

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 46

No. 548

AUGUST 1992

"THEY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND HER!" Grand Long Complete Story, by  
PAULINE STEWART, appears inside.



The illustration depicts a classroom scene. A man in a military uniform, wearing a peaked cap and a cross on his chest, stands with a young child. The child is holding a large, pointed object, possibly a toy sword or a pointer. In the background, other children and a teacher are visible, some with schoolbags. A whiteboard is on the left, and a large number '2' in a circle is on the right. The title 'THE SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY' is written in a large, stylized font at the top.

**THE SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY** 2

"Good-bye, Daddy!"

An appealing incident from the EXTRA-LONG instalment of the superb new serial which appears in this issue.

**WHEN DADDY WENT TO WAR!**

By ELISE PROBYN

96p



# FLIPS PAGES



(INCORPORATING NORMAN SHAW)

ROBIN OSBORNE, 84 BELVEDERE ROAD, LONDON SE19 2HZ  
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## A WORD TO THE FORE

Hi, People!

Regular readers of this magazine will know that Norman Shaw has retired, although you could be forgiven for not believing that such a thing would ever come to pass. The reins have been handed to me, and I hope to continue things in much the same way (though Norman will be a hard act to follow). Many of you have sent messages of appreciation and hope for the future, and Norman wants to thank you all although he is unable to do so individually. Please consider yourselves thanked!

Sadly I have to report that Norman's health has deteriorated badly in the last few weeks. He is suffering from Asthma and Osteoporosis, and sometimes the treatment seems worse than the ailment, with unexpected side effects. He is, however, remaining cheerful and is not in a life-threatening condition.

No special offers or deals this month other than those already in operation. Lots of specific items will be offered in next issue's advertisement.

I plan to keep 'wants' lists, so would welcome any lists of requirements (might be that I have some of your wants on hand). As always, callers are welcome, but please 'phone first to make an appointment as there are occasions when I have to be out. An answerphone will be in operation and will advise when I expect to be available if you should ring while I am out.

Finally, when ordering Howard Baker facsimiles please note that all Club Volumes up to and including no. 23 (except nos. 14 -17) are now out of print. The special price offers do not apply to any out of print volumes.

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BRITISH AND AMERICAN COMICS, STORY PAPERS, ANNUALS, NEWSPAPER COMIC SECTIONS, DAILY STRIPS, PULP MAGAZINES, GAG AND EDITORIAL CARTOONS, HUMOUR MAGAZINES AND ILLUSTRATED BOOKS

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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## THE BEST SCHOOL OF ALL

A year or so ago I described in the C.D. my last visit to my old school just before its amalgamation with another, and its transfer to a different building. Several readers kindly wrote to say how much they were moved by this article, and that my enthusiasm for my *alma mater* echoed their own.

A history of the school has recently been published, and I can't resist reproducing here part of the book's title page showing the badge and motto which I wore with so much pride during my five years at the Bromley County Grammar School. I understand, by the

way, that 'Dum Cresco Spero' means 'While I grow I hope'.

I'm also reproducing a photograph of my Headmistress, which I was delighted to find in the book. This distinguished and imaginative lady gave tremendous inspiration to me and the many other girls who were in her care. She was quite as impressive as those wonderful fictional Heads of Cliff



Miss Winifred Whiting BA  
Headmistress 1933-1946.

House and Morcove Schools - Miss Penelope Primrose and Miss Esther Somerfield.

### A MUCH DESERVED TRIBUTE

Many of us have reason to be grateful to Bill Lofts who always so warmly and generously shares with other collectors the results of his meticulous researches. For decades now he has been recognized as one of the greatest literary sleuths in our hobby - and, indeed, in the world of popular fiction generally. I was glad to see that the June issue of THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE COLLECTOR included a

splendidly detailed assessment of, and tribute to, his achievements.

Happy Reading!

MARY CADOGAN

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(In response to requests from several readers we are re-publishing from time to time articles which appeared in early C.D.s. Mr. Jenkins' perceptive assessment of "Fishy" appeared originally in the May 1948 issue.)

### THE SHYLOCK OF GREYFRIARS

by Roger M. Jenkins

Some people have queer hobbies; there are those who like to deduce the private life of Sherlock Holmes from the fragmentary evidence afforded by Dr. Watson's narratives, while there are some who find nothing more enchanting than studying the love-making of newts at the full moon. But whatever the hobby may be, it is undoubtedly a clue to the character of the person who pursues it. Such at any rate, is the case with the Shylock of Greyfriars, who could find no occupation so engrossing or diverting as spending a pleasant afternoon checking his accounts.

Fisher T. Fish came to Greyfriars in "Magnet" No. 150 entitled "The Yankee Schoolboy", which appeared on the 24th December, 1910, a time in which Anglo-American concord was, to say the least, conspicuous by its absence. It was in the same year that American sentiment was swayed by the famous declaration of a senator that it would not be long before the stars and stripes flew over all the North American continent. President Wilson's unfortunate remark five years later that America was too proud to fight was the culmination of the ill-feeling of a decade, the British view of which is acutely defined in the character of the young American schoolboy.

For Fishy had all the worst American attributes. He was mean, cowardly, boastful, untruthful, avaricious, and endowed with peculiar moral views concerning business. To someone whose eye-teeth had been cut in 'Noo Yark' it must have been provoking not to have been allowed to pursue one's natural - or unnatural - bent. But Fishy's schemes

never succeeded, no matter how ingeniously they were contrived; when in Magnet No. 290 he took over the tuckshop and doubled the prices, he was outwitted by the Remove who set up a rival establishment in the Rag; in No. 381 his Insurance Company for issuing punishment policies was compulsorily wound-up when questionable methods were employed by the Company to avoid payment to the policy-holders; and just as his effort in No. 204 to start a pawnshop had met with little success, so, in No. 465, his effort to invest on the Stock Exchange money he didn't possess was foiled by his form fellows. But he met with least encouragement in his money-lending proclivities.

It is said that Orpheus with his lute drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek; but it took a signature to promise to pay ten-per-cent interest per day to draw money out of Fishy. He wasn't in business for his health he told the world indignantly, as he counted his little piles of cash, loaned his bunch of keys out at twopence an hour, and bought Nugent's "Holiday Annual" from Bunter. Fishy was spry, and for this reason Bunter was a persistent but not a favoured customer. It is not on record that he ever lent Bunter much money, but on the hilarious occasion in Magnet No. 640 when Bunter went bankrupt, paying a penny in the pound, Fishy had made up a creditor's list for over twenty shillings, so presumably there must have been quite a number of times (like the one when Bunter received a cheque from his father with instruction to display it and return it immediately) which induced Fishy to expend a sprat to catch a mackerel, however faithfully he followed the precepts of his father, Hiram K. Fish.

Mr. Fish was a well-known figure on Wall Street, where, we understand, he lost considerable sums of other people's money in attempting to corner grains of various descriptions. His two most famous appearances in the Magnet were in Nos. 1092 to 1107 when he took Harry Wharton & Co. to Hollywood to make pictures for him on the nod, and in Nos. 1434 to 1439 when he leased Portercliffe Hall to find some hidden sovereigns. This series was exceptionally amusing, Mr. Hamilton interplaying with brilliance the opposed characters of Bunter, Fish and Alonzo Todd, all of whom had different ideas on the subject of the disposal of the treasure. Needless to say, neither Hiram K. Fish nor his son Fisher Tarleton gained a red cent from their nefarious transactions. The episode was Fishy in all senses of the word.

In a way, Fishy was badly treated by the Remove. He usually had everything except moral justice on his side, but naturally schoolboys could not be expected to venerate the written word with the same esteem as their elders; if they borrowed money, and found that they had signed an agreement to pay an exorbitant rate of interest, they conveniently forgot all about it. Fishy, with all his perspicacity, never bargained for the rough justice his creditors meted out to him. It was a case of cunning over-reaching itself. Nevertheless, Fishy must have felt that it was the bee's knee, not to mention the elephant's side whiskers, that people in this goldurned island just didn't understand business.

Fisher T. Fish's character seemed to deteriorate as the years went by. Many other characters underwent a gradual transformation - like Mauleverer who later became less weak-minded but more lazy, and Bunter who seemed more obtuse each year. Fishy really developed his worst miserly instincts after the first world war, when the epithets, "Shylock" on the one hand, and "Swindler" on the other, were freely bandied across the Atlantic at the time America demanded payment on her war-debts. But not all the Americans who came to Greyfriars were objectionable. Putnam van Duck, for instance, who appeared in Magnets Nos. 1468 and 1471 to 1478, was everything that Fishy wasn't - generous, sporting, and agreeable - even to Bunter, though he did dub him "Fat Jack of the Bonehouse". Fishy just couldn't make him out. But then Fishy was a Yankee of

1910 whilst Putnam van Duck was a typical American of the thirties. The favourite pastime of Mr. Fish's son and heir was to peruse his accounts-book and check his spondulicks. This highly engrossing activity was one which he pursued for many years, and it inevitably landed him in trouble, the greatest of which was probably the time when Mr. Prout chanced to find the ledger and had to be squirted with ink before he would relinquish it. The blame for this subsequently fell on Bunter, and the Popper's Island Rebellion which ensued in Magnets Nos. 1374 to 1382 is among the most interesting of the many revolts recounted in the pages of school fiction.

But Fishy, despite (or probably because of) his queer notions, was one of the most popular figures with readers of Greyfriars tales; like Bunter, his oddities made him more interesting. Many have asserted that after tales of Bunter, stories of Fishy's exploits were in the greatest general demand. Some people have objected to the character of Fish on the grounds that he, like most Greyfriars juniors, seemed too old for his years. But it would be equally appropriate to level a counter-charge that St. Jim's juniors seemed too young for their years. Probably there is a little truth in both statements. But there is no doubt about the popularity of stories about this American junior...

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## MEMORIES OF ST. FRANK'S

by Edward Allatt

In my previous article (*C.D.* April 1992) I told of the building up of my *Nelson Lee Library* collection. Of course this was not, and is not the largest such collection, and it was most certainly not a complete collection of this paper. Therefore there are many, many St. Frank's stories that I never had the opportunity to read. Having only very recently come upon the excellent *C.D.* I now know that I could very easily remedy those lost opportunities by availing myself of the services of the Nelson Lee Lending Library, but I am afraid that my eyes these days would not be up to reading the small print that these papers used. What is needed is some enterprising publisher to bring out those early papers in large print format; there is probably a market out there among us 'crinklies'.

In those far off days I recall reading some St. Frank's stories and to this day I have never known when they first appeared in the *Nelson Lee*. I refer to those tales that were reprinted in the *Monster Library*. As I search my memory I have pinpointed more or less the time that I had my first encounter with the St. Frank's characters. It was in a complete story so it must have been a copy of the *Monster Library*. My educated guess is that this must have been 1925-26, a couple of years before I started reading and collecting *Nelson Lee*. The title of the story has been forgotten but the scenario remains clear in my mind. It is a cruise on Lord Dorrimore's yacht, the ship runs aground wedged between two large rocks, there are some girls in the party although it is before

Irene Manners & Co's days. Tom Watson's sister is one of them; the island is honeycombed with tunnels and caves, some of the young ladies are seized by a band of ruffians previously wrecked on the island, the girls are rescued and all ends well. Another story I read in a *Monster Library* was when the school was transferred to London. Some of the boys get involved with unsavoury characters in the East End, probably Handforth blundering in where he is not wanted. As I look back over the years it seems to me that I must have read several *Monster Library* stories long before I came upon the *N.L.L.* This was in a copy that I read of the arrival of Solomon Levi at the school, he reversed his name for a while and called himself Ivel. He put his business acumen to good use and bought up several ailing companies, among them a cinema in Bannington, or was it Bellton?

The lost city of Eldorado story I read in the *Monster Library*, but in this case I am unable to verify when this series appeared in the *N.L.L.* because I have a copy of "The Modern El Dorado" (OS No. 269; 31 July 1920). It may well be that I read other *Monster* stories but they do not spring to mind except in the case of "The Barring Out at St. Frank's", which I have re-read more recently when it was published by the Howard Baker Co. in the 1970s. Other memories are only fragments of stories remembered; the following examples may not even be in chronological order of appearance and, because I am relying entirely on my memory, may even be slightly mixed up.

Reggie Pitt arrives at the school, he is not a very nice individual at this time and rigs a device under a racing shell to impede a rival crew in a boat-race. (Perhaps this is an incident in one of the stories previously mentioned.) Another example is when the St. Frank's crowd are staying in a large country house. Three-dimensional objects and figures appear and disappear, Fatty Little comes downstairs and sees a long table in the hall overflowing with Christmas 'goodies'. He reaches for a succulent morsel; it vanishes before his very eyes. It seems that some 'boffin' has invented a beamless film projector. Did Edwy Searles Brooks have some foreknowledge of the present day 'hologram'?

Another series that I remember is that of a young author who has written a play. The St. Frank's crowd rehearse it for him but the script is stolen. A play opens in the West End and it is word for word the same play. A charge of plagiarism is made. In court the boys and girls enact the play and the charge is upheld. It was in this series that I first saw in print that hackneyed theatrical opening scene conveyed with a white-clad figure bounding through open French windows calling out "Anyone for tennis". Another story that I recall is of one of the boys (was it Castleton?) being 'conned' into putting a large amount

of money into a 'magic box' that is claimed to cure all sorts of illnesses and wounds.

## THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY

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## HANDFORTH THE DETECTIVE!

A rousing story of school life, fun and adventure, featuring the Boys of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 55.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

February 25th, 1922.

This story was most likely based upon a true life incident in the U.S.A. in 1923 when a Dr. Abrams claimed to have invented a similar 'black box' that was going to revolutionise medicine. The account of Archie Glenthorne's brother flying the Atlantic comes to mind; they have to make a forced landing on Little Side, or was it Big Side? When did Jimmy Potts the Boot-boy Baronet arrive at St. Frank's? I recall reading about it, and I know that the story was reprinted in the *Schoolboys Own Library* No. 212 (Jan. 1934). In another story a shabbily dressed man appears at an Armistice Day Service at St. Frank's. The story reveals that he has lost his memory. He is believed to be an Army officer and is taken on a tour of the 1914-18 Great War battlefields, I think, by Glenthorne's father, a retired General who pretends to lead a charge 'over the top'. The memory is restored. Here my memory falters! I believe he turns out to be the father of one of the St. Frank's boys. Was it Jimmy Potts? Collectors of *Nelson Lee Library* will recall the time when Handforth became a surly, introverted figure and fell out with all his erstwhile friends. Things became so bad he had to leave the school under a bit of a cloud and spent some time at St. Jim's. This episode was recorded in *The Gem*. As Nelson Lee fans and collectors read this I visualise them going to their respective collections and identifying all the tales that I have mentioned. Who knows, it might well lead to somebody writing an article giving all the details.

Many other memories crowd my mind but a halt must be called. My fairly recent introduction to *Collector's Digest* has triggered off many of these reminiscences and my great regret is that I did not come upon this splendid little magazine years ago.

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## RSVP/ASP

by Ian Godden

Between 1923 and 1941 John G. Brandon wrote over 120 novels if one includes the 55 titles he contributed to the Sexton Blake Library from 1933. There was also a large volume of work published in story papers such as *THE THRILLER*, *UNION JACK* & *DETECTIVE WEEKLY*. Brandon was amazingly prolific in the 1930s: aside from numerous short stories, in 1937 he published 10 Blakes and 5 novels and, the following year, ten novels and 5 Blakes.

All of his Sexton Blakes except one featured the famous RSVP, Ronald Sturges Vereker Purvale, who also appeared in some 25 books under the name of The Hon. Arthur Stukeley Pennington, known as ASP. In nearly all the books he appears with Insp. McCarthy of Scotland Yard who also appeared in a further 20 or more titles on his own.



RSVP/ASP is one of the great characters of popular fiction, a larger than life character who fought villains of all shapes and sizes and carried on very much like the Saint. Both had a fearless and flippant attitude in the face of danger and both comported themselves with great skill when rough stuff ensued, as it generally did when they were around. RSVP/ASP was never an official detective and his rule-of-thumb methods often brought him into conflict with the police, particularly McCarthy's superior, the stolid and regulation loving Area Supt. Burman.

ASP has a bachelor flat in Jermyn Street where he lives with Bilgewater, his bull-terrier, and his servant, Flash George Wibley, the former 'King of bank and jewel cracksmen', now reformed. RSVP/ASP is tall and well-built with a broken nose and a 'tin' ear and wears a cordless monocle; what a sight he must have been! Many a villain must have thought him a pushover with his languid manner and Wodehousean drawl.

Apart from those mentioned, other regulars in the series were William 'Big Bill' Withers, taxi driver and reformed safe-cracker, Lord Montague Chanways, ex-RAF wing-commander, and ASP's Luger automatic pistol No. 489761, a 'remarkably sound weapon'.

In the '30s Wright & Brown published hardcover versions of Sexton Blake stories, with the necessary changes, by various hands, John G. Brandon included. It would be interesting to know which books were in this category and from which Blakes they derived. Perhaps some reader has this information?

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## THE 'KEEN' SLEUTHS

by Bill Lofts

According to the Lofts/Adley Bibliography 'The Crime-Fighters', there have been no less than a dozen detectives of the name of 'Keen' - including some slight spelling variations, easily the most famous being Jack Keen of Film Fun fame, who was covered by me in No. 8 of this series in March 1991.

Charles Hamilton in fact created two of them in Funny Cuts in 1907. Dalton Keene, and Foster Keene, the latter far the more colourful, under his 'Gordon Conway' pen-name. Living at Fitzroy Street, London, Foster Keene was described as very tall and slim, with jet black hair, thin lips, and greyish green eyes that seemed to be changing colour all the time. He also seemed animated, could not keep still, with a gaze that almost hypnotised one to look at him closely.

Another 'Keen' was a detective called Loder Keen who appeared in Comic Cuts in the 1931/2 period, author unknown, thought I don't think it was Charles Hamilton's work. With a name like Loder, one would connect him with the criminal classes more than the detective ones!

**THE BUTTERFLY—To Girl and Boy It Brings Great Joy.**

**The Footprints on the Ceiling**

An exciting Mystery Tale in which Roy Keen, the detective, appears for the first time.



Roy Keen.



The Roy Keen detective half-page stories that run in Butterfly in early 1932, however, did have an interesting background. They were written by Mrs. Gertrude Mary Wilson, when it was extremely unusual for a woman to write them. She was actually the wife of Roy Wilson, the extremely gifted artist of such strips as 'Pitch and Toss' in the Funny Wonder, as well as, in the early days, Basil and Bert.

Roy and his wife were personal friends of Len Stroud, the Butterfly editor. Because of Gertrude's work in the detective field (writing at least twenty novels for Robert Hale) she was asked to contribute to the green comic paper. Roy Keen was a pleasant young man, well-built, keeping himself very fit. He lived in a London mansion, with a manservant called 'Ponders', and drove a little two seater car.

When I met Mrs. Wilson in the late 'sixties, she told me that she thought Sherlock Holmes was the greatest fictional character ever created because of the excellent background of hansom cabs and thick fogs in Victorian London. As a young girl she also read the Greyfriars stories, so I suppose it is not surprising that she introduced a Detective Inspector Grimes of Scotland Yard. Perhaps some relation of the one we read about at Courtfield? Mrs. Wilson died a few years ago, probably in her early nineties.

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**WANTED:** Greyfriars Book Club Volume No. 1 "The Worst Boy at Greyfriars" and No. 2 "Harry Wharton & Co. in India". Must be in fine to very good condition. State your price please.

**FOR SALE:** Soft cover edition of Volume No. 3 "The Making of Harry Wharton". Your offers please or will exchange for one of the above volumes. W.L. BAWDEN, 14 Highland Park, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 2EX.

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## NANCY BREARY

One of our readers, P. Simonsen, writes:

"I am living in hope that someone might contribute an article about Nancy Breary, who I believe started writing schoolgirl stories in the late 1930s. I have not been able to discover anything about her life so far. Maybe I will be pleasantly surprised one day."

Can any reader provide information, please?



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## HOW TO SELL WHAT YOU WRITE, BY GOODYEAR

by Ray Hopkins

No! Not what you are thinking. Neither the Tyre Manufacturers nor she who sometimes roars at the bar staff in the Rover's Return. (Does she still? I haven't been there lately.) I am referring to the man of many initials, R.A.H. Goodyear, whose innumerable school stories were often given as school prizes in the 1920s and 1930s.

His first published story appeared in BOYS' FRIEND WEEKLY No. 47, 17 Dec. 1895. It was a serial entitled, "The Football Rivals" (not a school story). It was concluded in No. 50 and was probably too short to be reprinted in complete form. Of this story the Editor says:

"The story entitled "The Football Rivals" is by a reader of the BOYS' FRIEND, Mr. R.A.H. Goodyear. This young gentleman is only seventeen, and he must be complimented on the very clever and bright little story he has written, which gives promise of better work in the future.

"When it was first sent to me I must confess I was rather doubtful that it had been written by a boy of seventeen, but now, after investigation, I am quite satisfied upon the matter. The fact that the author is a fellow reader should interest boys and girls in this story, which will run for about five or six weeks.

"Mr. Goodyear, I may add, is a native of Yorkshire - a county which is full of enthusiasm for the noble winter pastime - and I am not surprised he has caught the spirit of the game, and successfully introduced it into his charming narrative."

The British Museum Catalogues list seventy-five titles by him, published from 1897 to 1938, not all of them school stories. This is evidently not a complete list for I am aware of two others not listed, one of which is a 1930 reprint of one they did list with a new title, "One of the Best", originally titled, "The Greenway Heathens", and published in 1933. The other is "Battle Royal School" (1924). A trip through the titles in the catalogues shows that he also successfully published ten "How to sell what you write" pamphlets, some of less than fifty pages. These are as follows:

- Golden Hints for Writers (23 pages, 1916)
- Income-Increasing Authorship (20 pages), 1919
- Making Money by the Pen, 1911
- Money-Making Authorship, 1927
- Money Prizes for Authors, 1919
- Poetry that Pays (the art of writing moneymaking verse), 1919
- Prize Competitions and How to Win Them (56 pages), 1907
- Tale-Writing for Money (32 pages), 1908
- What Shall I Write About? (23 pages), 1908
- Writing for Fame and Fortune, 1928

Among the listings I copied down from the British Museum Catalogues, the only other authors of juvenile fiction I found who included this type of non-fiction work among their titles were: Sydney Horler ("Writing for Money", 1932), Christine Chaundler ("The Children's Author. A writer's guide to the juvenile market", 1934), and Harold Avery ("'Wrinkles' for Young Writers", 1902).

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## INSCRIPTIONS

by Ted Baldock

There can be few more thought provoking experiences than the reading of inscriptions, especially those to be found in old books. In them one may often catch glimpses of pleasure and affection, both of the bestower and the recipient. One may perhaps catch a flash of the joy experienced by the girl or boy upon the reception of a book which was destined to become a treasured favourite. This emotion is not unmixed with a certain pathos: a sadness that this joy occurred so long ago and has, for many reasons, since become obsolete and forgotten. The affection bestowed with the gift of a book is indicated by the tone of the donor's inscription.

My copy of Dean Farrar's "Eric, or, Little by Little" displays clear evidence of this. This sugary, now practically undigestable and frequently derided, nineteenth century classic contains the following. "To Ivor from his Dad, In memory of their visit to Torquay, Devon in July 1929." An image emerges of these two friends exploring the delights of Torquay together. How did this much-loved volume become detached from the family concerned?

Another inscription in perfect copper plate hints strongly at a strictly orthodox upbringing. It graces my volume of E. Everett-Green's "Sir Aylmer's Heir". "Kilwinning Mansfield United Reformed Church. Presented to Jane Brown for regular attendance at Church and Sabbath School during 1903." How proud must Jane Brown have been to receive such recognition! This pleasure was experienced nearly ninety years ago. What vicissitudes the book must have witnessed. It now reposes on my shelf alongside many other old favourites.

William George Bunter has not escaped comment. In my copy of "Billy Bunter at Butlin's", B.H.R. (who saw fit to confine him/herself to initials) inscribed the following: "Billy Bunter may well be a fat and fatuous ass - we may agree on that. But please do not visit upon this book that which you must feel like visiting upon him. The one - Bunter, is an ass. The other - this book is the innocent reflection of him, respect it as such."

What must have been the pleasure, and pride, of Jenny Robertson upon receiving "The Babes in a Basket" by the author of several other gems of a similar nature. It is inscribed "Presented to Jenny Robertson for perfect attendance at Church and Sabbath School during the year 1923". One wonders whether Jenny - having long since achieved maturity - was then capable of any untoward pranks. The evocation of memories is very strong, as one ponders on these long ago prizes. Such memories make them even more valuable to the present owners to whom they have infiltrated - with what adventures on the way?

Another reads: "Jim with love from Mother. Many happy returns of the day. 28 May, 1943". Perhaps 'Jim' is now a successful and retired business man. Does he remember this birthday gift which was Jeffrey Havelton's "Study Number Thirteen to

the Rescue". To another un-named recipient came R.M. Ballantyne's "Post Haste" with "Best wishes for Christmas - 1914" from Marian. Ominous date. Within the limits possible in that wartime period it is to be hoped that her sentiments were fulfilled.

A happy note is inscribed in R.A.H. Goodyear's "Sporting Fifth at Ripley" on an ornate book plate: "F. Drake, July 1929 - 1st, Three Legged Race with L. Davies". Across the mist of years we may catch a glimpse of Drake and Davis and hear their laughter as they thunder along the track to a glorious victory. A perfect moment for them both. Almost perfection was reached by John French who attained a splendid 991/2 marks out of a possible 100 from the Pleasant Road, Southend-on-Sea Primitive Methodist Sunday School. What happened to deny John the remaining half mark? Perhaps the superintendent, W.C. Anderson, could have enlightened us. For this great effort John became the proud owner of R.A.H. Goodyear's "Battle Royal School".

G.A. Henty's "One of the 28th": A tale of Waterloo, was the gift of Aunt Aimee to Hilda Mary Clay on Jan. 18th, 1897. Was Aunt Aimee taking a shot in the dark, or did Miss Clay have a genuine love for Military History and Henty?

My copy of Kenneth Grahame's "Dream Days" bears the appellation, Robert Newton Flew, Merton College, Oxford, July 1910. This is on the flyleaf, under which is quoted in minute calligraphy the first verse of Hillaire Belloc's lovely children's poem:

Child, do not throw this book about,  
Refrain from unholy pleasure  
Of cutting all the pictures out.  
Preserve it as your chiefest treasure.

Also, on the title page and by no means defacing it, are William Blake's lines:

To see the world in a grain of sand,  
And heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold eternity in the palm of your hand  
And infinity in an hour.

Perhaps my best loved inscription is the enigmatic. To "Fragrance" from "Remembrance" 1927-28. Nellie Hooper. Contained in a small volume of essays, here surely lingers an echo of Mrs. Gaskell's 'Cranford' ladies. Whether Nellie was the bestower or the recipient, the sentiment is redolent with an old world charm which seems very much at odds with our noisy present day lives.

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**WANTED:** Modern Boy 324, 335, 337, 338, 339. Any reasonable price paid. ROY PARSONS, 'Foinaven', Church Hollow, West Winterslow, Salisbury, SP5 1SX.

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**WANTED:** ENID BLYTON, W.E. JOHNS, CROMPTON. First editions in wrappers and ALL ephemera related to these authors. ANY original artwork related to Bunter, Blyton, Biggles, Eagle or other British comics and boys papers. ALL Boys Friend Libraries by W.E. Johns and Rochester. Many "Thriller" issues and first editions in wrappers by Charteris required. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, WD1 4JL. Tel. 0923 232383.

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# The Postman Called

**NIC GAYLE (Exmouth):** I've a horrid feeling I'm going to set a literary hare coursing, but here goes... The answer to the question posed by John Lewis in last month's issue about the age of Dr. Locke is an annoying one for those of us who like our saga-worlds uncorrupted by the slipshod or expedient: it was, like Dr. Watson's wound or Lord Emsworth's age, a moveable feast.

On my reading it hinges on another question: how old do you think Colonel Wharton is? I picture him somewhere in his fifties - it being a peculiarity of Hamilton's entire corpus that he consistently places parental and avuncular relationships at a generation's remove from what they would be in real life - and this estate seems to tally with Frank Richards' consistent depiction of him as a retired gentleman in middle age. So it comes as a shock to learn in one of the most famous and best-loved series of the Magnet's golden age - no. 1140, to be precise - that Dr. Locke had been Colonel Wharton's headmaster when he'd been at Greyfriars as a boy? Indeed, that he still perhaps thought of him as Jim Wharton, Captain of the Remove!

Work it out...

**SIMON GARRETT (Bath):** John Lewis's discovery of Quelch's age (C.D. 547) confirms many strong implications in the Magnet. Charles Hamilton often remarks, in connection with Quelch,

## The Greyfriars MASTERS' GALLERY



### No. 1.—THE HEAD

**H**ATS off to worthy Dr. Locke!  
Far famed for deeds scholastic;  
Although we oft receive a shock  
When punishments are drastic,  
We all admit that, as a rule,  
Our Head is kind and lenient;  
The merry japers in the school  
All find it most convenient.

Attired in gown and mortar-board  
The Head's a fearsome figure;  
He wields the cane just like a sword,  
With energy and vigour.  
But only deeds of deepest dye  
Receive such castigations;  
The victim's voice is shrill and high,  
And loud his lamentations.

The Head is growing old and grey,  
Though still alert and ciever;  
For Heads of schools don't fade away,  
They seem to live for ever.  
Like Gosling, keeper of the gate,  
The Head is hale and hearty;  
And he will never join, they state,  
The "old-at-seventy" party

We would not wish a worthier man  
To reign in justice o'er us;  
"Find his superior if you can!"  
The fellows chant in chorus.  
Long may "His Reverence" reign and rule  
In wisdom and in honour;  
To bring fresh fame to Greyfriars School  
And shed new lustre on her.

that "between fifteen and fifty there was a great gulf fixed." But in the Cassell hardback "Backing up Billy Bunter", page 189, there is a variant: "...between fifteen and fifty five..."

By this reckoning, the Removites in "Backing up B.B." behave like extremely immature twenty-year-olds!

**LES ROWLEY (Chingford):** In the July C.D. Ernest Holman writes of Edgar Wallace and the scarcity of reprints of Wallace's stories. Ernest might like to know that, in the last year, I bought an omnibus volume of nine stories (over 1,000 pages). This selection was first published in 1985 and I understand copies are still available from booksellers who specialise in these cheap reprints which are well bound and at £4.95 a bargain. Contents: The Four Just Men; Sanders of The River (memories of Leslie Banks and Paul Robeson); The Angel of Terror; The Dark Eyes of London: The Ringer; The Avenger; The Gunner: On The Spot; and the Devil Man. [ISBN 0 600 38556 6] Publisher: Hamlyn, Astronaut House, Hounslow Road, Feltham, Middlesex. Just imagine - 9 novels for under a fiver, although I sighed at the absence of Mr. J.G. Reeder.

**BRIAN DOYLE (London):** I disagree with Ernest Holman on two things: he implies that Wallace's books are hard to find these days - I come across dozens of them at various book sales, jumble sales, etc. and usually don't even bother to buy them, they are so numerous. He also says that E.W. is almost 'forgotten' today, after 60 years. Wrong. There's still a thriving E.W. society so far as I know (I was a 'Founder-Member' many years ago). And also his books are often advertised for in the 'Book Collector Monthly Magazine'.

**JOHN GIBBS (Taunton):** Martin Waters (Wellingborough) asked in the May edition of the C.D. if any reader could state which story-paper carried the 'House of Thrills' reprints from the Amalgamated Press 'Bullseye' weekly. They were reprinted in 'Film Fun'.

Looking through some 1947-1949 issues, the stories were there; I've no idea when they started or finished but there were no 'House of Thrill's' stories in the 1952 issues, as far as I can see.

When my son, also a very keen collector, let me have a look at one of his 1934 'Bullseyes' it all came flooding back, the 'House of Thrill's' stories, reprinted in the 'Film Fun'. I said "Are you sure?" "Yes -"

**LANCE SALWAY (Sherborne):** I'm sure that Edward Allatt himself will give Ray Hopkin the information he seeks about Upton Sinclair's pseudonym (page 29, June C.D.)... You will see in the enclosed booklet about the Hess Collection of story papers at the University of Minnesota that Sinclair's pen name was Lieutenant Frederick Garrison, U.S.A. (I've marked the relevant



# The Hess Collection



compiled by  
Geo. H. Hess, Jr.

- ◆ Dime Novels, Story Papers,
- ◆ Boys & Girls Series Books,
- ◆ Paperbound Libraries, etc, etc.

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page.) I've enclosed this booklet as you may like to know about this collection, if you don't already, especially as it includes "17,000 numbers of the British counterpart of the American dime novel, thousands of British boys' periodicals and annuals, and several hundred Victorian boys' books that were issued in parts." If only there was a similar collection in this country, available to all researchers! Or is there?

(Editor's note: I was most interested to read the booklet sent by Mr. Salway, and reproduce the cover here.)

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## THE 'CAPSTAN' CORRESPONDENCE

Letters by Jack Adrian Arranged by John Bridgwater

On the title-page of the 6d Streamline paperback, published in 1952, entitled *A Problem in Ciphers* the author's name is given as Rex Hardinge ('Capstan'). No trace of 'Capstan' could be found in any of the reference books available to me; however, *A Problem In Ciphers* is listed in Robert Adey's fascinating book *Locked Room Murders* (originally published by Ferret a decade ago, now reissued, substantially revised, by Crossover Press in America) on pages 121 and 331. It is a later version of *SBL 3rd, 176 The Riddle of the Sealed Room* (September, 1948). Sexton Blake and Tinker have been replaced by Murphy and McTavish, a clear case of deBlakeanisation. *A Problem In Ciphers* also appeared as a Wright & Brown hardback.

Having failed to find out anything about 'Capstan' I mentioned this to the writer and researcher Jack Adrian. He immediately responded by sending me another Wright & Brown hardback *The Polite Pirate* by 'Capstan'. This turned out to be a reprint of a series of eleven short stories which first appeared in *Detective Weekly*, Nos. 239 to 254 over the period 18 September 1937 to 1 January 1938 under the name Rex Hardinge. In the book the order of the stories has been changed and some short linking pieces added to make a smooth, continuous novel.

I found the stories about the international detective Don Miraflores Smith were not up to Hardinge's usual high standard. In his next letter to me Jack Adrian agreed:

"...I'd go along with you when you say the stories are not Hardinge at his best, but I believe this is because they are short stories. That is, Hardinge could handle the long novel and (like a good many Blake writers) the long novelette (20,000-30,000 words) but wasn't too hot on the short -- the anecdote, if you like. Good pulpwriters -- and Hardinge was, within his limits, a very good pulpwriter -- depend on words and lots of 'em...lots of adjectives! The short story thus becomes something of a strait-jacket. I'm enclosing *Murder of a Musician* (by 'Capstan')... it's only a novelette basically... I suspect it was originally published as *DW 241, "Murder To Music"* (2 October, 1937)..."

This proved to be correct, but it appeared under the name Rex Hardinge. The actual book is a Paget 9d paperback and the story is very much better than *The Polite Pirate*. The detectives are McGee and Flynn -- 'Capstan' seemed to prefer Irish and Scottish names for his sleuths!

Jack Adrian went on: "...Hardinge did 14 novels/books as 'Capstan', and I believe there's a reason for this. His first few books were under his own name (Rex Hardinge): *Beyond the Skyline*, Eldon, 1933; *Three Rounds Rapid*, Skeffington, 1936.

"The first I'm not sure about, but believe is a deBlakeanised *SBL*, one of his African adventures (the title smacks of a 'Lost Race' theme, and Hardinge did write one or two Blakes with that plot). The second is definitely deBlakeanised -- it contains three of his African *UJs*. He then started writing a semi-autobiography called *Found - Adventure* which was published in 1938 by Herbert Jenkins and concerned his travels all over Africa (if you remember, he trekked from the East coast to the West -- or vice-versa -- and wrote about it in the *UJ* in its dying days).

"I suspect he wanted to be known as the author of *Found - Adventure* rather than the author of pulp hardbacks published by such as Skeffington and Wright & Brown, and thus decided to publish all his later hardbacks as 'Capstan' (the *SBLs* didn't really count, if you see what I mean, since he'd been doing them for so long). As far as I'm aware *Found - Adventure* was something of a best-seller and got good critical reviews. While writing it, in 1937, he published his first book as 'Capstan' -- *Cap'n Luke, Filibuster* (which I **think** contains three *UJs* or *DWs*, but don't have a copy) -- and thereafter everything was done as 'Capstan' until well after the war. He also, under his real name, wrote another non-fiction work for Herbert Jenkins called *Black Pawns* (ca 1939) which deals with the tribes of South-West Africa, and in which he lets the natives mainly speak for themselves (should Germany have the Colonies back? etc.). This seems to be a rare book, as I've never seen a copy and I've been looking for nearly 20 years. I know what it's about from a Herbert Jenkins editorial blurb...

"Other 'Capstans' are *Carver of the Swamp* (deBl. African adventures: Wright & Brown, 1938); *The Hole in the Mountain* (deBl.; African adventures: Wright & Brown, 1939; almost certainly expanded from an early *UJ*, "The Ghost Hole"; *Black Magic* (which I'm pretty sure is a deBl. of *SBL* 2nd, 485 *The Case of the Black Magician*; Wright & Brown, 1941); *Inkosi-Carver Investigates* (which I strongly suspect is a deBl. of more of RH's African *UJs* and/or *DWs*; Wright & Brown, 1943); *Feud* (a deBl. of *SBL* 2nd, 497 *The Crime in Carson's Shack*; Wright & Brown, 1950). There were one or two more, including a handful of original paperbacks published by Mellifont, which were either *UJ/DW* deBl. or straight *DW* reprints (Mellifont paperbacks only took about 25,000 words, so they were perfect for this kind of reprint)."

Following that letter Jack Adrian sent *SBL* 3rd, 13 *One Of Seven* (1941), and made the following comments about it, referring particularly to the final chapter of the book:

"...There's a mountain with an abyssal hole in it, from which mist rises like smoke. I looked up my Capstan/Hardinge list. There, by Capstan, is a novel called *The Hole in the Mountain*. I thought another deBlakeanisation traced... I think it'd be stretching coincidence to its farthest point if RH wrote two separate stories featuring a 'hole in the mountain'! There's just one snag, however... and that's that while *One Of Seven* was issued as an *SBL* in December, 1941, *The Hole in the Mountain* was published by Wright & Brown (at 7/6d, their fancy price) in September... 1939!

"Which of course means that *One Of Seven* is that relative rarity, a 'Blakeanisation' -- that is, a story published first in hardback and **then** Blakeanised and sold to Len Pratt of the *SBL*. However, there are yet further complications, since the Wright & Brown hardback itself had already been expanded from a *UJ*!

"So presumably the sequence of events is as follows: RH writes "The Ghost Hole" as an SB *UJ* (No. 1511) in 1932. He then fleshes it out into a full-length novel, deBlakeanising it (and probably calling Blake Inkosi-Carver) and getting it published by Wright & Brown as *The Hole in the Mountain* in 1939. He then re-Blakeanises this into *One Of Seven* in 1941, thus getting three bites at the same plot -- this shows great commercial enterprise! (Incidentally, that old rascal Gerald Verner was a dab-hand at

this kind of thing, quite often getting four or five bites at the cherry. Other Blake writers were by no means blameless. When accused by either Pratt or Harold Twyman of palming off lightly revised old stories as brand-new originals, the guilty parties would usually give a slightly start, put on an expression of baffled innocence, and say: "Good Lord! Really! My secretary must have given you the wrong manuscript".)

*(Part II next month)*

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### **WHO WAS 'THE OLD SLEUTH'? BRIAN DOYLE PUTS YOU WISE...**

In his diverting Blakiana article 'Sexton Blake Lives!' (SPCD, July), John Bridgwater poses the question "Who was Old Sleuth?" The answer lies buried in the complex world of the American 'dime novel', published mainly during the 1860-1910 period in the United States, though many were reprinted subsequently in this country too.

'Old Sleuth' was the very first Dime Novel 'series' detective and was originally created by Harlan Page Halsey in the story "Old Sleuth the Detective" in the 'New York Fireside Companion' (a folio format story-paper) in 1872. The 'O.S.' soon became so popular with readers that he was eventually given his own magazine, "The Old Sleuth Library", which ran from 1885 to 1905, and was published by George Munro; as well as the 'O.S.' it featured the adventures of several other popular characters. More publications followed, including "The Old Sleuth Weekly", "The Old Sleuth's Own" and, inevitably, "The Young Sleuth Weekly". Surprisingly, there doesn't seem to have been a "Young Girl Sleuth's Weekly" or even "The Old sleuth's Mother-in-Law Library".

I cannot discover who exactly the 'O.S.' was, but presume he was an old, very experienced detective - a sort of Sexton Blake Senior. The stories were usually as told 'by' the 'O.S.'. A typical title was "Magic Dick, a Boy Detective, or Out of the State of New York", by The Old Sleuth (in Old Sleuth's Own, No. 139).

Some of the 'Old Sleuth' stories were reprinted in Britain by the popular Aldine Libraries in the early-1900s, so the readers of the "Union Jack" in 1905 (as mentioned by Mr. Bridgwater) would probably have been familiar with the character. The 'Old Sleuth', in fact, was possibly a kind of American Sexton Blake - both to be mentioned by their youthful admirers in the same breath (or gasp).

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**WANTED:** "Schoolboys Own Library" No. 138 and 356. Very good condition please - your price paid.

JOHN GIBBS, Yarde Farm, Combe Florey, Taunton, Somerset, TA4 3JB.

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Next only to the perennial Playbox Annual, it might reasonably be claimed that The Wonderland Annual was the best yearly treat that the Amalgamated Press published. Although most reference books seem to give the date of the initial issue as 1921, it actually went on sale in the Autumn of 1919, dated for 1920. With hindsight, its origins seem a little odd. The Great War had ended less than a year before, at which time the A.P. were publishing three coloured children's papers. The oldest, PUCK, was aimed at the older age-group - then there were CHUCKLES, and THE RAINBOW, the latter being the most popular. As it featured Tiger Tim, the Bruin Boys and other favourite Rainbow characters, Playbox Annual was in effect attached to The Rainbow. One might have thought, therefore, that in deciding to launch a second yearly volume, a companion to either Chuckles or Puck would appear. The former, in fact, was never so honoured, while Puck had to wait till 1921 for its Annual.

Meantime, in March 1919, the A.P. added a new kiddies' weekly to its output. Similar in size to the Magnet, this was a coloured comic, "PLAYTIME" - a month or so later, a second paper appeared - "WONDERLAND TALES", adopting a rather oblong shape, and printed in black, white and red. Both had a rather shaky start, as with the War just ended, money was tight. Wonderland Tales, especially, had to change its format and title twice within a year or so, and even then didn't last very long!

Nevertheless, when the companion to Playbox Annual appeared, the publishers called it The Wonderland Annual, even though Playtime was the more successful weekly. Even stranger, perhaps, is the fact that the Annual carried most of the Playtime characters, and hardly any from Wonderland Weekly (as it was now called)! It may have been felt, of course, that to have just two Annuals, one called Playbox and the other Playtime, would have created some confusion. In the event, come 1927, they did indeed change the title to Playtime Annual, - rather belatedly, as Wonderland Weekly had ceased publication years earlier!

Anyway, it is 1919, and Wonderland Annual is in the shops, printed on the same good-quality paper as its rival, the same size, but somewhat slimmer - and accordingly a shilling or so cheaper. In 1920 it would carry 208 pages, the same as Playbox Annual, but whereas the latter only sported 4 coloured plates, Wonderland would have 16 full-colour glossy pages, plus a colour frontispiece. Both books also included several 2-colour sections, red, green or blue.

Popular authors contributed - Agnes Grozier Herbertson, Henry St. John Cooper, John Grenfell (with his customary tales of island castaways), Peter Cavan, Hope Ward, (The Twinkle Twins stories), G.R. Hearn, and many others, including J. Mac. Wilson, who was also one of the main artists. The



BILLY & DOLLY JUMBO  
 THE TWINKLE TWINS  
 BRAVE SCOTTIE  
 NAUGHTY KITTICATS  
 THE TIMBERTOES  
 Advert for "WONDERLAND TALES"

- Illus. ARTHUR WHITE
- Illus. DOROTHY HEATHER
- Illus. DOROTHY HEATHER
- Illus. L. CHURCH
- Illus. J. MAC. WILSON
- Illus V.S. DANIEL



## MICKY MOUSE



1. "Keep the pot a-boiling," laughed Bunny, as he skipped like mad. "Faster, pepper, turn the rope round so fast that it ties itself in knots!" Oh, what a time they had, but do you see Rhino and Hino come along?"

"Field Folk" and the "Timbertoes" were only two of his creations - he was undoubtedly one of the finest artists ever employed on the old comics and annuals. True, there were no Foxwells or Freddie Crompton, but with Harry Rountree, Dorothy Heather, Arthur White, and the ubiquitous H. O'Neill, the artwork was as good as, if not better than, that of The Playbox.

Above all, there was J. Louis Smyth, who enriched each volume with both serious and humorous work, the latter in a style that was all his own.

Dorothy Heather drew both the "Scottie, Tim & Binky" Feature and the "Twinkle Twins" - Arthur White, soon to create Rupert the Chick for "Chick's Own", contributed "Billy & Dolly Jumbo" - while Harry Rountree forestalled Walt Disney by a year or so with his Micky Mouse. Actually this "strip" started off as "Jill and her Jungle Friends", and the little mouse was named Max. Then, for some reason or other, Jill disappeared, and Max became Micky! Phil Swinnerton, artist brother of the well-known journalist and author Frank Swinnerton, illustrated "The Naughty Nigger" - a feature not likely to be revived today. Swinnerton was quite a revelation - he was the A.P.'s "Rory Bremner" - he could imitate almost any other artist's style (Shields was one of his specialities) and often did a page which incorporated everyone else's characters!

How sales of Wonderland Annual compared with those of Playbox - or the numerous other A.P. Annuals which were issued in the early 1920s - one can only guess. Perhaps Bill Lofts, who has seen so many Fleetway House records, might know. Anyway, Wonderland Annual continued virtually unchanged until the 1926 issue. True, H.O'Neill took the Micky Mouse feature over, from Rountree, but meantime many other well-known A.P. artists had entered the pages - Macdonald, Shields, Stavert, J. Cash, L. Church, Philip Hayward, V.S. Daniel, etc. - but this was to be the last volume.

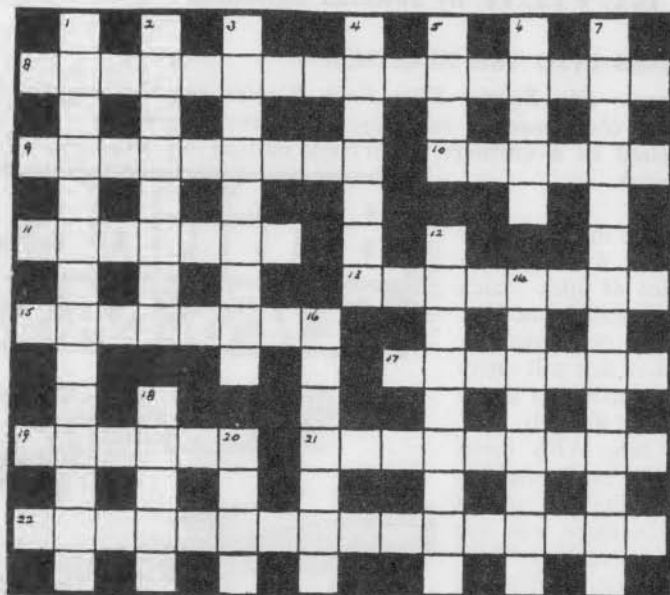
For 1927 the name was finally changed to PLAYTIME Annual (though Wonderland was given in small letters underneath). The contents continued much the same, and of course the weekly Playtime was still going strong. "Uncle Dan" (Langton Townley) who had presided over the group of papers which included Playtime, was still "in charge". Happily, Wonderland Annual escaped the changeover from the nice glossy paper to the cheap "cardboardy" type, which was adopted around 1928/29 - and, in the writer's opinion, reduced the attractiveness of all the Annuals by about fifty per cent.

As somebody once asked, "What's in a name?" Well, nothing much really, I suppose, yet to one person, at least, the Playtime Annual was never in the same class as the dear old "Wonderland", despite the similarity of contents!

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## A HAMILTONIAN CROSSWORD



### CLUES ACROSS

8. Jack Coe hears more about a Greyfriars character (6,5,5)
9. Main reason for attending Greyfriars, but not Bunter's (9)
10. A member of Herr Rosenblaum's Foreign Academy (6)
11. Half caste enemy of Wharton (2,5)
13. Where Bunter will probably end up unless his postal order arrives (4,4)
15. Most lied about enjoying these (3,5)
17. A little used Remove character (7)
19. Alias of Timothy Perkins (2,4)
21. "The \_\_\_\_\_ Schoolboy." See 1937 Magnet (9)
22. Where Nosey Clark kept Harry Wharton hostage (3,5,8)

### CLUES DOWN

1. He should have an early night (4,10)
2. A post-war Hamiltonian school (8)
3. Often extracted by Inky (4,5)
4. End made when all is put right (7)
5. Often piled on by Pelion according to Frank Richards (4)
6. The Friardale carrier (5)
7. Grin at bold tale of a St. Jim's character (8,6)
12. Usual boisterous manner of Bob Cherry, taking in a more sober member of the Co. (9)
14. E.g. Jimmy the One or Jerry the Rat (8)
16. Inebriated like a Greyfriars junior? (7)
18. Where Sir Hilton Popper sits in court? (5)
20. Kildare, perhaps (4)

*ANSWERS NEXT MONTH*

## BOOK REVIEW by Jennifer Schofield

### BIGGLES FLIES INTO THE NINETIES!

*Biggles Learns to Fly, Biggles Flies East, Biggles and Co, Biggles in Spain, Biggles Defies the Swastika and Biggles in the Orient* by Captain W.E. Johns, published in a uniform paperback edition by Red Fox, July 1992, price £3.50 each.

How splendid that Biggles is in print again! And what an excellent choice of titles. Each book is one of Captain Johns' best, and taken together they make up a coherent narrative that will surely capture the imagination of a new generation of boys and girls.

"Biggles Learns to Fly" opens in 1916, when the eager volunteer joins the Royal Flying Corps at the age of seventeen and one month, having conveniently "lost" his birth certificate. After only fifteen hours at the joystick he is on his way to France and active service. Exciting and entertaining as the story is, it is also an authentic record of the life of a young RFC officer, training, flying and fighting in the First World War, for Biggles' experiences were closely modelled on Johns' own.

Biggles actually made his first appearance when he was already an acting Captain, in "The Camels are Coming" published in 1932. When Johns backtracked in time in "Biggles Learns to Fly", published in a rare "Boys' Friend Library" edition in 1934, he repeated his earlier description of his hero, faithfully recording his lack of height and small girlish hands. In effect he gave an official beginning to the series and it makes sense for new readers to start with this title, and learn to take to the air together with Biggles.

When "Biggles Learns to Fly" came out in hardback for the first time in 1951 the order of the chapters was changed, causing some confusion, and it is good to find that the original format has been restored.

"Biggles Flies East" is also set in World War I, and follows on well as the second book in this new series, but it differs greatly from the episodic "Biggles Learns to Fly".

# BIGGLES FLIES EAST



"Biggles Flies east", first published in 1935, is a true novel, stylish and gripping, with an ingenious plot. Biggles' best friend, Algy Lacey, plays an important part in the action, and the airman fights a deadly battle of wits with the man who is destined to become his arch-enemy, the sinister Hauptmann Erich von Stalhein. Readers who know the details of Captain Johns' life will also appreciate Major Sterne - Johns' private joke at the expense of Lawrence of Arabia.

"Biggles and Co", first published in 1936, is one of the most amusing of the thrilling yarns set in the inter-war years, and the one in which von Stalhein makes his dramatic reappearance, after his apparent death at the end of "Biggles Flies East". He is now ruthlessly engaged in airway robbery to obtain gold for his country, and as Biggles is temporarily in the air freight business they are bound to cross each other.

Held at gunpoint, the airman suffers the greatest shock he has ever experienced: "For the face into which he was staring was that of a man who he thought, was buried deep in the arid sand of Palestine..." Fortunately, by now Biggles and Algy are always accompanied by the youthful Ginger, and together the three heroes are able to outwit the resurrected German.

"Biggles in Spain", first published in 1939, is another fast-moving adventure story, but very different in mood. Biggles, Algy and Ginger become involved in the Spanish Civil War, and there is a grimness and seriousness about their mission to take a secret document to England, at whatever cost to themselves. One of Johns' friends was killed fighting for the Republicans, and he was well aware of the nature of the conflict. It is a compelling and thought-provoking tale, and at one point Ginger even has to consider whether to put his loyalty to his friends above his loyalty to his country.

The last two books to be considered are set in the Second World War. In "Biggles Defies the Swastika", first published in 1941, Biggles, Algy and Ginger, now all in the RAF, encounter Von Stalhein yet again, this time in enemy occupied Norway. The narrative gains immeasurably from the authenticity of the geographical and political setting and the reality of the picture given of a country suffering invasion, but the atmosphere of the story is buoyant and the speed, ingenuity, excitement and humour of the action are vintage Johns.

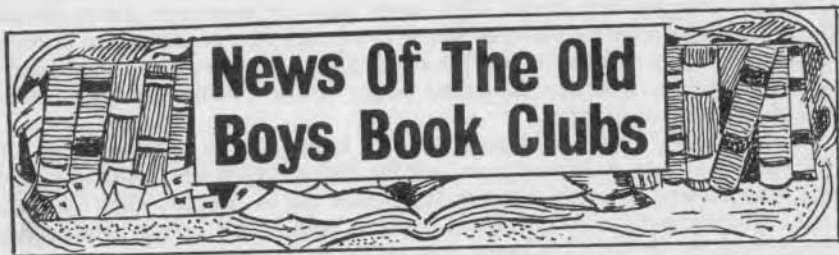
It was difficult for the Captain to write convincingly about the Second World War, as he was no longer in the RAF himself, and he even resorted to updating First World War stories when he wanted to describe the part Biggles played in the Battle of Britain. He solved the problem by plots about special missions involving Biggles, Algy and Ginger only, or the three airmen and the rest of Biggles' own squadron. "Biggles in the Orient" is one of the best of these latter jungle background. First published in 1945, it reflected the importance of the struggle against the Japanese.

All six books brought out by Red Fox have a similar appearance, attractive, bright and glossy, with a different picture on each front cover, illustrating a scene from the tale in question but always including an aeroplane and Biggles himself. The printed pages are clear and well-designed. An ideal set for a boy or girl to collect - and older Biggles enthusiasts may well enjoy refreshing their memories with these handy volumes.

Red Fox has also brought out "Biggles Defies the Swastika" and "Biggles Flies East" on cassettes, with Tim Pigott-Smith as Biggles, and some very well chosen music and sound effects. We have found them perfect for car journeys!

With such a new impetus, Biggles should be triumphantly on course to fly into the Twenty-First Century.

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### NORTHERN O.B.B.C. REPORT

Despite its being a typical British summer day - i.e. cloudy, cool and windy - the sun did present itself in the evening for the Club to have its annual informal, and very happy, get-together and barbecue at the home of our secretary in Wakefield.

A goodly number turned up even though many apologies were received. Margaret, Catherine and Vera were able to master the barbecue and Vera provided home baking and cups of tea.

There was plenty of opportunity for people to view Geoffrey's extensive library and a video recording was viewed of our President Mary Cadogan's appearance on Noel Edmonds' T.V. programme in May, where she proved she was indeed an expert on our hobby. Coincidentally, on the same programme appeared an avid collector of recorded radio programmes, Barry Hill, who also proved an expert in his field. He is well known to our club as he has made two visits to us in the past and presented excellent items.

Our next meeting will be at our usual venue on 8th August.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

### LONDON OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

22 members attended the July meeting at Chingford Horticultural Society Hall. Roger Jenkins talked about the St. Jim's stories, firstly in Pluck and then in the Gem. Next there was Mark's musical quiz which was won by Brian.

After a mouth-watering feast, Norman spoke about the W.E. Johns centenary and some of the events which are planned. This was followed by Bob Whiter's quiz, which was won by Eric and Mark.

The next meeting, which is on Sunday 9th August is at the home of Bill Bradford at 5, Queen Anne's Grove, Ealing.

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**WANTED:** Schoolboys Own Librarys - must be V.G. condition and reasonably priced. Also require Sexton Blake Librarys pre. 1940. JOHN BECK, 29 Mill Road, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 2RU.

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## A GREAT OCCASION

by Mary Cadogan

Anthony Buckeridge, the author of the Jennings books, has recently celebrated his 80th birthday. To mark the occasion his publishers, Macmillan, held a party in London, and Brian Doyle and I were among the guests. It was truly a heart-warming and happy function; as well as having the very great pleasure of meeting Anthony and his wife Eileen again, Brian and I were thrilled to meet David Davis (better known to most of us as 'David', Head of BBC Children's Hour from 1953 to 1964 and, of course, a regular contributor to the programme for many years before that, during 'Uncle Mac's' reign).

Memories of Children's Hour - which launched Jennings so many years ago - were affectionately discussed. Anthony was presented by Macmillan's Michael Wace with a beautiful leather-bound, gilt-edged copy of one of his Jennings books. (His recently written *Jennings Again* has been a big and well deserved success.) I thought C.D. readers might like to see this picture of myself, David, Anthony and Brian at the party. In wishing Anthony Many Happy Returns I expressed my appreciation, not only of his wonderfully appealing books, but of his role as Vice-Chairman of the Northern Old Boys Book Club. We are all proud that this distinguished author takes such a lively interest in our hobby.



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# JENNIE the Little Flower Girl

An appealing story of a little girl with a very big heart.

## A Lucky Fall.

**T**ING-A-LING! Ting-a-ling-a-ling!  
 "Oh dear! Here comes that boy on his cycle again!" Jennie Dean's pretty face puckered in a frown as the shrill tinkling of a bicycle bell echoed along the street. "I wish the boy would go somewhere else, or stop ringing his bell!" Jennie's head was aching badly, for she had been standing in the hot sun for hours selling her roses, and for the last hour a boy on a fairy-cycle had been riding up and down on the pavement furiously ringing his bell.

"Hi! Hi! Out of my way!" The boy dashed up again, and, narrowly avoiding a collision with Jennie's flower-basket, put on his brake and stopped near by. "Didn't you hear my bell, or are you deaf?" he demanded.

Jennie gazed disapprovingly at the lad, a sneaky-faced boy of about twelve years of age.

"That's not a nice way to speak to anyone," said Jennie at length. "I wasn't in your way. You deliberately rode your cycle across the pavement at me. But there," she added, a smile breaking over her face, "we'll say no more about it. But please don't ring your bell so much, I've got such a bad headache."

But Jennie's plea fell on deaf ears, for the sneaky boy merely grinned at her and started ringing his bell more furiously than ever.

"If you don't like it you can clear off," he said, with a sneer. "We don't like hawkers near our home, anyway."

Jennie bit her lip to check an angry retort, and, with a mocking laugh, the boy rode off along the pavement still ringing his bell.

"Never mind, I hope I shan't have to stand here much longer," Jennie told herself cheerfully. "I've only three more bunches of roses to sell, and when they've gone I'll be able to go home. Roses! Pretty roses! Buy a bunch of roses, sir?"

Jennie held out a bunch of red roses invitingly as a tall man, wearing a top hat and frock coat, came striding along the street.

"Morning-gathered roses! Only sixpence a bunch!"

The man passed by without a look at the roses, his brows wrinkled in a thoughtful frown.

"Roses! Buy my pretty roses— Oo!" Jennie broke off with a startled gasp as something whizzed past her, and, narrowly missing her head, struck the man's top hat.

The hat shot off its wearer's head, and as it fell to the ground the man's foot came down on it and flattened it on the pavement.

With a sudden angry cry the man stopped abruptly, and, snatching up his ruined hat, swung round and glared wrathfully along the street towards Jennie.

"What do you mean by throwing at my hat, child?" he blurted out. "How dare you!"

Jennie gazed back at the man, her big grey eyes round with amazement.

"I—I didn't throw anything at your hat, sir!"

Ting-a-ling! Ting-a-ling!

The loud ringing of the cycle bell interrupted Jennie, and the next moment the sneaky-looking lad sped along the street.

## Every Saturday

"I saw her, sir! I saw her do it!" The boy pointed at Jennie as he made the accusation. "I saw her throw the stone at your hat. Look! Here's the stone she threw!"

He stooped to pick up the missile, then held it out for the man's inspection. The man flushed angrily and turned once more to the astonished girl.

"What on earth possessed you to do such a thing?" he cried. "You've ruined my hat!"

"Oh, I didn't do it, sir! Honestly, I didn't!" Jennie cried. "Oh, please believe me, sir!"

"Don't you, mister! Look at this!"

The sneaky lad bent over Jennie's basket, and straightened up once more with another pebble in his hand.

"Here's another stone, sir," he said. "I bet she would have thrown that if she had missed you with the first one! She was annoyed because you wouldn't buy her roses."

"H'm! I believe you're right, my lad," the man said slowly. Then, turning to Jennie, he added: "You'll come along with me to the police station. Pick your basket up."

Jennie opened her lips to deny the wicked accusation, but no words came, and, picking up her flower-basket, she stumbled along between the man and the boy with the bicycle.

"I didn't do it, but I can't prove it," she told herself. "Oh, what will happen? What will mums do if they send me to prison?"

Jennie's eyes dimmed with tears as she thought of her poor invalid mother for whom she worked so hard—wondered who would look after her.

"Oh, please—please don't take me to the police station, sir." The distracted girl almost sobbed out the words as she gazed pleadingly up into the tall man's face. "I—I didn't throw the stone—really I didn't—but I'll give you all the money I've got for another hat if only you'll let me go, sir!"

The man's face softened for a moment, then grew stern once more.

"I'm sorry, my girl, but you should have thought of that before you threw the stone," he said, shaking his head. "You might have injured me if you had hit my head instead of my hat. No! I must make an example of you!"

Dazed by the unfairness of it all, Jennie walked blindly along, hitting her lip to check the tears that rose to her eyes.

The mocking laugh of the boy with the bicycle broke in on her thoughts, and Jennie glanced round at his sneaky face.

"Why did you lie? Why did you say I

threw the stone?" she cried. "You know I did not throw it, and— Oo!"

Jennie's words ended in a gasp as she tripped up on the pavement. As the weight of her flower-basket pulled her forward she threw out her hands, clutching wildly at the boy.

The next moment there was a loud ripping noise, and Jennie fell forward on to her basket clutching a ragged piece of cloth in her hand.

The tall man paused abruptly whilst the boy, his face a picture of mingled anger and dismay, gazed down at his torn coat.

"Look! Look what you've done to my coat!" he cried. "You've torn the pocket right out of it!"

"Oh dear! I'm ever so sorry!" Jennie held out the piece of cloth as she rose to her feet. "I couldn't help it. I tripped up on the pavement, and— Goodness! Look!"

A forked piece of wood, with a length of elastic bound to it, had fallen to the ground with a shower of small stones from the torn coat pocket.

"A catapult!" exclaimed Jennie.

The tall man gave a soft whistle of surprise, and, stepping forward, he seized the boy firmly by the arm.

"You little scamp! So it was you, after all! You fired the stone that hit my hat from your catapult!"

"Then he must have pretended to find the other stone in my flower-basket!" broke in Jennie. "Oh, the bad boy!"

"Bad isn't the word for him!" said the man grimly. "He deserves the birch for this—and I wouldn't be surprised if he gets it!"

He paused for a moment and looked at Jennie with the friendliest of smiles.

"I'm ever so sorry, my dear," he said gently. "To think that I blamed you! Poor little girl! You must let me buy those roses that I've stopped you from selling! Come, come! I insist!" he wound up, as Jennie stepped back, shaking her head. "Now, please accept this half-a-crown and my sincere apologies."

Jennie heaved a sigh of relief as the man marched the boy, squealing and protesting, along the street towards the police station.

"Thank goodness I'm cleared of suspicion!" murmured Jennie. "I daren't think what might have happened but for that lucky fall!"

*(Another grand story of the little girl with the heart of gold in next Saturday's LARKS. Order your copy to-day.)*

## Random Riddles



Billy Bunter

Why is Billy Bunter like a football?

*Because he's repeatedly "blown up" and kicked.*

Why is a duffer at history like a drenched terrier?

*Because both are "out in the reign."*

Why is Fisher T. Fish like his native city (New York)?

*Because both are noted for "tall storeys."*

Why is Mr. Quelch like a balloon?

*Because he frequently goes "up in the air."*



Hurree Singh

Why is Billy Bunter like a 'bus-conductor?

*Because he often has "no room inside."*

Why is Coker's motor-bike like a "sacked" office-boy?

*Because they both get the "push."*

Why is Mr. Quelch an excellent angler?

*Because, in class, he's always "catching Fish."*

Why is No. 13 Study often in a "stony" state?

*Because it contains a Cherry.*

## Sports and Sportsmen

No. 2.—CRICKET



King Willow sits upon his throne,  
His subjects flock around him.  
And sportsmen all, in every zone,  
Monarchs of games have crowned him.  
In Bangala white the fieldsmen stand  
And pay their homage duly;  
And they agree, on every hand,  
That cricket thrills them truly!

Each Greyfriars fellow is a keen  
And ardent leather-hunter;  
A few exceptions may be seen,  
There's Sloop, and Billy Bunter.  
By slackers such as these, I fear,  
A bat is never wielded;  
Nor is the swift, elusive sphere  
By boys of this sort fielded.

But others love the grand old game,  
The stogging and the suttling;  
They love amassing runs—and fims,  
In tussle most exciting,  
Some find their pleasure on the stream  
Or on the bounding billow;  
But few of us would ever dream  
Of shunning good King Willow.

Long may he reign! for he has proved  
For many a generation,  
A worthy king, esteemed, beloved  
By boys of every station.  
Let slackers smoke their cigarettes  
In quiet glade or thicket;  
The real good sportsman ne'er regrets  
The hours he's spent at cricket!



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