Among other things, the old school was apparently invaded by Bolsheviks. (Are you too young to recall when we talked about "Bolshies"?)

The long St. Jim's tale was a mouth-watering masterpiece of schoolboy fiction, entitled "The Wandering Schoolboy". Arthur Augustus, on his dignity about a punishment, ran away from school, and turned up, in several hilarious episodes, at Greyfriars, Rookwood, and even Cliff House.

It is interesting to note that a few years later, in the summer of 1922, Hamilton used the theme again in a lovely 6-story series in the Gem. The Gem titles tell a lot. "The St. Jim's Runaway", "Gussy at Greyfriars", "The Refugee at Highcliffe", "Gussy Amongst the Girls", "The Runaway at Rookwood", and "The Return of the Runaway". The Gem at its gorgeous best.

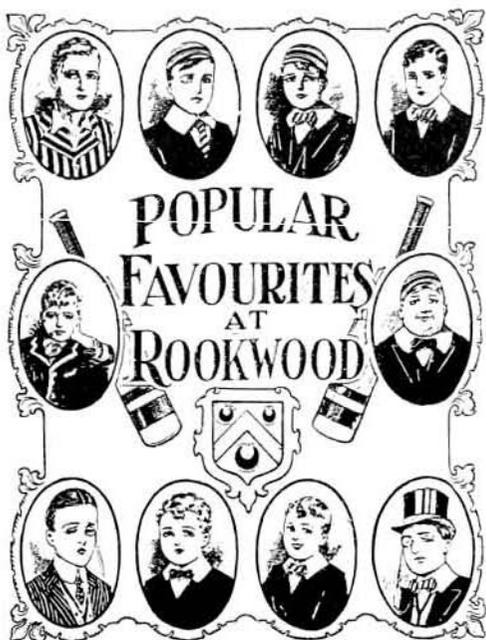
Back to that first H.A. The long Rookwood story was "Rivals of Rookwood", with Lovell at his blundering, blustery best. Fine stuff.

And there was one of those magnificent reprints which helped to make the Annual the grand book it was. The reprint was entitled "Fighting for his Honour", a story about a vicious new boy at Greyfriars - chap named Heath. This was the one in which Bob Cherry was accused of stealing a postal order. Grand drama of school life, this.

It had originally appeared in the Magnet in 1911, as two connected stories under the titles "Driven from School", and "A Schoolboy's Honour". (And later on it appeared yet again in the S.O.L. So, no doubt, you know it well.)

To provide a bit of variety, there was a long historical story, "In Monmouth's Cause", by Dudley Frobisher, a name entirely unknown to me. And there was a Wild West tale, without any author's name being given.

Actually this first Holiday Annual owed quite a lot to a fourth periodical, though the Editor did not mention it. That fourth one was The Greyfriars Herald. It had been published as a separate entity early in the war - 1915 to be precise. It ran for 18 weeks - and cost a halfpenny. Lacking in advertisements, and of unusual but lovely format, it really seemed just like a real school magazine. I doubt if many copies are still in existence, but my own bound volume of those 18



Reading from left to right: George Bubbley, Oliver Loring, Jimmy Silver, Arthur Edward Lovell, Agy Silver, Tubby Mulla, Adolphus Smythe, Teddy Grace, Tommy Dodd, Val. Morsington.

copies is among my own most cherished possessions. It ended in mid-March 1916.

This Holiday Annual contains lots of short stories, ostensibly by the boys themselves; lots of lovely verse, most of it no doubt coming from that master of that art, Samways. Any amount of puzzle pictures, and plenty of novelties, including some pages of pictures of the adventures of Bubble and Squeak.

I have not checked, but I fancy that all of these little side attractions came from those old Greyfriars Heralds. A particular charm of those 18 weeks of the Herald was that Charles Hamilton was responsible personally for most of the stories.

How they made it pay at a halfpenny I do not know. But it was one paper that was a genuine victim of the war and the paper shortage.

It was clearly popular, for in November 1919, a couple of months after that first Annual was in the shops, the Greyfriars Herald came back. Now larger, of Gem and Magnet format, and costing three-halfpence. It had its own charm, but no longer gave the impression of being a real school magazine. The wonder of the original G.H. was lost, and never found again.

And so I end my trip back to 1919, and the joys of the first Holiday Annual. Surely you agree with me? Those were the days to be young.

COLLECTORS OF THE FUTURE

by E.G. Hammond

I wondered, as a harmless Yuletide exercise, what the readers of Collectors' Digest would be reading about and collecting in fifty years time. It is only of academic interest to me, as I shall not be around. I suspect that the majority of current readers will be in the same boat.

Will the subjects that hold our interest now, still have the same fascination? I feel this may not be the case. After all, almost a century and a half will have passed since the first appearance of the 'Magnet' and over a century from most of our other favourites. How many of us are really interested in the comics, story books and magazines of over a century ago? Not too many I imagine.

As there are no story paper books that are remotely equivalent to our favourites of the second, third and fourth decades of our century, perhaps the Story Paper part of the title of our magazine will have changed. Dare I suggest that it could become 'Comic Paper and Video Collector's Digest'? If so I am glad I shall not see it, but it must be a distinct possibility. After all, the time that we spent reading and enjoying our favourites is now taken by the vast majority of the youth of today watching television and playing video games. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that today's programmes and games will be studied, written and talked about with the same enthusiasm as we now experience with our youthful interests.

I am sure books are still read, by the minority I suspect, but I would be glad to be proved wrong. What the books are I do not know. Is there a 1990s equivalent of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, St. Frank's or Morcove and the rest of our beloved locations? Are there characters being written about now who are as memorable as Billy Bunter, Mr. Quelch, Tom Merry, Sexton Blake, Nipper, Biggles, William, Wilson and innumerable others. If so, I have not heard of them.

What of the memorable characters created by the illustrators of the past - Mary Tourtel's Rupert for example (although for me he came to life in Alfred Bestall's pictures), George E. Studdy's Bonzo, Herbert Foxwell's Tiger Tim, A.B. Payne's Pip Squeak and Wilfred, Frank Hampson's Dan Dare and many, many more. Also there

were the artists who were well known for the depiction of a host of characters. Magic names - Roy Wilson, Thomas Henry, C.H. Chapman, Leonard Shields, George Wakefield, Eric Parker, Dudley Watkins and the underated Reg Perrott. Many more too numerous to mention!

I think we may be better served in the current pictorial field than the literary one. Our contemporary illustrators are upholding the old tradition, and there are many that compare favourable with those of the good old days. New characters have been created, and many deserve to last. I feel the work of the following will be admired, discussed and collected in fifty years time: Raymond Briggs, creator of the Snowman and other satirical works; John Ryan and his Captain Pugwash stories; Leo Baxendale, creator of the Bash Street Kids and the progenitor of a style that is popular still. Norman Thelwell and his lovable ponies. Martin Handford and his ubiquitous 'Wally' books. If we are allowed to look abroad there are other well known artists and characters. Jim Davis and his 'Garfield', Charles M. Schulz's 'Peanuts' - not forgetting the Continentals' 'Tin Tin' and 'Asterix'. All will be very collectable.

Whether they will deserve the loyalty and love that we bestow upon the works of yesteryear, only time can tell. Alas, it will not allow me to see if any of my predictions are correct, unless I am allowed to take a peek from that great big library in the sky!

BOOKS

REVIEWS BY MARY CADOGAN

With so many books in the shops in the run-up to Christmas I am concentrating on crime! CRIME FOR CHRISTMAS (published by Michael O'Mara Books) is a substantial anthology of short stories by past and present day masters - and mistresses - of the genre. There is a seasonable touch about the setting of every story, from Wilkie Collins's MR. WRAY'S CASH BOX, originally published in 1852, to those by contemporary writers such as Ellis Peters and H.R.F. Keating. I particularly enjoyed the former's THE TRINITY CAT, and Christopher Hallam's A BOOK FOR CHRISTMAS, which deals with murkier aspects of the second-hand book world than we usually encounter in our hobby! The compiler of this anthology is Richard Dalby, and, as Peter Cushing comments in his introduction, he has supplied us with 'a rich harvest'. It includes stories by Edgar Wallace, Agatha Christie, Fergus Hume, Thomas Hardy, Arthur Conan Doyle and Pamela Sewell, amongst others.

Another first-rate collection of Crime Stories (not tied this time to Christmas settings) is CRIME WAVES 1: The Annual Anthology of the Crime Writers' Association. The editor is H.R.F. Keating, who has assembled a barrage of talent, which the publisher (Gollancz) has made available both in hardback (at £13.99) and paperback (£3.99). Most of the stories are by contemporary writers, but there is no slackening of atmosphere because of this. There are three village mysterious (by Margaret Yorke, Susan Moody and Reginald Hill); Antonia Fraser has contributed a crisp story about TV interviewer Jemima Shore who becomes involved with villainy of a political nature; Michael Gilbert transports us to the early days of the twentieth century for BLOOD MATCH; Simon Brett in LETTER TO HIS SON provides humour as well as horror;

Robert Barnard deals with the darker side of the festive season in **HAPPY CHRISTMAS**, while Julian Symons, in **THE TIGER'S STRIPE**, forces us to empathize with his leading character's dreadful dilemma. And there is much, much more.

With one or other - or both - of these anthologies beside you, your Christmas will certainly be enlivened if you enjoy unravelling a mystery. A different, cosier, seasonable mood is provided in Lesley Anne Ivory's **CHRISTMAS CATS** (Pavilion Books £6.99) which comprises entrancing feline pictures in full colour, nostalgic Christmassy quotes from several favourite writers of the past and simply lashings of the season's traditional props and trappings throughout. A perfect companion for the cat-lover over the holiday.

REVIEWS BY NORMAN WRIGHT

"THE GOLDEN YEARS OF ADVENTURE STORIES". Published by D.C. Thomson & co. Ltd. at £5.95.

THE GOLDEN YEARS OF

ADVENTURE STORIES

This book will be a real treat for Collectors Digest readers who were brought up on the 'big five' - Rover, Adventure, Hotspur, Wizard and Skipper. Within its pages are stories and strips of many long running characters who fought, ran, slogged and japed across the pages of those popular boys' papers. "The Wolf of Kabul", "I Flew With Braddock", "The Truth About Wilson", "Morgyn the Mighty" and "Red Circle School" can all be found here, together with other stories and strips drawn from the big five and other Thomson comics and story papers. As well as the adventures there are mouth watering pages of covers, annuals, adverts and free gifts - all in full colour. The one fault with this book is that there is not enough of it and it leaves the reader, like Oliver Twist, wanting more. We can only hope that the book will be successful and spawn a whole shoal of future volumes.



144 PAGES OF THRILLS
FOR BOYS OF ALL AGES

In the event of difficulty in obtaining the book it can be obtained direct from the publisher in the same way (and for the same price) as the "Beano Dandy Fifty Years of Annuals" volume.

"BEANO DANDY FIFTY YEARS OF ANNUALS". Published by D.C. Thomson & Co. Ltd. at £5.95.

This is the fourth book in the 'fifty years' series and hopefully it will not be the last. The others in the series have contained a mix of items from both comics and annuals, this volume concentrates on the annuals devoted to Beano, Dandy and their spin off characters. The book is divided into fourteen sections, each section devoted to a mouth-watering sample of the goodies that could be found in a particular annual. The earliest annual chosen for inclusion is the 1949 "Magic - Beano Book". Here can be found strips featuring Big Eggo, Koko The Pup and Biffo The Bear. Other selections are from annuals of the '50s, '60s and '70s. A large section is reserved for that Beano super-star, Dennis the Menace where a selection of strips from his second book can be found. The emphasis is firmly on humour though a few adventure strips have found their way in. Each section begins with a reproduction of the cover of the annual in question, together with a scene-setting topical event from the year.

In many ways this is the best of the series. The editor's choice is very well balanced, featuring a mix of characters that give a good cross section of the two comics 'funny folk'. Gone are the 'chats with personalities' that I found rather irritating in some of the earlier volumes. The book has a splendid full colour front end-paper depicting a corner newsagents shop of the late 1930s displaying the very first Dandy book. The only mistake that I can find is in the section at the back where a list is given of all the cover pictures on the undated annuals. The details for the 1945 and 1946 annuals seem to be the wrong way round - at least as far as other reference works give them (Lofts/Adley, Clark, Moore). As a bonus the inside of the book's dust jacket has a full colour poster of several dozen Beano and Dandy characters on it. All that can't be bad for £5.95. Anyone who has difficulty obtaining to book from their local newsagents can obtain it direct from the publishers at the following address - 'Subscribers Dept.', D.C. Thomson & Co. Bank Street, Dundee, DD1 9EW. The cost is £5.95 plus £1.80 postage.

WANTED: by Collector. JOHN HAMILTON: Pre-War hardbacks, any title with or without D/W, including the 'Ace Series', 'Airmans Bookcase', 'Flying Thrillers' Sundial Mystery' and Adventure Library, and Airmans Bookclub editions in dustwrappers. W.E. JOHNS: Any Pre-War hardbacks, with or without D/S and Paperback editions of 'MOSSYFACE' (by William Earle) and any 'BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY' Editions, any condition considered.

JOHN TRENDLER, 7 Park Close, Bushey, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD2 2DE. Tel. (0923) 31608.



LARRY MORLEY (Hanwell): I read that Carlton Communications, the company which won the TV franchise over Thames, are going to transmit a show called 'Bunter at Large' in which Billy as an adult becomes a stockbroker (hope he is more successful than his father)... May I recommend a book called SIXTY THREE YEARS A MOVIE FAN by Normal Olden, published by Book Guild Ltd. Mr. Olden has seen well over 10,000 films. He is well into his 70s now and lives in Kensington. This is a charming, warm book, full of lovely memories. No smart-Alec comments like so many film critics. Stacks of lovely pictures - and full of half-remembered names such as Regis Toomey, Una Merkel, Betty Compson, Sue Carol and Helen Twelvetrees, amongst others. A jolly good read, to be ordered from your library or bought (at £12.50) from The Book Guild Ltd., 25 High Street, Lewes, Sussex.

JOHN BRIDGWATER (Christchurch): I did not think it possible, but the C.D. actually does get better and better. As an ex-airman I did like the "flying articles" which have appeared during the past months. More, please! Do keep the "Other Detective" series going. Very enjoyable!

CLARICE HARDING (Sidmouth): How can I describe the October CD? Thirty two pages of delightful nostalgia, for which I send you my thanks. How exciting for you to finally acquire the 1940 Girls' Crystal Annual! I am now studying the back cover of C.D. and once again longing for *Schoolgirls' Own Libraries*. It seems difficult to find Cliff House and Morcove stories. But it is some consolation to see these beautiful reproductions.

PHILIP TIERNEY (Grimsby): John Lewis's difficulty in assessing the average age of the Greyfriars Shell Form is caused by the disproportionate number of boys in the middle school.

This could happen of course, but it would cause considerable changes in the arrangement of Forms while the "bulge" moved upwards.

Time stood still at Greyfriars, and we would not have wished it to have done otherwise, but what would have happened at the end of a year if it had not? Most of the Sixthformers would leave and the present Fifth Form would move into the Sixth with Blundell probably (and to Coker's indignation) becoming captain of Greyfriars.

The Thirdformers would move up into a single Fourth Form and there would have to be an Upper and Lower Fifth instead of an Upper and Lower Fourth. Those two Forms would have to include the present Shell, making them very large, so perhaps the Shell would be retained with the younger and more backward members of the Remove (e.g. Bunter) going into it.

We would not have liked all this I am sure so it is a good thing that time **did** stand still.

Editor's Note: In last month's THE POSTMAN CALLED Bill Lofts informed us that John Wheway (as Hilda Richards) had written four Cliff House Stories which were not published in *The Schoolgirl* as it ceased publication in May 1940. He thought that one of these, '*Schoolgirl Circus Star*' was considered for inclusion in *School Friend Annual 1942* but not used. In fact it **did** appear in that Annual as the lead story, probably shortened. The name of the school had been changed from Cliff House to Towershill, and Babs, Clara and Bessie were transmogrified into Cynthia, Sylvia and Angela!

WANTED: ENID BLYTON/W.E. JOHNS/CROMPTON. First editions in wrappers, **all** pre 1960 ephemera. £20 each offered for Biggles "Boys Friend Libraries". £5 each offered for "Thriller" nos. 88,116,157,176,280,286,392,393,469,583,586.

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A STUFFED OWL

by Keith Atkinson

"I can't understand it", moaned Bunter,
"Why I'm feeling so terribly ill.
The whole Christmas meal was delicious
And I almost completed my fill.

"I really enjoyed the hors d'oeuvre,
(I only had seven or eight).
Six helpings of turkey and stuffing
Simply melted away on my plate.

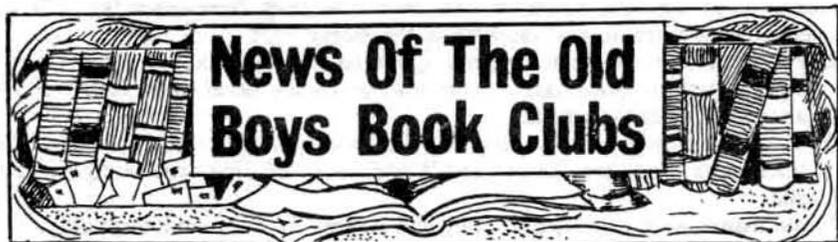
"Then came the pièce de résistance,
The pudding was really a dream,
Just packed full of plums and sultanas,
Nine platesful all covered in cream.

"Of mince pies I ate quite a dozen,
Then biscuits and cheese followed fast.
After dinner mints, walnuts and chestnuts,
Just two pounds to complete my repast.

"After that I had trouble to manage
A boxful of peppermint creams,
So I just settled down in the armchair
To go over the feast in my dreams.

"But something is wrong with my innards,
And I just don't know what it can be.
I hope I feel better quite shortly
For there's muffins and trifle for tea."





CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our November meeting we were once more able to meet at the home of our Secretary, Tony Cowley.

After a short business meeting, Bill related something of the Lofts-Adley partnership. The method of working (a personal division between the research and writing labours) which gave us all those marvellous Indexes and many similar works of bibliographic literature. Without doubt, this collaboration has produced more items of use to enthusiasts in this hobby than anyone else. We were fortunate indeed to have such a prolific team within the poorly-organised world of publishing for the young, or the young-in-heart!

Later we were provided - by BBC Video - with an explanation of the production methods used by the Daily Mirror for the 'Jane' cartoon strip. **ADRIAN PERKINS**

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Chairman Joan welcomed the twelve members assembled for our A.G.M. - a reasonable number considering that people often shy away from strictly business meetings which, nevertheless, are most essential.

Much comment was made concerning the success of our previous month's gathering at which we welcomed Mary Cadogan and Anthony Buckeridge. This meeting had been a milestone yet again, in the Club's history. The feeling was that we must continue our tradition of recent years in having guest speakers, informal lunches or dinners and other special events, despite the expenditure involved.

Officers were all re-elected. Paul stepped down from being Vice-Chairman, and Mark Caldicott graciously agreed to take his place.

The programme for next year was taking shape, and again, a very full and varied one it was going to be. Programme pocket-cards would be available soon.

Our Christmas party was discussed. This would be on 14th December. Joan was to be co-ordinator for the programme.

Everyone felt this business meeting was worthwhile, and left feeling that the future of the Club was strong with a committed membership. **JOHNNY BULL MINOR**

LONDON O.B.B.C.

Nineteen members attended the November meeting at the Chingford Horticultural Society Hall. Don Webster opened the proceedings with a feature entitled "To Start You Talking". The subject was "illustrators", and a lively debate ensued with names like Chapman, Shields and Parker well to the fore. A sumptuous tea followed, courtesy of our genial hosts, Tony and Audrey Potts, after which Bill Bradford read an old paper on the Hobby, presumably written by a past member of the club. There was some

speculation as to who this might be. He then read from Newsletter No. 229 which recounted a meeting held in East Dulwich in November 1971.

Ray Hopkins then entertained members with an excellent reading from Magnet No. 907, "Ragged Dick at Greyfriars". This told of Dick's tussle with Bolsover Major shortly after arriving at the school.

To round off an enjoyable meeting, Roy Parsons challenged our wits with a Schools quiz in three parts (Hamilton, Brooks and Wodehouse), the first prize being awarded to Mark Taha.

Warm thanks were expressed to Tony and Audrey for their kind hospitality.

ALAN PRATT



CHRISTMAS WITH GIRL

By Susan Chambers

For readers of GIRL (and EAGLE et al) Christmas was more than holly on the cover, and snowclad headings. As befitted a paper founded and edited by a clergyman the religious aspects of the festive season were not forgotten. Mention was made of the Nativity in the Editor's Letter, and it was the subject of the Picture Gallery. The titles tell us all, "The Journey of the Magi", "Flight into Egypt", "No Room at the Inn". Eric Winter usually painted these pictures especially for GIRL, although one or two of the early ones were reprints of Old Masters.

Participation was also part of Christmas with GIRL. From its first year, special carol services were held for readers, led by editor Marcus Morris. Initially one was held in London; but in subsequent years they were held in about eight locations around the UK.

Further participation on a secular and wholly entertaining level was also on offer, with excursions to a Pantomime, a circus, and occasionally GIRL parties.

Within the paper, Christmas parties at the Arenska School of Dancing along with music, dancing, laughter and games often proved the catalyst for a new adventure, or provided the clue to solving a mystery. It was during a party game that Belle realised the identity of the school's guest in "Genie of the Lamp (1954)". At Belle's 1955 party two guests would eventually be contenders for "The Lost Heiress". If Princess Leonie hadn't invited her police guard into the 1958 party, her fiance's enemies would not have been given the opportunity to spirit her away, thus starting a chase to Europe in "A Royal Romance". Whilst out carol singing before a theatrical party in 1956, the group meet Sylvine who will become "The Rebel". 1957 however, saw the chums still on a caravan holiday in "The Jolly Wagoners".

Within the picture strip serial "Wendy & Jinx", Christmas parties could provide the ending to an adventure, and carol singing activities could demonstrate the successful resolution of conflicts. In "The Fairbridge Feud" it was joint carol singing around the

A WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL!



After being in several scrapes, Susan March, a student nurse at St. Bride's hospital, is deprived of her Nurse of the Year medal and moved to the orthopaedic ward, where staff-nurse Freda Eastman does her utmost to make Susan's life a misery. The local ice-hockey team is brought in after a rough crash and Susan does very well during the emergency. Freda, however, takes all the credit, then reports Susan in Mattson for "perceived indiscretion". Mattson tells Susan it might be best if she resigned and asks her to think it over. Then Susan's father falls ill and has no one to look after him. In desperation, Susan writes out her resignation and posts it next morning. But on Christmas Eve, when Freda is off duty and everyone is good-humoured and happy, Susan begins to regret her hasty action. The ice-hockey players help her decorate the ward...



village which clearly showed that the feud between Manor School and the Fairbridge Academy was over, even if the story was not. In "The New Headmistress" Wendy & Jinx joyfully join in the carol service after successfully working out the cause of a misunderstanding between themselves.

St. Bride's Hospital provided a suitable backdrop for Nurse Susan Marsh to dispense good cheer on the wards. There was also the prospect of hospital balls, sadly often missed because of the needs of patients.

Lettice Leafe, in her insouciant way, bumbled and ate her way through Christmas amidst exploding crackers and burnt puddings. She had several close encounters with Father Christmas, the alias for either her equally bumbling Uncle Timothy, or Headmistress Miss Froth.

GIRL often ran potted biographies and features under the banner "Real Life Stories" and at Christmas these would be seasonal, covering, for example, the Nativity, King Wenceslas, and St. Nicholas.

It was good in the 1950s to curl up in front of the fire and find out what my favourite characters were up to at Christmas. Finally in Marcus Morris' words 'I'd like to wish you all not just "Happy Christmas", but all the joy and gaiety of Christmas for the whole year round'.

SLEUTHING AND SUSPENSE IN THE STRAND MAGAZINE

By Mary Cadogan

Draw the curtains, turn up your reading lamps and settle down to a positive feast of nostalgic fiction which is provided in two new books compiled by the enthusiastic and indefatigable Jack Adrian. Oxford University Press have just issued two anthologies prepared by him: *DETECTIVE STORIES FROM THE STRAND MAGAZINE* and *STRANGE TALES FROM THE STRAND MAGAZINE* (each priced at £15.95). Do buy, beg or borrow (from your public library) these bumper books to enhance your Christmas. Each presents a wonderful selection of stories by celebrated, and less well-known, writers. Not all of them are famous for their short stories, but every tale in these anthologies is a delight.

I particularly enjoyed the volume of sleuthing stories, but the Strange Tales are also compelling. I mentioned recently in the C.D. that someone should publish the collected introductions of Jack Adrian, he has, once again, excelled in his intros which set the scene, provide useful bibliographical background, and intriguing atmosphere to accompany the stories. I was particularly interested to read about George Newnes, the man who did so much to promote popular fiction, publishing *TITBITS*, *THE STRAND MAGAZINE*, the *WILLIAM* books, and a great deal more.

DETECTIVE STORIES FROM THE STRAND MAGAZINE includes contributions from G.K. Chesterton (Father Brown), Agatha Christie (Poirot), A.E.W. Mason, E.C. Bentley, Sapper, W.W. Jacobs, Edgar Wallace and many others. I was especially intrigued by an Aldous Huxley story in the 'Rogues, Knaves and Fortune-Hunters' section - *A DEAL IN OLD MASTERS*. Arthur Conan Doyle ('The Master') who is represented in both books, was of course the luminary who helped considerably to make *The Strand Magazine* the resilient success that it was over so many decades.

STRANGE TALES FROM THE STRAND MAGAZINE comprises stories of the uncanny and macabre - ghostly exploits, tales of unnatural disasters, of weird monsters, of madness and revenge. Many of these narratives have never before appeared in book

form, including two suspense stories from Edith Nesbit and one from Beverley Nichols. Grant Allen, D.E. Lawrence, Sapper, Graham Green, Edgar Wallace, F. Tennyson Jesse, Hugh Walpole and many other authors are represented.

Both volumes strike the right note for the festive season, and indeed for nostalgic delights to be savoured well into the New Year.

WANTED: Champion Library 1928 to 1934. Boys Friend Libraries, stories of Ferrers Locke by Headley Scott.

J. ASHLEY, 46 Nicholas Crescent, Fareham, Hants., PO15 5AH. Telephone 0329/234489.

WANTED: Schoolgirls' Own Libraries, Pre-War and Post-War, also assorted Girls' Weekly Story Papers, pre 1950. Blyton Sunny Stories, Rupert Annuals 1940, 1941, 1942.

BETTY HOPTON, 79 Scalpcliffe Road, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs., DE15 9AB. Tel. 0283 65806.

FOR SALE: M.B. Magnets Vol. 48, Vol. 77 £7 each (v.g.). Vol. 21, Vol. 60 £6.00 each (fair). B.O.P. Best of British Pluck £5 (v.g.). Sexton Blake Omnibus No's. 1, 2 and 4, no d/w £3 each (fair). Sexton Blake Casebook £5 (v.g.). Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jims £4 (fair). Postage extra. S.a.e. first please.

E. SHEPPARD, 1 Forge Close, Bempton, Bridlington, YO15 1LX.

FOR SALE: 137 issues of Collectors' Digest dating from the 1950s and 1960s, 25 pence each. Must be sold as one lot, plus £4.00 postage.

SUSAN PARRATT, 5 Downham Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, Cheshire. Tel: 061-432-8409)

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SOME SEASONAL ANAGRAMS

from Margery Woods

1. Niche Gleams
2. Wider Reveal
3. Tory Bat Bent
4. Crake or Echo
5. Mint a Poem

6. A Star Mimics Jar E
7. Gem in Madden
8. Track Cars Pyre
9. Mend Gang Team
10. Verse Mirth Born Then

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

SEASON'S GREETINGS



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