

STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS'

DIGEST

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FLIPS PAGES



(INCORPORATING NORMAN SHAW)
ROBIN OSBORNE, 84 BELVEDERE ROAD, LONDON SE19 2HZ
PHONE (BETWEEN 11 A.M. - 10 P.M.) 081-771 0541

Hi People,

Hope that this finds you as it leaves me - in the pink! Many of you have written to Norman Shaw wishing him well on his retirement, and he wants to express his thanks for all the nice letters and cards although, unfortunately, he is unable to do so individually. Please, therefore, consider yourselves duly thanked. **WARMEST NEW YEAR GREETINGS TO YOU ALL!**

SOME NICE ITEMS TO HAND AND NOW OFFERED FOR THE FIRST TIME:

1. NELSON LEE MONSTER LIBRARY, numbers 1 - 19 (complete set), generally very good condition but some magi-tape repair to spines - £190.
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1938 - spine repair, o/w V.G. - £10.
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3. SCHOOLGIRLS OWN ANNUAL: 1923 - V.G. - £12.
1925 - V.G./Fine - £15.
1928 - Fine - £18.
1932 - V.G./Fine, but part spine split - £12.
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5. GIRL ANNUAL: Numbers 2 - 6: V.G., each £4.50.
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Jly - Dec 1927: July - Dec 1928:) £80

As always, callers are very welcome (there is really too much stock to do it justice in a single page) but please make an appointment!

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 Editor's Chat

A HAPPY NEW YEAR



Such is the optimism of mankind that whenever we embark upon a New Year we hope it will be a peaceful and prosperous one, not only for ourselves and our nearest and dearest, but for the whole world. The times may be troubled, but there is no lessening of the sincerity of my New Year's greetings to all C.D. readers: may 1993 bring you peace and joy and all good things.

At any rate I can say with confidence that our little magazine will provide you with good reading and warmly nostalgic memories. It is gratifying to be able to record that articles continue to arrive and that our hobby never fails to provide inspiration for our contributors. Their

support is tremendously appreciated, and I also relish the many letters and cards received from readers in praise of the C.D. Thank you all for your loyal support and encouragement.

I have already received several letters of kind comment about the C.D. Annual and it seems that once again this has struck the right note and enhanced the Christmas season in the way that the old papers did during our younger days.

May 1993 bring all blessings to you.

MARY CADOGAN



SOME OF THE SAGA'S LADIES ON CELLULOID by J.E.M.

Over the years, the Digest has carried many references to Sexton Blake's appearance on stage, screen and television as well as to some of the actors who have portrayed him. Little if anything, however, has been written about the ladies involved in these dramatisations. Yet Blake's female allies - and adversaries - are almost as famous as the great man himself. Surely actresses who played the parts of such celebrated characters as Yvonne, Roxane and Mlle Julie deserve a mention?

Getting on for sixty years ago, Fox British MGM made a film entitled *Sexton Blake and the Mademoiselle*. This was based on the G.H. Teed story, *They Shall Repay* which had appeared only a year or two before in the Union Jack. It was, of course, the first in the famous series about Roxane's revenge on the crooked financiers who had ruined her father. The film version, which featured George Curzon as Blake, cast Lorraine Grey as Roxane and here, at least for me, is where real mystery begins. Except that Miss Grey was (presumably) an English actress, I have been unable to discover anything about her, e.g. her age at the time, what other films, if any, she appeared in, whether she was originally a stage actress, and so on.

In 1938 another MGM offering, *Sexton Blake and the Hooded Terror*, introduced Greta Gynt as Mlle Julie, the famous creation of Pierre Quiroule. I have not seen this film myself but understand it was a corny piece of melodrama, that great barnstormer Tod Slaughter himself playing the lead villain (Blake was portrayed by George Curzon). Miss Gynt was a very glamorous lady from Norway, popular in many British films of the forties, and no doubt other older readers will recall her in thrillers like *The Arsenal Stadium Mystery*, *Dark Eyes of London*, *Dear Murderer* and *The Calendar*, all titles which clearly indicate the kind of story this exotic femme fatale was at home in. She no doubt made an excellent Mlle Julie.

Six years later, a different British company made *Meet Sexton Blake*, introducing Yvonne, the great G.H. Teed character whose literary origin predated the first world war and who was a kind of proto-Roxane. In this film, our hero's part was taken by David Farrar who later became a Hollywood star - mostly playing villains! Mlle Yvonne was played by Magda Kun and this glamorously named and, no doubt, physically glamorous lady presents yet another mystery. As in the case of Lorraine Grey, I can discover nothing about Miss Kun's other appearances on the screen, though I am fairly

certain she was, if only briefly, a favourite of the time. Certainly her name is pretty unforgettable.

Meet Sexton Blake also featured two other ladies about whom there is no mystery and whose fame must be known to every cinema-goer. Blake's delightful housekeeper, Mrs. Bardell, was played by that brilliant character actress, Kathleen Harrison. Though born in Lancashire, she often played cockneys and soon became a national figure, appearing in such memorable British screen-plays as *Bank Holiday*, *The Ghost Train*, *The Winslow Boy* and *In Which We Serve*, as well as in the series about the Huggett family. A minor role in *Meet Sexton Blake* was taken by Jean Simmons. It was only her third screen appearance but she was soon to make a big name in Hollywood in such films as *The Big Country*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Elmer Gantry* and many others.

Finally, a puzzle from the so-called 'New Look' era of Sexton Blake. In 1959, a novel by Howard Baker inspired the film, *Murder at Site Three*, with Geoffrey Toone as Blake and Jill Melford as the last of the great Blakian glamour girls, Paula Dane. Again, unfortunately, I have been unable to discover anything in the usual cinema references about Miss Melford or her background. So now we have a trio of mysterious ladies. Can any Blakian film buff throw a larger spotlight on Mesdemoiselles Grey, Kun and Melford? After all, whatever else they did, these thespians could claim the honour of bringing to life three characters whose fame will certainly never be forgotten by fans of the Sexton Blake Saga.

(Editor's Note: I seem to recall that Magda Kun made occasional radio appearances during the 1930s and '40s but I know nothing of the other two actresses.



THE GOLDEN AGE OF STEAM

by Jack Greaves

The Railways played an important part in the life of the boys at St. Frank's, at a time when the various railway companies and their employees were proud of their achievements, and the name of 'British Rail' was many years into the future.

E.S. Brooks introduced us to rail in the first St. Frank's story in the Nelson Lee when Nipper, under his disguised name of Richard Bennett leaves London by train, eventually arriving at the country station of Bellton.

In the second School story, "The Boy from California", Dick Bennett (Nipper) had taken over the Captaincy of the Ancient House Remove Form from Fullwood, and the Housemaster, Mr. Alvington (Nelson Lee) asked him to be at Bellton Station to meet a new boy who would be arriving that day at 4.00 p.m. This newcomer was Justin B. Farman.

Nipper related this meeting. He was the first of many new boys who were to appear in future stories and I'm sure they all must have been impressed by the peaceful surroundings of the small village station, with its lovely countryside.

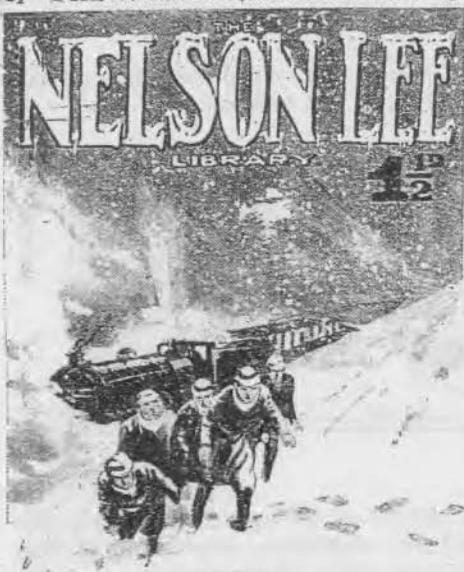
This local train ran between Caistowe, Bellton and Bannington and is mentioned on numerous occasions throughout the saga.

Bellton Station itself witnessed many happy scenes, particularly on the last day of term when the St. Frank's boys, full of excitement at the prospect of going home to see their families again, would congregate to await the arrival of the local train to take them to Bannington for the start of their journey. Lordly sixth formers, lofty-looking fifth-formers, Removites and scurrying fags in dozens would make up the scene.

The station also had its sad moments, and one particularly unhappy occasion was related by Nipper in Old Series 206, "Expelled from St. Frank's". He had been sacked from the school on the faked evidence of the rascal sixth-former, Starke. Nipper's two chums came to the station to see him off:

"I don't think I'll describe what happened on the platform, or at the doorway of an empty compartment, when the train pulled in. We were all feeling pretty bad and the parting was hard... I was sacked. It seemed too awful to be true."

NO. 237.—Grand Xmas Story, specially written for this Number!
1½^d THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY 1½^d



Dorrie's Christmas Party
A Story of Railway Life and Detective Adventure, introducing NELSON LEE and NIPPER and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the author of "The Sign of the West Wind" "Letters for the Ladies" "End the Trawl," etc.

An important story connected with the railways was Old Series 131, "The Hold-Up" of the 8-15 Mail" and this appeared during the winter of 1917. Nipper and Co. had accepted a challenge to cycle from the school to Helmsford and back in a little under an hour and a half. Things were proceeding quite well until they encountered a sudden severe snow storm and, during this, they had a mishap with their cycles, causing damage, by which time visibility was so bad that they lost their bearings. Minutes later, however, Nipper thought he had found their direction but he stumbled and fell headlong down a steep snowy slope, banging his head on a stone, eventually reaching the railway lines at the bottom, then realising that he was in the well known Bellton Cutting.

Montie and Tommy Watson, not knowing what had happened to their chum, heard him cry out after his injury and they made a rapid descent which soon resolved itself to a series of giddy slides but they arrived at the bottom safe and sound. These incidents led to the eventual capture of two criminals, who, after carrying out a daring robbery in the South West, boarded the 8.15

mail-train, which would pass through the Bellton cutting on its way to London. Police had captured a third member of the gang, who, under questioning, informed them that the train would be held-up by him, enabling the other two members to make their escape with the proceeds of the robbery before the train reached London.

An illustration to "Dorrie's Christmas Party" shows the boys held-up in a snow storm on another occasion, but they have an excellent time afterwards.

Two other early Old Series stories have excellent front covers showing examples of the age of steam: 141, "A Terrible Lesson" and 168, "The Cottage on the Moor".

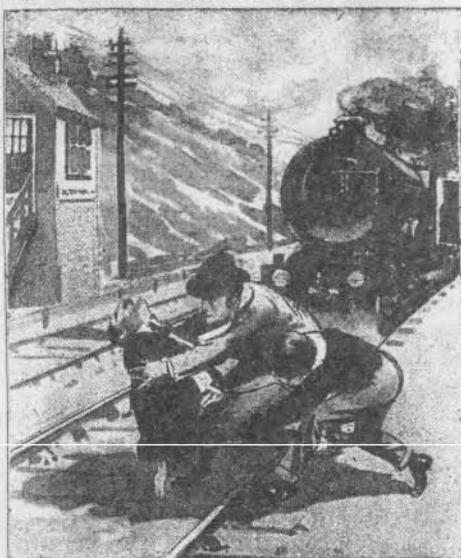
Another enjoyable complete story on a railway theme was O/S 384 "The Mystery of the 6-10 Local", Nelson Lee's power of detection well to the fore here.

In the holiday series in America, Brooks introduces us to the power of steam in that country, with a vast contrast there, both in the power of the locomotives, and the distances they travel.

Finally, I list some of the many railway stations that are mentioned in the Old Series. Some are quite small, like Bellton, while others are main-line ones.

No. 141.—ENTHRALLING SCHOOL AND DETECTIVE NOVEL!

1^o. THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY 1^o.



A TERRIBLE LESSON;

DR. BILL AGAINST CUNNING!
 Another Excellent Story of NELSON LEE and NIPPER at ST. FRANK'S COLLEGE.
 Prepared for Publication by the Author of "The Secret Menace," "Lost at Sea," etc.
 February 1903, 1915.

BOXVALE STATION (237), ESHER STATION (302), FENCHURCH ST. LONDON (264), GOLDERS GREEN STATION (311), GREAT RAPLEY STATION (145), GADSBURY (186), KETWORTH (168), KINGS CROSS (281), LIVERPOOL STREET STATION (143), LONDON BRIDGE STATION (223), MARYLEBONE STATION (522), MARKS TEY STATION (304), MELHAVEN (136), OLDHAM (282), PADDINGTON (228), ST. PANCRAS (522), STREATHAM (358), TOOTING (358), TREGELLIS STATION (290), TREMLEY (344), YALEMOOR (237), VICTORIA STATION (274).

(Victoria was perhaps the most important station of all, from the boys' point of view, as they alighted here at the commencement of the holiday period.)

WANTED: Red Lion Libraries Paperback, called "The Truth about Wilson" buy W.S.K. Webb, published in 1962. Telephone 0772-315789.



THE GREAT CANINE SLEUTH SHOW - or Every dog has its Day! by Len Hawkey

Since stories of mystery and detection first developed, many sagacious canines have sniffed their way along the highways and byways of crime to aid their human companions, and, gathered together, they could form as impressive and diverse a Dog Show as one could wish. True, there have been one or two - like the fabled "Hound of the Baskervilles", not wholly on the side of law and order, but most have been steadfast and true, and often pretty clever!

Pedro, saviour of Blake and Tinker on so many occasions, springs first to mind; then there was Clutch, basically a Terrier, and yet a "dog of many disguises", who, around the year 1903, helped Vernon Trew solve many cases in the pages of the old *Big Budget*. Not much later, Lion (in spite of his name, a lively Collie) performed similar services for that intrepid husband and wife team, Mr. & Mrs. Frank Dudley, in the weekly *Marvel*, and illustrated by R.J. Macdonald and Wilfred Sayers.

Lion was about the only Collie encountered in this genre - unsurprisingly, the preponderance of canine sleuths were Bloodhounds. Apart from the immortal Pedro, there was Bob, who pawed his way through the pages of *Comic Life* during 1921, assisting Lionel Lockhart and Yung Chang - characters depicted by Vincent Daniel. Earlier, in the late Edwardian era, a smart young detective named Paul Dane graced the coloured *Puck* comic, helped by a remarkably gifted raven, Grip - shades of Barnaby Rudge - plus a Bloodhound called Twister. The enterprising Paul opened a "Detectives Training Agency" and the hopeful young investigators often needed Twister's help. Again, Vincent Daniel (and sometimes Albert Lock) illustrated these stories, which also appeared in *The Jester*. Eventually the school closed and Twister (possibly now in retirement) was replaced by another Bloodhound, Prince. These later tales were also depicted by Robert Farwig, C.H. Chapman, and Louis Smyth.

The famous Dixon Hawke - possibly the only one of the 'old brigade' still active today - also owned a Bloodhound, Solomon, who must by now be a rather arthritic greybeard. Yet another *Marvel* detective, Gordon Grey (1898) had a Bloodhound who answered to the undignified name of Dingo, and they reappeared, two decades later, in the *Detective Library*. Of the same breed, with a more appropriate sobriquet, was Harold Hood's companion, Guardsman, in the *Boy's Friend* of 1926. He had the advantage, too, of being drawn by Cecil Gifford Ambler, who was considered only slightly inferior to Warwick Reynolds as an animal artist. Two more long-eared and heavily jowled trackers were Nelson, owned by the detective Michael Hearn (*Boy's Herald*, 1910, illustrated by E.E. Briscoe, H.M. Lewis and "Val" Reading) - and Peter the Great, who belonged to investigator Anthony Rollitt - yet another *Marvel* character (circa 1895) who resurfaced in *The Jester* some ten years later - the artists were Fritz Braun and H.M. Lewis, respectively.

Last, but not least, of the Bloodhound-detectives, we come to the most indestructible of all - apart from Pedro, of course. This was Dirk, a wonder-dog, who appeared almost simultaneously in both Comic Cuts and The Marvel, around 1896. His master, Paul Sleuth (a very appropriate name for a detective!) sometimes worked with Anthony Rollitt, so presumably Peter the Great and Dirk were acquainted - may even have been related! Dirk, however, had far the longest career, and at one time superseded his master as "star" of the stories, with an extended series in The Jester entitled "Dirk, the Dog Detective". As well as the papers mentioned, Dirk, along with Paul, appeared in The Union Jack, The Boy's Friend, Chips, and, as late as 1923, in The Rocket. He earned the nation's gratitude in 1907 (21st Dec.) when he saved the life of Kaiser Wilhelm, during a visit to London. The Royal entourage was passing down Fleet Street, where a bomb had been hidden in overhead decorations. It was due to be detonated as the carriage passed below. All that was needed was a tug on a cord, but Dirk scented it out, pulled the cord himself, and exploded the device prematurely. In the light of what happened a few years later, he might have done better to leave well alone!

Over the years many artists depicted Dirk and Paul - Louis Smyth, Albert Lock, A.H. Clarke, Phil Swinnerton, V.S. Daniel, C.H. Chapman, W. Sayers, and - last of all, in the Rocket - J.H. Valda. Only one other Bloodhound springs to mind - the aptly named Strongheart, companion of Jimmy Dauntless in the comic, My Favourite, during the 1930s.

Every dog has its day, however, and over several decades many other breeds have featured. Terriers are well in evidence - Spot, for example, who took to the air with George Gale, The Flying 'Tec. (Chips, 1911). He was, naturally, a "Skye" Terrier, and C.H. Chapman and Vincent Daniel were his usual artists. Then, Don Darrell's terrier, Snap, was as keen on all sporting activities as his master, and pranced through the pages of the green Boy's Friend in the 1920s, vigorously illustrated by Ernest Ibbetson. Clutch, already mentioned, was a bull-terrier, while Dark (adopted by Ragged Jack, the Tramp-Detective, in Merry & Bright, around 1912/13) although termed a mongrel, was mostly Terrier, if Fred Bennett's artwork can be relied on.

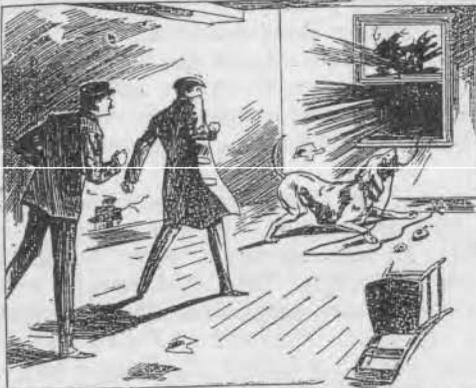
In The Jester (1906/07) a very inept detective named Kenneth Mugg had as pet and assistant, Dandy, described as "the one and only Foxterrier-Bloodhound" - does Dandy therefore qualify for both breeds? Pongo, owned by another "comic" character, sleuth-hound Sam, altho' a scrawny specimen, was in fact yet another Bloodhound, and featured - in "strip" form, albeit briefly in The Boys Magazine. Strangely, the only Alsatian seems to have been Flash, belonging to the schoolgirl detective, Valerie Drew, whose adventures featured in The Schoolgirls' Weekly and other mags in the 1930s. Similarly, only one Great Dane can be found, devoted to Clive Markham, a detective launched by the comic Chips in the same era, and named, unsurprisingly, Dane! Incidentally, this seems to be the only detective series drawn by that excellent artist W. Bryce Hamilton.

There were three Bulldogs in "The Show", two of them (unoriginally) called "Buller". One was owned by the Doctor/Detective, Duncan Dread - Fun & Fiction, 1911 - and the other by Stalwart Forthright, he of the dozen or so lady assistants, in the 1920 Jester.

The artists depicting these worthies were, respectively, W.G. Wakefield and Louis Smyth, and it was the latter who also portrayed the third of the "Bulldog Breed", Bob, owned by the pretty feminine sleuth, Barbara Brown, whose exploits figured in the pages of The Favorite Comic in 1911.

Thus the Great Detective Dog Show closes, with, to be fair, rosettes all round - it might be appropriate to end by quoting a few lines from that little-known poet and dog-lover, Herr Leonhardt Falkenschlüssel:-

"...And in the dark of Winter, I sense their bright eyes shine
From secret tracks and byways, that once were theirs and mine:
And tho' I grieve too often those steadfast hearts at rest,
One thing I've learnt for certain, four-footed friends are best!"



Dirk rushed at this repo, and, seizing it in his teeth, pulled. From outside came the terrific report of an explosion, and loud cries of fear and horror followed the momentary silence which the sudden amazement of the report had caused.



Peter was straining on the leash, his roll distinctly excited, and his nostrils sniffing suspiciously around Pinner's boots.

- 1. Albert Lock
- 2. Wilfred Sayers
- 3 and 4. J. Louis Smyth



Lion came to the rescue of his master, and flew at the throat of the diamond merchant.



- 5 "Val" Reading
- 6 ?

BARBARA BROWN AND BULLDOG BOB

THE ONE AND ONLY FOX-TERRIER BLOODHOUND - DANDY



'CLUTCH' THE MASTER OF DISGUISE



A few days ago I took down a volume from my bookcases, with the intention of having a good read. As I settled down and turned the pages, something dropped out. Something which, presumably, long years ago I had used as a book-mark. It was an old programme from the London Hippodrome for the show "Hit the Deck."

"Hit the Deck" was a Musical Comedy, elaborately staged with an enormous cast. I loved it, and saw it a great many times from a front row stall. An Orchestra Stall cost six bob, in case anybody remembers when we used real money in this country. I wonder what an Orchestra Stall at the London Hippodrome costs today.

The programme cost 6d. I daresay that, before I went to the show, I had a gorgeous supper at a Lyon's Tea Shop for two bob, and maybe a huge Banana Split which cost ninepence for umpteen years. Anyone remember Lyons?

I have had a copy made of the cover of the programme, and I hope our Editor may find it possible to reproduce it with this little item. "Hit the Deck", the

Musical Comedy, was based on a splendid film, "Shore Leave", of the later silent era of the cinemas. A superb film, starring Richard Barthelmess and Dorothy Mackaill as the sailor-boy and his sweetheart. It was our very first feature film in "The Small Cinema" of which some readers may recall that I wrote a "biography" over a period of time in C.D.

In "Hit the Deck", the leading players were Stanley Holloway and Ivy Tresmand, two famous stage stars of the time but on the mature side for the sailor-boy and his sweetheart. As a passing matter of interest, for those who watch the T.V. show "This is Your Life", a recent episode told the life of the great stage personality, Ellen Pollock. As I watched it I recalled, with a pang, that Ellen Pollock had a supporting role in "Hit the Deck".

You probably can't see it in the picture but, in the corner, is pencilled the date - February 27th 1928. 1928! I adopt the role of Danny here, with memories of the old papers. *The Boys' Friend* had come to the end of its life at the end of 1927 - amalgamated with the "Triumph". Alas.

And in February 1928, the *Modern Boy* started its career. *Modern Boy*! I would not have had one of those in my pocket when I sat in my Hippodrome stall. So far as I remember I did not take that paper regularly till the Rio Kid joined it a good many years later. Today I have them all, naturally, collected in later years. I had the

complete run bound in umpteen volumes by the bookbinding department of W.H. Smith. And they look really something.

Number One - early February 1928 - had 36 pages. Number Two had 32 pages. Number Three had 28 pages. It looked as though it might shrink away. Luckily the shrinking stopped there, and there were 28 pages right through from thence till the first series ended a long, long time further on.

A grand paper. Nothing to compare with it now for the lads of today. Top of the bill was a fine serial set in the South Seas - "King of the Islands". And that serial was headed with the information "By Sir Alan Cobham". Hamilton fans must have known who the real writer was. Many years on, Charles Hamilton told me that the first time that he knew the serial had been credited to the famous airman was when he read some comments of mine on the subject in C.D. Mr. Hamilton must have been pulling my leg. It is unbelievable that our great author would not have had a peep at his brain child in print. Obviously some arrangement had been made by the publishers.

1928, February! In the *Magnet* a magnificent 7-story series, commencing with "Dismissed from Greyfriars", was running. Owing to the plotting of Skinner, the Head and Mr. Quelch found themselves at daggers drawn, and Mr. Quelch was dismissed from Greyfriars. The *Magnet* at its very best. Maybe I was deep in a chapter of "The Rebels of the Remove" during the interval at "Hit the Deck".

Feb. 1928. The Rio Kid was at the top of his form in the Popular. Tip-top paper. How lucky we were in 1928 if we were around them.

The *Nelson Lee Library* started a new series with "The St. Frank's Ice carnival". It was Handforth's idea, but St. Frank's was burgled while the carnival was on. Handforth solved the mystery, so, perhaps, I read "Handforth, the Detective" in the train on the way home from the Hipp.

Feb. 1928. Two S.O.L.'s that month. One was "A disgrace to His School", a story about Hazeldene, reprinted from the *Magnet* of 1910.

The *Gem* didn't hit the deck in Feb. 1928. The sub-writers had taken over at that time. Instead of hitting the deck it hit rock bottom with an awful tale called "Lowther's Love Affair" in which Lowther became engaged to a young lady who was Cardew in disguise. Real tommy-rot.

And so, understudying Danny, the old London Hippodrome has caused me to look back, wallowing in nostalgia. And, even if you are much too young to remember, I am sure you will agree with me that "those were the days".

"Hit the Deck" with its excellent songs (they wrote songs with melodies in those distant days) had a long run at the London Hippodrome. Later, two versions of the show were sent on tour by the famous firm of Macdonald & Young. A little less elaborate, these touring versions had the advantage of more youthful players in the leading roles.

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.

SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE AUTHORS

This month: A Tribute to Stanley Austin

by Margery Woods

Besides its undisputed star, Valerie Drew, the Girl Detective, THE SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY produced an excellent weekly programme of complete stories and serials which covered a broad spectrum of appealing fiction for girls. Most of the A.P. authors developed a particular style of their own, a genre within the genre, so to speak, as did Kirkham with his irresistible comedy and Inglesant with his strong emotional drama, but one of the team was especially talented in that he seemed able to write convincingly in a range of contrasting story-styles. From the classic boarding school story, through adventurous episodes featuring career types, to the romantic atmospheric tales of the Mystery Maid. His name was Stanley Austin and he was already an author of boys' fiction before he turned to girls' stories during the mid thirties under the pseudonym of Sheila Austin.

In THE SCHOOL OF SECRET ENEMIES and HER FIGHT TO STAY AT SCHOOL, serialised in S.W. and later reissued in SGOL, there was enough well written adventure and mystery combined with schoolday life to keep any devotee of the genre enrapt for hours. Admittedly, the influence of Cliff House is sensed in Austin's school stories - there is even a bête noir of a prefect called Connie! But what better influence could a writer of school stories have for that particular market? In the first title the story sparkles along, with a head-mistress who seems to change character, a mysterious Stark Island which holds a strange secret, and the heroine, Molly, engaged in an ongoing battle with crooks and plotters, not to forget a phantom monk, until all is resolved in a racing finish. Stock ingredients when listed coldly, which only underlines the skill needed to serve up the stock formula over and over again yet infusing a freshness every time (SGOL 554 and 601).

Away from school, Austin takes us to Cornwall on THE TREASURE TRAIL OF THE TREMAYNES, invading Inglesant territory in a tale of long hidden treasure, a family feud going back to the French revolution, a castle and caves, ancient smugglers and new villains, and a determined, spunky heroine. Lots of wild sea atmosphere and excitement with every wave (SGOL 682).

Austin also contributed many short stories to S.W. and its Annual, including several featuring the Skating Bees, a youthful show biz team of skaters and acrobats who naturally attracted as much trouble and adventure as applause. There was another career girl called Sybil who seemed unable to settle for long in any one job and consequently ran into more than her fair share of villains and problems in each new post she tackled. Better known was Dawn Dallas, nicknamed Little Lady Bountiful, but perhaps a little too good to be true, for some tastes. Dawn must have appealed to the youthful pony enthusiasts among her readers for invariably she was illustrated in riding habit, if not always with mount. A suggestion of county society ran through these stories, which at least demonstrated A.P.'s attempts to appeal to readers across a broad social spectrum.

But one of Austin's most interesting creations was the Mystery Maid of the Mountains. This girl of the snows, whose home was a cabin high up on Shadow Mountain, where she had been brought up since babyhood by an elderly scholarly hermit she called grandfather, had a fey, mystical quality which came across almost uncannily. In retrospect, some of the plots seem unconvincing. Always there was someone determined to drive her out of her mountain domain, even though to the villagers she was an angel. She was accused of being gypsy, thief, even kidnapper, on occasions, or even of going into folks' houses to do deliberate damage or let out their hens! And yet, when one remembers the setting, a wild terrain not specified, perhaps Wales, perhaps

amid the Lakes, of that time, there could be suspicion of anyone not easily understood, who did not conform, by an insular community huddled at the foot of the mountain. The Maid had tamed a wild goat, which in itself was quite a feat; she was a skier of quite spectacular skill, possessed great courage and kindness, and a magnetic charm that won animals to her will; she was also very beautiful. No wonder the locals were somewhat in awe of her.

Some of Austin's most romantic and atmospheric writing went into these stories. His snow landscapes and the striking girl whose "hair that cascaded luxuriantly over the white shoulders glistened like coppery gold" were painted in words as vividly as on the canvas of any painter. But there is always a great sense of intrigue about a character whose name we are not told and whose origins are shrouded in mystery. Even after her adventure of the current week came to its

The RIDDLE OF RAVENSCAR SCHOOL!

A magnificent school and mystery story specially written for this issue by
SHEILA AUSTIN

SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY No 733

THE EDITOR VERY MUCH REGRETS...

that with this issue "The Schoolgirls' Own Library" is forced to suspend publication.

As you may know, the majority of the wood pulp from which paper is manufactured in Great Britain comes from Scandinavia.

Owing to the extension of the war to Norway exports of pulp from that country have entirely ceased. So acute has the shortage of paper become in consequence that it has been found quite impossible to continue publication at the present time.

It is hoped, however, that this suspension will only be for a limited period, and that the "Libraries" will resume their appearance in the future. The Editor is sure that when they do, you will support them as loyally as you have done in the past.

happy conclusion there remained that element of remoteness to leave the more introspective reader thoughtful. Eventually, Austin tore away this element and identified the Maid. But as Thelma Kenrick, with wealthy parents, father a top film director, and a small sister called Doris, the mountain maid lost her magic to reality. After she had rescued her own little sister, come into a fortune, and her father announced they would all live by the mountain and she would still be their Mystery Maid (GUARDIAN OF THE SNOWS SGOL 578) the ensuing stories were never quite the same. Despite this, she remains one of the more unusual and memorable characters in storypaper fiction.

One small point is strange. For an author who wrote so vividly and well, Austin had one blank spot: his choice of names. Time after time the same names turn up: Doris and Ruth. Perhaps they were his favourites...

One somewhat sad distinction belongs to him. When the curtain fell in the spring of 1940 on so many of the story papers we knew and loved, the final title in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY was a school and mystery story, THE RIDDLE OF RAVENSCAR SCHOOL, by Sheila Austin.

A grand writer who must have brought countless hours of pleasure to countless young readers.

SOME BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON STANLEY AUSTIN

by Mary Cadogan



STANLEY, COLIN AND CELIA

As a follow up to Margery's very interesting article, I am giving below some information about Stanley Austin which I obtained when I interviewed his son, Colin Austin, a year or two ago. Bob Whiter put me in touch with Colin, who was known to neighbours of Roger Whiter (Bob's son, who now lives in Surrey).

As Bill Lofts and Derek Adley say in their *THE MEN BEHIND BOYS' FICTION*, Stanley Austin was a splendid and prolific author in his own right as well as 'a leading substitute writer for the *MAGNET* and *GEM...*' He was born in 1890 and died (of cancer) in 1958. He married Celia Rouget in 1914, and they had four children: Diana, who only lived for a few months, Pamela, Desmond and Colin. (One of Austin's pen-names was to be Colin Desmond.) Celia was born in North Wales; she had music lessons from Coleridge Taylor, was an artist in oils and water colours and a private tutor to several families. She inspired and urged Stanley to become a regular writer. He started out as a deckhand on a coaster with the Merchant Navy, but didn't like this work very much. He took work in the off licence of a famous pub in Northwich, 'The Feathers', and Celia became temporary manageress of the pub. Whenever Stanley was not working he apparently 'always had his head stuck in a comic or a book. He never stopped reading'. Around 1911 he won five shillings in a short story writing competition. He was a great rowing enthusiast, and rowing as a theme was often a feature of his stories - both for boys and girls.

During the Great War Austin joined the Cheshire Regiment but was transferred to the Royal Engineers when an officer asked 'can anybody here bash a typewriter?', and he volunteered. In addition to his official duties he started a Royal Engineers' paper called *The Eyewash* and edited this until the end of the war.

When hostilities ended, he was influenced by his half-cousin Michael Poole (real name Reginald Heber Poole) to go to London, where Poole was working as a sub-editor with the Amalgamated Press. Austin became a sub-editor on the *Magnet and Gem* for two years. He then realized that he would make more money if he went freelance, because his writing talents had been quickly pressed into action. He set up house at Bookham in Surrey in the early 1920s and wrote substitute stories as 'Frank Richards', 'Martin Clifford' and 'Owen Conquest' during the period 1921 to 1930.

In the early 1930s he was asked to write some Cliff House stories for THE SCHOOLGIRL and was glad to do so, especially once the Gem began to reprint Hamilton's original stories. He wrote many girls' stories after this, as 'Sheila Austin' or 'Celia Austin', and also as 'Clive Bancroft', and his work appeared in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY, GIRLS' CRYSTAL and in the monthly SGOLs - both up to 1940 and when the Library was

No. 100. —THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY.



Not for the first time has Valentine Mornington's headstrong, unruly nature been the cause of trouble in the Fourth Form at Rookwood. Seldom, however, has it led him to such lengths as described in this splendid story.

relaunched after the Second World War. (During the war, when only the GIRLS' CRYSTAL survived, Stanley got a job as a storekeeper at Vickers Aircraft, in Weybridge; he was slightly injured in 1940 when the works were bombed by the Germans.)

There is no doubt that Austin was one of the A.P.'s most successful juvenile writers, and it is sad that Celia, who so enthusiastically encouraged him to write, was not able fully to savour his achievements. She was knocked down in the street by a butcher's van in the 1930s, was concussed for six weeks and had to spend most of the rest of her life in hospital.

Her brain had been damaged in the accident, and although she could still walk and do many things she could no longer look after herself or her family. Stanley's son Colin remembers his sister Pamela - seven years his senior - as a surrogate mother. Celia was in hospital at Brookwood, near Woking, for many years where Stanley, as well as the Poole family, could frequently visit her.

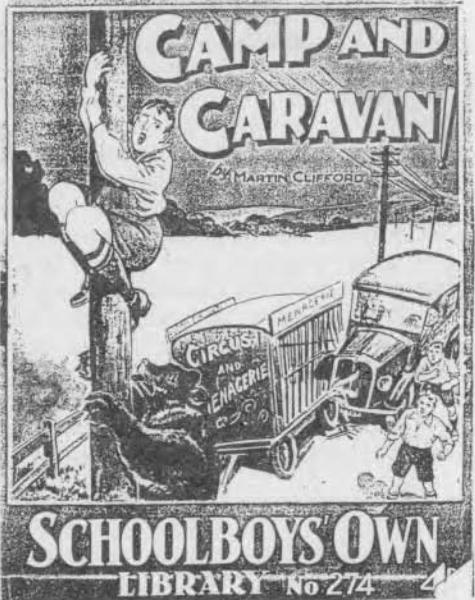
Stanley Austin wrote stories for D.C. Thomson in the 1930s - for SKIPPER, WIZARD AND HOTSPUR. He also wrote for CHUMS and THE SCOUT. He loved writing cowboy stories, and Colin was often indulged by his father with gifts of American cowboy pulps. A special memory is of his father buying these, and Friary Ales for himself, and comics and sweets for Colin: Stanley would then read the cowboy papers and comics to Colin at bedtime, while Colin drank Tizer and Stanley enjoyed his ale.



THE WHITE FEATHER

A Complete Story of
Indian Warfare
By STANLEY AUSTIN

When Celia was well, she helped to correct Stanley's manuscripts (he was often writing one long complete story, one short story and one serial instalment every week). She would also take his copy to London to the A.P. so that it was on the editors' desks by 9am. (later on Colin undertook these deliveries). Stanley's routine was to work at his typewriter from 10.00am until 4.00pm on most days, but before beginning the writing process he would smoke his pipe and rock in an old wicker chair while he worked out his plots. Colin remembers his father in a roomful of smoke, with windows sealed, and screens to enhance the room's warmth, with a stove burning cosily. Stanley never sat down to type until a whole story was in his head. He would then tap it out steadily, stopping for nothing except cups of tea or coffee. Stanley Austin's writing career spanned several decades, and he was able to continue it up to the time of his death in 1958. He was educated at an elementary school and started work at the age of twelve.



There is no doubt that, like so many of the authors of the Amalgamated Press's juvenile papers, he was a natural and gifted story-spinner, whose work gave pleasure to thousands of children over many years.

SOME D.C. THOMSON ANNUALS (3): ADVENTURELAND

D. J. O'Leary (conclusion)

On reflection, a number of cinema influences - hardly surprising in the 'thirties - might be detected. Strangely enough there is no cowboy story, although we have Mexican bandits and also a Western setting for two stories, but the character of Dynamiter Jim in the "Flying Idol" reminds me of similar figures who tossed sticks of dynamite nonchalantly at their enemies in many B pictures. Then there is the New York cop and his tricky but gallant adversary. "Casey's Last Cop" almost reads like a plot synopsis for one of those Warner Brothers crime films starring James Cagney or Edward G. Robinson.

It is the first story, however, that must 'ring bells'. "The Cheetahs of Chunga Das" evokes vividly that excellent melodrama "The Most Dangerous Game" (also known as "The Hounds of Zaroff"). In this 1932 picture Leslie Brooks, a crazed big-game hunter, pursues fellow hunter Joel McCrea - somewhat encumbered by the presence of Fay Wray - with his ferocious hounds. Even the geographical setting, the East Indies, is the same. And the 'game' are likewise hunters themselves.

Some other points of interest: A Red Circle story outside the "Hotspur" is certainly very rare even if not unique (I do not have a complete set of ADVENTURELANDS so cannot say if there were other examples. If so they were very unusual). It is a pity that "Microbe Marney's Five Pound Check" is, for me, very feeble.

I have already said that I don't usually find the Thomson annual illustrations very interesting and the colour plates, though vivid, seem to have no connection with the stories. The photo-picture features, nevertheless, catch the attention with their variety of topics from Death Valley ("An Adventure Land Worth Its Salt") to "Helping the Deep-Sea Diver". The picture which stayed in my mind for so many years, "When Falls Stop Falling" showing a frozen Niagara Falls, is still impressive.

The two full page cartoon strips, "The Consequence" where a little boy's trip to the music hall leads to a disastrous attempt at juggling, is followed later by "The Hat-Trick" where a little boy's excitement at a football match leads to poor Dad's hat being dented. Not brilliant, but competently drawn and good for a smile. The artist is not named, of course, but looking at other ADVENTURELANDS in my collection, I find very similar cartoons in the 1920s identified as being by W. L. Ridgewell.

One last point. It is noteworthy that once again, as in the ROVER annual with which I started this occasional series, there is only one author allowed to use his "real" name: Gilbert Chester. It says a lot for his standing that Thomson allowed this.

So we have another example of an annual of exuberant and varied action, humour and drama. It is no wonder that the boys of the 'thirties relished the mixture. How I wish that youngsters of today had something similar!

WANTED: Greyfriars Book Club volume No. 1 'The Worst Boy at Greyfriars', and 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.

BUNTER! THE MUSICAL

A Look-Back at Greyfriars' Only Song-and-Dance Show

by Brian Doyle (continued)

The story of BUNTER! was set in 1934, at Greyfriars' School, and the 13 songs included "My Flexible Friend" (Quelch's ode to his cane!), "A Fellow Should Stand by His Chums" (sung by Bunter, Vernon-Smith and the Famous Five), "Delectable Comestibles (sung by Guess Who?), "True Team Spirit" (an ensemble number) and "Cripes! Yaroo!" (Bunter and the Famous Five). Plus, of course, "Greyfriars", the school song which opened and closed the show. Mrs Kebble and Mr Quelch had a touching song which they sang together, "Glad to Volunteer", Mr Smedley described his (and others') "Nasty Habits" in another number, and I gather that the big rousing song-and-dance number for the entire company (led by Dr. Locke [who else!]), "Give It All You've Got", which closed the first half practically 'stopped the show'.

The Northcott Theatre front-of-house staff really went to town, apparently, with the Manager's Office becoming the Headmaster's Study, the Ladies' and Gents' becoming the Boys' and the Girls' and the Souvenir Shop in the school-like Foyer was transformed into the Stationery Store, selling Bunter-like comestibles (including sticky doughnuts, jam-tarts, sweets and ice-cream) and copies of the Howard Baker "Magnet" Reprint volumes and special Bunter "Tee-Hee" T-shirts!

I must mention the BUNTER! Souvenir Programme. Beautifully produced, the "Magnet"-sized booklet had 24 pages, over 60 illustrations (many culled from the original Chapman and Shields drawings from "The Magnet") and had several pages in the orange-coloured tints of the early-1930s issues. Its orange cover reproduced the cover of "Magnet" No. 1431 of July 20th 1935, featuring Bunter and Quelch. There was a specially-written Introduction by Benny Green, in which he compared Billy Bunter to Falstaff and Mr Pickwick as the most famous and immortal fictional 'fatties' of all time. The programme Notes were by Maurice Hall (credited as Chairman of the Friars Club) and the whole programme was compiled and edited by Tim Hulse. I'm fortunate enough to possess a copy (inscribed by John Judd) and it is a delight throughout - it will surely become a collectors' item in its own right, if it isn't already.

One aspect of the story of the show that might perhaps have shocked purists was that of the widowed Mrs Kebble 'falling for' Mr Quelch, Master of the Remove Form at Greyfriars. Patsy Rowlands as the love-lorn Mrs K. had a fine solo number called "For All the Wrong Reasons" in which, perhaps, she explained what she found to love about stern Henry Samuel (we all know he was known as 'a beast - but a just beast' so maybe it was this aspect of him that appealed to Mrs K.? One can just imagine her murmuring to herself "he brings out the beast in me too!" as she went about her duties in the Greyfriars Sick Bay...).

Writer-director John Judd (whose company presented BUNTER! in conjunction with the Northcott Theatre Company) told me at the time that he had been a Greyfriars and Bunter fan for many years. "I've been a member of the Friars Club for over a year," he said. "I've also been in touch constantly with Gerald Campion (BBC TV's Bunter, of course) and also met with Howard Baker and Maurice Hall, who were extremely helpful. With this show I have made every effort to be true to Frank Richards/Charles Hamilton", he explained. It was obvious that he meant it and, by all accounts, the show was as authentic as it possibly could be.

I did not have have pleasure of actually seeing the show myself. And, being at Exeter, it was not reviewed in the National newspapers or magazines. But a review in the *Times Educational Supplement* applauded "the authentic Fat Owl of the Remove,

stepping straight from a stage-sized issue of 'The Magnet' in the opening scene into all kinds of hot water" and concluded with "if things go well, the next stage should be the West End". *The Western Morning News* described the show as a "wonderful wheeze" and summed it up as "an evening of sheer enjoyment - 'The Magnet' merges marvellously with music". A local Exeter paper enthused "a merry musical piece of hokum that brings laughter from start to finish... the stylish songs - one of them a true show-stopper - give the production that special spark of charm that could well take the West End by storm... an enthusiastic capacity audience... an arresting and spectacular show."

The Stage (which had faithfully reported the show's progress over the preceding weeks) wasn't so keen. Its critic greeted the show with luke-warm words, though he did admit that "David Timson as Bunter is a success". Two weeks later *The Stage* printed two furious letters from readers who had seen the show and loved it and also wondered if the paper's critic had been at the same show as them. "Rapturously received by packed houses... slick, wickedly-funny and just right for West End audiences... sheer enjoyment... polished performances, superb scenery and catchy tunes:...fantastic...numerous curtain-calls...a top-hole, spiffing show" they enthused.

And Edward Murch in the SPCD (September 1988) said: "The cast was excellent... Timson was an admirable and definitive Bunter. Patsy Rowlands as superb...the pick of the numbers for me was her 'For All the Wrong Reasons'. I found this a most agreeable entertainment, so much so that I saw it three times...The programme was a joy to behold. John Judd and Paul Knight are to be congratulated."

BUNTER! was scheduled to run for about a month from June 21st to July 16th 1988, which it did and very successfully too. But the West End offers didn't flood in, sadly, and the hoped-for London production did not materialise. It must be remembered that it does cost a mint of money to put on a West End musical show these days - sometimes it can run literally into millions. And a lot of money can be lost if audiences don't flock in in their thousands.

In 1989 I saw a brand new musical called SHERLOCK HOLMES in London's West End. The music was by Leslie Bricusse and Ron Moody starred in the title-rôle. It was a special Preview performance held several days before the actual First Night. I thought the show was brilliant and superb entertainment, with several memorable songs, remarkable special effects and excellent performances. So, apparently, did the rest of the packed theatre. Two numbers stopped the show. There were many curtain calls and shouts of 'Bravo' from the mainly-standing audience at the end. The critics hated the show, murdered it in print - and it ran for just six weeks. I had the same experience when I saw the award winning American musical THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD three years earlier; it had won 6 coveted 'Tony Awards' on Broadway. Again, I and a packed house thought it brilliant with a superb score, and it received a standing ovation. The critics disliked it and it came off after five weeks. A lot of people lost a lot of money because of all this, running into hundreds of thousands of pounds. And Sherlock Holmes and, to a lesser extent, Edwin Drood, are famous fictional characters. What would happen to BUNTER! if the critics disliked it? What if they all behaved like Ponsonby instead of like Harry Wharton or Bob Cherry? I only mention all this to show how very risky it can be to produce a London musical - and how very difficult it is to find backers for it. Especially in the current climate.

I know that I personally would thoroughly enjoy BUNTER! if I could see it. And I'd probably see it more than once, or even twice. Many readers of the SPCD probably feel the same. But we all amount to only a few hundreds. For a show merely to survive

in London's West End these days, around 8,000 people would have to pay to see it every week (around 1000 per performance) for many months on end. Would even the great Billy Bunter attract those kinds of audiences? Who knows?

I spoke to John Judd recently on the telephone and he was as enthusiastic and optimistic as ever about BUNTER! "There's a strong possibility it may soon be put on in London," he said in his usual cheerful way. "It might be quite soon, around the end of this year, or maybe sometime next year. The signs are good. I'll be sure to let you know if and when it all looks as though it's going to happen. You know, you haven't heard the last of BUNTER!, not by a long chalk..."

Let's hope he's right. The Fat Owl of the Remove has a happy habit of popping up when he's least expected...

BOOKS

Reviewed by Mary Cadogan

I imagine that many C.D. readers acquired some book tokens at Christmas time, and possibly some of these might be used for one or other of the books mentioned below!

THE OXFORD BOOK OF GOTHIC TALES

Edited by Chris Baldick (Oxford, £16.95)

The 533 page hardback is an intriguing collection of suspenseful stories spanning over two hundred years. Early eighteenth-century tales of monks' vengeance and ruined abbeys rub shoulders with exploits from Arthur Conan Doyle, E. Nesbit, Robert Louis Stevenson and Bret Harte, and contemporary Gothics are also represented. There is a strange fascination in mystery and the macabre, and a cosiness too when such a volume can be savoured in the security of a comfortable room in the wake of the Christmas season. Gothic stories are not always my cup of tea, but I have certainly enjoyed many items in this wide-ranging collection.

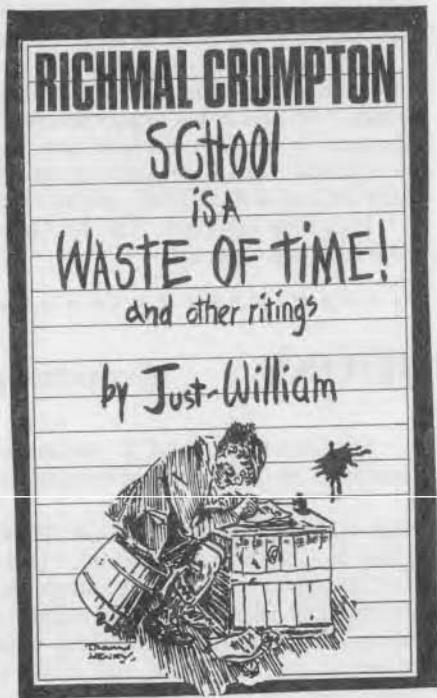
THE INDEPENDENT BOOK OF ANNIVERSARIES

by George Beal (Headline (£20.00))

Another bumper book, this time by one of our own contributors and subscribers. George Beal, who has been anniversaries editor for the *Independent* newspaper since 1986, and who has edited several magazines, including *Stamp Collecting* and *Playing Card World*. THE INDEPENDENT BOOK OF ANNIVERSARIES is a volume to browse through with delight. Each of the first 366 pages is devoted to one day of the year which gives information about who was 'born on this day'; who 'died on this day', and what 'occurred on this day'. There is a separate, long alphabetical index of people and of events, so that it is easy to look things up even if one is not sure of the dates on which certain happenings occurred. Just as an example of the snippets of information provided by this book, I discovered that Frank Richards shared his birthday (8th August) in different years with Dustin Hoffman, Nigel Mansell and Esther Williams (as well as many other luminaries) and that also on this day The Battle of Britain began (in 1940), President Nixon resigned (in 1974) and John McCarthy, the British journalist held hostage in the Lebanon, was freed (in 1991).

SCHOOL IS A WASTE OF TIME AND OTHER RITINGS BY JUST WILLIAM

by Richmal Crompton (Pan MacMillan £3.50)
This collection of articles by William, written in the 1920s and '30s for THE HAPPY MAG and TIT-BITS, is now available in paper-back. (It was collected together for the first time in 1990 and published in hardback as WHAT'S WRONG WITH CIVILIZASHUN.) It has a special interest as it shows William in reflective mood confiding his thoughts, opinions and aspirations to paper in a first-person narrative (and not having his adventures chronicled in the story style which is the usual format for the William books). William's grievances against adult hypocrisy, pomposity and snobbery find especially telling and comic expression in these diary-type entries. They provide us with further insights into Richmal Crompton's wonderfully resilient 'Frankenstein's Monster'. If you do not already own the hardback it is worth acquiring this paperback to add to, or complete, your collection of William Books. As I said in the introduction to it, William claims 'that people who read his literary creations find them "exciting". I'm sure that you will do so too!'



A FEW THOUGHTS ON "BIGGLES"

by H. Heath

It was splendid to see Biggles once again in print thanks to the new Red Fox Series.

I have read only a few Biggles stories, mostly in the *Modern Boy* in the mid 1930s, but these included "Biggles Flies East", and most of "Biggles Learns to Fly".

I have always regarded "Biggles Flies East" as a superb story full of mystery and action, and the best of those that I had read. In "Biggles Learns to Fly" it was good to meet once again, Mark Way who had been Biggles' observer in 169 Squadron. Although Mark was to play only a small part in the stories when compared with that of Algernon Lacey, he was always a favourite character of mine. Mark, although severely wounded, survived the 1914/18 war. Perhaps he and Biggles **did** meet up again in a peace-time series.

Another character who made only very fleeting appearances when Biggles joined 266 Squadron, was "Wilks" otherwise Wilkinson of 287 Squadron. He also survived the war, and appeared in at least one peace-time story.

The name of Mahoney, Biggles' flight-commander in 266 Squadron was also remembered. However, what was not recalled, is what happened to him?

Through no fault of their own, both "Algy" and "Ginger", in my estimation, rank behind Mark Way, Mahoney and Wilkinson. This may be due to the certain feeling that despite many desperate adventures, "Algy" and "Ginger" would always come through unscathed.

This feeling was not evident where Mark & Co. were involved.

A VISIT TO THE BOD

by Daniel Robinson

As a relative newcomer to Greyfriars and St. Jim's, I have often privately bemoaned the fact that most of the really interesting Magnet and Gem facsimiles were snapped up by collectors before I got to them: indeed, I have a suspicion that some of them were out of print before I was even born! Still I suppose one musn't grumble, especially considering the wealth of Hamiltonia which can still be bought; at the same time, however, I cannot help dreaming wistfully of reading 'Tom Merry's Schooldays' or 'The Making of Harry Wharton' just for the experience.

Then a brainwave came along. My tutors at Christ Church have often exhorted me to use the Bodleian Library, which holds a copy of every book published in this country since about 1660. I'm not sure they meant reading Greyfriars stories, but there was certainly no reason why I would not be allowed to ask for them. And so, having taken an oath a few days ago 'not to bring into the library or kindle therein any flame or fire, etc., etc.' (until recently one had to promise not to bring in any sheep), I strode down Oriel Lane, my Commoner's gown flapping behind me (it's not compulsory to wear one but I think the tourists appreciate it), my head high and my eyes bright.

I would like to be able to record that the courteous and friendly assistants found the books I was looking for within minutes and that I spent a very entertaining Monday afternoon in the company of Wharton, Mauly, the boulder and the rest. Unfortunately that would be a lie: a palpable untruth.

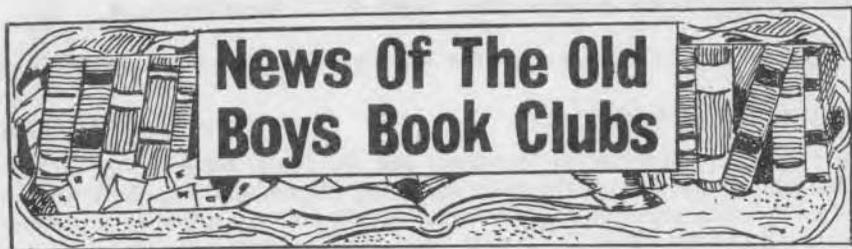
The staff were not especially friendly (perhaps they have rather low opinions of lazy students living off the taxpayers' purse and spending their time reading politically incorrect school stories: I can't imagine why) and when I finally arrived at the General Catalogue, to my amazement I found that there were no Greyfriars' Book Club volumes in stock. (If you have tears prepare to shed them now.)

Now the Bod receives a single copy of every book published in the land - or I assumed it did. Whether Howard Baker Press did not bother sending one, or whether the library declined them, I do not know, but all I can say is that it fairly ruined my afternoon, which I spent in a fruitless wild goose chase around ancient leather-bound catalogues, index cards, microfiches, and even at one point computer termini.

If any one has any light to shed of this mystery perhaps they could share it with us. Until that day I must submerge myself in Beowulf and George Eliot, all the while dreaming of those blue-cover Gems...

Editor's Note: C.D. readers will, I know, have great sympathy with Mr. Robinson. I still remember how thrilled I was - over twenty years ago - on my first visit to the

British Museum Reading Room to be devouring Charles Hamilton's early series of Bessie Bunter and Cliff House School in *The School Friend*, whilst readers on my right and left studied more conventionally academic tomes. Roger Jenkins, the Hamilton Librarian of the London O.B.B.C. assures me that Daniel Robinson could borrow the wanted series from his library, even though the Bod can't help.



NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Fourteen people attended our informal Christmas party on Saturday, 12th December. The quantity and quality of the food provided by members even surpassed all previous years' records! Joan has a justified reputation for the icing of the Club Christmas cake. This year she excelled herself: a sugar paste model of Bunter resting by the side of the cake, which resembled a study "feed", enhanced the delicate work of making the miniature cups and saucers, mince pies, turkey, jelly, etc.

Three very informal games (without any exertion by ourselves!) really made the time fly. During the toast to the Club, our founders and our favourite authors, we were saddened to hear of the death of Douglas Etheridge, one of our newest members from Wilmslow. We had a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

Our Club programme for 1993 is now ready. A very happy New Year from all at Northern Club.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our December meeting we gathered at the Trumpington home of our Chairman/Treasurer, Vic Hearn.

After our usual short business meeting, we listened intently as Vic described his infatuation with history, beginning with a fascination for school history which was reinforced by descriptions and illustrations in comics such as Puck. Vic's considerable knowledge of historical events was shown in his accounts of the massive Eastern Front battles of W.W.II (Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk) and his showing a video of the last named battle.

After this the traditional Christmas themes took over: Tony Cowley entertained us with an audio recording of a BBC radio play from the mid-eighties. Roy Whiskin read from Jilly Cooper's Foreword to the 1976 paperback 'Christmas Past', a selection of Victorian festivities as portrayed in their magazines. Keith Hodkinson closed the proceedings after he showed us some trailers for some very successful cinema films from the Forties and Fifties.

ADRIAN PERKINS



"A GOOD BOOK IN A COSY BOOK"

From Chatterbox Annual 1927

Nelson Lee's, o/s, n/s. Union Jacks, Sexton Blake Library, 3rd Series. Girls Cinema, bound volume of 20 issues, Feb. to June 1929. Offers invited, am open to exchanges. K. TOWNSEND, 7 North Close, Willington, Derby, DE65 6EA.

WANTED: NELSON LEE OLD SERIES 1 to 127 incl. Bound volumes preferred. A good price will be offered. Alternatively, if preferred, a part exchange can be negotiated with S.B.L.'s, U.J.'s, MAGNETS, etc. Terry Beenham, 20 Longshots Close, Broomfield, Chelmsford, CMI 5DX.

Grand Christmas Number

THE Schoolgirl

INCORPORATING 'SCHOOLGIRLS OWN' N° 587 VOL 19 WEEK ENDING DEC. 26th 1936 EVERY SATURDAY

2^d



Christmas Dinner
at Mistletoe
Manor

A happy moment in this
week's fine complete Cliff
House Christmas story

Editor's Note: Cliff House did not appear in our Christmas issue, so we are remedying this now by using this wonderfully Christmassy *Schoolgirl* cover.

KEEPING THE FLAME BURNING!

by Ian Scales

As I did not live during the time when papers such as the MAGNET and GEM were regularly available, I am grateful to Howard Baker, the Local Library and my father for providing me with the means of reading these stories. I was only ten when my father brought a copy of "The Schemer of the Remove" home for me to read and from that time I was hooked.

I feel it's a shame that many people today, especially children, are rarely given the opportunity to read these old papers, despite the fact that the Howard Baker reprints have been available for some time. I must also admit that at times I have found it a bit frustrating when adults have asked me about my hobby and have then given me patronizing smiles through ignorance, really, when I have explained. Fortunately, I have lent some copies to friends who have admitted that they thoroughly enjoyed them. I remember, when I worked in London, lending a copy of the "Courtsfield Cracksman" to a young lady who was initially only mildly interested. By the time I left London she had got through at least three of the volumes!

As a training teacher I have been interested in using the stories of Charles Hamilton as a way of helping some children in their reading. This started when a friend of mine gave me the usual patronizing grin when I mentioned the stories by Frank Richards. He said that he had never liked those sort of stories and then proceeded to give his own son his childhood collection of books. I was interested to see what they were and was amused when I noticed that some of them were written by a certain Mr. Martin Clifford! On the strength of that I lent the boy "The Toff of St. Jim's" and gave, as a Christmas present, the Museum Press reprint, "The Boy Without a Name". It is interesting that the boy's parents had been concerned about his lack of interest in reading. One night, after I had given him "The Boy Without a Name", they had come home late to find him reading the Highcliffe stories at 2.00 a.m.!

I recently visited a local Junior school where a friend had been studying the 1930s with her class. I had offered to do a lesson in which I could show the children what their counterparts had been reading during the thirties. I paid a quick visit to Flip's Pages where I had remembered seeing, on a previous visit, some individual facsimile copies of the MAGNET and GEM. I bought enough for each child to look at one each - I obviously didn't want to use my original copies. I did, however, put on a display of various originals with some NELSON LEES, HOLIDAY ANNUALS and so on. I used extracts from the "Billy Bunter gets the Boot" audio tape which they seemed to enjoy. Only two of the children had previously heard of Billy Bunter and that had been through seeing the comic strip versions. I also made a

simulation tape of a fictional boy remembering the papers of his childhood (done by my friend's son).

I was actually taken by surprise at the positive reaction the children made to the comics. Many of them, also, were surprised at the amount of text in each copy which a child would read every week. I know at my college the tutors say that unless a book has lots of big pictures and big friendly writing, a child won't read it - nonsense, of course, but there you are. I invited children to make comments about the copies of the papers I had given out and on the spur of the moment offered three of the facsimiles as prizes for the best speakers. One boy said that Frank Richards got the reader straight into the story and that he had already read one of the chapters of the MAGNET in the time I had given him to study it. Many did say that children today would not read them as there were a lot of words. Conversely, some said they would like to read more. I gave the most enthusiastic children the prizes and left some copies with the class teacher to borrow. As a result I have been asked to give a talk to another class next year.

On a fanciful note, I strongly believe that if, say, the Cardew series from the GEM or the Highcliffe stories could be turned into animation on television they could be extremely popular - judging by the reactions of friends. Even though the Cassells Bunter books have recently been republished, I do not feel that they represent the author's very best work. I would dearly love to see the old MAGNET and GEM stories (as well as others) being made available from ALL "good book shops". Children do still read the Enid Blyton school stories as well as those by such authors as Elinor M. Brent-Dyer. Surely many of us agree that Charles Hamilton was one at the top of his class.

I suppose I want to stress that there are children out there who really do enjoy a cracking good read and Charles Hamilton's stories do also contain messages of positive values which are so desperately needed by the children. Hamilton also sets high standards in his writing and resists the temptation to use simple language. Children can only benefit by reading his stories, as they did in days gone by.

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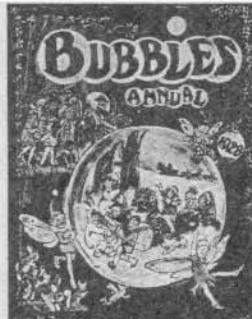


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ALL these Annuals are packed with the jolliest stories, pictures, jokes, puzzles, riddles, games and coloured plates. They are full book size and strongly bound in stout boards with cloth backs and glossy brightly-coloured covers. They are cheaper than the average toy and more durable. Moreover they out-live toys in interest. Each book will give pleasure for many months to come. Remember the names when you go shopping.



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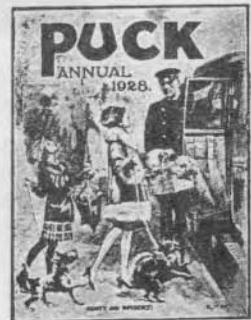
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TALKING OF BIGGLES

by

Jennifer Schofield



WE HAVE PLEASURE IN ANNOUNCING THIS PUBLICATION, TO MARK THE 1993 W.E. JOHNS CENTENARY.

This 28 page booklet contains 8 features by Jennifer Schofield (Piers Williams) which were originally published in the C.D. It also includes a new, introductory article by her, a picture of W.E. Johns, and some *Modern Boy* illustrations. Copies **signed by the author** are available to C.D. readers at the special price of £2 (which includes postage and packet).

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46 Overbury Avenue,
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Thank you for your support last Autumn and for the surprise and pleasure shown at the quality and depth of my stock. This is all very encouraging. I will do my best to keep up standards in 1993.

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ORIGINAL GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUALS

Amazingly I have a stock of 150 plus of this much loved Annual probably the largest stock world wide. Do contact me for gaps in your set of Biggles, Jennings, William, Blyton, Angela Brazil, Percy Westerman, Henty. I have very good stocks by these authors, do send me your wants list

COLIN CREWE SPECIAL WANTS

MAGNETS: 1140, 1360, 1428, 1599, 1600, 1601, 1610, 1647, 1651, 1660.

SCHOOLBOYS OWN LIBRARY -

I must confess to a sad gap in my own collection. Please report spares.

Leave the car in the garage and go by bike in 1993. Happy Days, Colin.

PROCEDURES FOR PAYMENTS:

Only required plus postage when you have received your parcel and are happy with goods, end of month if expecting postal order.

THE 1993 ENID BLYTON DAY

by Norman Wright

There have been Biggles Days, William Days and Eagle Luncheons, but until now there has been no national meeting for collectors of the work of Enid Blyton. That state of affairs will end in 1993!!

I have organised the first Enid Blyton Day to take place on Saturday, 6th March 1993 at the Watersmeet Centre in Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. The venue is spacious and comfortable and will easily accommodate fifty people.

There will be displays of Blyton related material together with a full programme of talks, etc., including - BARBARA STONEY, author of the well known biography of Enid, will talk on "Blyton - the Woman". MARY CADOGAN, renowned for her books on many aspects of children's literature, will talk on an aspect of the Blyton stories. JANET SELLER, whose knowledge of the Blyton books is second to none, will talk on some of her "favourite Blyton's". Yours Truly will present a slide show of some of the vast amount of ephemera related to Blyton that has been available over the years.

There will, of course, be time to chat with other enthusiasts and to sell or swap some of your surplus books. I am even hoping that a few special guests may be able to attend.

Tickets cost £5.00 per person and will include morning coffee and afternoon tea as well as the souvenir programme which, by kind permission of Darrell Waters Ltd., will reprint the scarce Famous Five story, "Well Done Famous Five", previously only available in a scarce Australian booklet given away with 'Weeties' in the 1950s.

Cheques for tickets should be sent, together with a large stamped self addressed envelope, to me at Eastbury Road (cheques made payable to Norman Wright). The envelope will be used to send you your tickets, map and souvenir programme prior to the meeting.

Tickets will **not** be on sale at the door and numbers will be limited to fifty - so send for your tickets now. I look forward to seeing many of you at the Blyton Day in March.

(SEND TO: 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Herts., WD1 4JL).

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Editor: Mary Cadogan, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 2PY.
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