

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 46

No. 549 SEPTEMBER 1992

Sunny Stories

FIVE GO OFF TO CAMP & OTHER TALES

By ENID BLYTON

2!



96p



FLIPS PAGES



(INCORPORATING NORMAN SHAW)
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Hi People,

Varied selection of goodies on offer this month:-

1. Many loose issues of TRIUMPH in basically very good condition (some staple rust) £3. each.
2. Bound volume of TRIUMPH Jan-June 1938 £80.
3. GEM - bound volumes - all uniform -
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647 - 672 (July - Dec 1920) £ 80
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(or the pair for £100)
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7. EAGLE - many issues of this popular paper, including some complete unbound volumes at the following rates: Vol. 1-10, £2 each, and Vol. 11 and subsequent at £1 each. Please advise requirements.
8. 2000 A.D. - many copies (would you believe, 30,000 - no kidding!) available - please advise wants.
9. Lots more goodies to hand, including recent comics like VICTOR, NEW HOTSPUR, BATTLE, WARLORD, SMASH, POW, WHAM, WHIZZER & CHIPS, COR, WHOOPEE, MONSTER FUN, BUZZ, TOPPER, BEEZER, TV COMIC, and many others. Please advise requirements.

That's it for now, except to say that Norman sends his best wishes to all his old customers. Have fun! Callers always welcome, but please make an appointment as I sometimes have to be out and I would hate you to have a wasted journey.

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

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR
Founded in 1941 by
W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST
Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

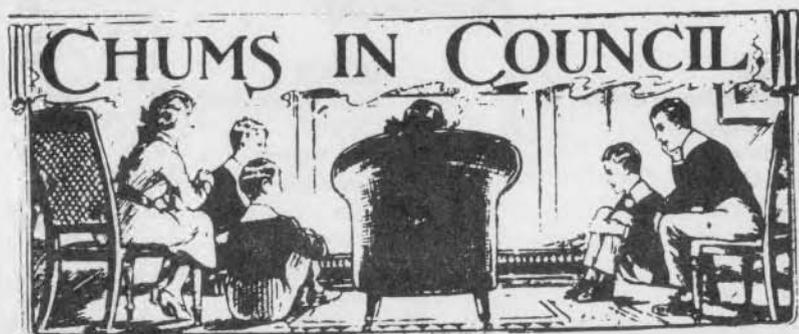
S.P.C.D. Edited and Published 1959 - January 1987 by Eric Fayne

VOL. 46

No. 549

SEPTEMBER 1992

Price 96p



ANNUAL TIME AGAIN

Yes, with our September issue we begin to think seriously about the C.D. Annual. I am happy to inform you that already I have received several fascinating contributions for this year's bumper volume, and I now look forward to receiving further items from readers. If you are considering the possibility of submitting an article, now is the time to do so, as arrangements have to be made with our printers long before the busy Christmas season is upon us. Please do put fingers to typewriters or pens to paper, and share with us your memories of favourite characters, series, authors or illustrators. Of course, it is always pleasing



to be sent a few items of seasonable nature, as the Annual is published in December.

Order forms are enclosed with this issue of the C.D., and you will see that I have endeavoured to keep the price almost the same as last year's, in spite of increased printing and postal charges.

To create the appropriate mood, this editorial is illustrated with pictures of some popular juvenile Annuals of the past. The heading, however, has nothing to do with Annuals but with Eric Fayne's article on *The Dreadnought* this month. You will note that he mentions, rather wistfully, the old Chums in Council heading - and, as you can see, I have managed to resurrect this.



Happy Reading
MARY CADOGAN

ANSWERS TO KEITH ATKINSON'S HAMILTONIAN CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 8. Horace James Coker
- 9. Education
- 10. Artois
- 11. Da Costa
- 13. Debt cell
- 15. Old times
- 17. Elliott
- 19. De Vere
- 21. Invisible
- 22. Sea Cliff Bungalow

DOWN

- 1. Lord Mauleverer
- 2. Carcroft
- 3. Left Stump
- 4. Amended
- 5. Ossa
- 6. Coote
- 7. Reginald Talbot
- 12. Ebullient
- 14. Criminal
- 16. Squiffy
- 18. Bench
- 20. Eric

THE DREADNOUGHT

by Eric Fayne

Somehow there seems to be a pleasantly old-fashioned tang in the name of the paper - The Dreadnought.

The term seems to have long gone out of use in the Navy. We hear of Battleships and Cruisers and Submarines. But no more Dreadnoughts. In a way, for me, at least, the name adds a special charm to the lovely old paper.

It was not a paper which enjoyed a long life, lasting exactly 3 years. It appeared every Thursday in the shops, was priced at one penny, and consisted of 28 pages. The covers were of a greeney-blue, and in appearance it was not unlike the Gem. The volume which I have selected from my bookcase is the one which contained the early stories of Greyfriars. The first issue in the book is No. 136, dated January 2nd 1915.

So the Great War had been raging for several months, though the War had not yet got into its stride.

Let us look at the supporting contents when Greyfriars joined the paper. A long complete story, dealing with the thrilling adventures of Bill Stubbs, on short leave from France.

There was a serial "The Secret Plotter", dealing with the amazing adventures of Sexton Blake and his assistant, Tinker. And there was another serial "Lion or Eagle", a stirring story of the Attempted Invasion of England. And this time the author's name is given - John Tregellis.

The whole page Editor's Chat appears under the title "Chums in Council". In passing, it was a title which appealed to me, as it seemed appropriate to our own C. D. At one time we often used that heading for our own comments from the old Ed., and in fact, we often used the same picture heading showing the Editor sitting before a big fire, surrounded by his 'chums'. The drawing was charming - the work of the artist Wakefield. Older C.D.readers may recall it.

With this issue, Frank Richards and Greyfriars joined the Dreadnought. Some 3 years earlier, Martin Clifford and St. Jim's had taken up their place in "The Penny Popular". It is a fair assumption that, at that time, St. Jim's was more popular than Greyfriars, though, years later, matters were reversed.

A few quotes from that "Chums in Council" before me are interesting. The first: "Let all your chums know that famous Frank Richards is now writing stories of Greyfriars for the Dreadnought each week." That was slightly misleading if readers were narrow-minded. Frank Richards had written those stories for the Magnet years earlier, and they were now being re-printed in the Dreadnought.

Quote no. 2: A Longish piece about what boys should read contains the following item: "The men who write for the papers I have edited are sportsmen in every sense of the word. Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, Arthur S. Hardy, and that greatest author for boys now living - H.S. Warren Bell - are all gentlemen whose characters are irreproachable."

That was in Jan 1915. All these years later almost everyone knows of Frank Richards - but few - very few - would ever have heard of Warren Bell.

Quote No. 3 - and the last: 'The Boy Without a Name', on sale tomorrow in the Boys' Friend Library, is the first story of Harry Wharton and his chums which has ever appeared in the form of a threepenny book. But if it is received in as favourable a manner as I anticipate, it certainly will not be the last."

And how right that old Editor was! As we know, there had been a number of school stories by Charles Hamilton in earlier B.F.L.'s, but "Boy Without a Name" was the first one of Greyfriars by Frank Richards. And in a few years' time there would arrive the threepenny Schoolboys' Own Library with several editions each month, mainly devoted to reprinting stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood.

And now for a few moments with those reprinted Greyfriars stories in the Dreadnought. They were heavily, but not unskilfully, pruned, losing a number of chapters in the transfer.

Oddly enough they started with the second story, and we can only guess as to why the first one was omitted. Every title was changed. The first one, "Bob Cherry's Triumph", had been the second one, "The Taming of Harry" in the Magnet of February 1908, seven years earlier.

Next came "Hazeldene's Treachery" which had been "The Mystery of Greyfriars" in Magnet No.3. In the reprint they started with the 5th chapter of that old title.

Hazeldene was an excellent character study. In the early years he was nicknamed "Vaseline", an appropriate and very excellent nickname. I have queried before why that nickname was dropped with the passing of time. I can only think that "Vaseline" was a proprietary name of a fine and very necessary commodity and the manufacturers may have protested, or, possibly, the thought occurred to the Editor and he may have dropped a hint to the author. We don't know.

There were now several consecutive stories starring Hazeldene, and in "Captured by Gypsies" (entitled "Kidnapped" in Magnet No.5) we were introduced to Vaseline's charming, demure sister, Marjorie. That, of course, was long before she went to Cliff House.

In "True Blue" (entitled "Aliens at Greyfriars" in Magnet No. 6) we have the story which introduced Hurree Singh to Greyfriars for the first time. Actually he was not a new character to readers of the time. Hurree Singh had been at Netherby (where we also met Redfern, Owen and Lawrence) and later, for some reason, Netherby School was transferred to Beechwood Academy. Just now I forget in which paper the Netherby and the Beechwood stories appeared, though, years ago, I did an article for our C.D. discussing those very schools.

And now, for some reason, Beechwood is closed temporarily, and a number of the "Aliens", including Hurree Singh, come to stay at Greyfriars. After a couple of frantic stories concerning the aliens, particularly Meunier, the French boy, and Hoffmann, the German, and Hurree Singh, and others, Beechwood re-opens and the aliens depart.

And now the tinted greeney cover left the Dreadnought and it appeared with a white cover henceforth. The same thing happened with the Gem and the Magnet. It seems the dye was no longer available. The War was beginning to bite.

Then, in "The Phantom Fugitive" (entitled "In Hiding" in Magnet No 8) very strange things are happening, and it almost seems that the old school is haunted. Until they discover that Hurree Singh, loving Greyfriars so much and not wanting to go back to Beechwood, has hidden himself away in a box-room. The tale ends "And so Hurree Janset Ram Singh" became once more a member of the Greyfriars Remove, and an inmate of Study No.1 - to share the future fortunes of the chums."

A nagging thought! WAS Inky in Study No.1 in later years? If we want to carp a bit - Heaven forbid - it might occur to us that security for the Indian boy was a trifle slack. After all, Hurree Singh was a "Nabob"!

A thought on Bulstrode, The Remove bully. He was a first-class character study in early years. yet he was just allowed to disappear from the yarns later on. I cannot recall that we were ever told what eventually happened to him. In one of these early tales Wharton fought the big and powerful Bulstrode, on the understanding that, if Wharton won, Bulstrode would move out of Study 1 and let Bob Cherry move in.

I should enjoy browsing on through these Greyfriars reprints in the Dreadnought, but space forbids.

So I jump ahead to No.159, for the 24th and last Greyfriars tale in the Dreadnought. The story is "Harry Wharton's Resolve" (entitled "The Greyfriars Conjurer" in Magnet No 29) and a tale featuring Levison (later to be expelled and go to St. Jim's).

And "Chums in Council", the Editor's Chat, had a startling announcement. "TO ALL DREADNOUGHT READERS! Great Amalgamation Scheme. I have a momentous statement to make this week regarding the future of the Dreadnought. In order that my reader chums may obtain better value for money, I have decided to amalgamate this

journal with our wonderful and world-famous companion paper, The Boys' Friend". And then lots more - about next week in the Boys' Friend.

And, at the close of the Greyfriars story:

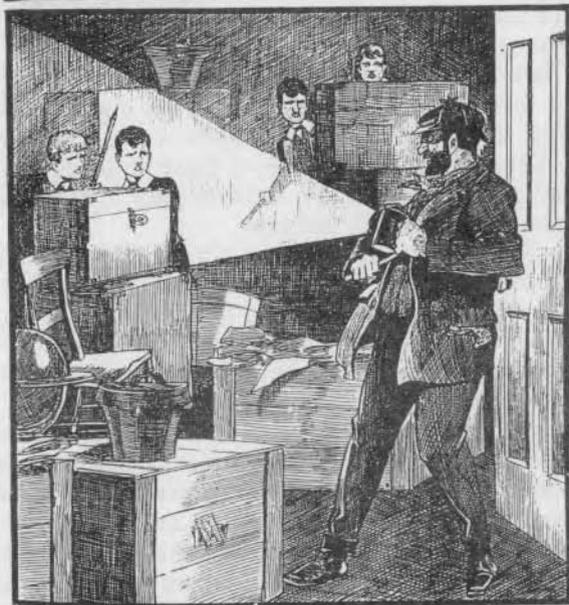
"This being the last issue of The Dreadnought, these stories must now cease. Our readers will be equally interested and amused, however, by the exciting adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co at Rookwood School, in the Boys' Friend."

No suggestion, you see, that the War or any paper shortage was to blame for the end of the Dreadnought. It seems obvious that, despite Greyfriars being the main attraction, the old paper was just not paying its way. True, paper shortage was to come in time, but apparently it had not come yet, or the Editor would have said so very readily as an excuse for the amalgamation.

The Penny Popular with the old St. Jim's yarns carried on - and on and on. The Dreadnought, with Greyfriars, fell by the wayside. So, as I said earlier, it seems that in early years St. Jim's was the more popular with readers.

--- And Billy Bunter was still only a supporting character in those days. Was it the emergence of Bunter, later on, that gave Greyfriars its great surge ahead?

GRAND TALE OF GREYFRIARS!



HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S AMBUSCADE!

(A Dramatic Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale Contained in this Issue.)

THE OTHER FAMOUS FIVE - A fiftieth birthday tribute by Norman Wright

To anyone over the age of fifty mention of 'The Famous Five' evokes memories of Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and Frank Nugent, Frank Richards' perennial quintet. Ask anyone under thirty about the Famous Five and you will get a different answer. It is a sad fact that, despite the Howard Baker and Hawk Book reprints, a majority of younger readers have never heard of Billy Bunter, let alone Harry Wharton.

I recently gave a talk on magazines and comics of the 1930s to a couple of classes of eleven-year-olds. When I held up a Magnet (with a lovely Bunter Christmas cover) and asked who had heard of Billy Bunter only their teachers put up their hands! A class of fifteen-year-olds registered an equal degree of blankness when a friend of mine mentioned Bunter to them. Yet each and every one of those children knew of the *other* Famous Five: the group created by Enid Blyton and much in the news recently as they reach their fiftieth birthday.

The Famous Five, Julian, Dick, Anne, Georgina (known as George) and Timothy, the dog, made their debut in "Five on a Treasure Island", published by Hodder and Stoughton in September 1942. The book and its characters were immediately popular, and a series followed. A new Fives book was published every year, with the exception of 1959, until the final book in the series "Five are Together Again" was published in 1963.

In the first story Kirrin Island, a rock-bound islet at the entrance to Kirrin Bay that had been in George's family for generations, was in danger of being sold to an unscrupulous pair who had discovered that a long last treasure was hidden in the dungeons of the castle that crowned the island. But the Five proved too smart for them and found the treasure before the final documents were signed, thus securing the island and the financial future of the family. As a reward George was given Kirrin Island and, most importantly, she was allowed to keep Timothy who had previously been 'persona non grata' after causing chaos in her father's study.



Illustration by Eileen Soper

Almost all of the stories began at Kirrin Cottage, George's family home, and the best of the bunch took place, to a greater or lesser extent, on Kirrin Island itself. Once on the island the Five could wander amidst the ruins of Kirrin castle, explore the dungeons or watch the sea-birds from the cliff-top while they waited for a fresh adventure to come their way. The stories were exciting, escapist reading set in a cosy rural England. The landscapes in the Fives books were always heavy with sandy coves, caves and castles; while just below the surface there was usually a secret passage to be found, in fact Kirrin was honeycombed with a network of underground passages, some actually running under the sea to Kirrin Island. The second book in the series, "Five Go Adventuring Again", was set in the Christmas holidays and when the cottage was snow-bound a secret passage came in very handy for tracking down secret plans that had been stolen from Uncle Quentin's study.

The first dozen titles in the series are, without a doubt, the best. Within those twelve stories the Five had adventures while caravanning, camping, hiking and, of course, on Kirrin Island. Blyton is often accused of being repetitive yet those early Famous Five stories have a freshness that always appeals to children. I have not yet found a child, who, once tempted by one of these books, fails to fall under the spell that the author manages to weave. She knew what her audience wanted and gave them just that. There is no denying that there was an overabundance of caves, castles, passages and lost treasures but Blyton had the skill to keep her young readers wanting more of the same. Her books have been accused of being over simplistic, yet if that were the case other writers would have jumped on the band-waggon. Indeed, during the 1950s there were quite a number of other books written along the Blyton lines. Few were successful and they are now forgotten, while Blyton's books continue to sell at a staggering rate.

Towards the end of the series the quality of the stories **did** deteriorate. Enid did not enjoy the best of health in her later years, and her powers to conjure a story out of her head onto her typewriter diminished during the 1960s. "Five Together Again" published in 1963 was a mere shadow of "Five on a Treasure Island" published twenty one years before.

The 1950s were the peak years for the Five. In 1957 the Children's Film Foundation made a seven part serial of "Five on a Treasure Island" for showing at Saturday Morning Cinema shows. In the editorial of Enid Blyton's Magazine Blyton regularly printed a list of the cinemas showing the film so that her readers would be able to see it. A second serial made by the Foundation "Five Have a Mystery to Solve" was released in 1964. A three-act play "Famous Five Adventure" was produced on the London stage during the mid-1950s.

A new wave of interest swept the country in 1978 when Southern Television produced two series of television films based on the books. And now in the fiftieth year Hodder and Stoughton have issued a facsimile of the first edition of "Five on a Treasure Island" and I have heard that the first printing has already sold out and they are set to reprint. So, happy birthday Five, your adventures look set to be around for a long time to come.



NO CO-OPERATION

by Bill Lofts

It was H.W. Twyman, former editor of *The Union Jack* and *Detective Weekly*, who first told me of the fierce rivalry that existed between various editorial offices at the old Amalgamated Press Ltd. This was in answer to my question about whether there was any co-operation between him and the editor of the Sexton Blake Library, Len Pratt, to ensure that writers who contributed to both departments did not duplicate their stories.

To give an example the U.J. yarns were, say, 25,000 words in length and the S.B.L. almost twice as long. It was quite easy for any story by a skilled writer to be lengthened or shortened so that he would receive two payments for one copyright. Certainly a number have been discovered by Blake fans over the years, being recorded as 'reprints' though they were nothing of the sort officially, but a deliberate pinch or self plagiarism.

I actually met both editors, who were completely different in every way. Len Pratt was of the old school. When answering my request for information he had an attitude of 'why dig all this up after so many years' - but he was co-operative to the point of at least forwarding letters from me to various Blake writers. 'Pratty' as he was nicknamed, was to my mind not a creative editor, having little interest in the crime field. He was quite content to have a regular batch of contributors as time went on (especially in post-war years), relying on them to ensure facts and situations were correct, without proper subbing or revision, thus making some Blake stories mediocre.

Twyman was far cleverer, studying criminology and even writing a textbook on the subject. When he took over the U.J. he straight away got rid of the old writers such as William Marray Graydon and W.B. Home-Gall who could not modernise their style. Indeed the hundred or so long letters to me packed with priceless inside information, show how co-operative he could be. In reciprocation I did a lot of research for him on famous murder trials held in London which he was writing up for the American market. When the idea of a Sexton Blake Annual was suggested in the late thirties it was stipulated that both editors should prepare it. Pratt suggested that Twy should make a start, then went on leave! By the time he returned Twy had completed it alone as press date was due. Twy had received no co-operation at all!



A FEW ANSWERS

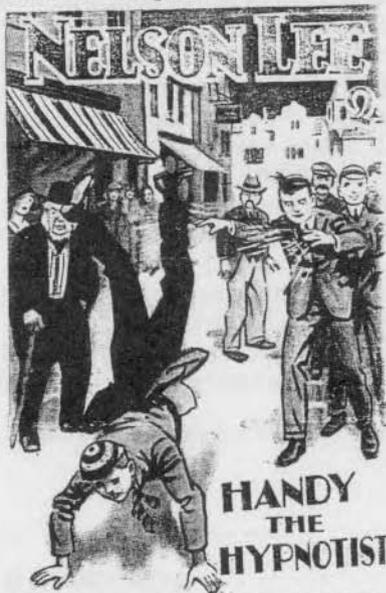
by C. H. CHURCHILL

In reply to Mr Allatt's excellent article in the August C.D. (which I enjoyed very much) I can give some answers to the questions he raised.

I once had 560 of the old small series Lees. I am now living in a retirement home, so had to dispose of most of them, to my sorrow. I have now about 25 left so most of my answers are from memory, plus the help of Bob Blyth's Bibliography of E.S.B.'s writings. The N.L.L. commenced on June 12th 1915. The first St. Frank's story was in No.112, July 28th 1917. The Monsters were published from March 1925 to May 1927, 17 numbers in all issued monthly. They were all reprints from old series Lees. Each series usually comprised eight tales, adjusted to read as one story. Very cleverly done. 1/- each.

The holiday story would be no.7, being reprints of Lees Nos. 213 to 220 issued July/ August 1919. It was called "Neath African Skies". "St. Frank's in London" would be No 8, reprint of Lees 221/228 issued August/October 1919.

The arrival of Solomon Levi was in No.14, "The Ghost of Bannington Grange". Actually this series was played about with too much. The Lee series was Nos. 285/293, Nov. 1920 to Jan 1921. As nine Lees were too many, one was added to the beginning and the last two thrown out. The



E. O. Handforth "does his stuff"—an amusing incident from this week extra-long, extra-funny school year, featuring the cheery Chums St. Frank's.

New Series No. 23. OUT ON WEDNESDAY. October 11th, 1920

HANDY
THE
HYPNOTIST

ending was faked so that the ending came with the Christmas number (No. 290).

The El Dorado or White Giants series was also chopped off early. It ran in the Lee from June to Sept.4th 1920, Lees Nos. 264/274. This is my favourite holiday series of all.

The barring out series (Mr Martin) was the first I ever read in the Lee, being Nos. 229/236 Oct/Dec 1919. I may be biased by I think this was the best of all the barring out stories in the Lee. This is the series reproduced by the Howard Baker organisation.

Reggie Pitt arrived in No.170 of the Lee 7/9/18 and the series ran from then to Oct 1918. he was nicknamed "The Serpent" owing to his behaviour. The boat race incident was in Lee No 171. The Monster was No 2 "The Black Sheep of the Remove".

The Christmas exploit mentioned is, I think, in Nos 551 or 552 of the Lees, Dec 1925.It never appeared in the Monsters.

The young author was Horace Stevens of the fifth form, Browne's pal. He wrote a play (Lees Nos. 561/568 Mar/Apl 1926) which was eventually produced after many adventures. I do not recall the "Anyone for Tennis" incident nor anything about the Magic Box affair. Archie's brother flying the Atlantic seems vague, but about this time I was not taking the Lee.

I remember Jimmy Potts coming in the 1st new series Jan/Feb 1928. This series was reprinted in the S.O.L.

As to the "Armistice Day at St. Frank's" incident, it was in the 1st new series Nos 80 and 81. This title was also used for No 440 in the old small series. As far as I recollect, Archie's father was a Colonel and not a General. Handy went to St. Jim's in June 1928 and featured in four stories in the Gem. (Nos 1059/1062). He returned to St. Frank's in No. 114, 1st new series of the Lee. I do not remember ever reading this affair in either the Lee or the Gem.

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DIXON BRETT

by John Bridgwater

Dixon Brett? ... Who is he?... Let Detective Inspector Bullett of the Yard introduce him.

"Dixon Brett is one of the very best crime men we've got in the kingdom, if not the world... He is known all over the world... and feared too... by the criminal class... Money doesn't tempt him. Brett was offered a blank cheque by an American millionaire to take up the case of some (lost) pearls. Brett said bluntly that he was busy (looking for the lost husband of an impoverished woman from whom he expected no fee). All he got from her (on solving the mystery) was her thanks... Once he becomes interested it's generally bad luck for the culprit in the case! Remember the kidnapping of the Home Secretary's daughter? Dixon Brett solved that mystery, although the Yard got the credit!... He told me that if ever it leaked out that he was interested in it he'd never stir a finger to help us again". The Inspector is recommending Brett to a prospective client. The quotation comes from Dixon Brett Detective Library No. 8, "The Murder in the Fog". The author is given on the cover as Richard Worth, but inside on the first page the author is given as P.W. Batten. Unusual for an author to be identified by his real name inside and a pseudonym on the cover.

Dixon Brett works from chambers in the Lincolns Inn with two young assistants, Bill Slook and Pat Malone. He appeared in twenty eight issues of the Dixon Brett Library published by Aldines between 1926 and 1928. They were all reprinted as Aldine Thrillers between 1930 and 1932. In this series one of Brett's chief opponents was the powerful Black Eagle, who had some five battles against Brett starting with Dixon Brett Library No. 1 and ending in No.14. Brett does not consider himself to be a detective: he is a crime investigator, which, he explains, is something rather different, as his cases do not always end in arrest, trial and imprisonment of the criminal but justice always prevails in the end. He is something of an inventor extraordinary having produced a wonder plant fertilizer which speeds up the growth to a considerable extent and he also has made a cordial which is excellent for times when a pick-me-up is needed, this being "...worth a hogshead of whisky or any other concoction" at such times. Brett also uses a powerful, fast car called the Night Hawk - a forerunner of the Batmobile?

The Dixon Brett Library and the reprints have the peculiarity of not being page numbered. Brett also appeared in some of the Aldine 2d libraries, e.g. the Diamond Library.

I am indebted to W.O.G. Lofts and D.J. Adley for information used in this article taken from their "Old Boys Books Catalogue" and "The Men Behind Boys Fiction".

CHIPS by Ray Holmes

CHIPS, or to give the full title, *Illustrated Chips*, came hard on the heels of *Comic Cuts* on July 26th 1890, again priced at a halfpenny.

As the gap between the two papers did not give time to see if the first had been successful, one can only assume that Alfred Harmsworth was certain it would be, and that a companion paper was required.

CHIPS 1½^D. THE CHAMPION COMIC. **OUR CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY NUMBER** NEXT WEEK.



No. 1477. Published on Wednesday EVERY WEDNESDAY.—1½d. Published on Wednesday DECEMBER 21, 1918.

THE MERRY ADVENTURES OF WEARY WILLIE AND TIRED TIM, THE WORLD-FAMED TRAMPS.



1. Our merry adventures meet out and did some early Christmas shopping on the end last Saturday. "Get a move on yer, Willie!" insisted Tim. "P. S. Parker's on our track." Then some P. S. Parker called up



2. "How then, my lad, what are you trying to do?" paraded Tim, as he snatched the heavy sack. "There's a monstrous crowd the corner, and I've a good mind to give you in charge for future booting!" "Here he bin, the



3. "It'll be out of harm's way there!" insisted Tim, as he continued on his way. Then poor old Parker, P. S., got it well and truly in the neck. "Ours! You! Eh-eh!" he gurgled, with the comment of the kid!

Published on a Wednesday, *Chips* was printed with black ink on white paper, and the comic was acknowledged as the greatest "penny black" comic of all time. The price rose to a penny following the First World War.

What perhaps gave *Chips* an air of distinction was the fact that it produced a couple of characters who must be familiar to everyone over 50. A couple of tramps they may have been but they soldiered on through two world wars and were there at the paper's end in the 1950s.

The pair in question were Weary Willie and Tired Tim, though they were first christened Weary Waddles and Tired Timmy.

They were the creation of Tom Browne, who introduced them to the front page of the paper on 16th May, 1899. Browne did not draw their adventures for very long. A succession of artists tried their hands, until the series was taken over by Percy Cocking in 1909. Cocking enjoyed a virtually

unbroken run of 44 years, and the picture in the mind's eye of the two lovable tramps can be said to be due to him.

Another famous *Chips* character who lived for some two-score years was Homeless Hector, a mongrel dog. Poor Hector was the creation of Bert Brown and, in his early days, sometimes appeared with Willie and Tim.

Perhaps the highlight time for *Chips* was in the 1930s. By then it had turned pink and joined the millionaire's club as far as circulation was concerned. Under the editorial control of Mr. Richard Newton Chance, a gentleman who controlled several Amalgamated Press comics, *Chips* was a household name throughout the land. In fact it was now picking up adult readers who had taken the comic as children. Mr. Chance was quite a remarkable fellow. He always had a few words for his readers and had different names in different comics. For the readers of *Chips*, Mr. Chance was Corny Chips (Chief Cheery Chipite).

He his best to keep them cheerful with a centre-spread of sparkling fun. In a prime position were Laurie and Trailer - The Secret Service Men. This bright pair were at their best when they pitted their wits against the Nazis after the start of the Second World War. Almost as well known as Willie and Tim were Pa Perkins and his Son Percy and Casey's Court.

If by now you wanted some quiet reading, there were three or four 1,000 word stories to have a go at - not too long for a 12-year-old in those days, but exciting enough for readers to want to read the lot. *Outlaw of the Air*, *The Thrills Museum*, and *A Marked Man* were just some of the titles used.

During the war *Chips* was down at times to four pages and the price was increased to 2d. But it survived Hitler and his gang. Even Willie and Tim had their crack at the man with the black moustache.

What was rather curious for *Chips* was that its final number appeared in the same week that *Comic Cuts* closed. Two papers born in the same year died together, on 12th September 1953.

A NOTE ON THE NEW BIGGLES BOOKS

by DENNIS L. BIRD, SQUADRON LEADER R.A.F. (Retired)

Biggles enthusiasts will recall with pleasure the coloured frontispieces in the stories published by Oxford University Press in the 1930s. They were by Howard Leigh, and they depicted real, identifiable aeroplanes such as the de Havilland Dragon. Sadly, Howard Leigh died young, and the later Biggles books had some rather indifferent illustrations - none of them particularly accurate as regards aircraft.

Now six of the stories have just been re-published in paperback form, by the Red Fox branch of the Random Century Group - and I am glad to say that once again genuine aeroplanes are featured.

For those readers who are interested in such matters, here is the list of titles with the aircraft shown in the cover pictures:

"Biggles Learns to Fly"
"Biggles Flies East"

Vickers Gunbus and Albatros (German). Sopwith Camel and, I think, a German Halberstadt D. There is one notable error: the Camel is shown as having a machine-gun on the top wing as well as the two over the engine. The upper-wing gun was a feature of the SE5a, not the Camel.

"Biggles & Co"

de Havilland Dragon Rapide, that most graceful of bi-planes.

"Biggles in Spain"

A crashed Caproni 311 bomber (although the engines look more like those of a Bristol Blenheim). Behind the title are the tail and wingtip of an Italian fighter which I think is a Fiat CR42.

"Biggles Defies the Swastika"
"Biggles in the Orient"

Dornier DO24 Flying-boat.

A crashed Hawker Hurricane.

THE 'CAPSTAN' CORRESPONDENCE

Letters by Jack Adrian, arranged by John Bridgwater

PART II

Having disposed of a number of my Rex Hardinge "Capstan" queries in his letters, Jack Adrian then opened up the discussion by noting some more non-Blake appearances by Hardinge in certain magazines.

"One non-Blake Hardinge item I've discovered in the course of my researches (well, apart from those Westerns written as 'Charles Wrexe' and 'Rex Quinton' after the War) is a short story in the *Novel Magazine*: "Storm", in the May 1933 issue (which also contains a story called "Gay Love" by none other than Douglas Fairbanks Jr., a title which perhaps could not be used today!). "Storm" is a love story set against a terrific hurricane. I have a feeling RH wrote other love stories, possibly some of novel-length for Len Pratt's women's libraries.

"Actually, Hardinge did have more than one shot at the short story ... the Miraflores Smith stories (which triggered these letters off) are his most extended efforts. There was a broken-up series (very short: only about two or three as far as I'm aware) in *Detective Weekly* about a very strange Mycroft Holmes-type character called Hilary Brayne, who edits a magazine called *The Brain* which is all about crime. Brayne sits in his office, rarely going out (he's hugely fat ... again like Mycroft Holmes) and solving crimes through his reporters and researchers, who do all the donkey-work and bring him the results of the researches. Interestingly, Brayne is also rather like Nero Wolfe... the American Rex Stout's creation. Wolfe stays in his New York penthouse with his fabulous and rare collection of hothouse orchids and lets his assistant Archie Goodwin do all the legwork. Wolfe, too, is enormously fat and lazy.

"However, Hardinge would've had to have been really on the ball to have been influenced by Stout since the first two Wolfe books were published over here in 1935, and the one certain Brayne story I know about ... "The Mystery of the Millionaire's Beach" ... appeared in DW134, which was published on 14 September 1935. There was another short by Hardinge in DW102, "The House of Hate" (2 February 1935) and a

third in DW144, "Murder on the 12.15" (23 November, 1935). I believe ... though I may be wrong... that at least one of those is a Brayne story."

Jack is right, as I've only recently discovered myself. "The House of Hate" story he mentions is a Brayne story, which, from its very early 1935 date, means that Brayne was almost certainly influenced by Mycroft Holmes rather than Nero Wolfe. "Murder on the 12.15", however, features yet another Hardinge detective, one Red Corrigan.

Jack then continued: "The story "The Millionaire's Beach" was later reprinted in bookform in the SBL 3rd Series *One of Seven* as a page-filler at the back of the book. It's almost an Impossible Crime story ... a man is found drowned on the sea-shore, but when he's cut open only *fresh* water is found in his lungs... but not quite, alas. There were three Impossible Crime stories in *The Polite Pirate* which have all been included in the Second Edition of Bob Adey's excellent *Locked Room Murders* bibliography (published by the Crossover Press in America, but available over here from Post Mortem Books, 58 Stanford Avenue, Hassocks, Sussex BN6 8JH, at £28.50, but frankly worth every penny to the Impossible Crime enthusiast)."

REX HARDINGE: Checklist

As Rex Hardinge:

BEYOND THE SKYLINE, Eldon 1933. Probably an SBL; possibly three UJ stories - "THREE ROUNDS RAPID", Skeffington 1936. 3 novelettes: either UJ's or "Inkosi - Carver'DWs.

FOUND - ADVENTURE, Herbert Jenkins, 1938 - Autobiographical.

BLACK PAWNS, Herbert Jenkins, ca 1939. Non-fiction. NB There may have been yet another Hardinge non-fiction book about Africa published around this time.

MURDER ON THE VELD Wright & Brown, 1954. deBl. SBL. origin unknown.

THE SECRET OF SHEBA Wright & Brown, 1954. deBl. SBL. origin unknown.

As 'Capstan' :

CAP'N LUKE, FILIBUSTER, Wright & Brown, 1937. Probably novelettes from DW; possibly from UJ.

CARVER OF THE SWAMP Wright & Brown, 1938. Either deBl. from SBL or UJ's or three 'Inkosi-Carver' DWs.

THE POLITE PIRATE Wright & Brown, 1938. Shorts from DW

THE NIGHT COACH Mellifont 1938. Probably non-Blake novelette from DW.

THE HOLE IN THE MOUNTAIN Wright & Brown, 1939. Dealt with in article.

BROADCAST MURDER, Mellifont, 1939. Probably deBl. of DW118, "The Phantom Broadcast Mystery".

BLACK MAGIC Wright & Brown, 1941. DeBl of SBL 2nd. 485 *The Case of the Black Magician*.

THE CHINESE CABINET Mellifont, 1941. Almost certainly a deBl. since it features 'Colonel Ewart Cameron and his son Lance', which is a dead giveaway! But I can't seem to trace it to a UJ or a DW issue.

INKOSI-CARVER INVESTIGATES, Wright & Brown, 1943. Probably three non-Blake stories from DW.

MURDER OF A MUSICIAN, Paget 1949. Non-Blake DW. 241. "Murder to Music".

FORBIDDEN TERRITORY Wright & Brown, 1949. This was probably deBl. from a 2nd series SBL and then re-Blakenised into SBL 3rd, 214 *The Mystery of the Forbidden Territory* (April, 1950).

FEUD, Wright & Brown, 1950. deBl. SBL 2nd, 497 *The Crime in Carson's Shack*.

OPERATION DIAMOND Wright & Brown, 1951. deBl. SBL, origin unknown.
 A PROBLEM IN CIPHERS Wright & Brown, 1952. deBl. SBL 3rd, 176 *The Riddle of the Sealed Room* (an Impossible Crime).

I am most grateful to Jack Adrian for his permission to use the contents of his letters to me, as well as his Hardinge/Capstan' Checklist and notes, as I wished for this article. The Checklist presents readers with some interesting 'problems in origins', which someone may be able to answer.

CALL OF THE DESERT

by MARGERY WOODS

A long time favourite in popular fiction and entertainment has been the desert romance. Fabled Arabia and North Africa provided unlimited desert as well as inspiration, while the French Foreign Legion seemed to hold a great fascination for authors with tales to unfold of unfortunate heroes whose shadows ne'er dared darken family portals ever again.

Audiences poured out of theatres all over the country... and much of the world... with lumps of happiness in their throats and Sigmund Romberg's immortal melodies from **THE DESERT SONG** on their lips.

Several intrepid women explorers, notably Gertrude Bell and Dame Freyer Stark, had proved that a woman could survive in the desert, and as far back as 1867 Ouida had created a wild tough little gamin heroine of the desert in her romance, **UNDER TWO FLAGS**. (Was she perhaps the inspiration for Bizet's **CARMEN**?) But it was another author, over forty years later, who was to fire the desert vogue anew and make an impact on another great entertainment medium. This was E.M. Hull, and her catalyst was Rudolph Valentino.

Soon, hawk-nosed sheiks in flowing burnouses galloped across the silver screen, snatching up tremulous heroines and carrying them across burning sands to a tent under the stars and a fate worse than death... although Diana, of **THE SHEIK**, appeared to enjoy her fate so much that she married her sheik, who of course, proved to be a white sheik and quite socially acceptable. A decade so later Marlene Dietrich enthralled cinema audiences in **DESIRE** and Robert Hichens' best seller (1904) **THE GARDEN OF ALLAH**, all in misty soft focus and, as in all the best escapist entertainment, with a careful filtering out of flies, smells and inconsiderate sores.

50¢ PAPERBACK LIBRARY 52-979

OVER 1,000,000 COPIES SOLD

HE'S POP, OP, AND CAMP

THE SHEIK

HE: I told you to wait in the tent!

SHE: But I want you now —now, you mad fool!

POW! "Scenes of incandescent passion"

—The New York Times

BAM! "SHOCKER APPEAL."

—The New York Times

E. M. HULL

The influence soon took hold in the juvenile market. A succession of desert serials for more youthful readers began to appear in the storypapers and these were later reissued in THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY. One of the earliest was Joan Inglesant's PRISONERS OF THE DESERT, in the early twenties, which she followed with SHEILA, SLAVE OF THE DESERT, and JASMIN, WAIF OF THE DESERT. Inglesant, or rather Draycott M. Dell. (could he have been any relation to E.M.?) always brought a strong, dramatic and colourful style to 'her' stories of schoolgirl adventure, and the desert gave additional scope for action that made you turn the page before you had time to let logic stop and question.

Another SOL (491) was Sybil Shaw's PRISONER OF DESERT SANDS, a not quite convincing story of Betty, her little brother Jackie, and her friend Poppy travelling to somewhere in Arabia to spend a holiday with Betty's father, who was something in commerce. Whatever that was, he must have wielded considerable authority for he had sent Sheik Abdul to prison for sheep stealing. Within two pages of Betty's arrival the little brother is kidnapped in revenge. Betty, in the true tradition of British schoolgirl pluck, disguises herself and sets off in search of Jackie. Instantly she gets herself a job looking after her little brother for the kidnapper until the ransom is paid. Unfortunately, Poppy, cast as the requisite not-so-bright chum, is also captured and gives the game away as soon as she sees her friend. Despite this the girls escape, only to be captured by dervishes and taken to a Sultan who desires a small white boy as a mascot! The girls, for whom he has no use, are consigned to the slave market. There follows an interlude in true harem fashion: scented waters, sweetmeats, satin cushions and rose petals before the prospective slaves are put on the block to be haggled over by an Arab woman and a vast Nubian. Fortunately, Jackie the Mascot is at hand with his own personal retinue and demands that the girls be bought as his own personal slaves. This crisis resolved, a new one arises with the child about to be sent out with the Sultan's army... no doubt to justify his position as the luck bringing Mascot...and we now have our heroine disguised as a soldier and riding out to battle so that she can keep an eye on little brother. After the inevitable unmasking she is slung into a dank and dismal dungeon. Presumably Jackie the Mascot will have to find another slave.

The rest of this somewhat melodramatic tale, sugared with much baby talk from the child and many wearisome snatches of thee-and-ye and wert-and-thou dialogue, consists of battle skirmishes between sultan and sheik in which the heroine persists in getting involved, thwarted escapes and encounters with various villains until Betty's father turns up, with the Sheik... the original kidnapper!... and immediately another skirmish breaks out and Betty places herself between the sheik and a gunman, thus saving his life and apparently inspiring the robber chief and his men to surrender to Betty. The Sheik is assisting Betty's father to find the kidnapped child and the missing girls. Confused?... I'm not surprised.

The Morcove girls, of course, were no strangers to the desert. One of this famous Co was Naomer, Queen of Nakara, a North African kingdom with a handy desert, and there was also Rose of the Desert who featured in many Morcove stories. In STRANDED IN THE DESERT Morcove has its own plane to transport its jolly company to the holiday of a lifetime at the home of their own little queen. As ever, treachery is afoot, and another plane brings Naomer's enemy on the same route to Nakara. Betty and Co have to face much danger before they see Morcove again, and Naomer has cause again to be thankful for the devotion and loyalty of Rose of the Desert.

But perhaps the pick of the bunch of compelling desert tales was **BABS AND CO IN EGYPT**. Several years prior to this John Wheway, before taking on the Hilda Richards pseudonym, wrote a serial entitled **NAIDA OF THE MYSTIC NILE** for the newly launched magazine **SCHOOLGIRL** in 1929. The ingredients were all there; the lost treasure, the father believed dead but still alive with amnesia, the rascally brother and cousin, and the schoolgirls who help the virtually penniless Egyptian girl and endeavour to thwart the plotters until the father is found, his memory restored and the treasure brought to light. Ends are all tied neatly and we leave Naida about to return to England with her schoolgirl chums where she will join their school while her father gets a job with a London museum and settles in England.

The Naida in the Cliff House story has become a princess, and her father the Bey Andros, and their home the Palace of Palms on the banks of the Nile. The story begins at the railway station, almost the stock start for so many holiday stories, yet what better as the scene setting, the promise of excitement and intrigue in store, and the characters conveniently gathered together for the essential preliminaries each week to introduce the Cliff House girls to new readers. They are accompanied by their boy chums from Friardale School. The station is du Caire in Alexandria, destination Cairo and the Palace of Palms. There is a load of well-written local colour interspaced with their encounter with a tall mysterious sheik who is saved from an assassin's knife by Jimmy Richmond, and then another mysterious Arab who seems, to the observant Babs, to be the sheik in disguise.

The Palace of Palms holds a forbidden room, which no-one except the Bey may enter and into which an unknown girl tries to go one evening. Naida's maid Lota has a suspicious mien, and Bessie sees strange nothings in the palace gardens at night. But Bessie's nothings may have been the kidnappers of Ralph Lawrence. (They quickly discovered he was not their quarry after all and left him.) The girls go through all the tourist business - sightseeing, camels and pyramids - except Bessie, whose succinct response to suggestions that she stir herself is: "Blow the Pip-Pyramids!" So much for Bunter culture!



But soon the desert calls and the girls, fortunately minus Bessie set out in search of Ben Alci, Naida's brother, who must fulfil a mission at the tomb of Set-aru to prove that he is a worthy successor to the ruler of the Senefari tribe, and more important, that he be accepted as the husband of the chief's daughter. He is a copt, and the girl a Bedouin, which is another obstacle to his acceptance by the Senefari. There are precious robes he must bring from the tomb which, just to add a little more difficulty, has a curse to guard its mysteries. Sandstorms, Lota's plotting, Ben Alci's enemies and the eerie secrets of the tomb all interweave to make this one of the most colourful and exciting of the Cliff House tales. Of all the A.P. writers, excellent as they are, Wheway possessed a special quality in that he wrote as carefully and as skilfully for juveniles as though writing for adults. He researched his background material with the same care as he might have written a travel tome, and he made it all so believable. Whether he wrote of emotional adolescent relationships, adventures round the world, schoolgirl pranks or the dangers of the desert, he made you feel you were there. Great story-telling.

TWO OF A DIFFERENT KIND

by ERNEST HOLMAN

Throughout the long saga of St. Jim's stories, Ralph Cardew and Harry Manners did, at times, get to cross purposes. In the general run of things, their viewpoint of one another was usually contained in such expressions as "That swot; that dummy!" "That cad; that rotter!" More often than not, the two did not feature in tandem. Sometimes they had brief but noticeable clashes, without forming more than a back-drop or side issue to the main story.

There did occur a couple of stories where a 'head-on' collision between the two formed a main theme. These were during the post-war period - nothing of note in the stories, just a display of each person's character in adversity - in the way that Charles Hamilton could describe so well.

The first story had the not-unfamiliar title of *The Scapegrace of St. Jim's*. It appeared during the early Fifties in a Mandeville hardback. Full as it is of other personages and events, it is with the two antagonists that the story deals.

One or the other of Manners and Cardew is to be offered the last position in the Eleven to meet Carcroft - the final decision will be made by Tom Merry, cricket Captain, based on performances in the coming House Match. Manners is going all out to improve his cricket; Cardew, however, although in good form, nevertheless has 'other things' on his mind. To be exact, the form of Plum Cake at the forthcoming Abbotsford Races. Cardew is convinced that she is on a 'good thing' and that a win will clear him of debts with local bookie, Bill Lodgey, and also leave him some 'cash in hand'.

When the odds on Plum Cake lengthen, Cardew realises that the horse is being 'saved' for another race the following week. How to get 'on' again is the problem - Lodgey is unlikely to give him any more 'tick' and unless an expected remittance arrives from Cardew's indulgent grandparent there are going to be 'breakers' ahead.

Seeking elsewhere for cash, Cardew suggests to Manners that a loan from him of a recently-arrived tenner would have the result of his (Cardew's) dropping out of the House Match and handing the vacant place against Carcroft to Manners. Not suprisingly, Manners tells him to get out before he is kicked out!

Cardew outshines Manners in the House Match and is giving the vacant spot for the Carcroft visit. He is not surprised when Plum Cake finishes as an 'also ran', and anxiously hopes daily for the arrival of his grandpa's money. As Baggy Trimble, in retaliation for a recent thumping, has taken the letter 'for a while' to pay Cardew out,

Cardew studies the letter rack in vain. When Trimble loses the letter he decides to forget all about it and keeps well away from Cardew.

Cardew tries his luck on the telephone with Lodgey, promising that money from his grandfather has arrived and he will be down to settle up as soon as he can manage. In the meantime, would Lodgey back Plum Cake for him in the next race? After some demur, Lodgey agrees; a message in code, telling the result of the race, will be phoned to the Porter's Lodge at Carcroft on the afternoon of the match. Meanwhile, because Gussy has 'had a fwightful mishap' and cannot play, Manners is added to the team for the coming match.

Cardew commences with a good performance at Carcroft but later on receives the news that Plum Cake has 'gone down'. On returning to the cricket, when the game resumes after an interval, Cardew 'falls apart' and it is only the stubborn holding up of one end by Manners that enables St. Jim's to pull off the match. Manners has a pretty good idea of the reason for Cardew's form and later at St. Jim's finds himself coming to blows with him.

Cardew gets the worst of the encounter and is left more or less breathless on a bench. By now he is in 'the depths' - Lodgey has threatened exposure and there is still no cash in sight to pay the bookie off. Cardew notices a key on the ground and realises it must have dropped from Manners' pocket during the fight. The chapter featuring the theft of the tenner from Manners' desk is, typically, entitled 'The Edge of the Abyss'. However, Cardew does not 'go over' the edge and pulls back in time to be able to restore the money to the desk.

Expecting at any time now to be called before the beak for the inevitable order to 'Go', Cardew turns full circle and 'finds' Manners key for him. Hardly surprisingly, the 'missing' letter from grandpa turns up and the enclosed cash saves the day for Cardew. When the team for Greyfriars is announced, Manners is in and Cardew out. 'Gratters' says Cardew, and Manners manages to find a cordial note as he murmurs 'Thanks!'

In the second story, the 'boot is on the other foot'. In the very last Tom Merry Annual, under the 'dated' title of 'From Foes to Friends' another confrontation between the two takes place. This time, the cause of the row is Manners' younger brother, Reggie. Reggie has 'borrowed' Sporting Snipster from Cardew's study and is caught by his brother in possession thereof. Finding that the paper belongs to Cardew, Manners waits to hear nothing further and storms into Cardew's study. As it happens, Cardew is not at fault, having been looking everywhere for his missing paper. Manners, however, does not do the graceful thing and retract, and the two remain at loggerheads.

When, at a later date, Cardew discovers that Reggie has again been 'borrowing' - this time from prefect Knox's cash, he promptly gives the fag a pound to put back. Manners sees the two talking and goes 'up in the air' again and a fight is shortly scheduled to take place behind the Gym.

When Reggie goes to Cardew's study to attempt to prevent the coming fight, Manners barges in and is about to get the fight over there and then - it is only when Reggie blurts out the true position that Manners 'climbs down'. He expresses his sorrow and Cardew agrees that the fight shall be called off - asking for one thing, however. That Reggie shall in future be kept away from his study!

Nothing at all very special about the two stories. Of course, the skeleton or 'bare bones' outline which has been given does not show the various other schoolboy characters and incidents - which, of course, are continuous throughout the yarns. One brief mention of 'others' should be made: Gussy, convinced that a word from a fellow

of tact and judgement will put things right, is happy to 'believe' that he has brought this about!

Typical Hamilton yarns, following a familiar pattern. All the same, readable stories, even if coming under the description of 'run of the mill'. Which brings forth a sobering thought - very soon after the last-mentioned story appeared, and some fifty years after the school had made its first appearance, the St. Jim's mill was about to experience its very last run!

SCHOOLGIRL SECRET SOCIETIES IN THE A.P. GIRLS' WEEKLIES

by MARION WATERS

This index was prepared at the request of Mary, our editor, to complement the notes on secret societies which I wrote for last year's annual. In order to save space I have kept the entries in this index as brief as possible. It is intended to be read in conjunction with the earlier article. The stories are not listed in a strict chronological order, but in groups under the titles of the old papers in which they appeared.

It is not always easy to define what exactly constitutes a 'secret society story'. I have tried to list all the epics where the central figures wear robes and hoods (in a couple of the early stories the girls merely wear black hoods with their dark coloured school clothes). I have usually ignored incidents where robed and hooded figures appear briefly in a story, but are not central to the main plot.

If anyone can spot any mistakes or omissions in my list, I would very much like to hear from them.

SCHOOLFRIEND AND SCHOOLGIRL

The Cliff House Secret Society Hilda Richards
3rd July 1920. A Story featuring the third form girls at Cliff House School.

The Firebrands of Freestone Falls Betty Adair
3rd February 1922. Part of a long-running series set in a school located in Canada. This particular story features the "Secret Order of the Firebrands".

Unknown by the School Rhoda Fleming
23rd January to 9th April 1932. The story of the 'Secret Five' at St. Kilda's School. The story follows a familiar pattern with a wicked prefect, and meetings in a ruined crypt. However there is a 'freshness' about the plot; there are few secret society stories by this author.

Barbara's Secret Society Hilda Richards
10th March to 31st March 1934. Barbara Redfern and her friends form the 'Society of Justice' to combat a tyrant headmistress who has taken the place of Miss Primrose.

The Secret Society Against Barbara Hilda Richards
2nd February to 2nd March 1935. This is a vindictive type of secret society composed of the unpleasant element in the fourth form at Cliff House. They call themselves the 'Society of the Red Triangle'.

SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN

Norma of the Blue Dominoes

Louise Carlton

11th August to 3rd November 1934. This is not strictly a 'secret society' story at all, but relates the adventures of an all-girl dance band, who have to keep their identities a secret, and in consequence always appear in public, masked and cloaked. It is a first class story, and one of the most entertaining epics to appear in 'Schoolgirls' Own' during its last years.

The Morcove Secret Society

Marjorie Stanton

6th July to 13th July 1936. A vindictive type secret society comprising the unpleasant girls in the fourth form at Morcove School, opposed to Betty Barton and her friends.

The Crimson Shadows

Shirley Halliday

7th March to 23rd May 1936. This was a re-run of the old 'Silent Six' stories from 'Schoolgirls' Weekly'. The artwork was similar, possibly by S. H. Chapman. There are four girls in this particular group, including a Swedish girl named Helga in place of Gretchen in the Silent Six.

SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY

The Quest of the Silent Six

Gertrude Nelson

1st October 1932 to 7th January, 1933. The 'Silent Six' were the first really outstanding schoolgirl secret society to appear in AP girls' fiction, and in many ways they set the pattern for all future hooded groups. The first series was illustrated by B. Hutchinson.

Shadowed by the Silent Six

25th February 1933.

Rivals to the Silent Six

29th April 1933.

Adventures Afloat with the Silent Six

22nd July 1933

The Silent Six Tackle a Tyrant

21st October 1933

The Silent Six Under Canvas

12th May to 18th August 1934

The Silent Six and the House of Secrets

10th November 1934.

These stories were all written by Gertrude Nelson and illustrated by S.H. Chapman. The final adventure of the Silent Six was rather different.

Valerie Leads the Silent Six

Adelie Ascott

13th April 1935. This entertaining story brought together the Silent Six and Valerie Drew, the popular girl detective, not to mention 'Flash' her Alsatian dog. 'Gertrude Nelson' and 'Adelie Ascott' are in fact the same writer ... John William Bobin. The story was illustrated by C. Percival, the usual artist for the Valerie Drew stories.

Her Feud with the Secret Three

Sheila Austin

Illustrated by S.H. Chapman. 10th October 1936 to 23rd January, 1937.
The story of a girl's conflict with a vindictive type of secret society.

Seven Who Kept Silent

Marion Traynor

1st October to 17th December, 1938. A very poor re-run of the Silent Six adventures. On this occasion, the Dutch girl is called Trudi, rather than Gretchen.

GIRLS CRYSTAL

Artwork by Evelyn Flinders unless stated.

Secret Leader of the Rebel Four.

Gail Western

22nd January to 14th May, 1938.

An expelled sixth former returns to expose a crooked prefect.

Secret Friends of the Speed Girl.

Gail Western

3rd September, 1938 to 7th January, 1939.

A secret society and motor racing combined in one story.

Daphne's Feud with the Phantom Four

Gail Western

27th May to 16th September 1939.

A vindictive type secret society.

Followers of the Phantom Rebel

Gail Western

23rd November 1940 to 15th March, 1941.

A young mistress who has been wrongfully dismissed from her post returns to settle accounts with a corrupt mistress.

Diana and the Elusive Five.

Anne Gilmore

27th June to 12th December, 1942.

A vindictive type secret society. This story was not illustrated by Miss Flinders, but the artwork was still very attractive.

Her Pact with the Secret Two.

Gail Western

15th May to 30th October, 1943.

A girl assists a boys' secret society; the illustrations are not by Miss Flinders.

The Warning of the Phantom Watcher.

Gail Western

27th January to 2nd June, 1945.

Virtually the same plot as the previous title. Again the story was not illustrated by Miss Flinders.

Their Helper in the Scarlet Cloak.

Enid Boyten.

2nd February, 1946.

An expelled sixth former returns in secret to clear her name. Miss Flinders had also returned from war service, and illustrated this story.

The Fourth Grey Ghost

Dorothy Page

14th August to 18th December, 1948. By far the best account of a girl who helps a boys' secret society.

The Elusive Grey Ghost

Dorothy Page

4th June to 22nd October 1949. A sequel to the first Grey Ghost adventure.

The Secret Three and the Masked Cavalier

Sheila Austin

27th September 1952 to 3rd January 1953. A rather 'basic' story, not illustrated by Evelyn Flinders.

All these stories were re-issued in the post-war series of the 'Schoolgirls' Own Library'.

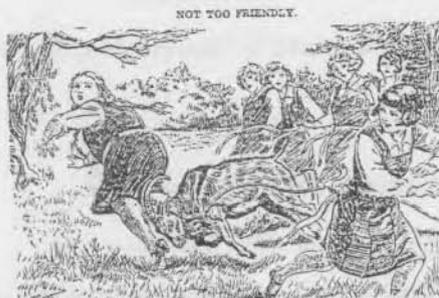
POST-WAR SCHOOL FRIEND

This story paper was very much identified with the adventures of the 'Silent Three' who became perhaps the best known of all schoolgirl secret societies.

To chronicle all their adventures between 1950 and 1976, would fill up a complete issue of this magazine. I have however produced a typed manuscript entitled 'The Silent Three Dossier', which runs to some thirty pages and has a good selection of illustrations. This publication lists all the published works on the Silent Three, with the various reprints and adaptations of the stories. Should anyone like a copy, the cost of copying and postage would be £4.00.

SCHOOLGIRL SECRET SOCIETIES ... Notes on the Illustrations.

1. The 'Silent Six' from 1930s 'Schoolgirls' Weekly' in their normal attire, as depicted by B. Hutchinson. I always liked the slightly 'chubby' heroines in Mr. Hutchinson's drawings. His version of Gretchen is particularly appealing.



As carefully as they could, the Silent Six attempted to capture the guest. Suddenly, the protesting animal severed its lead and, with a mighty run, sent Gretchen sprawling!

1



Expecting to find the mysterious shadowed figure, the Silent Six dashed into the crypts. Shirley flashed her torch around. No one else was there. "Look out!" she cried. "It's a trap!" But she was too late. The door slammed shut.

2. The 'Silent Six' in their robes and hoods. Although the girls look rather cumbersome in their robes, it is an effective disguise with a distinctly sinister aspect.
3. The Cliff House fourth formers as the 'Society of Justice' from 1930s 'Schoolgirl', as drawn by Tom Laidler. I think that this was the only secret society story illustrated by Mr. Laidler, but the results are very attractive.
4. The 'Rebel Four' from 1938 'Girls' Crystal' as illustrated by Evelyn Flinders. The girls with their striped blazers and curly hair will be familiar to readers of post-war 'School Friend'. Although the robe worn by the secret leader (a falsely expelled sixth former) resembles that worn by the 'Silent Three', close observation will reveal minor differences.
5. Another very attractive illustration of two robed members of the 'Rebel Four', by Miss Flinders.
6. The 'Phantom Rebel' from 1940 'Girls' Crystal', again by Miss Flinders. The three fourth formers in the foreground bear a striking resemblance to Betty, Joan and Peggy in post-war 'School Friend'. The robe worn by the 'Phantom Rebel' herself (a young mistress, wrongfully dismissed) is again slightly different from other robes drawn by this artist. The 'number' is worn on the chest, rather than on the front of the hood. The cuffs of the sleeves are tight, rather than full and flowing, and her hood lacks a 'tail' hanging down at the back.

Thrill Upon Thrill in this Grand Tale of Barbara Koutari & Co., and Diana Koystor-Clarke of Cliff House School!



Barbara's SECRET SOCIETY



"You really are going to help us fight Mabel Grundgely's bullying?" asked Topsy. To her delight the mystery girl in the grey robes nodded. "Yes," she said. "That is why I want you to form the Rebel Four!"



Even as Connie was trying to unscrew the head of the elephant, Topsy gave a gasp of dismay. "It's Mabel Grudgely!" she cried. The spiteful prefect was even then running up the pavilion steps.

FOLLOWERS of the PHANTOM REBEL



By GAIL WESTERN

WANTED: The coloured comic sections from the American Sunday newspapers, pre-1950 only. Must be complete and in very good condition. Ben Blich, 55 Arundel Avenue, Hazel Grove, Cheshire. SKT 5LD. Tel: 061 483 7627.

FOR SALE: Greyfriars Press Vol.6, 'The Downfall of Harry Wharton'. Superb condition, £13.00, or will swap for another out of print volume. David Caisley, 44 Morven Lea, Blaydon, Newcastle upon Tyne. NE21 4EZ.

WANTED: Greyfriars Book Club volume No. 1 'The Worst Boy at Greyfriars' and volume No. 4 'Harry Wharton & Co. in India'. Must be in fine to very good condition. State your price please.

FOR SALE: Greyfriars Press 'Magnet' volumes Nos. 10,11,21,24,25,52, - and Greyfriars Book Club No. 13. Write for details.
 W.L. Bawden, 14 Highland Park, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 2EX.

BOOK REVIEW

by DENNIS L. BIRD

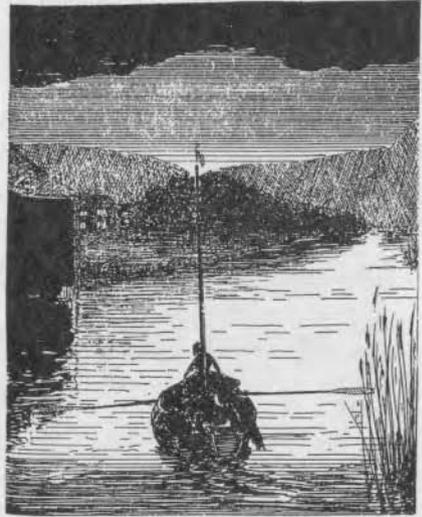
"The Life of Arthur Ransome" by Hugh Brogan, published by Pimlico (the paperback imprint of Janathan Cape Ltd), 1992, £10.

* * * * *

Arthur Michell Ransome (1884-1967) is one of the most curious figures in English literature. His prolific writings fall into four distinct categories, with very little overlap between them. First, in Edwardian times, he was jack-of-all-trades, writing "The ABC of Physical Culture", "A Child's Book of the Garden", "Bohemia in London", biographies of Edgar Allan Poe and Oscar Wilde. He was in Russia during the Revolution as correspondent of the "Daily News", played chess with Lenin, married Trotsky's secretary, and wrote a number of books favourable to Communism. But Stalin's brutalities disillusioned him, and he turned to his third group of interests: sailing and fishing ("Racundra's First Cruise", "Rod and Line", and so on).

And fourthly and pre-eminently, he was a supreme writer for children. In 1916 he published "Old Peter's Russian Tales", and between 1929 and 1947 he wrote the twelve children's novels which brought him lasting fame and which are known collectively as the "Swallows and Amazons" series.

His autobiography, published posthumously in 1976, was a sad disappointment, for it ended in 1932, when the famous books had barely begun. In 1984 - Ransome's centenary year - there came the first detailed study of his life and work, the biography by Hugh Brogan, and this has now belatedly appeared in paperback. It has 17 photographs compared with the original's 60, but one is new, showing the young Arthur in his school rugby XV.



Arthur Ransome's "The Enemy's Boathouse"

Mr Brogan, like his father the late Professor Sir Denis Brogan, is a specialist in American history, but in addition to his lecturing duties at Essex University he has found time to research Ransome's life in great depth. The result is a fascinating account of how some of the finest children's books came to be written - and also how they ended. Ransome's fearsome Russian wife was largely to blame. Every new book was subjected to the most devastating, destructive criticism by her; so much so that in 1948 he abandoned what would have

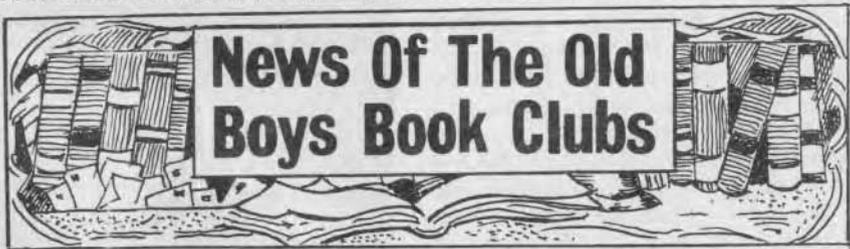
been the 13th story. Mr Brogan published the 40-page fragment in 1988 under the title "Coots in the North"; it would have been one of the best. Eugenia Ransome has much to answer for. And the strange thing was that once the books were published, she would not hear a word against them! Like many of my generation (born 1930), I grew up with the Swallows and Amazons. They were so true to life - capable John and Susan, dreamy Titty and Dorothea, bookworm Dick, dashing Nancy. And their adventures

were all set in real places, that you can still go and see today - in the Lake District, the Norfolk Broads, the River Orwell, and finally the Hebrides.

The characters, too, were drawn from life, initially from the nephews and nieces of Ransome's first love Barbara Collingwood. I met some of the original Swallows ("John" and "Bridget") at the launch party Mr Brogan gave for the hardback edition of his book, and they described how odd it was to await each new story in order to see what they had been doing! - for the adventures were all entirely Ransome's invention, based on practicalities which real-life children could have achieved. He was meticulous in ensuring the credibility of his tales; for instance, in his masterpiece "We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea" the Swallows drift into the North Sea in a 7-ton cutter and eventually reach Holland. He did just that himself, in his yacht "Nancy Blackett", to make certain that all the nautical and navigational details were accurate.

Mr Brogan's biography, together with a recent critical study ("Approaching Arthur Ransome, by Dr Peter Hunt; Jonathan Cape 1992, £13.99) is indispensable reading for anyone who wants to know more about "our children's author No 1", as "The Spectator" once described him. Neither book however, makes him seem a very likable person. As he once told an 11-year-old boy, "I'm supposed to love children because I'm a children's author, but really I hate them". He did not write his books only for children; he wrote them for himself about the kind of child he would like to have been.

One mystery remains. The four Swallow children are called Walker. Why did he pick that name? For his detested first wife (to escape whom he first went to Russia in 1913) was - Ivy Constance Walker.



LONDON OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

Seventeen members converged on Bill Bradford's home for the meeting on Sunday 9th August. Alan Pratt opened the meeting with a reading from "Our Friend Jennings" by Anthony Buckeridge, concerning the rescue of a Penny Black! During the tea interval, members attempted to name which library, the publisher, and the year of issue of the line of magazines hung up in the hall. Ray read a Bunter story from the Magnet, "The Right Thing", which was followed by a discussion on the difference of appeal to readers of the weeklies and the monthly libraries. Next meeting at the home of Roy Parsons, Foinhaven, Church Hollow, West Winterslow, Salisbury - 0980 862664 on Sunday 13th September.

SUZANNE HARPER

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

An attendance of 11, with a number of apologies, was better than we expected for our August Free-And-Easy where we asked members to bring along their own contributions on what turned out to be a very wet and humid evening.

Paul spoke about the forthcoming Centenary Celebrations for W.E. Johns, and mention was made of the re-published Biggles paperbacks reviewed in the August C.D.

Alan Harris sparked off a very lively discussion on science fiction with his talk on "ring worlds" as depicted in "The Hole in Space".

Geoffrey came prepared with one of his inimitable readings from Frank Richards - being excerpts from Magnet 896, "Poor Old Bunter" - and the hilarity was terrific! Verdict: Frank Richards - superb: Geoffrey - brilliant!

It will soon be time for our lunch with honoured guests Mary Cadogan and (hopefully) Anthony Buckeridge. This will be on 10th October in Wakefield with our evening meeting at the normal venue in Leeds. All are welcome but reservations must be made for lunch: details from Darrell Swift, 37 Tinsill Lane, Leeds, LS16 6BU.

JOHNNY BULL, MINOR



MARK TAHA (London): Re: various items in the August C.D.: I enjoyed Roger Jenkins' article on Fisher T. Fish. Personally I always rather liked him - and believe that the Famous Five's and others' treatment of him amounted to bullying. To put it bluntly, he didn't interfere with them, so why did they interfere with him? In answer to Edward Allatt's query, the St. Frank's boy who was conned into investing in a 'magic box' was Lord Pippinton, during the Ezra Quirke series, I believe. In reply to Ray Hopkins, Julie Goodyear in the rôle of Bet Gilroy, is still running the Rover's Return. Lastly, in answer to Nic Gayle, I agree that Dr. Locke's age was a 'moveable feast' and I was rather surprised to read that he'd been Colonel Wharton's Headmaster and still saw him as Jim Wharton of the Remove. However, I have worked out how it could have happened: assume Dr. Locke to be in his early sixties, Col. Wharton fifty. It's possible that Dr. Locke might have been the young Jim Wharton's Form-master in the Remove before being appointed Headmaster - say, when Jim Wharton was in a higher form. Dr. Locke was supposed to have been Head of Greyfriars for over thirty years, and Public Schools have been known to appoint young men as Heads. For instance, a 19th century Harrow Headmaster got the job at the age of 24: Dr. Arnold of Rugby was appointed at 33, and, in this century, Sr. John Wolfenden was appointed Headmaster of Uppingham at the age of 27. It seems obvious that Dr. Locke wanted Mr. Quelch to succeed him - as he probably would have; but it's not beyond the realms of possibility that Mr. Lascelles might have been appointed.

(EDITOR'S NOTE): I think that the correspondence about Dr. Locke's age will have to rest here. However, it seems that there is also much interest in the ages of other Greyfriars masters - see below!

John Lewis (Uttoxeter) In my continuing gleanings from the Magnet, I have now detected the approximate number of years allotted to Mr. Prout. It is frequently quoted that Prout is past the prime of life. This is confirmed in the Crocker series of 1939, wherein (no. 1616, page 17) Bob Cherry seriously asserts 'Prout's sixty, if he's a day.' Therefore, I think it can be safely assumed that Mr. Prout is in his early sixties, and senior to Mr. Quelch by some ten years.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: But can we take Bob's assessment seriously? When I was a schoolgirl, anyone over the age of 40 seemed ancient to me. One's viewpoint, of course, changes drastically over the years.)

Colin Morgan (Clwyd): In C.D. No.546 (June) there is a letter from E.H. John Gibbs in answer to a question from Mark Taha on 'V for Vengeance' about The Deathless Men. This story first appeared in THE WIZARD No. 1004 (8.8.42) - No. 1027 (26.6.43). The 1951 series referred to by Mr. Gibbs was, in fact, a repeat of the 1942-43 serial and appeared in No.1333 (1.9.51) - 1356 (9.2.52). New stories about The Deathless Men then followed:

V for Vengeance 1363 - 1373 (1952) The White Colossus 1409 - 1419 (1953)
The Voice from Berlin 1490 - 1501 (1954) 'M' Marks the Spot 1517 - 1528 (1955)
V for Vengeance 1565 - 1579 (1956)

plus a further repeat of the original story in No. 1716 - 1739 in 1959.

Edward Allatt (Cowley): Lance Salway of Sherborne is quite right in his assumption that I have supplied Ray Hopkins with the information he requested concerning the Upton Sinclair 'dime novels'. Perhaps he, and other interested C.D. readers, may like to know the pseudonyms that Sinclair used when writing his early boys' stories. They were Lt. Frederick Garrison, Ensign Clarke Fitch, St. Clair Beall, and Commander Arthur G. Brownell. The papers in which these stories appeared were, *Army & Navy Weekly*, *True Blue Library*, *Brave & Bold*, *Half-Holiday*, all of which are featured in *The Hess Collection* booklet mentioned in Mr. Salway's letter (C.D. August).

Bill Lofts (London): Regarding 'Nancy Breary' I cannot help much except that he/she penned about 25 books for George Newnes and Blackie & Son in the period 1944-60 with many reprints. All records of George Newnes I know were destroyed, but the lady could write to Blackie & Son. The authorship could have been by anyone - especially during the war years when every writer (especially of the A.P.) was feeling the pinch. It's the sort of thing E.L. McKeag would do. Since his death, all sorts of things have been discovered that he never told me at the time.

FOR SALE: Sexton Blakes, Boys' Friend Libraries. Enclose stamped Addressed Envelope. J. Cook, 178 Maria Street, Benwell, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE4 8LL

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

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.

FOR SALE: Offers please, for Nos.1-26 of THE CHAMPION (1922) to include postage: S. Perry, 10 The Waldens, Kingswood, Maidstone, Kent. ME17 3QG.

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