

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 48

No. 565

JANUARY 1994

Starting in this issue: **"THE MINSTREL GIRL!"** A Wonderful New Serial.

No. 108, Vol. 5. Week ending June 4th, 1921.

## The School Friend

Every **1½** Thursday

When on her island in the South Seas, free to do as she willed, Grace Kelwyn was as happy as she could be—

But at Cliff House School, where she is compelled to obey rules and regulations, she is downcast and miserable



**OUT OF HER ELEMENT!**

"Oh, for my island!" sighed Grace Kelwyn. "Oh to be back there with the sun, and the sea! I was happy there! Why can't I be happy at school! Why does everyone try to make me miserable! What have I done to deserve this!"

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# 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

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## Between Ourselves

**A HAPPY NEW  
YEAR...**

Once again I am sending you the traditional, heartfelt New Year greeting. I hope that 1994 will bring Peace, Prosperity and Happiness to every one of you, and to people the world over.

Whatever problems may exist, the celebration of Christmas followed by the re-dedication of starting a New Year are wonderful and perpetual affirmations of all that is good in life, and which is so frequently evident in the spirit of the old books and papers.

You will see that in our first 1994 number I am starting a new feature called FORUM. I hope that this will enable a full - and of course - friendly exchange of views between C.D. readers on subjects that seem so often to invite discussion. It can also be used for the raising and answering of factual questions about the contributors to, and the contents and collecting of, old children's books, papers and comics.

I shall look forward to receiving your letters for the FORUM. I would also like to take this opportunity of thanking those of you who sent to me and my family so many lovely Christmas cards and notes of appreciation about the C.D. I hope you will understand that it is not possible for me to answer all of

these personally: nevertheless I send my warmest thanks to you for writing to me.

May 1994 bring you many blessings.

MARY CADOGAN

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## **THE TERROR THAT WALKS BY NIGHT** by 4 Hamilton Wright

Fear of the dark has afflicted many small children, among them Frank Richards and, a generation later, his 'little' niece. My uncle was the only grown-up really to understand my fear of the dark and it made a bond between us. I used to watch the clock on the bedroom mantelpiece illuminated by the landing light beaming through the half-open doorway. I counted the hours as the hands moved round from half past six to half past nine, hearing jolly noises from downstairs - a meal being eaten, laughing voices and later the piano being played - I felt 'out of it' and longed to be grown-up and down there with the others.

I remember how solicitous Uncle was at bedtime, how he read to me and made up stories to ease my mind and encourage sleep. He would kiss me good night and turn off the bedroom light but leave the landing light turned on and the door half-open... just enough light to lay the 'ghosts' and just enough darkness to summon sleep. Or so he thought. But when his footsteps had faded down the stairs... then the noises started. Creaking and straining sounds came from the furniture... were there footfalls on the landing? Could I dare to close my eyes? No, I had to be on guard against I knew not what - until I fell asleep, worn out with being on the alert, three hours later. Sometimes I tried all the time-honoured ploys of 'Wanta-glassa-water' and 'Please may I have a biscuit?' and my poor tired mother came hurrying up the stairs, wondering whether her little daughter was deliberately fooling her. She believed the landing light kept me awake and tried turning it off after half an hour, only to be greeted by howls and shrieks of fear until it was turned on again.

Uncle was sympathetic and understood how I felt and I gradually realised that he had hated the dark himself when a child. In fact he had devised a game for himself and his siblings to play which effectively protected him from being alone in the dark and from being the first to enter a dark room. As an adult he emphasised the need for light - ostensibly to preserve one's sight from eyestrain - and lights were left on all over his house. One of the many houses he had lived in during his childhood was tall and narrow with an attic and a basement, lit by oil lamps and candles. There were great pools and caves of darkness full of nameless terrors personified as burglars and bogeymen. The Hamilton children devised a game whereby each child, armed with a poker, had to race all the way up to the top floor and rattle the poker in the grate, thereby frightening away the 'burglars'. My mother, the youngest, shivering with fear followed well behind the others, hoping the burglars would have run away by the time she reached the attic. Uncle was the instigator of this game but never the first to enter a dark room. Probably he was using his brothers and sisters to help allay his own fears. But unlike the other children he never quite lost his fear of the dark.

In the 1920s he stayed at my parents' London house for a week before they moved in, in order to supervise some alterations he had devised. The house itself may have had bad 'vibes' because five of the family who lived there formerly had died of the 'Spanish Flu' after the end of the First World War. Without telling my parents Uncle decided to have the house fumigated. When he slept alone there the timbers creaked and groaned for him just as they were to do for me some years later. The eerie sounds terrified him as he lay alone

in the dark. Was there somebody moving about downstairs? Was there someone coming up the stairs? Actually the noises were explained years later by the fact that the temperature dropped at night causing the wood to shrink, creaking and groaning as it did so. Uncle was not at all scientific and would never have thought of this explanation. He never forgot this experience and years later, after my father died, he wrote advising my mother not to sleep in the house alone, inferring it was not safe, although what he was afraid of he didn't specify. He suggested she should have a companion to live with her. The idea did not appeal to mother and was not used.

Mother was quite complacent about living there alone and made light of her brother's fears. But when she died, and I had the job of clearing out the house for sale, wild horses wouldn't have induced me to stay there alone at night with all the creaks and groans and 'silent' footfalls and strange dragging sounds as of knees crawling along the carpet in the early hours. I, too, remembered the noises in the night there when I was a schoolgirl - waking early in the morning too scared to open the door of my room - at the end of a passage, far from everybody else.

While I was tackling the sad task of emptying the house I stayed with a friend and visited every day during daylight hours. Then, thankfully, I locked up and retreated as darkness fell. Perhaps I had a sixth sense - the house was broken into and burgled one night during this period.

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## THE MISSING MANUSCRIPTS

by Gordon Hudson

In the late 1960s and early 1970s Howard Baker published a number of hardback volumes of Sexton Blake stories. Four of these were completely new stories, but the majority were reprints from the 4th and 5th series of the Sexton Blake Library.

The last of these books appeared in 1973, and in 1974 I wrote to Mr. Baker asking if any more would be published. He replied and told me at that stage he had no definite plans for producing any more, but he also kindly gave me a list of manuscripts of new stories which he held. These were:

1. The Doomed Valley by Rex Dolphin
2. The Case of the Missing Diplomat by Dale Ambler
3. Riviera Racket by Peter Saxon
4. A Pinch of Snuff by Peter Saxon
5. The Branded Blonde by Peter Saxon
6. The Odd Affair of Diane Starr by Peter Saxon

I often looked at the Howard Baker Press lists to see if any of these titles were included, but none were. Since Mr. Baker's death I have wondered whether the manuscripts still existed or whether they have been destroyed. If they are still in existence, it would of course be nice to see them published, but this would depend on anyone showing any interest in the stories.

Does anyone have any information about these missing manuscripts?

Just to complete the record, the four original hardbacks which Howard Baker Press published, all of which appeared in 1969, were:

1. Driven to Kill by Rex Dolphin
2. The Miniskirt Murders by Martin Thomas
3. Slaughter in the Sun by Stephen Christie
4. The Case of the Missing Bullion by Peter Saxon.

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## LOST AND FOUND

by Ray Hopkins

Edwy Searles Brooks had a great affection for London like Edgar Wallace who had lived in some of the less salubrious quarters but still liked to bring them into his stories, which made them more colourful with his colloquially speaking characters. In fact, Wallace lived in both Greenwich and Deptford, the latter borough where I was born (no blue plaque yet, however) and lived until we went "up-market" (chuckle) to New Cross, living on the boundary of Brockley. The front of the house in Shardeloes Road was in New Cross and the side abutting onto Vulcan Road was in Brockley.

No. 178.

THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. THREE-HALFPENCE.  
(INCORPORATING THE "BOYS' REALM.")



## THE BOY FROM BERMONDSEY

A Story of School Life and Detective Adventure at St. Frank's, introducing NELSON LEE and NIPPER and the BOYS OF ST. FRANK'S.

By the Author of "The Closing of the Net," "The Redemption of the Serpent," and many other Yarns.

(THE STORY RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

While I was reading Margaret Lane's biography of Wallace I came across an address in Tanners Hill, Deptford, which caused me to take the less than ten minutes walk from my own abode to view where the great man lived. Sadly, the site was covered by an ugly tier of council flats, quite seven or eight stories high, long balconies running from one side of

each floor to the other. However, I was more fortunate in discovering a close-by address in Brockley for E.S.B. I found the original building was still there, a large, two-story house now turned into a Labour Social Club, and located on the convergence of Foxberry Road with Brockley Road. This brings me to another area of South London through which my wandering footsteps carried me and where I found still standing the house, 52 Frean Street, Bermondsey, where had lived another well-known Londoner, the amiable Tommy Steele, he of the generous grin and cheerful mien.

E.S.B.'s Bermondsey lad also came into fame and fortune, fame from becoming a regular feature player, as it were, in the St. Frank's saga and fortune when ... but you'll have to wait until further along in this article, and then I may have guessed wrong. But, we'll see.

Like the poor but ladylike Betty Barton who, upon arrival at Morcove School, discovered herself flung into a den of inconsiderate, wealthy bullies, so does the genteel Jack Mason similarly find himself when he is confronted by the ill-mannered Fullwood and Co. at the gates of St. Frank's (NL OS 178, 1918) who had expected a dreadful sounding bargee and were faced by a quietly-spoken, polite boy from south of the river in one of the less select boroughs. Jack Mason, whose carpenter father is dead, had left Milton Road LCC School about a year before, when he was 14. Reginald Pitt rescues him by a ruse from the unmerciful bullying of Fullwood and Co., Mason not wishing to becoming involved in a fight before he's had a chance to meet his Headmaster.



Fullwood and Co. blocked the entrance completely and deliberately.  
 "There's no hurry, is there, kid?" the bully began smoothly. —(See p. 5.)

Pitt invites Mason to share his own study (Ancient House Remove Study E). In the Second Edition (1971) of Bob Blythe's E.S.B. Bibliography they are shown as occupants of West House Remove Study O but I know nothing of their changing houses as I don't have the relevant stories. A chance for someone more knowledgeable to write a follow-up article! But Nipper is worried that Pitt's influence on his new studymate may not be altogether good. Tregellis-West refers to Mason as "a splendid example of an upright British boy" and suggests that his good influence may help to keep Pitt, who occasionally slips into boulderish bad habits, on the straight and narrow.

The Remove is puzzled as to how a boy of Mason's background is able to attend St. Frank's College. Nelson Lee is aware that the boy has been recommended to the governors by Sir Crawford Grey. The Bibliography listing of characters who appear in the St. Frank's stories shoes that Sir Crawford first appeared in NL OS 718. However, a perusal of this issue does not reveal any person of this name.

Not included in this listing at all is Mr. David Strong an elderly visitor to Mason, who had met him previously by saving the man from being run over by a motor-bus in Piccadilly Circus. The strange thing is that Nelson Lee had observed this gentleman entering the train

at Bannington, well dressed and prosperous looking, whereas, upon arrival at Bellton, this same gentleman had changed into distinctly shabby clothes. Curiouser and curiouser, as someone once remarked!

Can we then assume at this point in the story that Mr. Strong is really Sir Crawford Grey in disguise and that he doesn't know this brave Jack Mason is really his son, presumably long-lost, and is just being kind to Jack for saving his life? But why the mysterious change of clothes? Sir Crawford in the bibliography mentioned above is identified as "Jack Grey's Father", therefore the poor lad from Bermondsey who enters St. Frank's as Jack Mason is, in reality, Jack Grey and, of course, he is shown under that name in the bibliography as occupying Study O in the West House with Reginald Pitt. No doubt this transformation is achieved and the mystery solved in NL OS 185 entitled "Jack Mason's Luck".

It would appear that this series is yet another reworking of the familiar "Missing Heir" romances. That's as far as I can go because NL OS 718 is the only story in this series that I possess. May I kid myself that I have performed a rare (hah!) piece of detective work?

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### OLD REMEMBERED JOYS

by Margery Woods

Once again it is past, the most joyous festival of the Calendar. The last carol has been sung, Auld Lang Syne is just an echo, the Crib and its much loved little figures have been packed away for another year and the tree, denuded of its glitter and lights, languishes forlornly in the garden, although its needles will continue to surface at subsequent cleaning onslaughts induced by spring fever. The Pantomime is but a memory --- Oh yes it is! Oh no it isn't! --- and the dustbin overflows with the last sad remnants of the great feast, the dead marines (empties!), the oddly smelling bits the birds were too full to tidy up, and the tawdry gilded tatters that so recently enfolded those exciting, intriguing and mysteriously shaped parcels arrayed beneath the tree. Now school, or the office, the dreaded reckoning of the bills --- maybe the tax inspector! --- and the rest of winter lie in wait.





But what of those special parcels? Some of them, alas, the uninspired, the disappointing, the frankly useless, from donors who must remain for ever nameless have doubtless already been consigned to the plastic carrier in the broom cupboard destined for the next Bring and Buy, or even some other unfortunate recipient next Christmas. Hopefully, these were in the smallest minority, leaving that special hoard stashed under the bed or wherever to be gloated over, maybe boasted about at school. One of the most joyously welcomed gifts would be THE GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL, or SCHOOLGIRL'S OWN ANNUAL, or one of the sister annuals. Or PLAYBOX, or PUCK if one was younger, or perhaps TIGER TIM'S very special annual, or MRS. HIPPO'S or THE BRUIN BOYS' annuals. All of these wonderful books shared one special feature, those glorious colours and superbly designed covers, just the sight of which could warm the heart and induce a bright rekindling of Christmas joy. Even if the nights were still too dark for outdoor play activities after school there were all those puzzles to solve, jokes and riddles to try out on chums, competitions to enter, pictures to paint, and various arcane experiments to carry out behind closed doors. (There were no health warnings in those days regarding the methods of making your own atomic bomb with a tube of cardboard, a length of fuse wire, a battery and a touch of gunpowder!)

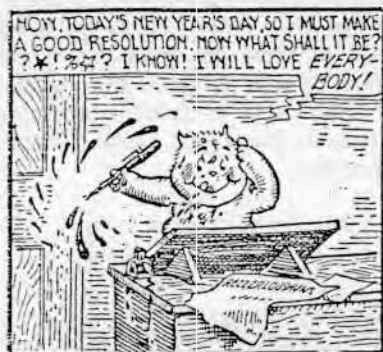
Rupert's Winter Sports



Then there were the annuals belonging to JESTER, BUTTERFLY, SPARKLER, CHIPS, CRACKERS and many more, within the pages of which one could renew acquaintance with Constable Cuddlecook; Gus Grit, the Ancient Brit; Chuckles and Chatter the Clowns, Happy Harry and Sister Sue, and many more. Of the boys' story-papers CHAMPION ANNUAL was a feast of reading. Besides the exciting stories of adventure by favourite authors there were well written features on sport and exploring. At random, the 1931 CHAMPION ANNUAL covered Motorbike Acrobats, Flying Adventure, Whale chasing in the Arctic, The Foreign Legion, and Magic Unmasked, among many others.

But the great Amalgamated Press were not the only purveyors of Christmas specials to youth. O.U.P. issued a long list of good quality annuals. The Big Books, for girls, boys and children, The Oxford series, and the Great Books. Warnes, Blackies and Collins published a wide range of annuals, and the leading nationals of the Press also put out an annual based on each newspaper's particular children's favourite. In the forefront of these were the inimitable Pip, Squeak and Wilfred of the Daily Mirror, and Teddy Tail of the Daily Mail. The Daily Sketch and Sunday Herald featured a perhaps slightly lesser known character, Uncle Oojah, in a beautifully produced book with colour plates by leading artists, a book that owed not a little of its style to the earlier years of Playbox.

If you were a child in the early thirties you may have been lucky enough to receive one of the DAILY EXPRESS CHILDREN'S ANNUALS. Similar in presentation to the well known BOOKANO series published by Strand Publications, and edited by their S. Louis Giraud, they contained some five or six wonderful pop-up models of great intricacy, some of which worked as one partly opened and closed the book. There were probably only five of them issued before DAILY EXPRESS BOYS AND GIRLS BOOK OF THE YEAR took over, and they are now greatly sought after by the collectors of Rupert Bear, for these annuals contained some of Mary Tourtel's work and the first annual contained a pop-up model of Rupert. Sadly, the Rupert cult has forced up the prices of these books to very high levels.



## New Year Resolutions.

If you lived north of Watford, you may have got a very appealing and enjoyable stocking filler on Christmas morning: THE GLOOPS CHRISTMAS COMIC. This was an annual compilation of the comic strips featuring the fat white cat who lived with twins Belinda and Burford, Grandpa, and Emma, the family's long suffering maid of all work. Gloops was seldom out of trouble or mischief and catlike he enjoyed a rummage in dustbins and a night on the tiles with his moggy mates, dispatching enemies, when he was not involved in his anthropomorphic spells with the family. He was a great favourite with

Yorkshire readers of the SHEFFIELD STAR, and farther north on Tyneside in Uncle Nick's children's corner in the NEWCASTLE EVENING CHRONICLE. Gloops may have been syndicated to other provincial papers in the Kemsley chain. His original catchword was 'THMILE!' but this was changed to 'Smile', probably in case small children could not cope with the lisp. He had his own club, The Gloopers, who wore the round blue badge with its famous smiling cat. One look at Gloops and you began to smile, and the nightly picture strip soon chased away any lingering blues from school.

Fashions in reading, as in all things, change with the years, and perhaps each age looks back on childhood and in the rosy glow of nostalgia believes its own particular favourites were the best of all time. Perhaps. Would you swap Rupert, or William, or Tiger Tim, or the immortal Greyfriars boys for a computer game of Teenage Ninja Mutant Turtles in a sewer in full vibrant technicolor...?

Happy 1994 with all your youthful favourites.

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## FORUM

### For the Exchange of Readers' Views

**Darrell Swift writes:** I was almost breathless when I read in the October C.D. of all the proposed events planned to celebrate the Elinor M. Brent-Dyer centenary. Clarissa Cridland's effervescent enthusiasm certainly comes through so I congratulate her and all her chums who are obviously determined to make it a most successful occasion.

I was a little surprised however, to hear that HarperCollins are to produce a paperback facsimile of the first Chalet School title. I do not consider a paperback reprint of an original hardback title as being a facsimile in the true sense of the word - even allowing for the fact that certain wording has to be altered and a reference made to the fact it is a reprint.

**Clarissa Cridland replies:** When HarperCollins first mentioned to me that they were thinking of doing a facsimile of *The School At The Chalet*, I did say that I thought that this should be a paperback and not a hardback.

As I'm sure CD readers will recall, we at Macmillan (where in my working life I am children's Rights Director) published a paperback 'facsimile' of *Just William* to mark the centenary of Richmal Crompton's birth in 1990. From a collector's point of view this was a horror - the cover was not even the original - but as a commercial venture it was a huge success and we have sold around 70,000 copies to date. Our normal edition with the modern cover has never been out of print and sells to those who want to buy the *William* titles in a series: the facsimile sells to those who, in the main, do not buy the other titles but who remember *William* from their childhood.

When I advised HarperCollins I could not say that members of the Friends of the Chalet School and other fans would buy a proper facsimile and neither could I say that the trade would support such an edition. I could, though, predict that a paperback 'facsimile' would be a success. HarperCollins are not publishing the Chalet Books for love and it would not be sensible to encourage them to do anything which does not have a guaranteed commercial success. The main aim, after all, is to make sure that they continue to keep the Chalet Books in print.

**Colin Cole comments:** I refer to Mark Taha's comments in CD No. 561 for September 1993, page 19, under "Good Captaincy, Decent Chaps", etc.

The part of the article I was particularly interested in referred to the post-war Skilton/Cassells hardbacks dealing with Greyfriars stories, mostly written by Hamilton.

I have received a letter from an impeccable source that Mr. G. Samways has denied completing the last half of No. 34 and the last four post-war hardbacks. In fact, all Greyfriars stories written by Mr. Samways were those before the 1930s, none afterwards.

I agree that Peter Hazeldene did "fill in" for the Remove soccer team in positions other than goalkeeper but, in nine out of 10 stories he is shown as a stand-in for Field (Squiff).

With regard to Mark's suggestion that Wharton should have continued as a rebel after the 1924/25 series in the Magnet, I disagree with this, as I think would most of the Magnet readers at the time. Wharton was obviously a born leader, a very honest and decent chap but, like most people, he had a flaw in character. At times he was very touchy and proud. This flaw led to trials and tribulations for Harry. The flaw surfaced occasionally but showed what a marvellous and unusual character Hamilton had created - so unlike other junior leaders, e.g. Tom Merry and Jimmy Silver.

A permanent friendship between Wharton and Vernon-Smith (another great character) would have placed Tom Redwing in a difficult position.

Wharton appeared much more interesting by having these occasional outbreaks of rebellion rather than being a permanent "black sheep". I am confident that most students of Hamilton and Greyfriars would agree with my contention. I think the Famous Five were an interesting combination. Apart from Wharton, there was the likeable, hearty Cherry, the wise Hurree Singh (Inky), peacemaker Nugent and dogged Johnny Bull full of common sense. Johnny did rather grate with his "I told you so", but together with the others he helped to make up a varied and interesting Company.

I look forward to hearing other C.D. readers' views on this matter.

**Peter Mahony writes:** This name 'Clavering' cropped up several times in Hamilton's writings:

- 1) Clavering College - Tom Merry's original school (*Gems* 3,5,7,9 Old Series).
- 2) Reggie Clavering - Tom Merry's 'Double' (*Gems* 323-5, 1524-26).
- 3) Sidney Clavering and his 'dissipated' uncle (*Magnet* 204).
- 4) Leonard Clavering and Tom Redwing (*Magnets* 518-522).

Does any reader know of other instances?

Hamilton's source could have been "Laurence Clavering" by A.E.W. Mason (the "Four Feathers" author) published in 1897. In that story there is a "Sir Reginald Wingate", Governor of the Sudan. Mason was also a member of the "Whitefriars" Club. Two more connections to ponder.

Quelch - Could Henry Samuel's surname have been derived from "Quiller-Couch", the legendary 'Q'? Was Sir Arthur similar to Henry in character? Certainly, their academic prowess is unchallenged. There was, also, a cricket umpire of Edwardian times named J. Quelch - the origin of the "just beast"? Any comments anyone?

**Simon Garrett writes:** Whilst reading the auto-biography of the medical missionary Wilfred Grenfell (prompted by fond memories of the 1952 strip-cartoon version in Eagle) I noticed the following description of Dr. Temple, headmaster of Rugby 1857-69: "The head was a beast, but he was always a just beast."

No prizes for naming an even more distinguished schoolmaster who fitted this description.

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## SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE AUTHORS

**This month: A Tribute to RONALD FLEMING**

by Dennis L. Bird

Of all the Amalgamated Press's writers of stories for schoolgirls, Ronald Fleming was one of the most durable and dramatically effective. Born in the early years of this century, he wrote his first story for the Schoolgirls' Own Library in 1926 ("The Secret of Study 11"), and his last in 1963 ("Sign of the Hawk").

Like all the A.P. men, he wrote under several pseudonyms, two of them using his own initials and one including his own surname: Rhoda Fleming. That was the pen-name he used in 1930 in the short-lived "School Days" weekly, and in other pre-war papers, and as late as 1951 ("The Girl Ghost of Falcon Castle") in the "Girls' Crystal".

It was as "Renee Frazer" that he began and ended his career. At first he wrote the obligatory school stories, but between 1927 and 1933 he created a light-hearted character called "Sunny" who adventured in the South Seas and elsewhere. As "Jean Emerson" he wrote of "A Spoilt Girl's Folly" in the "Schoolgirls' Own" in 1934. And then, in October 1935, the A.P. launched the paper with which he was to be principally associated ever after - the "Girls' Crystal". Less concerned with boarding schools than the other papers were, it was aimed partly at the older girl who had left school and taken a job.

Ronald Fleming was invited to contribute a weekly detective story to the new paper, and adventurously he decided to have a male hero - tall, debonair, perhaps a little like Dorothy L. Sayers' famous Lord Peter Wimsey. Thus Noel Raymond was born, and was to survive until 1951.



Illustration by J. Pariss? (*Girls' Crystal*, June 18, 1938)

Stewart Pride (later editor of the revived "School Friend") tells me that the pseudonym "Peter Langley" was chosen "because the main character was a man. Presumably it was felt that a woman could not write about a male detective." Noel Raymond developed over the years from the foppish man-about-town of 1935 into the steely, resolute investigator of the war years, and finally to the rather cosy "Nunky" of the 1950s, when he had taken his young niece June Gaynor into partnership.

Fleming himself matured as a writer. Apart from a somewhat frivolous series about "The Madcap Form Mistress" (written as "Jean Vernon" for the "G.C." in 1936), he produced a succession of strongly dramatic serials as "Renee Frazer". Usually there was an intriguing mystery involved ("The Girl Who Searched in Secret", 1937; "The Boy Who Kept Paddy Guessing", 1939).

It is this element of surprise which marks Fleming out from almost all his contemporaries. In the weekly Noel Raymond stories, the villain was generally the unexpected person. Several suspects would be introduced, and then - in the best tradition of the classic 1930s detective novel - the culprit was the least likely. Mostly it was a man; on the rare occasions when there was a feminine miscreant, Fleming would give some discreet signal during the story - he would refer to her as a "young woman" instead of "girl", or would consistently use her full name instead of just "Jean" or "Sylvia".

It is perhaps not too difficult in a short story of some 6,000 words to keep up the suspense and uncertainty about the villain's identity. It is much harder to sustain the mystery in a serial of some 15 episodes (say, 90,000 words). "Renee Frazer" did this brilliantly in "The Spectre Marred Their Friendship" ("G.C.", 1938), in which Jean Stirling is befriended by two young men, one of whom is her secret enemy. The solution is cunningly withheld until almost the last instalment.

What was Ronald Fleming like as a man? Mrs. Constance M. White - herself a writer of girls' fiction - knew him during the war, in 1944. She sought his help over one of her stories. "Trying to show me how I could improve it, he walked up and down the room, waving his hands and arms like an actor. Tall," (he was over 6 ft) "with crinkly brown hair and piercing eyes, he could well have been one."

Stewart Pride corroborates this. He writes: "Ronnie came regularly to the office to plot about four instalments at a time. He lived the stuff, sometimes prowling round the room, acting out different characters."

To heighten the drama of the narratives, good illustrations were essential. The A.P. could call on a number of talented artists, most of them anonymous. The first Noel Raymond illustrator was not a success; his characters were too hysterical, in unnatural poses. But in 1937 the ideal artist appeared (his name may have been J. Pariss). He drew for two "Renee Frazer" serials ("The Boy Who Mystified Marion" and "Her Cavalier of the Caves"), and then in January 1938 he took over Noel Raymond, and - with a few interruptions - drew him in masterly fashion until November 1948.

"Renee Frazer" also needed other illustrators, and for some of those stories ("The Girl Who Searched in Secret", 1937; "The Boy Who Threatened Her Holiday Quest", 1940, and others) the task was entrusted to C. Percival, who had very successfully depicted the girl detective Valerie Drew over a number of years.



Illustrated by J. Pariss? (*Girls' Crystal* 1937)

In 1942 there was something of a crisis for A.P.: Ronald Fleming, one of their most important authors, was called up for service in the Royal Air Force. The solution, so far as the Noel Raymond stories were concerned, was for past episodes to be re-written in the office, with changed names and places but identical plots. Later, from December 1942, the weekly stories were straight reprints from the past. Even these stopped in March 1944, and there was no more of Noel until April 1945, when "Peter Langley" returned.

Noel and June continued sporadically until 1951. Two years before their demise, Fleming had experimented with another male protagonist, "Colin Forrest - That Amazing New Master." This took the author back to the school stories of his beginnings, but he was never at his best there. Soon he was again ranging wider, to Mexico, to the Rocky Mountains. His last three stories, specially written for the Schoolgirls' Own Library in 1962 & 1963, went back into history to the French Revolution - "Mam'selle X", "Mam'selle Pimpernel", and "Sign of the Hawk".

Ronald Fleming wrote nearly 500 Noel Raymond stories as "Peter Langley", and more than 60 serials under other names. He also wrote for some of the boys' papers, and in the 1960s made the difficult transition from the written word to picture stories when the "Girls' Crystal" became a strip-cartoon

paper in March 1953. Altogether he must have made a memorable impact on young minds over a period of 40 years, for his tales were well plotted



The Opening Chapters of a Fine New Story by

RENEE FRAZER

Illustrated by C. Percival (*Girls' Crystal Serials* 1939-40)

(admittedly, far-fetched at times), with realistic characters and that essential narrative momentum which continually makes the reader ask "I wonder what happens next?" Therein lies the secret of all good fiction.

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## REMEMBERING THE RAINBOW

by Brian Doyle

### Conclusion

In 1922, Italia Conti, who had been so closely associated with every production of "Where the Rainbow Ends", at last realised her dream of buying the production rights to the play. Charles Hawtrey had just died, so she acted quickly, and soon she was to see those magic words 'Italia Conti Presents' on the posters. She arranged for the play to be presented regularly from then on (December, 1922) at the Holborn Empire, London, and there it stayed, every Christmas season, for the next 18 years - the 'home' of "Where the Rainbow Ends" - until that lovely old theatre was destroyed by a German bomb in 1940.

During this long period at Holborn, Miss Conti regularly invited several hundreds of the poorest and most needy children in London, and the Provinces, to see "Rainbow" free of any charges; for most it was their very first taste of the theatre. A wonderful gesture that St. George would have been proud of!

During those 18 seasons at Holborn, several child and teenage performers destined for stardom of varying magnitudes made their stage bows, or at least, very early appearances, in "Rainbow".

Jack Hawkins made his stage debut at the Holborn Empire in the Christmas, 1923, production of "Where the Rainbow Ends", as an Elf, also understudying the leading boy's role of Crispian, for four weeks, 6 performances a week (matinees only) for 30/- (£1.50) a



week. He must have made a big impression on Miss Conti, for the following year, 1924, when he was only 17, Hawkins played both St. George and M. Bertrand (for, we presume a little more than 30/- a week!). In later years, this great British star said, obviously stirred by painful memories "I remember that St. George's armour weighed at least a ton!".

In 1928, the young Charles Hawtrey (yes, the one we recall from the old Will Hay comedies and the later 'Carry On' films) stepped into the great Noel Coward's shoes to play William, the spiteful pageboy.

Richard Todd was a pupil at the Italia Conti stage school during 1936-37, and appeared in "Rainbow" for two successive years, 1937 and 1938, when he was 17 and 18 years old. In the first, he played 'The Slacker' and in the second he was the Sea Witch ('flying' on a Kirby wire!). Around this period, 'Dick Todd', as he was then billed, appeared as a schoolboy 'extra' in two Will Hay comedy films, "Boys Will Be Boys" and "Good Morning, Boys", which, he recalls, were 'great fun'.

Another actor later to become well-known, especially on the London stage (as well as on TV and in occasional films) was Jack Watling, who 'worked his way up through the ranks', as it were, playing a Frog in 1935, William, the pageboy in 1937, and (at 16!) St. George himself in 1939, and then again in 1940.

A memorable highlight for Italia Conti and her cast was in January, 1933, when Her Majesty the Queen (now the Queen Mother, of course) and little Princess Elizabeth (now the Queen) visited Holborn Empire to see "Where the Rainbow Ends".

It was also around this time, 1931-32, that Italia Conti founded the Rainbow League. Her idea was to gather all the boys and girls of England and the Empire (the British, not the Holborn one!) under the banner of St. George. They would have Rainbow Badges and Rainbow Membership Cards and their subscriptions would go towards endowing Rainbow cots and beds in children's hospitals. 'A League of Hope for the Youth of the British Empire' was how she described it. Noel Coward was its first President and the League eventually had over 20,000 young members. And the whole thing worked! Several cots and beds were endowed in children's hospitals and wards, as promised and, in December, 1932, the Bishop of London blessed a new cot, presented by Italia Conti on behalf of the Rainbow League, at (appropriately) St. George's Hospital, London, and endowed in the memory of Mrs. Clifford Mills (co-author of "Rainbow") who had died some time earlier.

Italia Conti was determined not to be left out of things up there on the stage, and played the role of Vera Carey, the children's 'lost' mother, during most of the years at Holborn. She was by then over 50 and Mrs. Carey was meant to be 'young and beautiful', but a little thing like that didn't worry the indefatigable Italia; she applied the make-up and considered that no one would be able to tell from the front... Her sister, Bianca Murray, who had looked after costumes and wardrobe for many years, also appeared in the play from time to time; she was married to actor Bertram Murray, who was a long-standing regular in the role of wicked Uncle Joseph.

Other notable adult performers at Holborn included Jean Anderson as Aunt Matilda (1932); Bruce Belfrage, later to be a famous BBC Radio announcer (he was the one who went on calmly reading the news when a German bomb fell on Broadcasting House during World War II), played St. George in 1928; Sir Basil Bartlett, Bt., (actor-playwright and later BBC executive, and married to Mary Malcolm, famed BBC TV announcer in the 1950s and daughter of Lily Langtry!) was St. George in 1934 (a baronet as well as a Saint!).

Doing her best to beat the German blitz, Miss Conti rallied back after the destruction of her beloved Holborn Empire, and produced "Rainbow" for the Christmas season, 1940, at London's New Theatre (now the Albery), when St. George was again Jack Watling, by

now an elderly 17. Then came the first break in the run of London productions of "Rainbow" since 1917 and there were no productions in 1941 or 1942 (though Miss Conti personally took the play 'on the road' to the provinces through the war years - but I have no record of these tours). The "Rainbow" rose again, however, like a phoenix from the ashes, at the Winter Garden Theatre, London, in time for Christmas 1943. The young 'star of the future, in this production was Michael Medwin, who played 'The Slacker' (sharing the role with one Patric Napper for some reason).

But the "Rainbow" faded again, in London anyway, and there were no productions in the capital between 1944-46. Italia Conti died on February 8th, 1946, at the age of 72, leaving the ownership of "Rainbow" to her sister, Bianca. At the Memorial Service at St. Paul's, Covent Garden, Dame Sybil Thorndike read a passage from "Rainbow" and Roger Quilter's music from the show was played.

Italia Conti wanted "Rainbow" to continue and her sister, Bianca, and her husband Bertram Murray, produced the play at the Kilburn Empire, in North London, for Christmas, 1947. Bertram, perhaps exhausted by his production chores, handed the role of nasty Uncle Joseph to none other than Clive Dunn (nice, bumbling old Corporal Jones of TV's "Dad's Army" years later). In the 1948 production at London's Cambridge Theatre, no fewer than three lovely girls destined for wider fame appeared. Rosamund was Jean Bayless, who starred in "The Sound of Music" in the West End in the early-1960s; Adele Leigh, later to become a well-known operatic singer and prima donna of the famous Vienna Volksoper, was Betty Blunders; and the Spirit of the Lake was danced by Nanette Newman, later a well-known actress and wife of film writer-director Bryan Forbes.

In 1949 a new and climactic era dawned for "Where the Rainbow Ends", when world-famous ballet star, (and ex-Conti school pupil) Anton Dolin, played St. George at the Comedy Theatre, London. The following year, Dolin bought the production rights to "Rainbow" and put it on every year from then on, also producing and appearing as St. George, until the end of "Rainbow" in the late-1950s. Dolin (1904-1983) had been a huge star, dancing leading roles with the famed Diaghilev Company at 20, and forming a famous dancing partnership with Markova in the 1930s. His real name was Patrick Healy-Kay and he was the first British male dancer and choreographer to win world acclaim. Now he had taken "Rainbow" under his distinguished wing, as it were, and the play took on a new lease of life.

He once wrote of this period: "Clad in silver armour and a golden wig, I would fight the Dragon with all my strength, remaining alone on the stage at curtain fall, while I invited the children from the audience to come and shake my hand and swear their allegiance to England. How the children loved it, and it didn't do the grown-ups any harm either."

For that new landmark production at Christmas, 1950, at London's huge Stoll Theatre, Dolin had all the sets and costumes (which had become somewhat tatty and worn over the years) re-designed by well-known artist/illustrator Philip Gough, and enlarged the cast by the inclusion of the Festival Ballet Company's (which he had co-founded) Corps de Ballet. This production was produced by distinguished actor-director Henry Kendall (who had been a notable St. George back in 1918). In the cast were one-time child actor (and soon to be a leading ballet star) John Gilpin, as 'The Slacker', Virginia Vernon, later a well-known actress and musical comedy star, as Rosamund, John (later Johnny) Briggs (now famous as 'Mike Baldwin' in TV's "Coronation Street") as Cubby the lion cub, and Edmund Purdom as the Dragon King; Purdom later starred in many Hollywood films, including "The Student Prince" (in which Mario Lanza supplied his singing voice!). He also starred in the swashbuckling TV series "Sword of Freedom". A good man with a sword, his spectacular

battle, as the Dragon King, with Anton Dolin's virile St. George was one of the most memorable.

1951 - 'Festival of Britain' year - saw "Where the Rainbow Ends" in all its colours at the Winter Garden Theatre again, when popular young film and stage actor Donald Houston donned the armour of St. George. Jim Blunders was played by David Gregory, whom readers may remember as 'Tinker' to William Franklyn's detective in the BBC Radio series "Sexton Blake" in 1967. For the first time since the war, this production toured several provincial cities throughout Britain after its Christmas season in London.

The rest of the 1950s "Rainbow" history, I'll sum up with brief details and a few of the famous names who appeared (Anton Dolin was St. George in all the productions)...

1952: Prince's Theatre (now the Shaftesbury). 1953: Stoll Theatre. 1954: Royal Festival Hall. With Claude Hulbert as Uncle Joseph and Alicia Markova (Dolin's old friend and ballet-partner from years gone by, and one of the world's great ballerinas) as the Spirit of the Lake. 1955: Royal Festival Hall. With Alfred Marks as Uncle Joseph, Valentine Dyal as the Dragon King, Tony Adams (later of the long-running TV series "Crossroads") as 'The Slacker', and famous ballerina Violetta Elvin as the Spirit of the Lake. 1956: London Coliseum. With Claude Hulbert as Uncle Joseph, Frank Finlay as 'Dunks', the Dragon King's Chief Minister, and Alicia Markova as the Spirit of the Lake. 1957: No production. 1958: New Victoria. With Elaine Taylor, subsequently a busy actress-singer-dancer in various London shows and films, notably "Half a Sixpence", and later married to actor Christopher Plummer, as Rosamund, Henry Kendall as Uncle Joseph. Michael Mac Liammoir, the distinguished Irish actor, as the Dragon King, Bunny May, well-known child-actor who starred in the title-role of Blyton's "Noddy in Toyland" in London as 'The Slacker', and Alicia Markova back again as the Spirit of the Lake. This production was jointly directed by Anton Dolin and Henry Kendall, and was the last production of "Rainbow" in London.

There was one last-of-all production of "Rainbow" at the Granada, Sutton, in Surrey, which saw Dolin's swan-song as St. George, and again with Elaine Taylor and Michael Mac Liammoir (who co-produced with Dolin), plus actor-entertainer Billy Milton, rather surprisingly, Uncle Joseph.

Dolin said in his book "Last Words": "... one has to realise the physical limitations imposed by advancing years... eventually... reluctantly but sensibly I decided the show had gone on long enough, and it was time to put a stop to this annual event. Perhaps it was my mother's words which decided me: 'You're getting too old, my dear son, to play St. George'".

And so, after 42 seasons in London, plus that final one at Sutton, and many provincial tours, the "Rainbow" faded and the colours disappeared. But the memories remained...

The most recent production of "Where the Rainbow Ends" that I know of was the revival at the Clwyd Theatre, at Mold, in Wales, at Christmas, 1976. The only review I saw was in 'The Guardian' newspaper and that was so obviously written by an apparently mentally-impaired communist - the kind that wants to have Blyton and William books banned from public libraries because they're too 'middle-class' and feature children whose homes actually have lawns - that I won't even quote from it, so heavily-laden is it with inverted snobbery and ignorance; just a flavour: the reviewer hates the children in it just because their names are Rosamund and Crispian! He also complains because good is represented by St. George (presumably he would have preferred St. David) and because evil is depicted by (Welsh?) dragons (remember that this production was in Wales). The writer obviously dislikes children too; he refers to the four leading youngsters in the play as

'pompous, arrogant, self-important little brats...' So much for 'The Guardian's' impartial and intelligent standards of theatre reviewing in the 1970s...!

The above is on a par with the comment by Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard in their brief entry on "Rainbow" in their "Oxford Companion to Children's Literature" (1984): "...the story is imbued with patriotic fervour bordering on fascism" Pure nonsense, of course - and poor Mr. C. and Ms. Prichard don't even know that the word should be spelt with a capital F, i.e. Fascism.

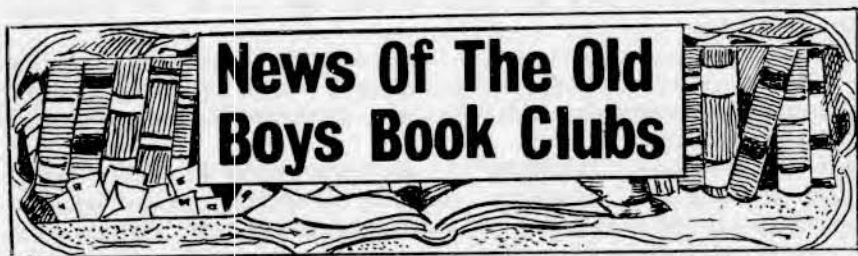
Sadly, critics over the years have tended to dismiss "Rainbow" with a few airy words, such as '...the delightful and moral fairy play has arrived once again - a sure sign that Christmas is upon us...' or ignored it completely, also ignoring the fact that many thousands of families were yet again turning up at the theatre to see the much-loved play. Similarly, practically every history of children's literature totally ignores "Where the Rainbow Ends", even though it was a best-selling and highly-popular children's book, as well as a play. It has ever been the fate of the popular to be passed over by the critics... Though that fine theatre critic J.C. Trewin (my personal favourite over many years) once remarked: "'Where the Rainbow Ends' is 'Peter Pan's' sole runner-up as the most popular annual London children's play at Christmas."

Little did Mrs. Clifford Mills realise just what she was starting when she told a story about a Rainbow to her small sick daughter back in 1911, or when she and her friend Reginald Owen got together to write it down as a play.

As Wordsworth once wrote in a famous poem: "The Rainbow comes and goes..."

This particular "Rainbow" came and now has sadly gone - probably forever...

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## LONDON OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

The November meeting held at the Chingford Horticultural Hall was attended by 20 members. Peter Mahony read two poems; "In Other People's Shoes" by Hamilton and "How Did You Die" possibly by Kipling or Hamilton. Prizes were awarded for the winners of Roger Jenkins' Greyfriars rhyming synonyms quiz and for Alan Pratt's various 20 questions quiz which grew to 25 questions.

Norman Wright spoke about Leslie Charteris and his literary output and read some short passages from his books. Charteris was still writing new adventures 50 years after his first book was published.

SUZANNE HARPER

## NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Sixteen people attended our Christmas party, and as in previous years, the tables were laden with tuck. Certain members did the same justice to the feast as Bunter would have done if he were present!

We had asked members to bring along informal items and they certainly did. We had a surfeit of quizzes (usually all resulting in hilarity). Darrell reported on his recent enjoyable visits to Alex Baker, at his Brighton bookshop, and to Anthony Buckeridge (Vice-President of our Club) and gave the good news that Anthony's health was improving rapidly.

Geoffrey's "Stately Homes of Greyfriars" quiz was won by Keith Atkinson, and Eric Humphreys' quiz by Mark Caldicott. Mark's fiendishly difficult quiz gave Joan, our Chairman, the doubtful distinction of being the winner with only two correct answers out of ten! Joan's nursery rhyme quiz was a popular item. Our next meeting is on January 8th. A very happy New Year to all C.D. readers from all at Northern Club.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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### **Mary Ann's Australians**

#### **The Australian Tour of England - 1909**

In 1909 Monty Noble led the Australians to England for a 5-Test series. England won the first Test by an emphatic 10 wickets but lost the series two to one. However, there was dissent within the Australian camp and during the series England called upon no fewer than 25 players, including one who had yet to appear in the county championship. MacLaren contributed perhaps only confusion as captain and selector and never played for England again. On the county scene five Surrey players fell foul of the police, this led to the dismissal, by Surrey, of the talented J N Crawford. This first full account on the tour sets the matches in context. The *dramatis persona* reads like a Who's Who of the time: Hobbs, Woolley, Hayward, Barnes, Jessop, Fry, Hirst, Rhodes, Warner, Blythe, Trumper, Bardsley, Armstrong, Macartney, Gregory etc.

*Mary Ann's Australians* features a number of photographs taken by the tourists' manager, Frank Laver; we believe this collection has never before been seen in a single volume. Written by Peter Mahony, author of 'Sundry Extras,' this is an informative account of a fascinating summer and is produced to the same high quality of print, reproduction and paper as *Cricket Lore*. It is available direct from Cricket Lore at £12.95 (UK) or £13.95 for overseas orders.

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**Editor's Note:** Readers will be interested to know of this book by our regular contributor, Peter Mahony. It can be ordered from CRICKET LORE, 22 Grazebrook Road, London, N16 0HS.

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**WANTED:** Pre 1916 Marvels. Will pay £2 each, v/good (£1.50 lesser). Please diggemout! DAVE, 0395 275734.

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**PETER HAZELDENE**

The other 'brands' in this series were occasionally guilty of straying into their old evil ways. Even Talbot, the best of the bunch, indulged in the odd lapse into 'crime' - usually to save a schoolmate's bacon. Hazel of Greyfriars made so many descents into the depths that he must be considered the blackest of all Hamilton's sheep. Even Vernon-Smith proved better material for reform and renewal than the utterly hopeless Hazeldene.

To chart Hazel's career episode by episode is a futile operation - because it is basically the same story over and over again. He gambles; he gets into debt; he cannot pay; he is terrified of being exposed; he succumbs to temptation - either to steal or to wangle; he falls further into the mire. Then he seeks to pass on the burden and, having inveigled someone into taking it up, he callously distances himself from the whole unseemly business. The unfortunate 'Samaritan' is usually left facing the music (or footing the bill!).



On the surface, Hazeldene seems pleasant enough. When things go well for him, he is cheerful and good-natured; but when trouble occurs, he shows up badly - very badly. He is entirely self-centred (he would fit well into the "Me" syndrome of the 1990s), caring nothing for the effect of his actions on others. He is unreliable, petulant, sulky, ungrateful, cowardly and dishonourable. When in favour, he likes to 'spread himself'. Offered a place in the Remove XI (which he has long coveted), he promptly adopts the attitude of doing Harry Wharton a favour by condescending to play. He is an unscrupulous, weak-willed scapegrace, with only one redeeming feature - he has a pretty sister.

The Hazeldene saga is also the story of Marjorie. Older than her brother, Marjorie possesses many of the qualities in which Peter is woefully deficient. Often she is burdened with his problems - but not always. Her obvious charms make her popular with Wharton, Bob Cherry, Lord Mauleverer, and even Herbert Vernon-Smith. To their credit, they often take on Hazel's troubles in order to protect Marjorie from distress, shame, humiliation, etc.

To her discredit, she sometimes manipulates them into assisting her brother against their better inclinations. Some of Hamilton's best character-drawing arises from his variations on this scapegrace brother, distressed sister, 'sucker' boy-friend theme. Wharton and Cherry are the chief sufferers, but even a wastrel like Gilbert Tracy (quite late on in the Magnet saga - Autumn 1938) falls into the 'save Hazel to protect Marjorie' trap. Of course, matters always work out in the end. Hazeldene, to his own satisfaction, is rescued; Marjorie is grateful; and the unfortunate Samaritans, having endured a host of narrow squeaks (and often lighter in pocket), make do with a kind smile or a gracious word from Marjorie.

Hazeldene was one of the original members of the Greyfriars Remove. His nickname, 'Vaseline', was probably a pun on his surname. However, his character indicates that he may be one of those 'pretty boys' who pay a lot of attention to their appearance - plenty of hair-oil, wavy locks, dandified dress, etc. As regards looks, the Hazeldene family were well-endowed. It was in character that they were lacking. Apart from Peter's obvious short-comings, and Marjorie's less evident ones, there was the hopelessly effete Uncle, John James, (Magnets 1413-17) who was suspected of embezzlement and went 'on the run'. He was innocent - but he 'couldn't face the police!' Like nephew, like uncle. Peter wouldn't help him - 'he didn't want to be involved'. Marjorie did help - in entirely the wrong way. It took the interference of Grandfather Hazeldene - a ramrod ex-Colonel - to sort them out. It is a pity that Hamilton did not make greater use of this tough old buffer. He might have made a man of his grandson - and taught his grand-daughter that taking on other people's burdens is not the way to help them develop self-reliance. Once or twice, Wharton had tried to tell Marjorie as much - only to come up against compressed lips and quiet sulks. Colonel Hazeldene would have sorted that kind of nonsense, but Hamilton never gave him a second chance.

Hazeldene never had enough money. He resented those with wealth and had a variety of specious reasons for a 'redistribution' of capital. It wasn't fair that an ass like Mauleverer, or a purse-proud cad like Vernon-Smith, or a Jew like Monty Newland should have unlimited funds, while that special person, Peter Hazeldene, was frequently stony. He pinched a 'tenner' which Mauly had left in a Holiday Annual as a book-mark (Magnets 1533-5) and salved his conscience with 'the ass deserves to lose it for being so careless'. Bill Lodgey, who had been dunning Hazel, put a stop to that piece of wickedness by refusing to take the stolen £10. However, the attempts to return it caused more trouble than the theft had. Marjorie, for once, had to become directly involved in taking over the burden. Disturbed by Dr. Locke in the act of restoring the tenner, she panicked in true Hazeldene fashion and threw the note away. Bob Cherry saw her do it and 'covered' for her. As a result he was landed in all sorts of predicaments with friends and foes because he was too chivalrous to 'drag a girl's name into it'. Smithy sorted it out, but of course dear Peter made no attempt whatever to smooth matters. In his valuable opinion Marjorie had been stupid for bungling the restoration - 'what can you expect of a *girl*?'; Bob was 'a fool to interfere'.

The reforms of this irresponsible character were fleeting. Generally, they lasted only as long as the terror of his experiences remained with Hazel. Once the dust had settled, he would cheerfully break out again and indulge his evil propensities - until retribution loomed. He could be very contrite - but only because his own skin was in danger, never for the correct reasons. Wharton and Cherry, both enamoured with Marjorie, would make allowances for him, but they were rarely rewarded with reformed conduct on Hazel's part.

Johnny Bull and Clara Trevlyn, much tougher characters than Marjorie, gave Hazeldene short shrift. Clara, impatient with Marjorie's mother-hen approach, rarely resisted the temptation to tell Hazel a few home-truths. Consequently, the dear boy, his ego

in need of constant massage, resented her considerably. That resentment did not prevent him from trying to persuade her to lie for him when one of his 'Three Fishers' trips was blamed on Bob Cherry. Clara refused to do that of course, but she owned up to her own part in the affair and got Bob off the hook. Hazeldene's misdemeanours were not revealed - so he escaped his just deserts yet again. Clara considered him a worry to Marjorie, but, like Wharton and Cherry, she put up with his peccadilloes rather than distress her friend. I hope Marjorie appreciated these three - but I wonder!

Johnny Bull and, to a lesser extent, Hurree Singh had little time for Hazeldene. There was an episode in the Muccolini's Circus series when Hazel stole a fiver belonging to Johnny. 'Inky' spotted it and contrived to exchange it for a 'Bank of Elegance' note. Hazeldene backed his fancy with a seedy racing man - and lost. The racing man was the real loser - it's amazing how often Hazel managed to welsh and get away with it. (Great training for adulthood - one can see a glittering career for him, based on honesty and integrity!). Bull was pleased to find his fiver safe, but he had the sense not to enquire too closely into its travels. Of course, the whole thing was kept dark so as 'not to worry Marjorie'.

Another unpleasant aspect of Hazeldene's career was his 'ducks and drakes' attitude to games. He was supposed to be a good goalkeeper. I suspect that he could be flashily brilliant at practice - when he did not have other things on his mind. However, for the vital hurly-burly of school matches a much tougher mentality would have been needed. Bulstrode in the early yarns and 'Squiff' in the later ones must surely have been better choices than the wimpish Hazel. A goal-keeper, in addition to physical courage, needs a cool head. Hazeldene had neither. Vernon-Smith and Skinner often claimed that Hazel got his place in the team because he was Marjorie's brother. In at least one story (Magnet 1533, 'The Bad Hat of the Remove'), Wharton had an uneasy feeling that 'it influenced him a little'. That story dealt with cricket and Hazeldene, anticipating a glorious win on a horse race, excelled himself in the first innings against Highcliffe. Then the race result came through - lost, of course - and he went to pieces, letting the side down and causing Greyfriars to lose. Wharton, normally a level-headed skipper, had a blind spot with Hazel. He was much harder on his best friend, Nugent, who could never be certain of a place in the side. Yet, time and again, he gambled on Hazeldene and was almost always let down. What chaps will do for a pair of blue eyes!

The least-deceived of the Greyfriars clan about Hazeldene's true merits was Herbert Vernon-Smith. In their early days, Smithy enjoyed leading Hazel astray (he didn't need much leading!) just to annoy Wharton & Co. Then the boulder fell under Marjorie's spell and refused to include Hazeldene in his later escapades. Occasionally, he bailed the scapegrace out, but he did not hesitate to taunt him about his failure to repay loans. (Johnny Bull once remarked that Hazel borrowed money on the 'Kathleen Mavourneen system' - 'It may be for years, and it may be for ever.') Smithy was also scornful of Hazel's cowardliness - there is a brilliant chapter in Magnet 1533 where the Boulder, asked for help by the hapless Hazel, trots out some home-truths:

"We fairly had them beaten if we hadn't a rotten weakling and deserter in the team! Ten men playin' the game of their lives, and the whole thing chucked away - because you must back your fancy and haven't grit to stand the racket when the cards go against you! By gad, if I could save you from the sack by liftin' my little finger, I wouldn't lift it! Take what's comin' to you, an' screw up a spot of pluck from somewhere to face the music!"

Of course, Hazel doesn't. He drifts off and steals the £10 he needs to get out of trouble. It's the old, old story which, with this burning brand, never gets better.

There is an apparent anomaly in Hazeldene's failure to reform. With Marjorie's genuine concern and the backing of upright people like Wharton & Co. he should surely



have made some progress. Yet he never did. A closer examination of the circumstances shows that there is no anomaly at all. Hazeldene resented his helpers. Unlike Talbot and Lumley with Tom Merry; De Courcy with Courtenay; Levison with his brother; Mornington with Erroll, Hazeldene never had a good angel who cared for him as a person. Marjorie always held a 'big sister' complex for him. He was probably jealous of her because she was older, more highly thought of and, horror of horrors, a mere girl! Hazel also knew that the Famous Five took an interest in him for Marjorie's sake - not for his. Smithy usually had an axe to grind - and was so openly scornful that Hazeldene had no regard for him at all. When it comes down to it, the poor blighter lacked a real friend - except for his long-suffering sister, who was, after all, family. Consequently, he had no incentive to reform - there was no one he wanted to please - except himself.

From Hazel's viewpoint, he really had it made. His many scrapes frightened him, but he invariably found himself extricated by the bunch of 'do-gooders' enlisted by his well-meaning but indulgent sister. Therefore, he saw no reason to change his ways - someone would always pick up the tab. (There are benefit-wanglers who milk our social security system in much the same way. Nobody *really* loves me: therefore I'm entitled to exploit the system!) Whoever grew up and married Marjorie (Cherry, Wharton, Smithy) would have acquired Hazel too, as a permanent charge on the family exchequer. Any explosion against the ne'er do well would have incurred Marjorie's reproachful glances, etc. - and the marriage would have been rocky as a result.

The negative traits of the Hazeldene family, though less obvious, were present in Marjorie. Asking Harry - or Bob - or ? - to help Hazel was a form of passing the burden; more subtle than her brother's blatant thrusting of problems on others, but present all the same. Her quiet 'Oh Claras!' and 'Harrys!' were less annoying than Hazel's petulant outbursts, but they had a deterrent effect on genuine friends who wanted to give Hazel a deserved 'come-uppance'. Marjorie's husband would have had to stick to his guns to prevent Hazel's troubles ruining the household. Wharton may have had the 'bottle' for it; I doubt if Bob Cherry would.

All in all, the Hazeldene saga was the least successful of Hamilton's burning brand themes in terms of true reform. As a fascinating study of the dilemmas of stronger characters faced with an incorrigible weak one, it is almost unsurpassed.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**FOR SALE:** Greyfriars Book Club Editions, volume 5, Tom Merry's Schooldays, comprising the first 15 issues of the Gem 1 to 15. Mint with slipcase. £35 o.n.o. Volume 6, Paul Dallas at Greyfriars 997-1004. Mint 325 plus p&p. PETER PEATFIELD, 41 Waterdell, Leighton Buzzard, Beds. LU7 8PH. Tel: (0525) 379550.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**FOR SALE:** C.D. 1964-83 £6 year. Captain Vol. 19 (Wodehouse). Frank Richards autobiography, Chums 1921, Scout 1922. Offers for these. S.B.L. 2nd, 3rd and P.B. DCs 40s, 50s, 60s. Champion 1950. Modern Boy. Details on request. LEEs o/s £1.50, n/s £1. A. MATHESON, 12 Langwell Crescent, Wick, Caithness, Scotland, KW1 4JP.

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

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**ARTHUR EDWARDS (London):** In SPCD number 561, September 1993 both Ted Baldock and Lawrence Price criticised the speech attributed to Greyfriar's characters in the recent BBC Radio 2 series, 'The Billy Bunter Stories'. Ted made reference to a 'Public School Accent'. I suggest that there was more than a public school accent, there was/is, a public school language. Who other than a public school boy or girl would refer to their parents as pater and mater, not father and mother, not dad and mum, nor pa and ma.

That made me think along lines irrelevant to the hobby. The starting point being that if we all spoke public school English, would Harry Champion have sung: 'Have you any surplus ferrous metal'? I then compiled a short list of other popular songs of yesteryear translated into that form of English. Would any of the following have caught on:-

My esteemed pater would not purchase a pedigree hound for me.

My spouse indicated that I should proceed behind a horse drawn vehicle.

I say old chap is that steam locomotive hauling the train destined for Chattanooga.

Our dwelling house is in an excellent condition.

Peter's pater is the proprietor of a confectioners.

Please direct me towards the family mansion.

Let us enter this emporium and partake of a milk-shake.

You are forbidden to act in that manner in this place.

Will William Bailey Esquire kindly return to the ancestral home.

I say old chap, you with the auburn hair, I suggest that you are wrong in the head.

There will be no further aqueous precipitations.

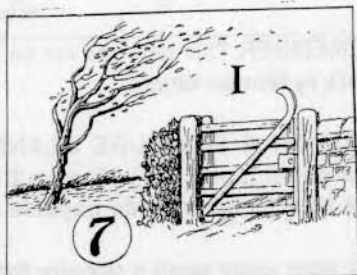
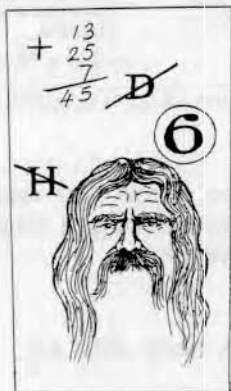
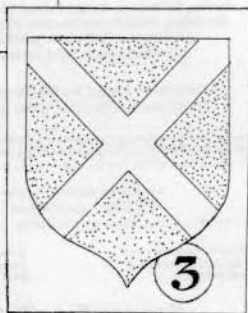
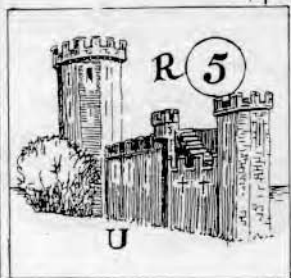
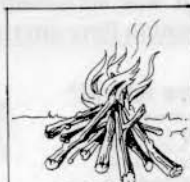
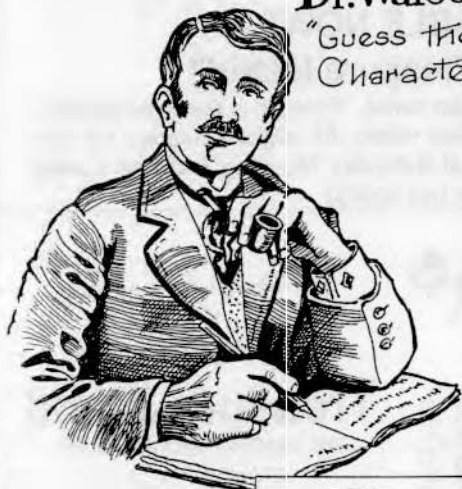
I doubt if any of the lads of Greyfriars or St. Jim's would have become writers of popular songs when they grew up!

**PATRICIA FAHEY (West Bromwich):** I would like to express my appreciation of the 'Brands from the Burning' series by Peter Mahony. It has been an excellent series so far and I can't wait to read the next instalment.

\*\*\*\*\*

# Dr. Watson Says

"Guess These Characters."



Answers next month

- BOB WHITER 1993 -

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Music by Jack Beaver

Adapted and produced by Frank Wells  
Directed by Gerald Landau

Starring Rei Grainer, Richard Palmer, Gillian Harrison,  
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Peter Burton, Iris Russell, Robert Dean,  
John Charlesworth, Rufus Cruikshank.

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Running time approx 120 minutes

VHS PAL MONOCHROME

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FIVE ON A TREASURE ISLAND

Enid Blyton's

## Enid Blyton's Five on a Treasure Island

THE CLASSIC 1957 FILM SERIAL



**REMEMBER** This tape will not be available in any shop. It is distributed solely by Norman Wright.

"FIVE ON A TREASURE ISLAND", the video of the 1957 classic film serial, costs £17.95 plus £1.25 post and packing, a total of £19.20. (Cheques made payable to Norman Wright.)

For your copy send a cheque for £19.20 to :  
Norman Wright, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Herts. WD1 4JL.

## The 1994 Enid Blyton Day.

### Saturday 23rd April 1994.

I am sure that everyone who attended the 1993 Enid Blyton Day will be pleased to hear that plans are well under way for the 1994 Enid Blyton Day. I have once again booked the spacious and comfortable Chess Suite at Watersmeet in Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire a venue that will easily accommodate sixty people. The date to put in your diary is **Saturday 23rd of April 1994.**

The programme planning is well under way and some exciting items are already lined up. Tony Summerfield, who has delved deeply into the bibliographical aspect of Blyton, will give a talk and slide show on the Blyton books published by Brockhampton Press - and there were a lot of them! Tony hopes to include an illustration of the wrapper of every one of the Brockhampton Blyton titles.

Following on from this years slide show on Blyton ephemera I will be looking at the great mass of Noddy ephemera that has appeared over the years - with particular emphasis on those toys, games etc etc produced during the 1950s and 1960s.

Barbara Stoney, whose talk on Blyton the Woman was such a contributing factor to the success of the 1993 Blyton Day, will be with us again.

I am delighted to be able to announce that Gillian Baverstock, Enid Blyton's elder daughter, has agreed to attend and has promised to give us a talk.

A new departure this year will be a 'Forum' for questions. The panel will consist of Barbara Stoney, Pamela Ally (of Darrell Waters Ltd), Janet Seller and myself. So if you have a question - or two on any aspect of Blyton or her work the 1994 Blyton Day will give you the opportunity to get it answered! In order for our panel of experts to be able to answer your questions thoroughly **we will require questions in advance.** So when you send for your tickets please jot down your questions and I will pass them on to the members of the Forum best qualified to answer them.

As with the last Blyton Day there will be displays of rare Blyton ephemera, books, magazines and artwork, plus space for you to bring along rarities from your own collections to show others. There will, of course, be time to chat with other enthusiasts and to sell and swap some of your surplus books.

Tickets cost £6.50 per person and will include morning and afternoon coffee or tea as well as the special souvenir programme which, by kind permission of Darrell Waters Ltd., will reprint the scarce Secret Seven story "**Where are the Secret Seven**", previously only available in a rare Australian booklet given with 'Weeties' in the 1950s.

Cheques for tickets should be sent, **together with a large stamped addressed envelope**, to me at 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Herts, WD1 4JL. (Cheques made payable to Norman Wright) The envelope will be used to send you your ticket, souvenir programme and map, prior to the meeting. Tickets will not be on sale at the door and numbers will be limited to 60. (This year we had almost seventy people wanting to attend) - So send now to avoid disappointment. I look forward to meeting old friends and new faces at the **1994 Enid Blyton Day.**

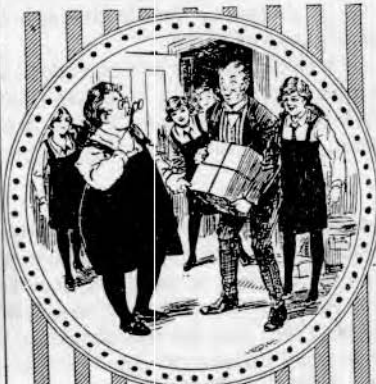


# EPISODES IN BESSIE'S LIFE

Bessie Bunter, The Famous Fat Girl at Cliff House School



It was only a joke, but Bessie  
Quite failed to guess as much.  
When the Fourth elected her "Captain"  
She proceeded to act as such!  
She told her amused "supporters"  
That life would be extra fine;  
But everything got so muddled  
That Bessie was glad to resign!



It happened to Bessie at Christmas-time,  
When proudly we heard her boast  
She'd borrow some armour, and take a  
stick  
And catch the ancestral ghost!  
The "ghost" so elusive and hard to find,  
Was a monkey that wore a white dress;  
She "found" it all right, as our picture  
shows—  
And, my word! how it did affright  
Bess!



A hundred-pound cheque for Bessie  
came,  
"Pay bearer," the wording said,  
And, needless to say, this large amount  
Did jolly well turn her head.  
She bought lorgnettes, and she put on  
airs,  
Large purchases, too, she'd make;  
How sad was Bessie to find the cheque  
Was simply a big mistake!

## BESSIE—Agitation—Acclamation—Accusation

Upon the rugged Cornish coast  
 A great find Bessie made ;  
 Upon this appetising stew  
 She nearly made a raid.  
 And then a girl came into sight—  
 A wild young stowaway !  
 When Bessie saw her she was filled  
 With most complete dismay !



And here's the finest thing she's done  
 (She can at times excel),  
 The youngster doubtless owes her life  
 To luck—and Bess, as well :  
 No help was near ; her panic filled  
 Poor Bessie's heart with dread :  
 So please don't laugh at her this time—  
 We'll give a cheer instead !

Alas ! Poor Bessie's hunger, here,  
 Makes her position black ;  
 She's in another's study just  
 To have a quiet snack.  
 The girl you see upon the left,  
 A Cliff House monitress,  
 Dealt promptly with poor Bessie, and  
 She caused her much distress !



**The Sexton Blake Index**  
**Second Edition**  
Edited by Duncan Harper.

Available from: Duncan Harper, 23 Algers Road, Loughton, Essex IG10 4NG.  
Price: £5.00. plus £1.50. post and packing in the UK.

Few fictional characters have had as many words written about their exploits as Sexton Blake. From his inception in the winter of 1893 until the final original Blake story appeared in 1978 almost two hundred authors have contributed to his legend. It would not be an exaggeration to say that almost every Amalgamated Press weekly worth its salt has, at some time or other, offered its readers a tale of the 'tec. and information on all these stories can be found in this up-dated and revised edition of the *Sexton Blake Index*. This new edition has a number of refinements that make it far more 'user friendly' than its predecessor. The contents page, a feature not found in the original edition, enables the researcher, or reader, to quickly find the publication he or she is seeking; and as over three dozen Blake bearing periodicals are included in the *Index* such a page is very necessary!

In addition to listing the periodicals in which Blake stories featured *The Sexton Blake Index* lists 90% of all the authors who penned them, and only such obscure publications as *Penny Pictorial* are devoid of an author's name after the story title.

Many readers enjoy tales featuring one particular character and by using the *Index* they can quickly find the adventures that featured Waldo or Zenith or any other of the myriad serial villains against whom Blake pitted his wits.

I am pleased to see that in this new edition Duncan Harper has cross referenced all known reprints so that the reader can see at a glance where a story came from - or where it was later reprinted. In the old index this could only be discovered after tedious reference to lists at the end of each section.

In addition to stories, the *Sexton Blake Index* also gives brief listings of Blake stage plays, films, radio and television appearances, comic strips etc. The author index at the back of the volume lists all known pen-names and gives details of the publications in which Blake stories by the various authors appeared.

*The Sexton Blake Index* comprises 142 A4 sized pages packed with information, plus two dozen illustrations taken from various stages in Blake's career. Its durable spiral binding makes it easy to handle and, more importantly when using a book like this for research, ensures that it stays open!

*The Sexton Blake Index* is excellent value and a valuable reference work for any Sexton Blake reader. Duncan Harper has put a great deal of time and effort into bringing out this new edition and it is a publication that deserves full support from every collector of pre-war boys' papers.

(NORMAN WRIGHT)

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