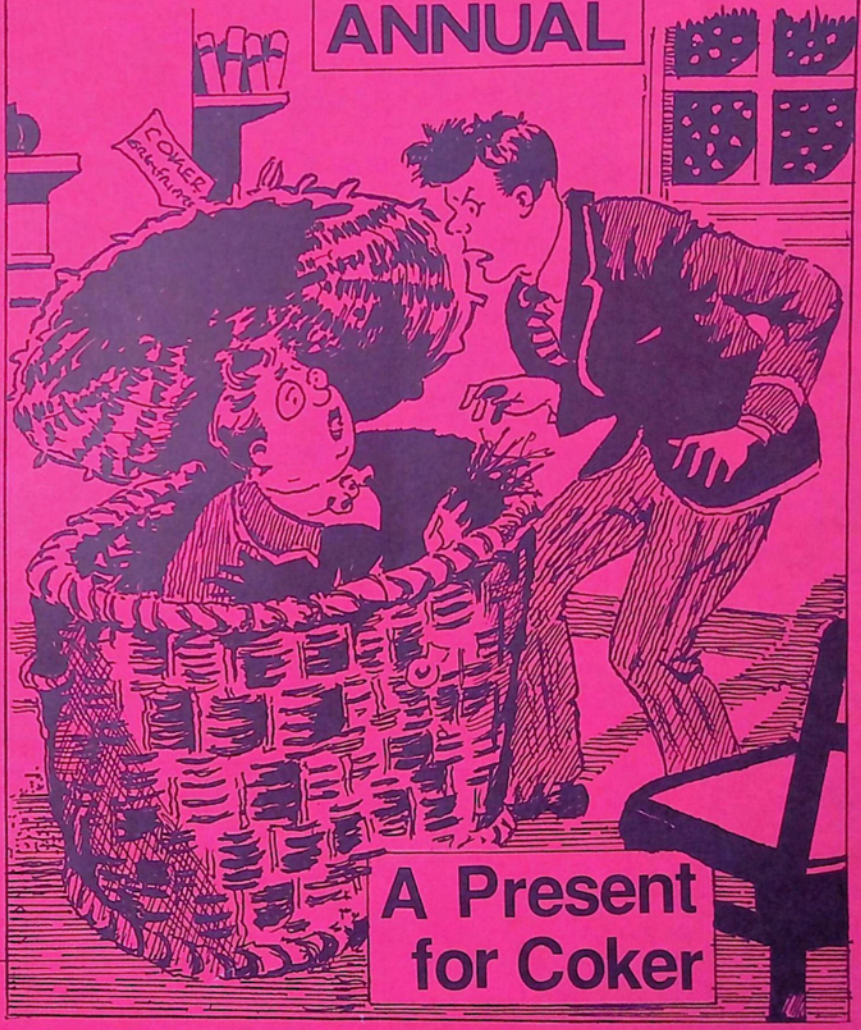
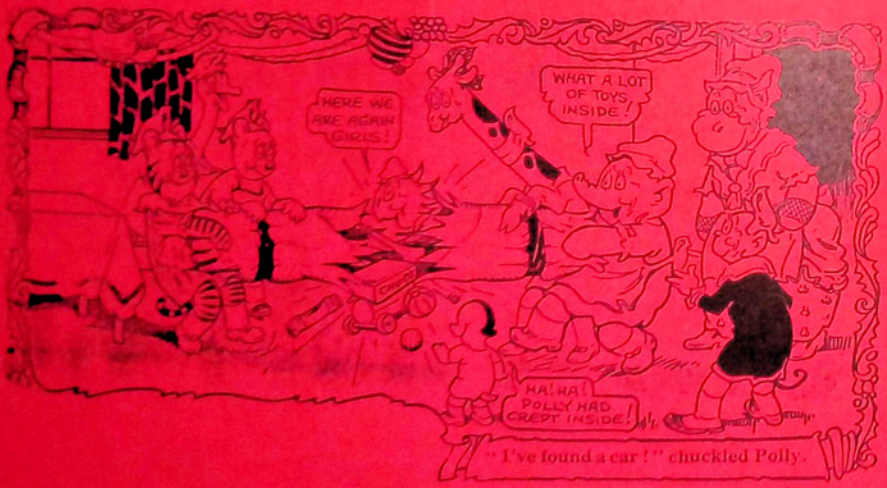
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

1994 1994

ANNUAL



A Present for Coker



"I've found a car!" chuckled Polly.

COLLECTORS DIGEST ANNUAL CHRISTMAS 1994

FORTY EIGHTH YEAR

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FOREWORD FROM THE EDITOR

Once again the Festive Season is almost upon us and I am presenting you with a new Annual. I feel sure you will agree that it is well up to our usual standard, and that it provides lasting satisfaction and delights.

You will see that many of our regular contributors have been busy, as well as several new writers for the C.D. We are particularly grateful to Una Hamilton Wright for letting us include a previously unpublished story by her Uncle, Frank Richards (Charles Hamilton), and also for her article about him around the time when the *Magnet* came into being. As you will see there are several Greyfriars items, while St. Frank's and Sexton Blake are also celebrated.

It seems to me that our contributors have ranged happily and widely across our various hobby fields, from nursery stories and papers, through school and detective tales to Biggles, the Eagle and 'wireless' nostalgia.

Once again our very good friend Henry Webb has drawn the Annual's front cover picture and most of its headings, while Bob Whiter has provided the back cover pictures as well as several on the inside pages.

We are also happy to use another picture from the late Terry Wakefield to convey Christmassy greetings.

As ever, my warm thanks are due to Mandy and Debbie, and all the staff at Quack's Printers for their unfailing courtesy, hard work and ready co-operation.

I am extremely grateful to our contributors and, of course, to all our wonderfully loyal C.D. readers and supporters.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

Mary Cadogan

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As a boy who, one Christmas strained his tonsils with his carol singing, I was no great success. My repertoire was as limited as it was discordant. At first, the only item on my programme was that well-known piece beginning with 'I knock on your knocker, I ring on your bell, I ask for a penny for singing so well'. My enterprise was unproductive, and it seemed that some additional item, should be introduced.

I chose 'Good King Wenceslas' because of its appeal for the rich to succour the poor. Alas, my youthful rendition of that favourite carol proved unpopular. Dire threats which owed nothing to the festive season reached me from behind closed doors, and more than once, a barking dog would convey warnings even more dire. I never progressed beyond 'when the snow lay round about' for my recital would terminate in accelerated departure under threat.

Adding to my discomfiture were the inclement conditions under which these performances were given. Biting winds would find their searching way between the folds of my scarf. Hail and sleet would saturate the rest of my clothing, and the frost that left its delicate tracery on window panes would nip my nose and ears. The true beauty of winter, with the bare branches of the trees and ledges of windows and roofs etched with burden of crystal and white, never seemed to coincide with my carol singing and give it the traditional blessing I felt it deserved. I began to envy the good king and his page the 'benefit' of the snow that 'lay round about'. Wenceslas and attendant seemed better served as they followed the poor man gathering winter fuel.

From small shops to big departmental stores, windows and interiors were festooned with tinsel and multi-coloured baubles. Much use had been made of artificial sprays and cotton wool to substitute for absent frost and snow. Three Father Christmases had been co-opted to induce and encourage potential trade. On reflection, it seemed ironic to have them in triplicate when their varied transport (hurriedly and incompetently disguised as reindeer-drawn sleigh) carried no single trace of snow.

Resolutely, I continued with my carolling. Miss Ironmonger, who owned our corner shop gave me two pence, whether it was for the singing or its ceasing, I have never since discovered. Her generosity earned her repeat performances galore and I suspect it was the fact that my mother was a very good customer indeed which ensured that encores and rewards continued. Kind soul, she must have been impatient for Christmas Day to arrive.

At first a trickle, then a flow that developed into a flood of Christmas cards arrived. They bore pictures of over-fed robins; sprays of holly and mistletoe; and festive wreaths garlanded with ribbons of many colours. There were stage-coaches, their horses speeding the passengers toward distant inn and tavern. There were churches of indefinable periods and there were choirs rejoicing and snow was, it must be said, prominently displayed on all such greetings. But the real thing was still absent, although no doubt somewhere else a latter-day Wenceslas and a suitable attendant were going forth to bring relief to some poor man gathering winter fuel by St. Agnes' fountain in a countryside made more beautiful by snow.

As the interval between Advent and Christmas narrowed, my round of carolling shortened until Miss Ironmonger became the sole recipient of my vocal attentions. The fact that the lady regularly contributed two pence on these occasions was not unconnected with my persistence that she should endure them. Two or three days before Christmas I had barely started the Wenceslas carol when her front door opened and she invited me in. Was she going to tell me off, I wondered. Had the continuous repetition of my one carol,

(I had long since dropped the 'knock on the knocker' piece in acknowledgement of her unfailing generosity), finally galvanised her into some form of reproach? I followed her with uncertain footsteps as she led the way to the flat above the shop. The drawing room was as neat as Miss Ironmonger herself, and just as much a period piece. The furniture would have guaranteed a good price in the auction rooms of today and bore ample evidence of its originator's craft. There was a roaring fire sending cascades of sparks into the dark anonymity of the chimney piece. The lady indicated one of the two armchairs that were placed on either side of the hearth, and I settled myself comfortably, the warmth from the fire embracing me as I did so.

There was no admonishment; no complaint about my singing; instead, a glass of ginger wine placed in my hand and the aroma of hot mince pies as they were placed enticingly before me. As we munched and sipped, I glanced across at Miss Ironmonger. There was a twinkle in her eyes which made her look younger, much younger than her speculated age, which the small fry of the district had placed between ninety and a century. I smiled hesitatingly back. The wine was warming and the pies delicious and, with the first words she uttered, Miss Ironmonger became a friend for life.

"A pity there's been no snow," she observed. "You must miss it. I know I do, because Christmas doesn't seem like Christmas without it. My mouth being full of delightful pastry, I nodded my head in silent agreement as she continued.

"My brother and I used to make the most wonderful snowmen when we were young. It was even greater fun in those days for young girls were not expected to engage in snowball battles. Even today, I've got a persistent wish to build a snowman. If we do get snow, will you promise to come and join me?"

I wondered if she was joking, but the tone of her voice carried more than a trace of pleading that could not be denied. So I nodded my head in agreement.

"Even if it is on Christmas Day?"

"Even if it is on Christmas Day." I assured her. It was an assurance not lightly given. Christmas Day, with or without snow, was a day of heavy social commitment. There were filled stockings to investigate, parcels to undo, a marvellous dinner to help demolish, to say nothing of the boxes of chocolates and crystallised fruits to fill the gap between dinner and tea with its cake topped with marzipan and white icing. Still, it was extremely unlikely that there would be snow on Christmas Day, so I felt that I was on a safe thing. We sealed my acceptance with a final mince pie and glass of ginger wine, and then exchanged our 'good nights'.

My stint of carol-singing was over for the year. Preparation for Christmas included a lot of additional chores for all members of the family. I chopped logs, ran errands, and dusted and polished until both the dirt and polish were transferred to the apron I wore. Even this outburst of energy did not result in a restful sleep from Christmas Eve to Christmas Day morning but, nevertheless, I managed to doze for some of the time.

Having emptied a bulging stocking of its contents and examined the same, I abandoned the miscellany of knick-knacks and discarded wrappings and crossed the room to draw back the curtains. It was not the first streaks of a greyish dawn that greeted me but a panoply of white. The lawn bore its coverlet of snow and the rooftops of the neighbouring houses had surrendered the colour of their red tiles to the shroud of Winter. Flakes were steadily falling on trees and bushes, window ledges and doorways. The appearance of the tower and turret of the local church had been transformed into one that could have graced many a greetings card. Beneath my bedroom window the bird bath intruded its sombre grey upon the scene. I had wished for a scene as traditional as this and, so I realised, had Miss Ironmonger. I realised, too, that I had a promise to keep.

I washed and dressed as quickly as I could, then took a spade from the garden shed. The deep impressions made by my Wellingtons were already being filled as I travelled the short distance to the corner shop. In response to my urgent knocking, a window high above me opened, sending a sudden cascade of snow down upon me. From the open lattice a head, surmounted by mob cap, looked down on me. If Miss Ironmonger regretted her earlier impetuosity there was no sign of it as she greeted me enthusiastically.

"Merry Christmas. Isn't this wonderful. Do your people know that you are up at this hour.' As she spoke the local church struck seven. "Be with you as soon as I've put a face on."

I had started scraping before she had closed her window and, a few moments later, I was indicating to her the promising mound to which every flurry or fall was adding more to our 'building' materials. Miss Ironmonger had made some acknowledgement to the festive occasion by virtue of the clothes in which she was arrayed. A woollen hat of bright red surmounted by a pom-pom of white, and the same two colours were prominent in her jumper and skirt - the hem of which was tucked into a pair of oversize wading boots. She entered into the spirit of things with great gusto, and our snowman gradually took shape until the chime of nine from the church warned me, once again of the passage of time, and we mutually agreed on a halt for breakfast.

My grandparents looked askance at my sudden appearance. I was perspiring freely although my clothes carried ample evidence of falling snow. I fell to and demolished my breakfast with a bland disregard for table manners. The next item on the traditional domestic agenda was dinner, scheduled for one-thirty, after which there would be the grand unwrapping of presents from under the Christmas tree in the lounge. In the interim there seemed plenty of time for joining my partner in the snowman enterprise.

"And where are you off to?" enquired my grandmother in a tone that no loving grandson could ignore.

"I'm off to help Miss Ironmonger build a snowman," I explained, and made good my departure before gran had got over her surprise.

My partner was waiting for me. The twinkle in her eyes had been joined by a rosy colour that was new to her cheeks. Another half an hour and the effigy was at the point of completion. Only a few final touches were necessary. We gave him eyes of lumps of coal, and a red mouth from a fragment of broken roof tile. Miss Ironmonger brought from her flat a rather threadbare scarf and an ancient bowler hat. She was adding an ancient umbrella when we were suddenly interrupted.

"That's a very fine snowman indeed," came the voice of my grandfather as he looked over the railings that bordered Miss Ironmonger's forecourt. I was sure that he had been sent on a mission of reconnaissance to check out my story. If he had, then he had come with an invitation as well.

"We are shortly going to have a mid-morning coffee and wondered if you would join us. Give us the chance of wishing you the compliments of the season, Miss Ironmonger."

"If you can spare me a few moments to tidy up..."

My grandfather nodded. I, too, would have preferred a few more minutes with my partner.

"Quite so. And you can come home with me, young rascal, for you are in a greater need of a tidy up than Miss Ironmonger."

It was a short while later when the four of us sat together in the drawing room with cups of coffee in our hands, and my grandparents were listening to their guest expatiating on the joys of making a snowman with the right person. No mention was made of my carol singing and this omission indicated the gift of tact on the part of my new friend. She laid down her cup on the tale and rose to take her leave.

"Can he see me home, please? It would be nice for us both to take another look at our creation. Who knows? Our snowman might be gone tomorrow."

"Of course he can, and he can carry this for you." Grandma thrust a parcel into my hands as we left the house. Our snowman was a silent witness to our return, but he looked solid enough as we passed him and entered the shop. Upstairs, in the flat, Miss Ironmonger poured us some ginger wine and suggested that we sipped it as we opened our parcels.

My friend gave a squeal of delighted recognition as she revealed a bottle of Yardley's English Lavender Water, a present from the three of us. But I easily out-squealed her, so

to speak, as the gift she had given me emerged from its wrappings... and I read the legend 'THE GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL 1927' across the cover. Of course the book's arrival had been much heralded in recent copies of the Magnet, but I had entertained no great hopes of it coming into my ownership. For one thing, the price of six shillings was beyond the pocket of my grandparents or any other member of my family. I can only hope that my benefactress could understand what joy her present would give for that Christmas and those that lay beyond. As Roger Jenkins was to write in 1971, '1927 was an annual with some endearing qualities'. It certainly held some endearing qualities for me - some of which were additional to those he mentioned and which I fully endorsed.

"You can change the book at the newsagents if you want to," Miss Ironmonger paused in dabbing lavender water on the back of her hands, "but Mr. Soper told me you had been looking at it for the last two months, and since you read a paper called 'THE MAGNET' each week..." She knew from the look on my face that she didn't have to say any more.

I wanted to savour the contents of that wonderful book straight away, in the company of the equally wonderful person who had given it to me, but I knew that Christmas dinner could not wait and there would be questions if I arrived late for an occasion that had taken so much effort to prepare.

Miss Ironmonger had unearthed a camera with a delayed timing mechanism so that we would be able to have a photograph of our friend, the snowman, with one of us on either side. Then it was time for us to part.

"Don't forget to thank your grandparents for the lovely lavender," Miss Ironmonger began.

"Thank you for the lovely book," I replied, standing on tiptoe to give her a grateful peck on the cheek.

Half way down the street, I turned and waved. In the years that were to follow, I was to see more of that dear lady. But it is that Christmas which holds the happiest of memories. If may occur to those of you who have heard me sing that Miss Ironmonger was either hard of hearing or a little eccentric. She was certainly not the former and, as for being eccentric, my answer is that eccentricity of her kind was more likely to be found in the old corner shop than in the supermarkets of today where customers do half of the work and concern for us is only conspicuous by its absence.

I still have a strong preference for the traditional white Christmas; the kind of Christmas depicted in the storypapers of old rather than the slush and sleet we are likely to get. The Greyfriars festive season usually began before the 'vac', and lasted into the New Year.

There are those boisterous gatherings at a study spread after a gruelling soccer fixture. The flurry of flakes on the window-pane as the snow made its ephemeral and transient journey. The scramble for a space on the ottoman by the window, or an upturned box by the door. The succulent smell of the sosses as they sizzle at the fire. The table, with its miscellany of cups, saucers, and plates gathered in from other studies on the Remove corridor. There are the sounds of protest from and indignant Bunter trying to facilitate an entrance, and meeting with emphatic opposition (and a boot belonging to Vernon-Smith). The din is excessive and, before long, will bring a response from Horace James Coker. That architect of a 'short way with fags' will be taken to the staircase and rolled down it where, with either good luck or good timing, he will encounter his form master coming up. Behind closed doors in the Sixth Form passage, Loder, Carne, and Walker are bemoaning a late arrival at the finishing post of a 'dead cert' (more likely to be nearer dead than 'cert'). Across the snow-clad quad, William Gosling draws his easy chair nearer to the fireplace and a dark green bottle on an adjacent table. Over the tuck shop, the family Mimble are looking forward to the evening meal, as the wind outside moans and whistles through the distance cloister ruins.

In his study, Henry Samuel Quelch puts the cover on his typewriter and picks up a cane. William George Bunter has not delivered the imposition awarded in class that morning and, the mountain not having come to Mahomet, Mahomet must needs go to the

mountain. The scenes are set, the actors are ready as the customary drama unfolds. Bunter, who has recently been concerned about where he is to spend the holiday is soon to have other, more painful, matters for his immediate attention.

Will Coker intervene? Will Prout, Hacker, or both, complain? Judging by the expression on Quelch's speaking visage it would be unwise so to do. But fools can be relied upon to walk where angels fear to tread... With a smile on our faces, we turn the page to find out. The outcome is dependent on Quelch and we know that he will never let us down.

The term still has a few days to run. Time in which a fat fraud can devise some grand strategy that will ensure his presence at Hilton Hall, Mauleverer Towers, Wharton Lodge, or whatever.

"I say, you fellows, about the hols," is the signal for more than one junior to depart for places unknown. It has been rumoured that, on such an occasion, a Removite sought extra tuition from Mr. Quelch in order to escape the jammy clutches of the persistent Bunter. Ghosts at cock-crow hardly disappeared as quick as fellows would to dodge Bunter. In desperate efforts to discourage the Falstaff of the Remove, handfuls of snow would be shoved down a fat neck, or fat features would be pushed into convenient heaps of snow.

In utter disregard of any rules to the contrary, patches of ice would be carefully rendered into slides that would speed the unwary on their way. Founder's fountain, with its crystal bracelet of icicles, was hardly a substitute for a snowman in Miss Ironmonger's eyes - or my own. Nevertheless, there was much about winter in the stories of which we did approve. Be the scene of the School itself - with the House, the Chapel and the clock tower - or the broken masonry of the cloister ruins, every buttress and arch clad in its wintry garment. Or be it the terraces and porch of Wharton Lodge that bore their personal burden, the seasonal appetite was always reconciled if the curtains had been drawn excluding the less satisfactory weather outside.

For a few, too few, winters it was a joy to sit by Miss Ironmonger's fireside, reading a story from a Christmas series, or pointing out to her one of the many illustrations that captured the imagination and the heart at Christmas time. If we paused at all, it was to sip the ginger wine or savour a hot mince pie.

The days of my carol singing were over almost as soon as they had begun, as of course, is the sharing of those stories with Miss Ironmonger. Over the years I have shared them with other dear friends. There are times when I think I am alone, but never too sure. Perhaps a glass of ginger wine and a hot mince pie are not so far away as I delve into a much loved Christmas story that has, in common with the carol of old, snow that is deep and crisp and even.

Merry Christmas to all from Nostalgia Limited. If you are not on my mailing list for free catalogue crammed with "goodies" write to:

JACK WILSON

19 DUNBEATH AVENUE, RAINHILL, PRESCOTT, MERSEYSIDE, L35 0QH

* *

Season's Greetings to all Friends. Is anyone interested in exchanging duplicates? I have Nelson Lee's, S.B.L. 3rd series (few 2nd), various other papers.

KEN TOWNSEND

7 NORTH CLOSE, WILLINGTON, DERBY, DE65 6EA. Tel (0283) 703305

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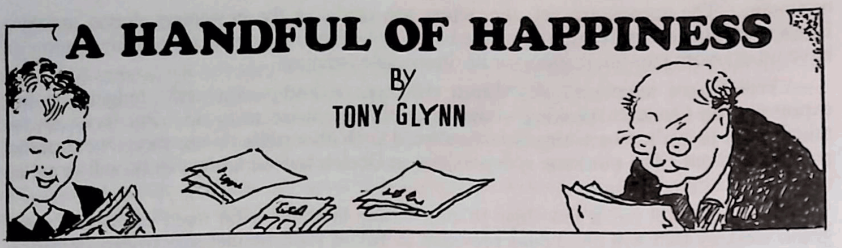


At this time of year, when winter closes in and Christmas is the biggest thing to look forward to before the welcome signs of spring, I often take up a handful of happiness.

Here it is: a few copies of the "Nelson Lee Library" which can take me back to the years 1928 and 1929 as I settle down in the comfort of an armchair. What years they were. At least, I have always believed them to have been wonderful years although I was not born until 1929 was taking its dying gasps.

This belief concerning the excellence of 1928 and 1929 was formed in quite another time, in the year 1942, when we sat out the "middle passage" of the second world war, a dreary time when rations were tight, pleasures were few and even a schoolboy such as myself could feel the heavy boredom of waiting for something decisive to happen to bring about the end of the war. It was then that I lived much of my spare time in my private fantasy version of 1928 and 1929. And that was due to these same numbers of the "NLL". They were, in fact, the keys to that golden and lost era of peace which existed just beyond the horizon of my lifetime; the jazz age of the twenties.

It was in 1942, you see, that I discovered these numbers of the vigorous little school story weekly and I became hooked on St. Frank's and those who dwelt therein. Younger generations have to understand that, in those days, we lived under considerable restrictions. Not the least of them so far as I was concerned was the curtailed supply of reading matter. Our comics and story papers appeared fortnightly instead of weekly, thanks to paper rationing. Indeed, some of the titles had been axed completely, including the "Magnet" and "Gem", both of which I had enjoyed in the last days of their existence. We had no television, of course, though the "wireless" filled a vital role in the hours of relaxation. For me, however, reading was the greatest pleasure and I longed for the variety of reading material which was obtainable before the war.

It was in Syd's emporium, packed out with all manner of second-hand books and magazines, that I found my first numbers of the "NLL" which included the little handful I am writing of. I still remember the thrill of coming across them, of discovering what were obviously schoolboy yarns in those little magazines which had such a great number of pages compared to our skimpy emergency issues of comics and story papers.

They were on sale at a penny a time, half the price which the boys of 1928 and 1929 handed over for them when mint. As was the case whenever I discovered some new treasure in Syd's shop, I bought what I could afford, resolving to return for the rest when funds were healthier, provided some youngster equally desperate for school yarns did not snap them up before me. In that respect I was lucky and I eventually acquired what must have been Syd's whole supply. I suppose there were a dozen or so, every one of which I treasured for a long time.

What pleasures unfolded as I plunged into those pages!

The "NLL" ceased publication in 1933 when I was only three, so I had never heard of it before the discovery in Syd's shop. I had encountered St. Frank's, however. This was through finding a discarded copy of an old "Schoolboys' Own Library" at school. The story did not impress me greatly, probably because it was a reprint of the 1923 caravanning series - not that I knew that at the time. It featured Handforth, of course, but he and his chums were removed from their native heath, so I had not yet entered the gates

of St. Frank's. In due course, that college came to rival even Greyfriars in my affections. I much preferred Handforth to Bunter.

In my freshly discovered "NLL" cache, I found Handforth, Church, McClure, Archie Glenthorne, Irene Manners and the Moor View girls and all the rest. I also discovered that Edwy Searles Brooks, who wrote the yarns, kept up a chatty friendship with his readers in contrast to Frank Richards of the "Magnet" and Martin Clifford of the "Gem". Good as they were in the line of writing school stories, they remained little more than names. Edwy Searles Brooks, however, replied to his readers on a gossipy page headed "Between Ourselves". He answered queries, shared interesting bits of letters with the rest of the readers and wrote about the joys he was preparing for future weeks. Edwy and his readers seemed to be one big and happy family. Small wonder that, in severely restricted 1942, I dreamed of how wonderful it must have been to live in 1928 and 1929 when you could hand over two pence for a brand new "NLL", wallow in Edwy's latest tale then write him a letter to which he would reply from the palatial, book-lined study which, according to the drawing which headed "Between Ourselves", he inhabited.

Even at a remove of 13 and 14 years, it was still possible to wallow in the yarns, no matter what horrors had descended on the world, and wallow I did.

Appropriately enough for this time of year, the first "NLL" I ever read had a glorious wintry theme, and yet another of my earliest discoveries was a Christmas number which I found one of the most enjoyable of all. Let me give you a sampling of my handful of yarns, all from the year 1928.

The first "NLL" I ever read was "The St. Frank's Ice Carnival" (New Series 94), wherein I met Handforth and friends in their St. Frank's surroundings for the first time. After all these years, I still recall how that story lifted me out of wartime England and into an England where there was peace and rollicking good times. It even seemed to make the ice and chills of winter appear attractive.

On the cover, Handforth was shown coming a cropper on ice-skates to the merriment of his peers in the background. Inside, Edwy Searles Brooks got to grips with his tale from the start, showing that deft touch for atmospheric writing. For over a week, he told us, St. Frank's had been in the grip of a hard, sustained frost. There was a steely sky, no sign of a wind and the frost continued day after day. The ice was five or six inches thick and Handforth was smitten by an idea.

"How about an ice carnival?" he suggested.

There was laughter at first, because it was considered a duty to laugh at Handy's ideas. But, slowly, the notion caught on, then the carnival was on, too. It was a glorious twenties affair, with fairy lights twinkling over the frozen River Stowe, skating races and high-jinks on the ice, hilarious spills including a collision between Handy and a cow which had wandered on to the ice. There were musicians as well as Irene and Co., who fox-trotted happily with the St. Frank's boys.

Of course, there were also a mystery and dirty deeds, and there was the incisive, detective mind of Nelson Lee at work.

Cold as the weather might be in that story, I warmed to the whole ethos of St. Frank's. I was at home there from the very beginning and it was clear that Mr. Brooks, writing in that magnificent study so many years before, had the power to take me out of the stringencies of rationed and blacked-out 1942 and drop me into the wonderful world of the spacious and peaceful 1920s.

So, I sped on to the second number in my little cache which, by a happy chance, was the one following that describing the ice carnival. It was "Handforth the Detective" (New Series 95), dating from February 1928. In this tale, the intrepid Edward Oswald Handforth turns his well intentioned but rather ham-handed detecting talents to tackling the mystery of a burglar who is plaguing the school.

Herein, too, the aristocratic Archie Glenthorne comes to the fore. I have always remembered the scene in which the amiable Archie is forced to enter territory wholly alien to him - a pawnshop. Having promised the delightful Marjorie Temple of Moor View

Archie came out of the pawnshop and was on the point of turning into the High Street, when he uttered a gasp. For over on the other side of the road were Handforth & Co., together with Irene Manners and Marjorie. Temple! Had they seen him coming out of the "pop" shop?

Archie's dilemma (from *Handforth the Detective)*

School a fiver towards her fund for the renovation of Bellton Church, Archie finds himself acutely short of cash. This is because a mysterious burglar has snaffled three fivers from him. Hardly the man to let a lady down, particularly when she was Marjorie, for whim he had a great affection, Archie resolved to raise the cash by popping his ticker - that is, pawning his watch.

With considerable discomfort, the swell of the Remove enters a gloomy cubicle in the shop and there discovers a clue which eventually aids the determined Handforth the Detective. Long, long after first reading this tale, I remembered Archie's furtive venturing into the pawnshop and his efforts to dodge Handforth and Co. whom he spots on the other side of the street, chatting to Irene Manners and, horror of horrors, the delectable Marjorie herself. Again, I think the magic was worked by Edwy's gift for atmospheric writing. In a few paragraphs, he convincingly took the reader with Archie into that secretive little compartment, provided of course for the anonymity of those who had recourse to the pledge department. He very ably conveyed Archie's trepidation and his alarm on seeing Handy and friends as he sneaked out.

If I had any grasp of social history, I should have known that the late twenties were not the days of peace and plenty I imagined them to be. There was unemployment and hardship which would get much more severe as the thirties dawned, bringing a world-wide slump. Now, I can see that Edwy Searles Brooks knew the facts of life. He might spin his fiction from that spacious study, but he knew he was writing it for an audience which bought it at two pence a time, and some might find it hard to raise even that modest sum. Quite likely, there were "NLL" devotees who were fully familiar with pawnshops.

Hence, as Archie advances on the pop shop, hoping he is not spotted, we find him writing: "... it must be confessed that Archie held that extraordinary view - so common among certain people - that it was degrading to be seen entering a pawnbroker's shop."

No snobbery with Edwy, you see. He was pointing out that it is no disgrace to be poor. Can it be that, in his days as a struggling author, he had reason to slip in for a quiet consultation with "uncle" himself?

By the time I turned to my third treasured "NLL", I was certainly an ESB fan and this next number confirmed my devotion. It became a great favourite.

It was a the number following the two previously mentioned, though only a few of my little cache ran in sequence. "The Mystery of Edgemoor Manor" (New Series 96) opened up in cracking style with Edwy building up the atmosphere through a device he often used: dirty weather. He was particularly strong on getting his characters into difficulties in a blizzard, fog or rainstorm out of which they blundered into some even more hazardous situation. This time, it was a teeming and unrelenting deluge of rain.

Some happy inspiration led Edwy to equip Edward Oswald with a sturdy little Austin Seven. I suppose I was only one of the many readers who never paused to wonder why Handy, obviously below licence-holding age, was permitted to drive this vehicle. But, no matter, he had the car and it took Handy, Church and McClure into many an adventure.

On this occasion, he was piloting the Austin Seven cautiously through the swirling rain and gusting wind, returning from a picture show with Church, McClure and his young brother, Willy, as passengers.

Disaster came when the car hit a large rock in the road and became stranded with a puncture. By the time the juniors had changed the wheel, it had grown late and they were concerned about turning up at St. Frank's at such an hour. Then, their difficulties were crowned when the car, running again, plunged into a ditch and McClure was thrown out, receiving an arm injury.

Now, it was late indeed and the car had to be abandoned in the ditch. The foursome set out in search of shelter and help for Mac's injury. They were somewhere near the little frequented hamlet of Edgemoor and close to the estate of the Earl of Edgemoor so they decided to find Edgemoor Manor though they knew little about the Earl and his ancestral home.

ESB brought in his masterly Gothic touch when the boys trudged through the storm to find grim iron gates, rusted and broken but locked with forbidding chains, set in a decaying wall. They entered the estate through a gap in the wall and helped McClure towards a silent and forbidding structure with battlements and turrets which loomed before them.

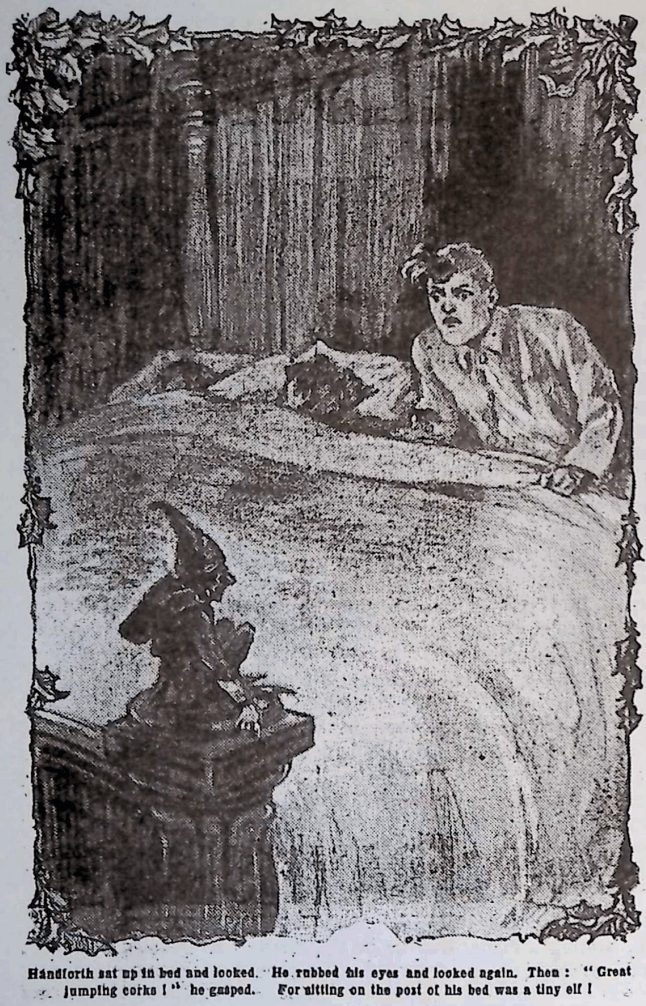
As its great main door, they saw that the place must have been crumbling away for years. They rang the bell, hearing it clang deep inside the manor. Eventually, a slow shuffling of feet came, then a grille in the door opened. The face of a wizened old man appeared.

"We're chaps from St. Frank's. Had a bit of a motor accident down the road and one of us has got an injured arm," explained Handforth. "We want you to let us come in and we'd like to telephone to the school."

The old man reacted in a most unfriendly way. "Go!" he declared with sudden fury. "A trick - a trick! None of ye shall enter these walls! Go and be thankful that ye've come to no harm!"

Ah, yes, Edwy was in the best of form as he got his teeth into the story. This was just the stuff for late night reading, preferably by the light of an electric torch under the bedclothes while the wind of a winter's night moaned outside.

Speaking of the right atmosphere, here's the Christmas issue I mentioned earlier, "The St. Frank's Revels" (New Series 139) which was Edwy's seasonal offering for 1928.



Handforth's night visitor (from *The St. Frank's Revels)*

This story followed that of the previous week, "The Mystery of Raithmere Castle". Even so, it could be read in isolation which was just as well for me since I did not find the initial yarn among my discoveries in Syd's shop.

Handy and Co., with assorted St. Frank's juniors and a party form Moor View were spending Christmas at Raithmere Castle where they encountered, - yes, you've guessed it - ghostly goings on. It was not simply a matter of conventional ghosts, however. This tale had pleasant overtones of pantomime and fairy stories, just as seasonal as the traditional Christmas ghost. It also had Ezra Quirke.

On my first encounter with this story, I had never heard of Ezra Quirke but he turned out to be a young man with an unhealthy obsession with the occult and the St. Frank's juniors knew him from long before. They knew, too, that when Quirke turned up incidents of the spine-chilling kind were sure to follow.

Such proved to be the case, but some of the strange incidents had a certain charm and were hardly the stuff horror comics are made of. The full page illustration on the inner cover caught the mood exactly and made me want to read the story as soon as I saw it. It showed Handy, sitting upright in a huge, old-fashioned bed, staring wide-eyed at the being sitting on the bed-post. It was, of all creatures, a tiny elf, straight out of a book of fairy tales.

Then there was the sumptuous spread of grub which Fatty Little suddenly saw laid out on a groaning table before his very eyes. It turned out to be spectral grub which faded away as Fatty advanced rapidly upon it with appetite very much at the ready.

Dora Manners, sister of Irene, and Winnie Pitt, sister of Reggie of St. Frank's, had an experience which enchanted rather than frightened them but which was nonetheless

strange. Enjoying the clear winter air on a balcony of the castle, they saw a company of little fairies, dancing on the lawn in the moonlight.

As befitted any Christmas tale by Edwy, there were sightings of a more eerie nature. Irene, Mary Summers and Doris Berkeley encountered a witch, hooked nose, conical hat and all, in a corridor and there was a huge ogre which scared the wits out of Ezra Quirke who had been going around warning the other guests of the certainty of occult disasters descending upon them. The plot thickened under Edwy's expert stirring.

Not that any of this dampened the Christmas spirit among the guests. In spite of the odd goings on and mounting mystery which was solved in due course, there was an infectious seasonal atmosphere to the yarn. It was the first of ESB's Christmas tales I ever read, and the sense of enjoyment I felt has remained with me. They really knew how to celebrate Christmas in the dancing twenties, I thought.

So, there are a few of the "NLL" numbers which introduced me to the St. Frank's saga. Today, I have them among a larger collection of the little weekly but when I take them out and consider them, they take me back to the time when I first discovered them. They act as a spring-board from which I can do a double backflip in time: first into the tedium of the wartime era which they helped so much to relieve and second into my personal version of the twenties wherein the whole St. Frank's cast, plus Lord Dorrimore and the Moor View girls rollicked and adventured.

They opened up to me ESB's vigorous and versatile talents. Some might say he challenged belief too often, that he was often too far-fetched. Who cares? This was schoolboy stuff and schoolboy stuff par excellence at that.

My little bundle of "NLL" numbers, found in a dusty book shop, will always be a handful of happiness.

Christmas Greetings to all readers. Many thanks to the Editor and contributors.

R.E. ANDREWS, SALISBURY

* *

Happy Xmas and Good Health in 1995 to friends and hobbyists everywhere.

BILL BRADFORD, EALING

* *

Christmas Greetings to hobby friends from the

BECKS OF LEWES AND POLEGATE

* *

Just after midnight when everything mattered,
Santa appeared looking three parts shattered,
Tripped on the mat,
On his face he fell flat,
Said "Nuts"; the illusion was shattered.

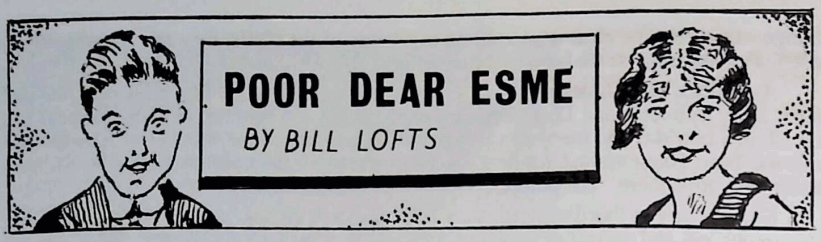
JOHNNY BURSLEM, RUNWELL, WICKFORD, ESSEX

* *

Season's Greetings to all Friars from

ARTHUR EDWARDS

* *



It's some years since I've received any query about this famous school story, the probable reason being that it was first serialised some 70 years ago (in 1924) in The Crusoe Magazine. The novel version of it appeared in the following year, and almost all the old enthusiasts of this extremely unusual story must have now passed on.

I am referring of course to 'Poor Dear Esme', the adventures of a boy who attended a girl's school, and dressed as a girl. The astonishing circumstances were to save his guardian, 'Uncle Dick', from going to prison for fraud. It was a very cleverly thought out plot, tastefully written as well, in what could have been a very tricky area. The theme was considered somewhat daring in those days, where to show an ankle was still considered indecent to some people whose values had been rooted in the staid Victorian era.

Esme Geering, to give him his full name, was brought up by his guardian, 'Uncle Dick', a sporting, loveable widower, who was originally entrusted with a baby girl named 'Esme'. Unfortunately, he lost the girl on a trip to the seaside where, by some incredible fluke, he found another baby - this time a boy - under a whelk stall! The father of the girl had actually gone out to Africa to start a new life, having no real interest of his offspring except to send a monthly allowance for her keep. 'Uncle Dick', too frightened to confess he had lost the little girl, simply called the 'new find' by the same name. As it happened 'Esme' was a boy's or girl's name, so there would be no slip-up in any correspondence between 'Uncle Dick' and Esme's father.

Then suddenly, out of the blue, when Esme was 16 years old, 'Uncle Dick' received a telegram from Africa that the father, in a sudden bout of home-sickness, was coming home to see his daughter. As the allowance had been drawn and spent under false pretences, unless 'Esme' could pretend to be a girl attending a girl's school, thus deceiving the father, ruin, disgrace and the prison gates loomed in front of the guardian.

Esme was in fact a perfectly normal boy of 16, with no especially feminine traits; he had attended the boy's school at Wryvern, where he had shown some prowess at hockey. Nature had, however, cast his features in a girlish mould,

They gathered close to the window and blew little smoke clouds.

and completed the job by giving him a girl's rosy cheeks and sensitive small mouth, which he hated, trying all the time to make it look hard and weather-beaten. His voice also had not yet broken, so, with his fairly long hair and slim figure, he could easily pass off as a girl.

St. Wilfred's girl's school was run privately by the Headmistress, Mrs. Troy - a most brilliant characterisation, rather like the teachers in the Cliff House saga. Other main characters were Christine, the nice girl ho eventually plays a large part in the scene; Caroline Bax, a spiteful piece of work if ever there was one with a spotted face; Cuthbert, the boot-boy, who supplies Esme with his cigarettes and bottles of Bass, as well as being a runner for his flutters on the horses. It had been tactfully explained to the Headmistress that 'Esme' was delicate and almost an invalid. 'She' had to have a room by herself and not sleep in the dormitory with other girls, and also be excused from games and swimming, and almost anything else that would have given Esme's true sex away.

One often wonders what a present day writer would have made of this story. The whole theme was tastefully handled, with no sexual overtones or improper suggestions. There was actually a love incident. A weak foppish bank clerk by the name of Cedric, who was an old boy at Esme's old school, had recognised Esme but concluded that the pupil at St. Wilfred's must be his sister, and fallen in love with him! Never able to resist a joke, Esme passed on love notes to him, via the boot boy, but that is as far as it went.

The Crusoe Magazine was first published in June 1924 in the same format as *The Happy Magazine*, its obvious companion, which had appeared some years earlier. Whilst *Happy Mag.* was a family paper, the *Crusoe*, as its editorial makes plain, was a boy's paper. 'Poor Dear Esme' appeared in the first six issues in rather long instalments till November of that year. This was lavishly illustrated by Thomas Henry, who, of course, was also drawing for the famous William stories, enchancing Richmal Crompton's creations. The general idea was that the sales of *Crusoe* would soon match those of the highly successful *Happy Magazine*.

Unfortunately it did not work like that, as when the serial of Esme had finished they carried on with just single tales of earlier adventures of Esme when he was at Wryvrn. That did not have much impact. It was obviously clear that *Crusoe Magazine* was a failure when after 24 monthly issues the title was changed to *Golden Magazine*, then later still to *Golden West*, which was totally comprised of Western stories. 'Esme' had carried on in single stories even with the change of titles - but these finished with the August 1927 issue, with the paper finally dying in December of that year.

The chances of finding the first six issues of *Crusoe Magazine* are, I would say, pretty remote, but George Newnes, the publishers, did bring out a book version of Esme's masquerade in October 1925, a cheap edition priced at half-a-crown. Unfortunately it did not contain the delightful Thomas Henry illustrations though they might have been on the dust jacket, which I have never seen on any copy so far. It also seems to be the only edition for this attractive story, because of which the book is extremely scarce. The late Derek Adley took many many years to obtain a copy, and then only due to the generosity of a mutual friend.

Whether the creator of 'Poor Dear Esme' was a bit disgruntled at the treatment by the publisher is not known, but in the Amalgamated Press boys' paper *Modern Boy*, dated January 25th 1930, a new serial featuring Esme appeared entitled 'The Escapades of Esme', in which he was now several years older and at St. Chad's College of Oxford University.

The editor, Charles Boff, was certainly lavish with his description of the new serial...

> *"Esme is at once the most famous, the most charming, and the most amusing of all the fiction characters of that great writers A.M. Burrage.*
>
> *It is impossible not to be thrilled and fascinated by Esme... Esme ought to be a national character - and your editor believes will be a character known and chuckled over and admired from Lands End to John o' groats.*

Unfortunately this serial was illustrated not by Thomas Henry, but by one of the staff members of the paper.

It ran from No. 103 (Jan. 25th Vol. 4) to No. 115 (April 19th 1930 Vol. 5). The theme was simply that Esme had been caught breaking bounds (and certainly not for the first time!) and was to be expelled. Maybe he was now getting more mature, and felt pangs of sorrow in having to go home to his guardian with his education far from complete. Rescue came when he was able to disguise himself as a governess in close co-operation with a friend. The theme of a boy in dressing up as a girl was simply too good to miss. Also featured was Cuthbert the ex-boot boy, now much older and promoted to manservant. It must also be said that neither he nor most others in the plot knew that Esme was anyone but a girl when he had left St. Wilfred's in a great hurry, for a future tale.

The author of 'Poor Dear Esme', Alfred McLelland Burrage, came from the famous family of boys' writers. Originally from Norwich they had been prominent on the scene from Victorian days almost till the First World War. Like his father, Esme's creator had started writing stories when still at school. By the time he was seventeen, he had become a full-time professional writer for a very large number of periodicals including some of high class quality such as the *Strand, Pearson's* and *Tatler*. He had had experience in penning school tales, as in the early days he had written the famous stories of 'Tufty' for James Henderson Ltd. Indeed, even when I entered the hobby in 1950, these were very much collected, as proved by advertisements.

He also wrote a couple of Sexton Blake stories in the thirties for Detective Weekly under the name of 'Frank Lelland'. I well remember showing a copy of one of them to the former editor of 'Union Jack' when the name was unknown. H.W. Twyman could not recall it, except to say that the author was certainly a cut above many writers he had on his books. A.M. Burrage's main output, however, was the short story of which he penned many hundreds, all of top class quality. Curiously, not all that long ago, I met the son of A.M. Burrage, a former officer in the Royal Navy, when I was engaged for a time in trying to solve a mystery in the family history. On the subject of 'Poor Dear Esme' the only thing he could recall was that 'Esme' was based loosely on the theme of Brandon Thomas's 1896 famous farce 'Charlie's Aunt' which was filmed at least half a dozen times. I well recall the Arthur Askey and Jack Benny versions.

Born at Hillingdon, Middlesex, 1st July 1989, A.M. Burrage was the son of Alfred Sherrington Burrage who specialised in the Robin Hood stories. He died at Hendon, Middlesex, on 18th December 1956, aged 67.

Some years ago now I met the author Fred Gordon Cook, who amongst many other things had produced a number of substitute Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories just after the First World War. He had for a time been on the staff of George Newnes Ltd. where the editorial head of fiction was a Reeves Shaw. Shaw controlled *The Happy Magazine*, and its policy. Cook remembers Shaw telling him it was a pity that both Richmal Crompton's William stories and Esme's exploits were similar in being 'light-heartedadventures of schoolboys', and that was why 'Esme' never appeared in *Happy Magazine*. They were in a sense rivals.

This is true to some extent of course, though the loveable William had adventures (or misadventures!) around the town of Hadley, that were limitless to write about. William was only about eleven, with no traits such as Esme's with his smoking/ drinking/gambling (which he had obviously picked up from his guardian). There was also a limit to the theme of dressing up as a female - with the non-girls school tales just ordinary.

Esme was really a decent sort, whom one could not help liking

despite his bad traits. He was slightly in the Jimmy Silver mould, and not as hard as Vernon-Smith. But then 'Smithy' was always one of the most popular boys in votes by readers of *The Magnet*. 'Poor Dear Esme' is what Burrage's hero might have been nicknamed at St. Wilfred's but his adventures there were very rich with fun and laughter.

Can you help please. Wanted: "Blake", 2nd series, number 569, 695, 707. Cash or exchanges.

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* *

ROGER JENKINS sends chairman's greetings to all London O.B.B.C. members and library borrowers. May 1995 witness prosperity to every reader.

* *

Season's Greetings to all.

PETER McCALL, WOKINGHAM

* *

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Seasonal Greetings to all hobby friends.

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* *

Season's Greetings to all followers of Greyfriars, to all Collectors' Digest readers, and particularly to Mary Cadogan our esteemed editor. Here's to our magazine.

A pleasure to look forward to,
A joy to read,
Memories to cherish,
Something to treasure.
Long may it continue!

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Seasons greetings to all hobby friends all over the world

* *

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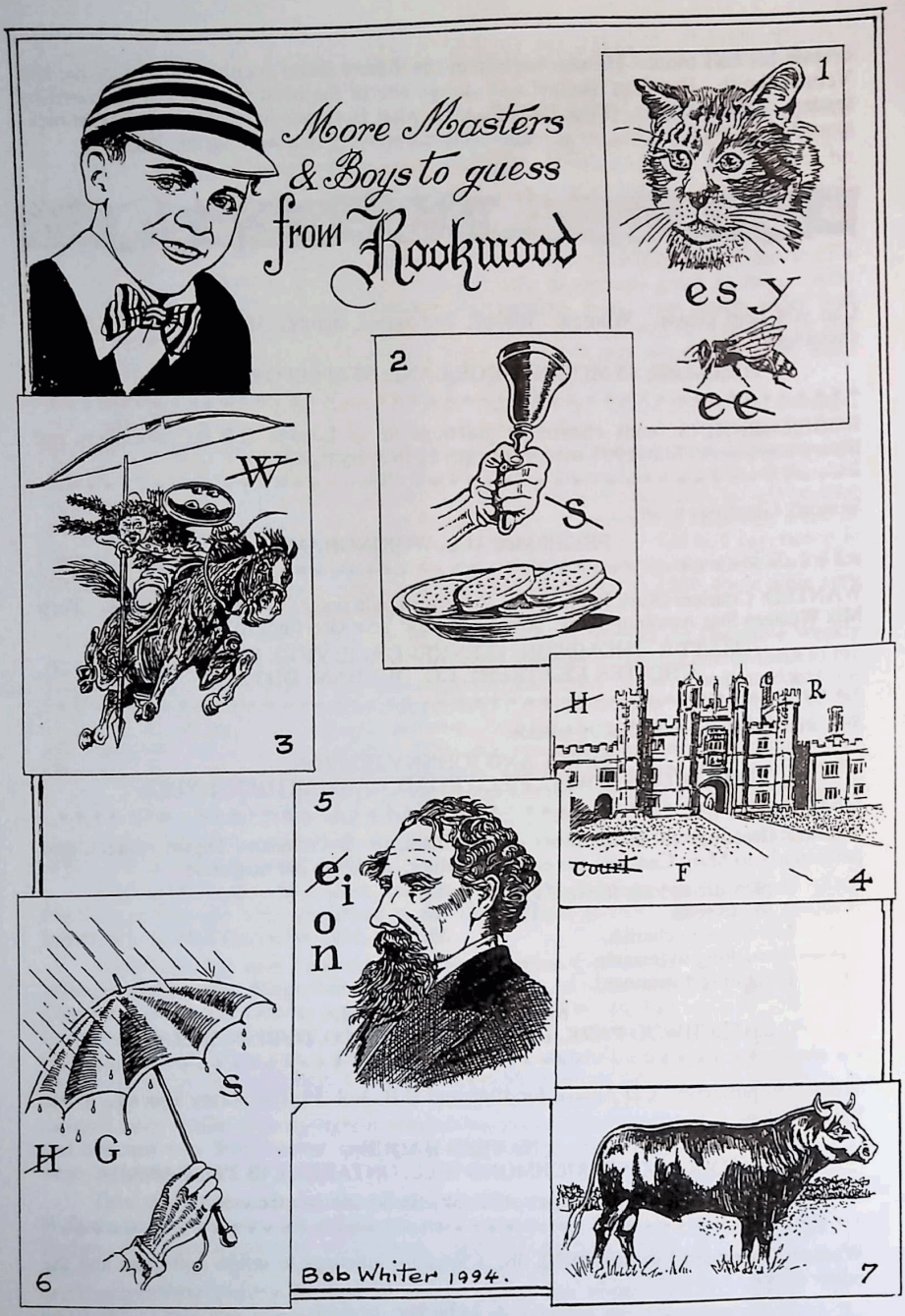


ANSWERS ON PAGE 88

POST WAR PROSPERITY AND THE "EAGLE" INFLUENCE

BY NORMAN WRIGHT

By the late 1940s a young public were ready and eager for something new. Ration books and utility furniture were still an everyday part of life but there was a new wave of optimism in the air. The war was over and the future looked promising. It was the dawn of an age when science was seen as offering the answers to most of the world's problems and this was to be reflected in the comics of the new decade. The multitude of 'one off' and short run comics that had proliferated during the decade had, to some extent, filled the gap left when severe wartime paper shortages had killed off all but the hardiest of the long-running pre-war comics. They had brought a new vitality to the comic scene but still left much to be desired. Despite their inventiveness they lacked, with the odd exception, full colour - which had been such a feature of the great comics of the 1930s - and were often small in size and usually printed on poor quality newsprint. Comics from the mainstream publishers, The Amalgamated Press and D.C.Thomson, that had survived the war were still suffering from the stringent wartime paper rationing and were only just beginning to approach something like their pre-war size. The market was ripe for something new, a comic that coupled something of the freedom and originality displayed in the short run and 'one off' publications with quality paper, colour and, above all, a far sighted spirit of optimism and enthusiasm that mirrored the mood of the country.

With few exceptions comics had rarely enjoyed any degree of parental approval. Most parents either ignored or tolerated them and school teachers invariably confiscated such periodicals, though it was a standing joke that many of them re-surfaced in the staff-room to be enjoyed over a cup of coffee. But towards the end of the 1940s the public awareness of comics and their content was raised by the influx of so called 'horror comics' from America. These were imported cheaply into the country as ship-board ballast and, while not generally sold by the multiple chain newsagents, they were readily available in small corner shops. Attention was first drawn to them in the USA by Dr. Fredric Wertham in his book "Seduction of the Innocent" in which he pointed out the foulness of the visual matter that these publications printed. Rape, murder, torture and dismemberment of human beings were regularly portrayed within their pages and Wertham began a campaign to have them banned. In the United States such comics sold in vast numbers and Wertham found his campaign bitterly opposed by the publishers and distributors who had a vested interest in their continued publication. In Britain J.B.Priestley, writing in "New Statesman and Nation" described the horror comics as " smelling more of the concentration camp than the boxing booth and the fairground." Certain sections of the press took up the crusade and parents, teachers, politicians and churchmen began to take more than a passing interest in the comics young people were reading.

It was just at this time that a young vicar of a Lancashire parish, the Rev. Marcus Morris, decided to turn his parish magazine, "The Anvil", into a national magazine. Commissioning a student artist named Frank Hampson to handle the illustrations, the magazine became mildly successful but Morris soon realised he would have to raise more revenue from somewhere if "The Anvil" was to continue. He conceived the idea of creating a children's comic with strong Christian ideals, an antidote to the ghastly 'horror comics' that he believed all the country's youth was reading. Hampson was enthusiastic about the project and together they produced a dummy copy of a comic that Hampson's wife, Dorothy, named "Eagle". Several publishers were approached and eventually Hulton Press, proprietors of the prestigious "Picture Post", agreed to publish the comic. A massive publicity campaign was launched and when the first issue, dated 14th April 1950, went on sale nearly one million copies were sold. The quality of content and production was high as Marcus Morris believed that only the best could attract Britain's youth away from the plethora of American horror comics. "Eagle " was tabloid size and printed by the photogravure method on good quality paper. The first issue consisted of twenty pages, eight of which were in full colour, and cost threepence, very good value when compared with its smaller, cheaply printed rivals. With its strong moral and educational tone and a vicar for an editor teachers and churchmen were eager to recommend the comic. "Eagle" was the first comic to be totally parentally acceptable and, despite the contention from other comic publishers that it was being run by amateurs, had a powerful and enduring influence on the comic scene for the rest of the decade and beyond.

The back page of the first "Eagle" carried the opening instalment of a picture strip depicting the life of St. Paul and for a large proportion of its life, the comic consistantly devoted a full colour page to the lives of great men from history. Inside were many factual features such as " Heroes of the Clouds", "Making your own Model racing Car", and "Discovering The Countryside". Adventure strips included a cowboy adventure entitled "Seth and Shorty" the adventures of Rob Conway and "Tommy Walls", a product sponsored strip that promoted a certain brand of ice cream. There were a number of text stories and two humorous strips, "Skippy the Kangaroo" and John Ryan's "Captain Pugwash". Yet for all of its slightly high-brow features it was "Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future" that made "Eagle" so instantly and enduringly popular. The character and his comrades, created and nurtured for the first nine years of their existance by Frank Hampson, had everything to appeal to a child of the 'fifties. Dan, Digby, Sir Hubert, Professor Peabody and the rest of the cast were ever optimistic. The strip featured realistic spaceships and a host of believable futuristic machines and tools in a world that seemed not too far distant. It was superbly drawn and printed in full colour on the comic's first two pages. Just looking at the Dan Dare strip had an uplifting effect on young readers. He was a clean-cut hero with all the necessary qualities of leadership who could always be relied upon to fight against evil whatever the odds. Yet he was always able to put himself in the other man's position: he was compassionate and, unlike many heroes before him, always ready to give his

enemies another chance or suggest piece proposals that left them dignity. Hampson created a wonderful and enduring villain in the shape of the Mekon of Mekonta, whose totally evil personality was a splendid contrast to that of Dan Dare. In one episode, when the Mekon is trying to call the spaceman's bluff, Dan reminds him that "Dare never lies!"

For the first nine years of the strip Dan Dare was drawn by a team of artists led by Frank Hampson. The 'Studio' as it was called was run very much on the lines of a film animation studio with different artists being responsible for each stage of production. To ensure accuracy hundreds of reference photographs and models were used to ensure that the characters and space 'hardware' was always accurately drawn irrespective of which artist was working on any particular frame. When "Eagle" was taken over by Odhams Press in 1959 Hampson, who retained no copyright in the character, left the strip and, after working on a back page strip on the life of Christ, ceased working for "Eagle" all together. Dan Dare, however, continued for the rest of the comic's life. After Hampson left the comic his adventures were for a time drawn by Frank Bellamy who was establishing himself as one of the country's leading adventure strip artists. Bellamy gave Dare something of a face-lift and the spaceman underwent some subtle changes of character after which he was never quite the same again.Towards the end of the comic's life in the sixties reprints of earlier Dan Dare adventures replaced new strips.

The popularity of "Eagle" - and Dan Dare in particular - soon became apparent to the Amalgamated Press and, in February, 1952, they launched a rival comic entitled "Lion", complete with front page spaceman. But the production values of "Lion" were a world away from those of "Eagle". The comic had an old fashioned look and lacked almost everything that had made "Eagle" successful - colour, educational content and quality artwork. Despite these drawbacks it ran for over twenty years, swallowing up numerous other comics that came into the Amalgamated Press fold including, in 1969, "Eagle". A number of characters who appeared in the first issue of "Lion" remained with the comic for many years. "Sandy Dean's Schooldays" at Tollgate school, despite being reminiscent of public school stories in pre-war boy's papers ran throughout the 1950s and on into the 1960s. Another popular and original character was "Robot Archie" who differed from other mechanical men in that he was not the property of some mad inventor bent on world domination. The strip incorporated humour as well as plenty of thrills and was created by George Cowan The strip was drawn by Alan Philpott who made "Robot Archie" very much his own, working on the character until the early 1960s when it was taken over by a young artist named Ted Kiernen.

Lion's answer to Dan Dare was "Captain Condor" and he was a very different kettle of fish to Hampson's space fleet hero. Condor's adventures were set far in the future when the Earth was ruled by a dictator. Originally imprisoned for failing

to carry out his demands Condor and his friends escape and set out on a mission to defeat the despot. Ronald Forbes artwork had plenty of vitality and what it lacked in polish it made up for in sheer escapism. The rocket ships, and futuristic cities and alien landscapes looked wildly improbable yet had a quality that fascinated readers. Forbes' frames were always busy and-action packed and the strip's storyline, by veteran and prolific scriptwriter Frank S. Pepper, rattled along at a cracking pace. In an interview with David Ashford Pepper explained something of the character's beginnings: "To start with I made Condor almost a non-character, a sort of Action Man puppet that could be stuck in almost any sort of posture, thus leaving all my options open to develop him along whatever lines seemed best. Know-alls said "He's not a patch on Dan Dare. He'll never last, "but he did." Later the strip was taken over by Neville Wilson and then by Keith Watson, one of the artists on the Dan Dare team. Some splendid Captain Condor covers were drawn by his Watson's successor, Brian Lewis but later, after Lewis ceased drawing him, the strip was moved to a less significant place inside the comic.

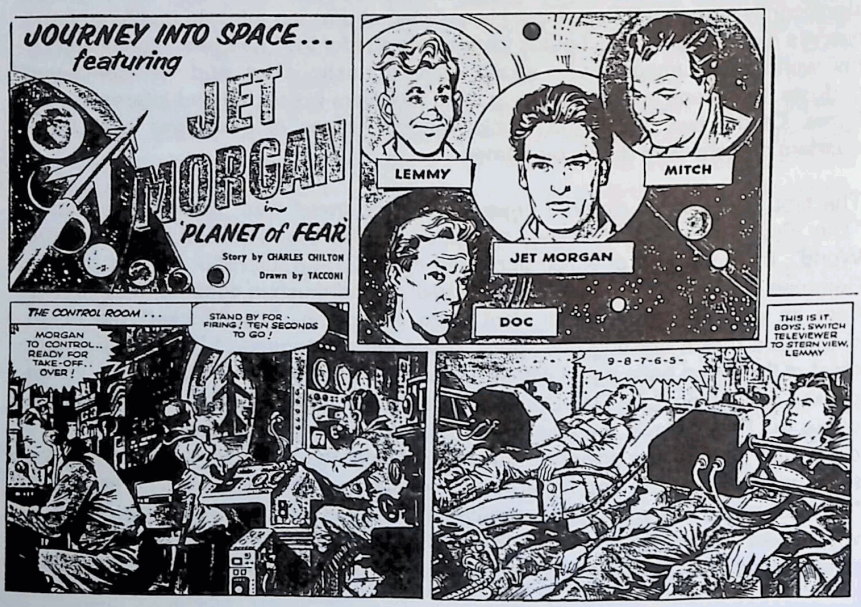
Other spacemen, very much in the Dan Dare mould, soon followed. Many were in short-run comics that sought to imitate the American comic book. Mick Anglo, a comic artist and writer created and produced a whole string of them: "Captain Valiant" for "Space Comics","Space Commander Kerry" for the comic of the same name and "Sparky Malone" for "Space Commando Comics". They were larger-than-life characters whose adventures owed more to the American strip Flash Gordon than Dan Dare. Another artist whose space heroes deserved wider distribution than they received was Norman Light. As early as 1951 he had drawn "Galactic Patrol", featuring the broad shouldered Brad Kane and "Commander Wade Kirkham and the Space Commandos" for "Space Hero" number one, a comic for which he had also provided the colour cover artwork. Unfortunatelly number two, the only other issue of "Space Hero", contained nothing by Light. His best creation was "Captain Future" of the Star Rovers Patrol who made his debut in the first issue of "Spaceman" a fifteen issue comic published by Gould -Light. Many of Light's space strips were later reprinted in 'albums' published by the same company. His artwork, while lacking the technical finesse and colour of Hampson's work is full of unrestrained vigour and filled with action and intricate spacecraft. The third of the quartet of early 1950s space strip artists whose work had more than a little influence on comics during the decade was Ronald Embleton, an artist who went on to greater things in the 1960s and '70s. Like Anglo and Light most of his early strips were for small comic publishers. His work for minor comics including "Gallant Science Comic" and others published by Scion, a firm that featured science fiction strongly in their many short run comics, was always beautifully finished. When he was given the chance to work in colour he showed the potential that was to flower later in such classic strips as "Wulf the Briton" in "T.V.Express" and "Wrath of the Gods" in "Boys World".

While Embleton, Light and Anglo moved onto other genres within the comics field Ron Turner remained almost exclusively an artist of science fiction. Like his afore-mentioned contempories his early work is to be found in many of the Scion comics, particularly their 'Big' series, mentioned in the previous chapter. His work has a distinctive style with large areas of black relieved with white 'shadow'. In 1953 Turner began drawing the regular monthly adventures of "Space Ace" for "Lone Star" comic, published by Atlas. Ace's adventures began as a four page serial strip but the character became so popular with readers that his share of the comic was later increased to seven pages. But Turner is best known for his depiction of the space detective Rick Random in "Super Detective Library", the Amalgamated Press' third 'pocket library' comic, launched in April 1953. Each 64 paged issue contained a complete adventure and in the case of "Super Detective Library" such characters as The Saint, Rip Kirby and Blackshirt were regularly encountered battling wrongdoers within its pages. Editor Edward Holmes originally wanted the library to be totally devoted to science-fiction strips but he was over-ruled. He did, however, manage to introduce such stories into the early issues and eventually "Rick Random - Detective of the Spaceways" made his debut in issue number 37. His first adventure "Crime Rides the Spaceways" was drawn by Bill Lacey and took Random to Logo on the track of the black-gloved menace. Lacey was a first class artist who drew many strips for "Super Detective Library", (most notably the series featuring Roderic Graeme's gentleman cracksman, Blackshirt) but it was Ron Turner who became the definitive Rick Random artist and made the character his own when he drew "Kidnappers from Space" in number 44 of "Super Detective Library". Turner's style had matured significantly since his Scion strips. He excelled at drawing intricate machinery and readers did not worry if his figures were a little stiff for they had been captivated by his wonderfully, imaginative space craft, futuristic cities and well-conceived gadgets. His aliens are no mere bug eyed monsters but varied and interesting life forms. Of the two dozen plus Rick Random issues of the comic over three quarters of them were drawn by Turner.

The first comic to be devoted entirely to space travel was "Rocket", headlined "The First Space Age Weekly", published by the proprietors of "News of the World", the first issue of which appeared dated 21st April 1956. Printed by Eric Bemrose of Liverpool, the printers of "Eagle", it had much in common with its rival from its gravure colour to its front page spaceman. The "Rocket" masthead depicted a rocket blasting into space above the adventures of "Captain Falcon", chief of the Moon base patrol whose adventures usually began with a large action packed illustration. Like Dan Dare his exploits extended to the second page of the comic but Frank Black, the artist responsible for Falcon, and who appears to have done little other comic artwork, was nowhere near the superlative standard of the team working on Dare and his artwork appears crude by comparison. The rest of "Rocket" was filled with space orientated features, stories and strips, some of which, like "Flash Gordon" and "Brick Bradford" were reprinted from American publications. Despite its glossy appearance, "Rocket" lasted less than a year, an

indication that those who had to fork out hard won pennies every week for their comic were more discerning than publishers gave them credit for.

"Jeff Hawke", the spaceman from the "Daily Express", had successfully transferred to "Express Weekly", one of the Beaverbrook comics, when it was still being printed as a two-colour comic. A number of artists drew his exploits for the comic but the best was Fernando Tacconi who really brought the strip to life when the centre spread became a blaze of colour in issue number 74 when the comic changed its title to "Express Super Colour Weekly". But Jeff Hawke's days with "Express Weekly" were numbered, his place taken by a group of spacemen whose exploits had been delighting radio listeners since 1953 in the popular radio serial "Journey Into Space". Jet Morgan, Doc Mathews, Lemmy Barnet and Stephen Mitchell had thrilled the nation in three radio serials before their adventures were transferred to "Express Weekly" on 28th of April 1956, just one week after "News of the World" had launched "Rocket". Many elements from the radio serial were woven into "Planet of Fear", which was scripted by Charles Chilton, creator and producer of the radio serials. A second strip "Shadow Over Britain" was also scripted by Chilton and drawn by Tacconi, but the third serial was only 'based on Charles Chilton's characters', and the artwork, by Terence Patrick, was nowhere near as exciting as that of his predecessor. The final "Journey Into Space" strip adventure came to an end on 5th of November 1957. Space adventures continued in comics to the present day but the influence of those early heroes of the spaceways - Dan Dare, Rick Random, Jet Morgan and the like has remained.



Charles Chilton's popular radio characters transferred to *Express Weekly* where their exploits were drawn by the Italian artist Nando Tacconi

Norman Light's dynamic "Captain Future"

Ron Turner's unique style helped to make Rick Random the most popular character in Super *Detective Library*

SEXTON BLAKE - "CUPID"

BY Bette Colby

Believe me I am paying a sincere tribute to our legendary hero when I call him "Cupid". As a fellow admirer of the austere, dignified and very erudite detective, you may be feeling a trifle stunned as you try to picture him thus... the very antithesis of *your* Sexton Blake. The pundits assure us that "truth is stranger than fiction" and, speaking from personal experience, I can say that Blake did play the role of "Cupid" in my life.

Because of my interest in the adventures of the man from Baker Street, I was introduced to fellow enthusiast Victor Colby. Through our mutual admiration for the great detective a friendship began. Years later this led to romance and our marriage... Victor brought as his dowry his complete collection of The Sexton Blake Library, more precious than rubies!

Quite nonchalantly folk throw at us the rather hoary cliché "No man is an island". If one ponders this well-worn statement, it can be quite terrifying when one realises how true it is. Our lives are influenced to an amazing extent by the actions of others, whether benign or malignant. A single moment in time, one simple action, can dictate one's entire future, for better or for worse. Often I shudder when I think how different my life could have been if I had taken a step backward instead of forward as I stood hesitating many years ago outside "The Book Bargain Bazaar" in Crane Place, Sydney.

At this time I was already a reader of "The Sexton Blake Library". An aunt who had followed Blake's adventures in the "Union Jack" and the "Detective Weekly" had introduced me to Blake & Tinker through her collection of the latter publication when I was 9 years old. Some years later I discovered the Sexton Blake Library and began a collection which I kept until I married. To this day I gave much credit to the Blake saga for fostering my love of reading, my large vocabulary and spelling ability. My English teacher at High School did not see things this way and was horrified when she saw me reading a "Detective Weekly" during morning recess. She berated me in no uncertain terms for wasting my time reading a "Penny Dreadful". The following year I confounded her by gaining top marks in English and Economics and second place in History for the whole of Year 4 girls!

Time passed and my life in the wider commercial world was helped by my ability to put words together effectively. Of course, by then I was reading in other fields, but there was still a place in my life for Sexton Blake, Tinker and Pedro, not forgetting dear old Mrs. Bardell.

Then a true serendipity event occurred in my life. A journalist wrote a small paragraph in a Sydney newspaper about "The Book Bargain Bazaar" catering for collectors of "Magnets and Gems and S.B.L.s". So a total stranger was the second influence on my future life as he pointed me in the right direction and set the stage for me to meet Victor Colby.

Knowing that earlier stories of Blake must exist somewhere was a far cry from locating them until I read this item. Even then I had one final hurdle to overcome and I hesitated for quite some time outside the bookshop. Lack of confidence prompted me to think that the proprietor would think me a most odd female, an adult looking for a boy's detective paper from the past.

Finally my very strong interest in the Blake Saga overcame my lack of confidence and I took that fateful step forward... as the script writers say "the rest is history"! The

bookshop proprietor, Stanley Nicholls, far from being amused at my enquiry, was most helpful. "Yes", he assured me "there is a source for these books overseas, but unfortunately there are quite a few enthusiasts here who would have prior claim on these items as they are old customers".

My hopes, raised one moment, dashed the next, were lifted to the masthead when Mr. Nicholls offered to borrow Blake items for me to read. Since I was more interested in reading the Blake Saga than collecting it, I saluted this brilliant idea with enthusiasm and gratitude.

Some four months later, I had even more cause to be grateful to Mr. Nicholls when he decided it was time I met up with Victor Colby. This way I could thank him for the bundles of "Union Jacks" he had been delivering to the shop for me to collect on loan. Little did we know that Mr. Nicholls' decision would play such a vital role in our futures and that one day, many years hence, Stan would sing at our wedding.

Some months later I met the other collectors, and "The Golden Hours" club was formed to foster our interests in the Blake saga and the Charles Hamilton books, etc. As secretary of this club, I shared many interesting meetings held monthly in the unique setting and most appropriate atmosphere of "The Book Bargain Bazaar". Also I made a host of pen-friends amongst the members of the Old Boys' Book Clubs and shared their interests and activities with ever increasing pleasure.

Sadly many of these friends have died and Mr. Nicholls, as well as his fascinating, Dickensian little shop are no longer with us. However, Sexton Blake, blessed by the immortality imparted by his many talented biographers, lives on in the fond memories of his admirers... we grow older daily, but, at the laudable age of 101 years, Blake is still at his zenith of acumen and strength!

Christmas Greetings to all hobby friends. Always wanting to hear of any early pre-1969 Rupert books for sale.

JOHN BECK, 29 MILL ROAD, LEWES, E. SUSSEX, BN7 2RU

* *

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all. With special greetings to our editor.

D. BLAKE, THAMES DITTON, SURREY

* *

Seasons Greetings and a happy 1995 to all readers and many good C.D. friends.

LEN HAWKEY, 3 SEAVIEW ROAD, LEIGH-ON-SEA, ESSEX, SS9 1AT

* *

JACK HUGHES sends best wishes to all. Still seeks "Neighbours" by H.L. Gee. Any assistance appreciated.

2 DIPROSE STREET, PIMLICO, TOWNSVILLE 4812, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

* *

Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year to all Digest readers.

LESLIE KING, CHESHAM, BUCKS.

* *

Christmas and New Year Greetings to C.D. enthusiasts from the land of Tom Brown.

REG. V. MOSS, KHANDALLAH, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

* *

THE ALDINE BUFFALO BILL ADVENTURES

By Allan Pratt

One of my late father's fondest boyhood memories was seeing the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show when the "Colonel" brought his troupe to England at the start of this century.

A recent television documentary about the Great Scout included enthusiastic comment from another elderly gentleman who eagerly recalled a similar experience. Clearly, in those days of long ago, Buffalo Bill was more than just a hero: he was positively legendary, on a par with the likes of Robin Hood and Dick Turpin.

It is hardly surprising, in the circumstances, that his name was attached to a welter of fiction, much of it lurid and fanciful, designed to appeal to the adventurous spirits of youngsters and thus part them from their pocket money.

There were many sources of Buffalo Bill fiction in the U.K. but the liveliest and, almost certainly, the most successful was the Aldine Press. Via their O'er Land and Sea Library, Buffalo Bill Library, Wild West Yarns, etc. etc., they printed and reprinted their thrilling tales of the Great Scout from around 1890 until well into the 1930s by which time they probably appeared to be curiously dated. These were, after all, a sort of half way house between the Penny Dreadfuls of the last century and the "wholesome" juvenile literature that followed in their wake.

Of course there was a limited factual basis to the yarns. W.F. Cody (1846-1917) was a scout and guide for the U.S. Army who, in the Sioux-Cheyenne War of 1876 killed the Indian chief Yellow Hand in single combat at the battle of Indian Creek. He was, for a time, a Pony Express rider and was also responsible for the provision of buffalo meat to the workers on the Kansas Pacific Railroad (which, incidentally, earned Cody his nickname).

Indeed, Bill's C.V. would have been spot on for the position of Boys' Adventure Paper Hero. In the Aldine stories, references were made from time to time to actual happenings such as those summarised above but, in the main, these were used merely as a sort of backcloth to far more outrageous adventures involving larger than life madmen, grisly spectres and anything else that took the fancy of the unidentified authors of the yarns.

Bill did not, as it happens, face all of these nerve-racking experiences alone. He was joined, often, by one or more of his "pards", men like Wild Bill Hickok and Surgeon Frank Powell, who were almost as brave and daring as the Great Scout himself, a necessary qualification for those odd occasions on which the "pards" featured in their own stories in starring roles.

But, whether accompanied or not, Buffalo Bill would invariably be on the trail of some master villain or particularly savage and bloodthirsty Red Indian and, unlike the super crooks in the Blake saga, Bill's opponents rarely lived to fight another day. Owlhoots with picturesque names such as Deadshot Kraus, Drink-All Joe, the Black Captain and Manslayer, Chief of the Prairies were almost certain to meet a dreadful fate at the hands of Bill or one of his cohorts. In fact, some of the more lurid aspects of the yarns clearly sat uneasily with Aldine's constant reassurance to readers (or, more likely, their parents) that their magazines were thoroughly clean and wholesome and full of high moral values. As E.S. Turner noted in his excellent "Boys Will Be Boys", when, in one adventure, Bill whipped off an Indian chief's war-bonnet, scalped him "in the twinkling of an eye" and waved aloft "the red trophy", the publishers inserted a somewhat

apologetic footnote explaining that Bill was not in the habit of scalping redskins but that on this occasion he felt justified because he was on "a trail of revenge" for the Custer massacre.

There was also a club for readers to join. The True Blue Brotherhood was "a world-wide league of fellowship... founded for promoting a good understanding amongst boys and young men of all ages." The rules, reminiscent of the Boy Scout Law, included obligations to "strive to stamp out bullying, cowardice and the use of vulgar language," to "be kind to animals and prevent cruelty to dumb creatures by others" and "to lend a hand in moments of danger to everybody whether they be fellow members or not." Any reader who succeeded in sending in one envelope the names of six recruits was "promoted" to Lieutenant whilst one who could find twelve received an instant Captaincy!

The Buffalo Bill Library was a pocket sized publication that doubled in price from a penny to twopence during its long run. Each issue contained one story of Buffalo Bill, usually complete in itself, with no back up stories or illustrations. Covers were printed in red, white and blue and were notable for the distinctive artwork of Rob Prowse which was shown to even greater advantage on the covers of the Buffalo Bill Novels (a fourpenny series) as these were printed in full colour. The stories themselves are of varying quality. It must be remembered, of course, that most of them were written in the last century and imported from the United States, hence the writing style is a hybrid of Victorian English and (sometimes strange) western dialect. They were clearly intended to provide a sensational read, and strange happenings were often introduced for dramatic effect only, adding little or nothing to the story construction. In one yarn, whilst tied up under the floorboards of a cabin, Bill, through a knothole, watches a strange old man chuckling insanely as he throws chemicals onto a stove producing brightly coloured flashes. Bill subsequently escapes and no further mention is made of the old chemist. In another, a rancher has, as a servant, a particularly awesome creature, half human and half ape, who shuffles and slithers across the floor when introduced to the heroes of the story. Having described in detail the grotesque nature of the beast, the author seemingly forgets about him altogether as Bill & Co. gallop off to face new dangers.

TRUE BLUE BROTHERHOOD

THE TRUE BLUE BROTHERHOOD is a world-wide league of fellowship which was founded many years ago for promoting a good understanding amongst boys and young men of all ages.

All readers of this book are eligible to join the True Blue Brotherhood, it being only necessary to fill up the coupon given below, and send it to the President, 1-3, Crown Court, Chancery Lane, London, W.C.2, enclosing Threepence for the Certificate, Badge, and Secret Signs, which are forwarded to each recruit. Beyond this threepence there is absolutely no expense incurred. Foreign or Colonial recruits must send exchange coupon for 4d., (obtainable at Post Office). Foreign stamps will not be accepted.

When you have joined you can get other fellows of your neighbourhood to follow your example and form a local branch of the Brotherhood. Football and athletic clubs can be formed in this way. If you send up the names *and coupons* of six recruits in one envelope you will gain promotion to Lieutenant, while Twelve Recruits will make you a Captain.

RULES OF THE BROTHERHOOD

The rules which members have to agree to abide by are quite simple:—

1. To be true to themselves and to their friends 2. To do their best to help one another in time of trouble and distress. 3. To be kind to animals and prevent cruelty to dumb creatures by others. 4. To strive to stamp out bullying, cowardice, and the use of vulgar language. 5. To be loyal to their country in peace and war. 6. To be truthful, generous, honourable, manly, and brave. 7. To lend a hand in moment of danger to everybody whether they be fellow members or not.

NOTE THIS.—Each Recruit *must fill up the coupon* and send it, with Threepence in stamps, to the President. Unless this is done membership will not be allowed.

The Official Organs of the True Blue Brotherhood are "Buffalo Bill Library," and "Buffalo Bill Novels."

TRUE BLUE BROTHERHOOD COUPON.

I wish to join the True Blue Brotherhood. I promise to faithfully keep the Rules.

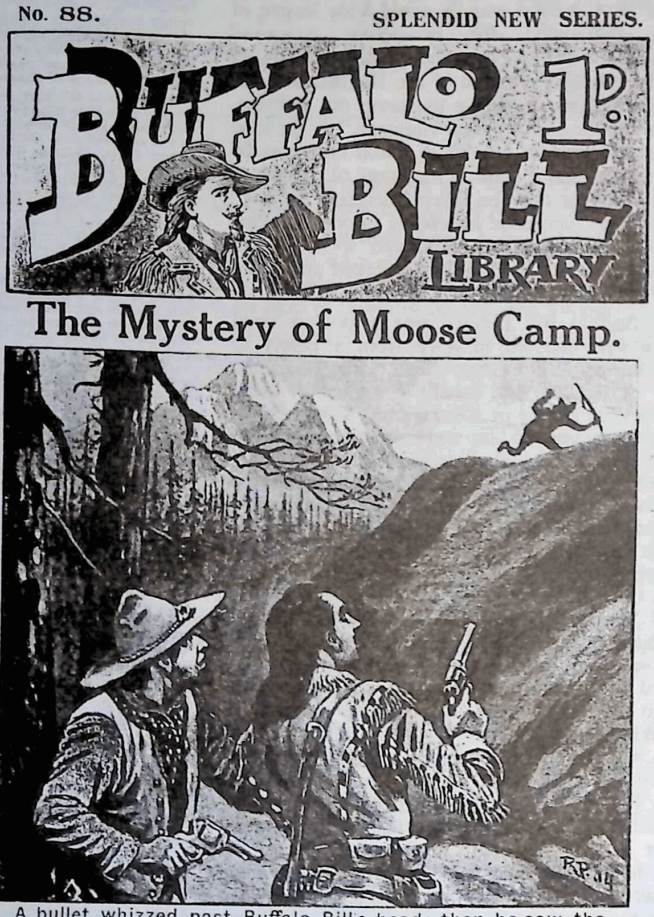
(Signed) *Name* .....

Address .....

Yet despite these apparent shortcomings in literary construction it must be said that many of the stories are well written, exciting and extremely atmospheric. And for those readers put off by what might be considered the somewhat long-winded style, there were opportunities to read shorter, more recently written stories in a series of hard-backed books about Buffalo Bill and the likes of Jim Bowie and Davy Crockett issued by Aldine in the 1920s. Edited by Wingrove Willson, these were illustrated throughout and contained beautifully produced colour plates painted by Prowse.

By today's standards the Aldine publications are almost 100% politically incorrect, hence titles such as "Buffalo Bill Among The Greasers", but they were probably genuinely representative of attitudes both at home and in the United States when they were written

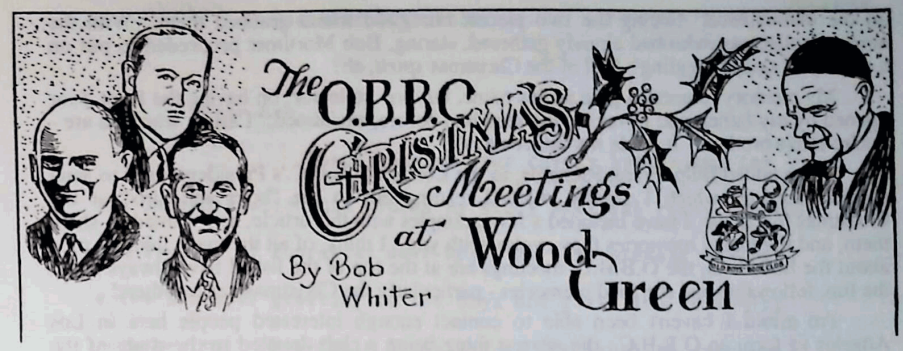
round about a century ago. Can anyone call himself a true western aficionado without having sampled the fare?



A bullet whizzed past Buffalo Bill's head; then he saw the mysterious black shape disappearing over the hill.

Congratulations on your 18th Birthday.
To ALAN THURLOW, WEST BRIDFORD, NOTTINGHAM.

* *



Some of my happiest memories are of the Christmas meetings that my brother Ben and I used to host at our home in Wood Green, London. I don't think I am exaggerating when I say it became almost a ritual for the London Old Boys Book Club to have Wood Green as its permanent Yuletide venue. It was here that we introduced the ghostly candlelight reading, the first performance being the sighting of the "spectre of Polpelly" (Magnet 1,453, December 21, 1935, Chapter 4, "The Phantom of Polpelly") by John Redwing, whilst he was awaiting the arrival of his son Tom Redwing, Vernon Smith, the Famous Five, and, of course, Bunter. With the lights out and just the candle flickering, giving the right atmosphere, it went down very well. I can remember dear old Len Packman making sure I had enough light by which to read the passage!

Apart from the usual Christmas ornaments decorating the large upstairs front room, we had make-believe messages on the wall purporting to have come from some of the characters featured in the stories. Dear old "Chappie", (Charles Chapman, the celebrated Magnet artist) even if he attended, would still send a special card with a drawing of Bunter adorned with festive greetings. This, too, was also in full view. When he attended, "Chappie" would usually stay the night, returning to his home on the Monday morning. On one occasion, he interrupted his journey home with a visit to Frank Richards and he took some of the club members with him!

One year, Rueben Godsave, of happy memory, sat and tickled the ivories. He played some of the songs they used to publish in the Christmas numbers. These were supposedly from pantomimes and shows that the boys put on before breaking up for the holidays. Most of them were, of course, parodies of well-known songs. Here are a few examples:

"Did you ever see a dream walking?" (Instead of "Well, I did," substitute "See Coker!")

To the tune of "Cock Robin" the words went: "All the men of the fifth are looking for the joker who dared lay his hands on the great Horace Coker."

Then we had "John Peel" with "Peel" being exchanged for "Bull". Thus, the first line went like this: "D'ye Ken John Bull and his cornet, too!"

Unfortunately, most of the good people who thundered out those choruses are no longer with us, but, to the few who remain and were at that meeting, I'm sure the memories are happy ones, allbeit tinged now with sadness.

Speaking of John Bull, I was always a little sorry that no mention was made in later stories of either Johnny Bull's concertina or his cornet. I seem to remember in Magnet 154, "Rolling in Money," the concertina was smashed and, in Magnet 160, "Poor Old Bunter" ("When Bunter Forgot," 1929 Holiday Annual), Bunter burnt it in the study fireplace, but, as far as I can remember, nothing disastrous happened to his cornet!

On another occasion, collector Robert Mortimer arrived in a very jolly mood. He wasn't drunk but he'd had a couple! I used to keep a couple of 40mm Bofors shell cases

on the mantelpiece. Seeing the two pieces, our good friend grabbed them. With the amazed collectors, who had already gathered, staring, Bob Mortimer proceeded to put on a display of skilful juggling! Full of the Christmas *spirit*, eh?

My memory refuses to give up his name, but one collector, on having the front door opened by my father, and never having seen him before, exclaimed, "I know who you are - you're Ben's brother." It made my father's day!

As an added fillip, Frank Richards, as the London O.B.B.C.'s President, used to send special greetings which I greatly enjoyed reading out to the "boys and girls" at the Christmas meetings. I have included a few examples with this article, as I wanted to share them, and the happy memories they evoke, with you. I think, of all the many things I miss about the homeland, the O.B.B.C. meetings are at the top of the list. I have always loved the fun, fellowship and the fond memories - particularly the Christmas get-togethers!

I'm afraid I haven't been able to contact enough interested people here in Los Angeles to form an O.B.B.C., the nearest thing being a club devoted to the study of the Sherlock Holmes canon. We call ourselves The Knights of Baskerville Hall. We have our own little magazine and every other month we hold a meeting. Members study a selected story and then test their knowledge of the same at the meeting. The winner of the previous meeting's quiz prepares the current quiz. We also view one of Jeremy Brett's Sherlock Holmes films - if possible, the one based on the story we're studying. When Jeremy was touring the states a couple of years ago, he attended one of our gatherings. He is a very nice person; in fact, a perfect gentleman! I'm happy to say our house is the preferred venue for the Christmas meetings, and after the regular club activities, we all enjoy a lusty singsong of Christmas carols round the piano.

But, to return to the London O.B.B.C. Christmas meetings, the quizzes always had the emphasis on the season. I well remember Bob Blythe pinning up a fine selection of Christmas numbers with only the cover picture showing. Collectors had to guess the series, title and date of each one. What happy times they were!

Before I get too sentimental, I'm going to close, wishing not only the parent club, London, but all Old Boys' Book Clubs everywhere, the happiest of Christmas meetings now and in the future!

Footnote: I'm fully aware that I haven't covered all the highlights, or mentioned by name all the collectors who graced the meetings. I crave your indulgence. The untold facts, like the unnamed personnel, both male and female, nevertheless are stored away with all the other happy memories. They will never be forgotten.

WANTED: For all: a Merry Christmas and Happy 1995. WANTED: for myself: 83 C.D. issues 1947-1948 and 1953-1961. Can anybody help?

GARY PANCZYSZYN
25 POPLAR AVENUE, SPONDON, DERBY, DE21 7FJ. Tel. (01332) 679388

* *

Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year to Madam Editor, Eric, Bill, Chris, Laurie, Les, Mac and all hobbyists.

JOHN BRIDGWATER
5A SAULFLAND PLACE, HIGHCLIFFE, CHRISTCHURCH, DORSET, BH23 4QP

* *

ROSE LAWN,
KINGSGATE-ON-SEA,
BROADSTAIRS,
KENT.

December 10th.1958

Dear Bob,

Thank you for your cheery letter,and for the Calender,which now adorns my study wall all ready for the New Year. Of course,my dear boy,I am very pleased to write a few lines of greeting to the boys and girls who so kindly remember me. May their Christmas be the happiest ever,and their New Year the brightest that ever was; with lots and lots of happy Christmasses and bright new Years to come!

At this time of year my thoughts always run back to the Xmas numbers which you tell me you are going to re-read. I think I missed them more than anything else when the old papers conked out. And recently I just couldn't resist getting back to the subject,with the result that "Bunter Comes for Christmas" next year,in one of the Cassell books.

I was much interested to see in the Daily Telegraph on Saturday that they are giving tickets for the Bunter play at the Palace as prizes in a competition. I hope that the lucky winners will have a good time with Billy. Who could have guessed that he would last so long,when he rolled off the typewriter in 1908?

Best of wishes,laddie,for your Christmas gathering, and as Tiny Tim used to say,God bless us all,every one!

With kindest regards,

Always yours sincerely,

Frank Richards

~~Chalet des Courlis~~
Rose Lawn ~~Wimereux-sur-Mer~~.
Kingsgate
Kent.

December I3th.I956

Dear Bob,

Christmas is always a cheery time: and one of its cheeriest aspects, to my mind, is the tremendous influx of letters from old friends: every one of them happily welcome, though when I look at the Everest on my desk I wonder a little how and when they will be answered! But I just must send a line in reply to yours, even with Billy Bunter waiting for the typewriter: a brief message to you and your friends at your meeting on Sunday. May you all have the happiest of Christmasses, prosperous New Year, and many more to follow till you have accumulated as many as I have: and continue to be my "constant readers' all the time! And, as Tiny Tim used to say, God bless us all, every one!

Always yours sincerely,

Frank Richards

~~Chalet des Courlis~~
Rose Lawn ~~Wimereux-sur-Mer~~.
Kingsgate
Broadstairs,
Kent.

Dec.I5th.I955

Dear Bob Cherry,

Thank you for a very delightful card. In answer to your question, "Ravenspur" was a little too much like the last act in Hamlet, to please me very much. But I am glad you liked it: and really of its kind it was not bad.

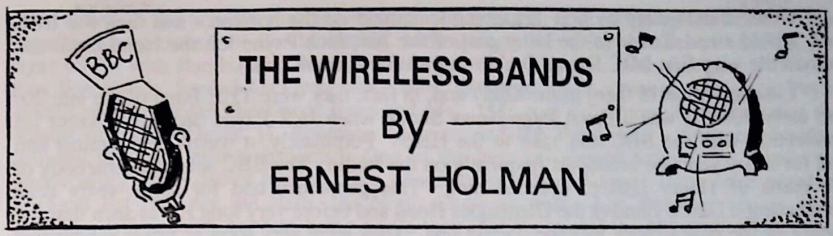
Best of wishes for your meeting on Sunday. Here are the few lines you have asked me for, laddie.

"Greetings to all friends, best wishes for Christmas and the New Year: and may you all live as long and happily as Frank Richards, and thank God as humbly and gratefully as he does for His many blessings."

With kindest regards,

Frank

(Charles Hamilton's letters are Copyright Una Hamilton Wright)



This is, in the main, a generalisation. By that, I mean that the subject of the Dance Band Days or Era is not one that offers much in the way of documentation. Therefore, a good deal of what follows is from as reliable a memory as I can muster. Some information is available from the sleeves of LPs, from the time when the Dance Band recordings were reissued considerably. Even sleeve notes, however, have to be taken with a pinch of salt - inaccuracies do occur, some of quite an obvious nature. So, in setting forth a very brief account of those days, the appropriate E. and O.E. must be pushed forward.

The period of the Dance Bands (and I should mention that I am only speaking of the British Bands) covered in all, probably about a quarter of a century. This would roughly be from the mid-20s to the beginning of the 50s. It was, though, in the Thirties that the Dance Bands reached their height. In those days, there was a continuous scene of bands on stage. Cinemas, Theatres and Music Halls were seldom without one of them.

It has been stated that this type of music stemmed from Scott Joplin and his many 'Rags' (to me, somewhat of a 'samey' character) and also from the music that accompanied the famous dance team of Vernon and Irene Castle. Their fox-trot was the forerunner of many more and they did also introduce many other 'trots', not nowadays remembered. Legend has it that there was once a Turkey Trot, which it seems, like the Cakewalk, had to eventually be 'toned down'. (I tremble to think what 'toning-up' it would get today!)

To me it always seemed that the Era started in 1919. At the end of the War, George Robey appeared in London in 'Joy Bells' and one of the 'turns' therein was Nick La Rocca's Original Dixie Land Jazzband. It was very popular with the London audience, especially so with the many American Soldiers who were on leave or returning to their Homeland. In fact, the Band was TOO popular; Robey found that he was being 'overshadowed' and apparently told Producer, Albert de Courville, that there wasn't the room for both himself AND the Band. De Courville thus had no alternative but to discontinue the Band's engagement.

Fortunately, however, the Band had a very long and successful spell at the Hammersmith Palais and they, in fact, had set the scene for their successors. The Jazz style gave way, gradually, to what was to become the Dance Band style. Among some of the early Bands can be numbered Fred Elizaldes (with a young vocalist named Al Bowlly) the Starita Brothers, as well as the Brothers Firman. Mostly they played straight-forward versions, with the verse and refrain often played twice - there was only occasionally a vocal refrain added. Generally, their main appeal was on Gramophone Records (78s - some, for some reason, were 80s) and with the Firmans, Maurice Elwin could be heard rendering such items as 'Shepherd of the Hills', 'Sunny Havana', 'All by yourself in the Moonlight' and, a very popular tune, 'Valencia'.

Broadcasts from Hotels, Restaurants and Ballrooms began, with Savoy Hotel's various Ensembles taking the main role. The Savoy Bands had several Conductors, and one future such was their Pianist named Carroll Gibbons. Most popular of all, however, were the regular broadcasts of Jack Payne and his Band from the Hotel Cecil. The time was soon coming when Bands would broadcast directly from the Studio, not it seems, without initial opposition from BBC Director, John Reith! As far as I can ascertain, it would seem that the first Studio broadcast of a Dance Band was made by Marius B. Winter, from a room very high up in the BBC Building in Savoy Hill.

Other Bands were by now beginning to appear on the horizon - and then the BBC took a bold step. Towards the latter part of the 20s, Jack Payne left the Hotel Cecil and formed the very first BBC Dance Orchestra (not Band, mark you!).

Listeners took to them immediately and, in fact, they were THE Band of the late 20s and early 30s. It was a Front Page News Shock when Jack Payne decided to sever his connection with the BBC and 'take to the Halls'. Fortunately, it wasn't held against him and for many years he broadcast frequently on the Radio. The BBC selected somebody of the name of Henry Hall to succeed him. This gentleman had for some years been conducting a Dance Band at the Gleneagles Hotel and before very long it was seen that the choice of the new Leader was the correct one. They were very soon as firmly established as their predecessor.

By the mid-30s, Dance Bands were in abundance. Of these, the most prominent were those selected to fill a weekly spot each night for the new Late Night Dance Music spot. (I wonder how many people today would believe the innocent pleasures I found in those days when I regularly listened until midnight?) Bands also included those who broadcast at other times of the afternoon or evening. In addition to Henry Hall, famous names were always around - Ambrose, Geraldo, Harry Roy, Lew Stone, Roy Fox, Sidney Lipton, Jack Jackson, Billy Cotton, Carroll Gibbons, Charlie Kunz, Maurice Winnick, Jack Harris, Joe Loss, Ray Noble.

Mention must, of course, be made of Jack Hylton. From the early 20s, he had been a sort of Paul Whiteman stage band, and although he did not appear in as many broadcasts as some of the others, he enjoyed a very good status and stature. He was, however, as with the other big names, a prolific recording band and those 78s were forever being advertised in such publications as 'Melody Maker'.

It was in the late-30s that 'off-shoots' soon began to take shape on the Halls. These were former members of Bands, having made quite a name for themselves in their own right whilst with Bands, who became solo-turns. Nat Gonella, from the Lew Stone and Roy Fox Bands, formed his Georgians. Billy Thorburn, once a pianist with Jack Payne, started up 'The Organ, the Dance Band and Me'. (Me was Billy himself, the organist that wizard of the Wurlitzer, H. Robinson Cleaver, and the Band was a fine and carefully selected group of instrumentalists.) One of the best 'off-shoots' from those Bands was undoubtedly Harry Roy's pianists, Ivor Moreton and Dave Kaye. They were regularly engaged not only for the Halls, but Night Clubs as well. Len Bermon, Henry Hall's drummer and vocalist, took to being a solo turn as did some of the Band vocalists. Elsie Carlisle left Ambrose to appear as a solo singer; Les Allen left Henry Hall and started a Music Hall act, accompanied by three pianists. These were just a few of the names of those days who 'took off alone'.

Mention of the vocalists must be continued, for they were a most important part of the broadcasting Bands and always got as big a hand on stage as the Band itself. It would not be possible to name all of them, but included amongst them all would be found Al Bowlly, Sam Browne, Dan Donovan, George Elrick, Chick Henderson, Alan Breeze, Denny Dennis, Bill Currie, Brian Lawrence, George Barclay, Sam Costa, Pat O'Malley, Jack Cooper - et al.

The lady vocalists were also abundant, with mention here going to Vera Lynn, Elsie Carlisle, Anne Lenner, Judy Shirley, Phyllis Robins, Kitty Masters, Mary Lee, Eve Becke, Paula Green - and so many more.

All the Bands had their own individual sound or style. Ambrose always featured more trombones than most bands; Jack Payne (I often wonder why) had a passion for taking a popular number and giving it what he called a 'concert version'. Maurice Winnick adopted the sound and style of Guy Lombardo's Royal Canadians, with his 'Sweetest Music This Side of Heaven'. Some Bands were at times inclined to overdo the descriptive type of music, and one or two offered a little too much of what was termed a 'comedy number'. On the whole, though, they were distinctive, each with their own Signature Tune (Henry Hall had two!). They each had their devoted followers, who would turn out wherever they appeared - I seem to recall going farther afield for Jack Payne than for many of the others, although all Dance Band followers were there when the Bands appeared in their own locality.

Autograph hunters did not fare too well. This was not due to any reluctance on the part of the Players to sign but that there jut wasn't time. A Band would appear at the end of Part One of a Music Hall first House, then dash off to another Hall several miles away, arriving just in time to be there for the second half of the first House. They would then quickly 'refresh' themselves and soon appear at the end of the first half of the Second House. Off they would then fly, in time to close the second House at the other Hall. Even then, often they had not finished their work. They could be dashing off to fill the Late Night Dance Music spot on radio. Often, they would be rushing off to a late-night recording session.

There was, though, a vast difference between stage and radio performance and those presented in their Dance Hall or Club. At the latter, it was just one long, monotonous grind into the small hours. Although it was their regular bread and butter, the 'away from it' feeling was so different when they appeared before their real public.

Even Sunday was a Dance Band day on the radio. Not, of course, with the BBC; but most of the main Bands appeared on one of the Continental Commercial Stations, such as Radio Luxembourg, Radio Luxembourg, Radio Normandy and such. The description 'appeared' is a misnomer. None of the Bands ever went farther than Bush House, in London's Strand, where the following Sunday's broadcast would be recorded on sound film, for transportation to the appropriate Continental station. Many of the Bands came to be associated with such things as Blank's Jams, Somebody's B.O. Soap (a brave Band Leader here!) or Thingummy's Hair Wash Night. These broadcasts must have been very popular, because a weekly radio magazine rivalled the BBC's Radio Times by offering all the news and times of the Commercial stations.

There are still some names that must not be omitted. Louis Levy, with his Gaumont British Orchestra, gave a very pleasing arrangement to many of the popular tunes of the day. Mantovani, for a spell, did this on a smaller scale, with what he called his 'Typica' Orchestra. (Actually, the term meant nothing, merely being derived from an obvious word with the 'l' omitted!) Above all, however, must be remembered that great musician, Victor Silvester. Before, during and long after the War, his strict tempo music came into hundreds of homes through radio and records. Even today, there is still a great demand for his old recordings - and very good indeed they still are. Victor was one of the longest broadcasting Bands of all time and will always be well remembered by so many of us. The longest spell of Band leading, however, fell to Joe Loss, who was still in harness when he died only a few years ago.

Yes, you are quite right - I haven't mentioned 'so-and-so!, or 'so-and-so' or 'so-and-so', have I? Lots more that haven't been included, too - but as I stated earlier, this is really only a personal recollection - almost as one would speak during a conversation. They were great days, though - and like so many other things that have today departed from our scene, will never return. Still, the sounds are still available, as most of those old 78s that had been remastered on to LPs are now reappearing on that modern marvel (?) known as a CD. (CD indeed - I ask you, the nerve of it!) Hubert Gregg, in his weekly radio show 'Thanks for the Memory' very wittily and aptly refers to these 'things' as 'shaving mirrors'.

There is still, I believe, one quarterly magazine devoted to the Dance Band Days, privately published as 'Memory Lane'. Above all, mention must be made of Alan Dell. For over twenty years he has been offering a weekly half hour on Radio of al these old Dance Band records and is also able to supply up to date information regarding clubs and meetings, as well as giving news of those musicians and singers who are still with us.

Away from the Thirties, brings to mind a name that must never be left out. Anne Shelton came into Ambrose's Band still a young schoolgirl in the early days of the war. Anne, both with Ambrose and as a solo singer and presenter, will always be remembered by ex-servicemen for the charm she put over the air. One of her greatest hits was 'Lily Marlene'. This had originally been broadcast on German radio and sung by Lala Anderson. New words in English were written to the tune and Anne was chosen to sing it. Even today, Anne is still known as our own Lily Marlene. It is said that Churchill was highly delighted with the song - rumour even has it that he was, in fact, the instigator! Anne went on long after the Dance Band Days had departed, as a fine performer in her own right. She was still performing this last summer when, sadly, she passed away at the age of 65.

It is with mention, in fact, of one of Anne's songs that I am choosing to end this offering. One of the very first numbers she broadcast with Ambrose carried a most inappropriate title for her, in view of her future progress. The title, though, did become a prophetic one as far as the fading Dance Band Days were concerned. It is this title which I also think is suitable to bring this article to a close - 'Let the Curtain Come Down'.

Happy Xmas and a Prosperous New Year to all hobbyists from

STUART WHITEHEAD, HYTHE, SOUTHAMPTON, HANTS.

* *

To Bill, Brian, Alan, Roger, Eric Fayne and all C.D. readers, all the best.

LARRY MORLEY, HANWELL

* *

Seasonal Greetings to all readers. Wants: SOLs.

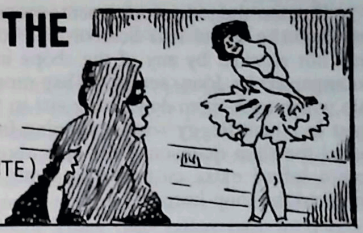
ROSEMARY KEOGH, 78 GREENVALE ROAD, ELTHAM, LONDON, SE9 1PD

* *

THE SILENT THREE AND THE TROUBLED SWANS

BY MARION WATERS

(WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARILYN WHITE)



At the start of the summer term in 1952 a new mistress joined the staff at Island School. The lady was a Miss Belmont, who was to be the assistant games mistress. There was a strong emphasis on water sports and outdoor activities at the school, so the appointment was most welcome, especially by the hard working Miss Grenville, who was in charge of physical education there.

The staff, very traditional in their outlook were a rather tough group, many of them having served in the recent war, and in other fields of endeavour. Miss Elaine Belmont was rather different. Before entering the teaching profession she had been a well-known ballerina, not quite at the top of her profession but certainly in the 'second eleven'. This fact created a great deal of interest in the school, especially among the younger girls. Miss Belmont was also a competent musician and the school orchestra began to flourish under her direction. She had worked in France for some years and was fluent in the language; on occasion she gave French lessons. School teachers in the early 1950s were expected to earn their money! Some of the older girls wondered why Miss Belmont had stopped being a dancer. "It's a bit of a come-down, being a teacher", said one sixth former. "It all depends if you can land yourself regular work", replied Mae Saunders. "At least with teaching, your money is there every month", added Celia Cope.

Soon Miss Belmont was being called upon to give ballet lessons to the younger girls. At the start of the autumn term it was announced that the school would produce a ballet to take place in the final week of the term. At first this was regarded as something of a joke in the school, but soon the amusement evaporated in the face of sustained hard work and the strains of music from 'Swan Lake' echoed throughout the school as the orchestra practised hard. Older girls were recruited to build up the cast of the production, and the gymnasium trembled under the pressure of dancing feet. In study No. 9 on the fourth form corridor, the approaching ballet had done something to disturb the usual harmonius atmosphere in the study. Study No. 9 was the 'home' of Betty Roland, Joan Derwent and Peggy West, three attractive but rather quiet members of the form.

It was taken for granted that Joan would wish to take part in the ballet for she was a graceful, artistic girl, keen on music and it was only natural that she should wish to be in the production. But when Peggy stated that she also wished to participate, Betty and Joan could hardly believe their ears. Peggy was proficient at most sports and was a top class swimmer, but her knowledge of art, music and drama was nil! To the amazement of her chums, Peggy put all her effort into ballet practice. She was strong and a good gymnast, and soon her efforts won praise from Miss Belmont. Joan was also thoroughly enjoying herself while, on the sidelines, Betty watched in quiet amazement.

For some weeks all went well, the dancers, musicians and support staff were all working and even the most cynical member of the staff or senior girls was forced to acknowledge their efforts. Then things seemed to go wrong. Miss Belmont was not her usual self. She still carried out her duties in an efficient manner but was listless, and appeared to have lost all interest in her work. There was consternation among the dancers but the girls were determined to press on. "I wonder what is wrong with Miss Belmont?" asked Joan. "She has been working too hard", replied Peggy. "Artistic temperament", chuckled Betty.

Despite their disappointment, progress with the ballet continued. Peggy obtained permission to travel into Scarborough to purchase a pair of ballet shoes as such things were not stocked by any of the shops in the village. After lunch one Saturday Peggy, accompanied by Joan, set off. They crossed over to the mainland, and there caught the train which took them down the coast to Scarborough. They visited a small shop in a side street in which Peggy was soon being fitted with the required footwear. The lady who owned the shop questioned the girls about the progress of their dance production. "We have a lot of extra custom from your school since you became interested in ballet", remarked the shop-keeper.

The two friends were delayed in their return from Scarborough because they met a group of girls from St. Hilda's a public school on the far side of the town. (There was a healthy rivalry between the two schools.) By the time the parties of girls had finished exchanging gossip, Joan and Peggy had to catch a later train.

It was after dark when they returned to Langthwaite, alighted at the station and prepared to make their way down through the village and along an unlit footpath in order to reach the main street. Suddenly Peggy's sharp ears picked up a sound and she motioned to Joan to keep silent. "We are making progress with our plans", said a woman's voice. "Do you think that Elaine Belmont will leave the school?" asked a second voice. "Let us hope so", replied the first woman. There was the sound of footsteps in the darkness, and the watching girls saw two women walking away down the path.

"What on earth is going on?" gasped Joan. "Now we know why Miss Belmont has not been too happy lately", said Peggy in a grim tone, "someone is putting pressure on her". "But why?" asked Joan anxiously. "I don't know", replied Peggy. "But I think I know one of the speakers. It was Mrs. Sledmere, one of the school governors!" "I thought her voice sounded familiar", exclaimed Joan. "Did you notice her coat?" asked Peggy. "It was a silver grey fur, not many of those in this part of the world. I remember

she wore the coat at the last speech day". That evening, in study No. 9, Joan and Peggy related what they had learned to the third member of the trio. Betty listened carefully as her friends explained their discovery.

"Now we know why Miss Belmont has been unhappy lately", she said. "But why?" asked Joan. "That is what we must find out", replied Betty. Peggy glanced across to a cupboard which contained three long green silk robes and hoods. "Do you think it is a task for the 'Silent Three'?" she asked. 'The Silent Three' was a secret society formed some years earlier by Betty, Joan and Peggy to deal with a bullying prefect. When acting as a secret group the three friends wore their green robes and hoods to conceal their identity. Since coming to Island School the 'Silent Three' had taken part in several adventures. The only person in the school who knew the true identities of the Silent Three was Rose Molloy, one of the school's maids, whom the girls had helped in their first adventure on the island.

The following day, after lessons, Miss Belmont was tidying up the room where the ballet rehearsals had been taking place. She had just completed her task when a quiet voice said. "One moment please". The mistress turned round to discover three slim figures, dressed in long green robes and hoods. The girls were masked, and the fronts of their hoods bore the numbers one, two and three. The surprised Miss Belmont was forced to laugh when she saw the robed figures. "Goodness", she exclaimed, "you must be the Silent Three". Like everyone else at Island School, she had often heard of the secret society which operated within the school, and been given descriptions of the disguise worn by the clandestine group.

Quickly the girl whose hood bore the figure one explained to the astonished teacher what Joan and Peggy had overheard the previous evening. "We know that someone has been threatening you", said the hooded girl, "we want to help". "We know that Mrs. Sledmere is involved in this matter. Please help us to bowl her out", added the girl whose hood bore the number 2. Miss Belmont gave a sigh, and began to relate her story. "As you know, in my youth I was a professional ballerina. I did well in my profession and, as you might expect, people became jealous, and I made enemies. Without going into too much detail, I was indiscreet in certain aspects of my private life. There was a scandal, and this was one of the reasons why I left dancing and turned to a more stable career. A short while ago I was approached and informed that if I did not resign my post here, details of my past would be revealed to Miss Garfield and the school governors". "Have you any idea why anyone should wish to see you leave the school?" asked the leader of the hooded group. "I guess that I must have upset someone in years gone by, and now they are having their revenge", replied the teacher. "Were you aware that Mrs. Sledmere, a school governor was involved in the matter?" asked one of the hooded girls. Miss Belmont shook her head. "No that is a surprise to me; I had no idea that she was involved in the matter".

The leader looked stern beneath her mask. "Miss Garfield, the headmistress, has a reputation for fairness. She is also aware of all the good work you have done for the school and will not dismiss you unfairly for something that happened many years ago, far away from Yorkshire. Why don't you go and see her and tell her the full facts?"

"In the meantime we will pay Mrs. Sledmere a visit and see what we can learn", added the girl marked number 3. Miss Belmont smiled: "You don't give me much choice, I will go and speak to Miss Garfield as you suggest, but please don't get yourselves into trouble on my account."

"Trust us", replied 'number 2'. With a faint rustle of silk the three hooded figures left the room, leaving a surprised mistress. "How utterly quaint", smiled Miss Belmont, "but quite charming for all that."

The following weekend the Silent Three left the island and made their way to the home of Mrs. Sledmere, which was a substantial detached house close to the neighbouring village of Robin Hood's Bay. The three girls found a quiet spot, drew on their robes, and adjusted their masks. When their disguise was complete, they quietly made their way through the garden towards the rear of the house. All appeared quiet, and there seemed to be no one at home.

"I would like a look round inside if it is possible", said Peggy. "We will have to be careful", replied Betty, "we don't want to leave any traces of our visit". Soon Peggy's sharp eyes spotted an insecure window at the side of the house. Supported by Betty and Joan, the agile Peggy clambered up and opened the window. Then she and Betty climbed in, while Joan kept watch outside.

The house was a large one, furnished in a lavish style. "How the other half live", whispered Peggy grimly. From past experience, the girls knew that a study was the best place to commence a search for incriminating evidence. There did not appear to be a room of this type on the ground floor of the house, but there was a large bureau in the dining room, so Betty decided to start her search there. With their hearts beating fast, Betty and Peggy crept into the room. Their robes and hoods provided concealment, and their rubber soled shoes enabled them to walk noiselessly. their hands were gloved - it was a cold day in any case. Betty was just about to open the bureau when Peggy heard movement elsewhere in the house.

"Quick, hide!", she gasped. Betty disappeared behind the settee in the corner of the room, and Peggy beneath a large table covered with a large green cloth which hung down almost to the floor.

Two women entered the room. The first was in late middle age, was tall and smartly dressed but with a haughty, arrogant bearing. The hooded girls recognized her as Mrs. Sledmere, one of the school governors. The other woman was much younger. She was athletic looking but had a rather shifty manner. Never dreaming that there were hidden watchers in the room, Mrs. Sledmere spoke: "I think that we have rather frightened our mutual friend Miss Belmont at Island School. I don't think that she will resign from her post willingly, but I think we can get rid of her by the end of this term." "What about Miss Garfield, the headmistress?" asked her companion, "she looks a tough old buzzard and might not wish to release a highly qualified member of her staff."

Mrs. Sledmere smiled slyly. "Miss Garfield is very 'traditional' in her outlook. Doubtless she will treat Miss Belmont in a generous fashion, but she would not wish any scandal to harm the reputation of her precious school". "Does Miss Belmont know that you are behind this affair?" asked the younger woman. "Of course not", snapped Mrs. Sledmere. "As a governor of the school I cannot be seen to be involved in anything underhand. So far I have worked through an intermediary. Needless to say I shall not reveal that you are my own niece when I recommend you as the replacement sports mistress."

From their hiding place, Betty and Peggy were tempted to seize the two schemers, bang their heads together and then drag them off to the headmistress, but wiser counsels prevailed.

A few minutes later the two plotters left the room and after a suitable interval Betty and Peggy emerged from their hiding places and quietly made their way to the unsecured window. In the garden, a very anxious Joan was waiting for them. "I thought that you had been invited to stay to tea", she said, attempting to hide her concern with a rather poor joke. "Too posh for the likes of us", chuckled Peggy beneath her mask. "Come on, let's get out of here", added Betty urgently, as they made towards the edge of the garden. "We have a lot to tell you, Joan".

The following evening, the Silent Three met with Miss Belmont in a store room in a quiet part of the school. The girls wore their robes and hoods to conceal their identities. Miss Belmont smiled with pleasure as the three hooded figures slipped noiselessly into the room. "My three mystery helpers", she smiled happily as she greeted them.

She then explained that she had spoken to the Head and made a clean breast about the episodes in her past, and pressure being put upon her to give up her post. "Miss Garfield is most fair minded", said Miss Belmont. "She's made it clear that my private life in years gone by is a 'closed book' as far as she is concerned. However, she is very anxious to avoid any scandal which might damage the reputation of the school". The Silent Three then related what they had learned at the home of Mrs. Sledmere.

Miss Belmont looked grim. "I am acquainted with Mrs. Sledmere, as a school governor, but I have never had any other contact with her. I wonder why she should be ill-disposed towards me?" "There is a younger woman, Mrs. Sledmere's niece, and she is after your job", said Peggy. "Can you tell me anything about her?" asked the teacher. "Her first name is Sheila", replied Betty. "We don't know her surname. By her appearance she could be a sportswoman of some kind." "She could also have been a dancer", added Peggy. "I don't recollect her", replied Miss Belmont. "It is some years since I was involved in ballet. In any case, dancers often have stage names, you know - 'Jane Smith' calls herself 'Isabella de Rosenburg' or something like that". The three masked girls chuckled at this.

Betty then assumed a serious tone. "I think we now have enough information to bring this matter out into the open", she explained. "We would like you to approach the "wrong 'uns" and say that you are willing to resign from Island School at the end of the term. However, you must insist on meeting them face to face - no intermediaries. I think that with the help of the school authorities we may be able to teach these schemers a lesson they will not forget in a hurry". The mistress listened carefully as Betty outlined her plans. Miss Belmont gazed intently into the face of the masked and hooded girl who seemed able to respond so well in the face of a crisis. "You are old beyond your years, my dear", she said quietly.

It was a dark, blustery day in late November when the fateful meeting took place. Miss Belmont had crossed over to the mainland and made her way through the village of Langthwaite to the tea rooms. The tea shop normally closed after the holiday season, but was available for meetings and private functions. She made her way to a table and waited for her accusers. She was soon joined by Mrs. Sledmere's niece, Sheila, who looked rather sheepish, and was obviously nervous at being required to do her own dirty work. Mrs. Sledmere was a coward as well as being devious and she lacked the courage to face her victim openly.

Miss Belmont greeted her accuser coldly, and the conversation began. "You won't remember me", said Sheila, "but we were at ballet school together many years ago". Miss Belmont replied, "I thought there was something familiar about you." "I well remember when you had your first big break", said Sheila in a spiteful tone, "That job in Paris." "An opportunity I earned by sheer hard work", replied Miss Belmont.

"It's a pity you didn't exercise the same discipline in your private life", sneered Sheila. "Now it's my turn, I'm out of work, and I want your job. You will either resign, or I shall tell the school governors about some of your 'romantic adventures' - you were quite a lively little thing in those days", she added with a cruel sneer. Miss Belmont gave a charming smile, "I think that the school governors are already aware of my rather romantic background", she said. "Mrs. Sledmere, your aunt seems to know all about me, and she is a member of the governing body. Isn't it a pity that she couldn't be here today to join us". Sheila turned a sickly shade of white, she was speechless, her plot had been exposed. "I don't know what you are talking about", she stammered. "Really", smiled Miss Belmont, "but I think you do".

Suddenly there was a commotion and a bizarre spectacle at the entrance to the tea shop. A tall woman rushed inside clad in a dark fur coat and a close fitting hat, attached to which was a veil concealing her face. She was closely pursued by the robed and hooded figures of the Silent Three. "For Heaven's sake, help me", screamed Mrs. Sledmere, "these hooded hooligans have just attacked me". Miss Belmont smiled again. "Really", she said, "I have never known the Silent Three use violence on anyone."

Swiftly Betty put up her hand and pulled the veil from the woman's face. "Mrs. Sledmere", she exclaimed, "we guessed it was you; it wasn't a very good disguise". "We found her hiding in an alleyway a short distance from the café", said Peggy. "A school governor skulking like a common criminal, not quite the done thing". "No silver grey fur today, just a common dark one", added Joan, trying to keep a straight face beneath her mask. Mrs. Sledmere was both angry and frightened. "I shall report you to the headmistress", she said in an angry tone, "but first I want to see your faces". The furious woman reached out her hand to Betty's hood. "If you attempt to expose us, we shall reveal your plot to discredit Miss Belmont and put your niece in her place", replied Betty. "Very praiseworthy conduct for a school governor", said Joan. "Just the sort of behaviour from someone who hides in back alleys", chimed in Peggy. The older woman was furious, the girls' remarks had stung her badly. "No one will believe you", she shouted. "I shall have this 'tart' removed from the school", she indicated Miss Belmont, "and I shall have you three hooded trouble-makers expelled. I shall report you immediately to Miss Garfield". The enraged woman hurled herself at Betty, but was skilfully restrained by the agile Miss Belmont. "I don't want to hurt you, but I shall do so if necessary", said the dancing mistress as she applied an arm lock to the struggling Mrs. Sledmere.

Suddenly a commanding voice said. "I think that we have heard enough". From behind a screen emerged the stout figure of Miss Ada Garfield, the headmistress of Island School. She was accompanied by a tall, distinguished looking gentleman, whom the girls recognized as Colonel Pickering, the chairman of the school governors. Mrs. Sledmere went very pale; she stopped struggling and Miss Belmont released her arm lock. The dignified chairman gave Mrs. Sledmere and her niece a look of withering scorn. "My dear young lady", he said to Miss Belmont. "I am very pleased that we have witnessed this despicable attempt to blackmail you. I am sure that your position at the school is quite secure. Should this pair of wretches attempt to damage your character, I shall bring criminal charges against them, with Miss Garfield as a witness."

Mrs. Sledmere and her niece left the café, looking distinctly sorry for themselves. Colonel Pickering then turned to the Silent Three but, to his amazement, the robed figures had vanished! "I think that the girls wish to remain anonymous", said Miss Belmont quietly. "I was going to thank them for their efforts", replied the chairman of the governors, "and to say how attractive I found their rather quaint costume". "Should I encounter the girls again, I will pass on your remarks", said Miss Belmont.

The games mistress *did* encounter the Silent Three later that evening. She thanked them warmly, but felt rather saddened when the girls declined to take off their hoods.

Rehearsals for 'Swan Lake' were pressed on with renewed vigour. The production was staged during the last week of the term, with separate presentations for the school, for parents and friends, and for the general public. The drama correspondent of the 'Yorkshire Post' praised the enthusiasm of the youthful dancers. The girls from St. Hilda's, together with the scholars from the state schools in the area, were also forced to agree that it had been a 'good show'.

At the end of the final performance Miss Belmont experienced a great feeling of relief. Her job was safe and the ballet had been a great success, despite the inexperience of the dancers. At the rear of the stage three girls were grouped closely together. There were Joan and Peggy dressed as swans, with Betty who was clad in overalls as a member of the stage staff. The mistress was perceptive enough to have a shrewd idea that the three friends were her mystery helpers. "Well done, girls", said Miss Belmont as she walked past Betty, Joan and Peggy.

"Here's to the next time." Happy Christmas Everybody!

BARRIE STARK

* *

Greetings to all.

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27 CELTIC CRESCENT, DORCHESTER, DORSET

* *

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DAVID BALL

42 BARNWELL, MELKSHAM, WILTS, SN12 7DG.

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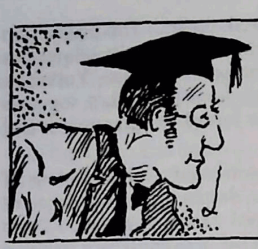


THE DECISION

BY

ANTHONY E. L. COOK

Henry Samuel Quelch smiled. Not in the manner in which most of the removites might have seen on rare occasions but a broad smile of complete and utter contentment. Before him on his desk lay a letter which had arrived by the noon day post and in the quietude of the half holiday afternoon he was re-reading for the third time. It was not that Mr. Quelch could not understand the contents of the letter. His well ordered and disciplined mind could quickly absorb such things but he wished to be quite sure that he, with human fallibility, had not missed any of its import. Satisfied at last he sat back in his chair and thought deeply for some considerable time.

In his mind's eye he saw his old university city of Oxford, which he had rarely visited since his student days - he saw the Master and his college staff dining at high table - furthermore he saw.....With a slight shake of his head he suddenly sat forward. This, he thought to himself, would not do. The matter must be given careful consideration. He must not indulge himself with idle thoughts. For the next fifteen minutes or so the Remove master walked around his study in deep contemplation. At last he donned his mortar board and gown and, slipping the letter into his pocket, left his study. With unhurried step he made his way out of the house and went in search of Dr. Locke. Whatever his decision might be, his first duty was to inform the Headmaster of the contents of the letter. Luckily Dr. Locke was in and welcomed him in his usual friendly fashion. "I apologise for disturbing you without prior warning, Headmaster" said Quelch "I would, however, appreciate a few moments of your time regarding a matter of some importance." Dr. Locke indicated a chair and, smiling benevolently, asked "Not a school problem, I hope?" "Not in the way you might assume, Headmaster. I would like you to read this letter which arrived by the noonday post."

Dr. Locke took the letter, a slightly puzzled look on his face. For the time it took to read it, there was silence in the study save the ponderous ticking of the large old clock. "Goodness me!" Dr. Locke exclaimed at last. "My dear Quelch, I must congratulate you: this is indeed an honour." "Indeed so", Quelch replied with a thin smile, and waited for the Headmaster to continue.

"Well, good gracious, so your old college want you to return as a lecturer. I have no doubt that you are thrilled at the prospect?"

"I am delighted, to say the least, to be offered a post of this standing, yet I am at the same time very surprised." "Surprised?" the Head repeated. "I would have assumed that the Master would have written to you, sir, in the first place for permission to offer such a post to a member of your staff" replied Mr. Quelch.

Dr. Locke, who was looking a little perturbed at this point and appeared only to half comprehend, nodded uncertainly.

"Yes, I see what you mean. Perhaps it was a little precipitous on his behalf but I can assure you that I take no offence. You realise, however, that this puts the school, our school, in a rather difficult position?"

Since the arrival of the letter Mr. Quelch would have been less than honest, for once, if he had suggested that he had given the school very much thought.

"I feel sure, Headmaster that it would not be impossible to find a replacement. The reputation of Greyfriars would attract a considerable number of applicants."

Dr. Locke gave the Remove master a searching look.

"Have you considered that there is a war on? There are not the up and coming young men available at the moment. Certainly not of the right calibre. In the main those who might apply would be older men. You and I have grown up with the school, my dear fellow; we understand what a school like ours is about and the traditions behind it. It will not be easy." With a certain acidity Mr. Quelch countered. "Are you suggesting that I refuse the post?" Dr. Locke shook his head. "No of course not. Forgive me I must sound selfish. My immediate thoughts turned quite naturally to the school. I have relied on your scholarship and your sound judgement through the past years and in particular I have always known that Greyfriars is in good hands at times when I am called away from duty." Quelch relaxed a little at these words. The two men talked for another half an hour at the end of which Mr. Quelch agreed that he would give the matter considerable thought and make his final decision within the next two or three days. After all, the letter had stated that a reply would be expected within seven days.

It was a very thoughtful Henry Samuel Quelch who returned to his study. His first inclination was to accept the offer. After all Oxford lectureships do not present themselves every day. Following his conversation with Dr. Locke, however, he felt duty bound to consider the school that had been his life for so many years and which, in return, had given him so much satisfaction.

Upon re-entering his study Mr. Quelch threw his mortarboard on to a nearby chair with a most uncharacteristic gesture. He was about to take off his gown when there came a knock on the study door.

"Come in!" he snapped, not really wishing to be disturbed at this stage of his personal deliberations. The door opened and Harry Wharton appeared. Seeing the look of displeasure on his form master's face he said hurriedly "Sorry to disturb you sir, but a gentleman is downstairs asking for you - he came through the gates on foot and then came straight to the house".

"Oh." The frown grew deeper, "Who is this person?"

Wharton passed a card over to his form master which informed him that its owner was Colonel Sir Oliver Carstairs. In the bottom corner was 'P.T.O.' Reversing the card the master of the Remove read 'A few moments of your valuable time would be very much appreciated'.

Although Mr. Quelch looked more than slightly irritated, still he retrieved his mortarboard from the chair and, turning to his head-boy, said "Very well Wharton, you had better ask Sir Oliver up."

Mr. Quelch's visitor must have followed Wharton closely for the junior appeared almost immediately accompanied by the imposing figure of Sir Oliver Carstairs. As the door closed Mr. Quelch rose. The two men shook hands.

"Please sit down, Sir Oliver."

Sir Oliver sat, and without preamble apologised to Mr. Quelch for what he termed his untimely intrusion without prior warning. It seemed, the master of the Remove thought, quite a day for untimely intrusions:

Sir Oliver continued: "The fact is, Mr. Quelch, it was not until I was about to leave London that I realised my journey would take me past Greyfriars. I therefore decided to take advantage of the fact and call upon you now rather than at a future date as I had planned."

"And how may I be of assistance to you?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"I will be as brief as possible." Sir Oliver sat upright in his chair showing his long years of military bearing. "You may remember my son, David Carstairs. In his last year he took the school Latin prize" Mr. Quelch's feature relaxed suddenly. "I do indeed remember, Sir Oliver. A boy of exceptional talent." Sir Oliver smiled a wry smile. "In that particular field perhaps. He gave enough of himself in other subjects to scrape through to university: to Balliol, Oxford, to be exact."

"He acquitted himself well I presume?"

"As it happened, he did. I feel that it was as much a surprise to him as to his tutors. Please don't misunderstand me. He did indeed come down with a first and his blue for rowing, but university is a far cry from the tighter confines of a public school. He played hard as well." "I fear" said Mr. Quelch "that one loses track of so many of our old boys."

Sir Oliver did not respond to the master's comment but continued. "David came down from Oxford just after the outbreak of war. He had been a member of the University Air Squadron and decided to join the RAF. After training he became a pilot with a Spitfire Squadron. I had rather hoped that he might have chosen the army following three generations of Carstairs but it was not to be." "I see" said Mr. Quelch, although he really did not see, and wondered exactly his visitor was leading up to.

"I have told you this to bring you up to date. You see David was shot down and killed a month ago."

At this the Remove master's manner changed: "My dear sir....." Sir Oliver held up his hand. "Please, there is a war on and thousands of young lives are at risk every day. David was one of the unlucky ones. It was, of course, a difficult time for my wife and myself, also for his sister to whom he was very close. However, a family decision has been made which I hope Greyfriars will honour and which does in fact include you, Mr. Quelch." At this Mr. Quelch's eyebrows rose. He let Sir Oliver continue. "We appreciate that David's name will go on the roll of honour as have those of many before him, but it has been agreed that as my son felt so strongly about the school we would also like to keep his name alive through a different channel. I have here a cheque which I hope the Headmaster and the Board of Governors will accept. This will set up a fund and found a bursary for one boy each year who decides to go on to university." At this point Sir Oliver drew from his pocket some papers and handed them to Mr. Quelch. Without comment the Remove master began to look through them. When he came to the cheque an exclamation of surprise escaped him. "Goodness me!" In silence he glanced through the rest of the papers. "This is exceedingly generous, Sir Oliver. You realise of course that I shall have to inform both the Headmaster and the Board of the full implications of the conditions which are set out in these documents?"

"I would not expect any other course. Do you see any particular point as being in dispute?" At this point Mr. Quelch reached for the letter which he received that morning. "I think you should read this." Sir Oliver read the letter while Mr. Quelch waited. When the Baronet had finished reading it he gave the master a quizzical look before making any comment. "I see, and are you thinking of accepting?" "I am thinking deeply on the matter at the moment. You must agree, I think, that such offers do not come every day. You have asked me to become a trustee of the suggested bursary. However, although you have afforded me this honour, and I take it as such, my resignation from Greyfriars would prevent me from accepting such a brief." Sir Oliver sat back in his chair. "Not necessarily, but that is a minor point. Greyfriars will miss you Mr. Quelch, you are part of the school."

"Quite. Perhaps that is as good a reason as any why I should accept?"

To the master's surprise Sir Oliver chuckled. "I can see your point of view, one feels like that now and again. Mind you, I can also see that apart from the purely academic side of the Oxford job you would be almost a free man".

"I beg your pardon?" Quelch was puzzled.

"Look at it this way. You would not be so tied to a rigid timetable, for one thing. Above all you would be dealing with a different type of boy, a more mature boy, and you would not be so involved with your students. After all, I remember when I was in India and my wife was taken seriously ill it was you who sent David home immediately by private transport. He never forgot that, but such things would not bother you in the same way at university. Also you would have the company of more like-minded staff and a way of life far removed from that of Greyfriars. More free time in which to pursue your own interests. Yes, if you accept the post there are great possibilities Mr. Quelch. Mind you, the rest of the staff there will no doubt be of 'the old school'; the younger element have been called up, but they will be back sooner or later, I feel sure".

By the end of this summing-up the Remove master wondered what was to come next, but with a rare flash of humour he said "You make it sound like a journey to the Elysian Fields." Sir Oliver Carstairs, no mean scholar himself, smiled knowingly at this and said quietly. "Perhaps my dear sir, perhaps: but who pays the Ferryman?" If Mr. Quelch was surprised at this comment he did not show it. "Who indeed?" He took a deep breath. "I will of course let Dr. Locke see your proposal and he in turn will be in contact with you. As for my part I am sure that we can come to some agreement if you insist on my role in the matter. I will also in due course inform you of my decision regarding my own future movements." "Good, and thank you for giving me of your valuable time." "It has been a pleasure, I can assure you. I only wish that your personal news might have been less traumatic. I fear our gain is by virtue of some sadness. One point, however, before you take your leave, Sir Oliver. At first glance the bursary you suggest is more than generous. Most of our boys come from families who can well afford to support their sons if they aspire to university places. If you will forgive my query, are you of the opinion that your gift will be well spent? After all, a considerable sum is involved."

Sir Oliver had risen to his feet. "Thank you for your concern. As it happens the offer is not just the whim of an old man nor is it a sudden idea just to perpetuate a name. I was having some talks with certain parties at the House of Commons a few days ago, and introduced to Butler, your education man. He told me he was of the opinion that things would change a great deal when this infernal war is over. Boys from all classes would be far more involved in better education and something of the kind of help that I suggest would be more than welcome."

Mr. Quelch was impressed. He was well aware that Rab Butler was the current President of the Board of Education and his comments were indeed food for thought.

"Thank you for telling me. Perhaps the future might well hold a new way forward for many young people. I understand more clearly the reasons behind your decision."

Mr. Quelch rose and shook Sir Oliver's hand. His visitor said. "As a matter of interest and despite my present commitment to our bank, I have been given several tasks by a government department. They are interested in gaining my advice on certain aspects of military intelligence. There is a war to be won and the older members of society from all professions are filling gaps" Mr. Quelch gave an indulgent smile. "Surely an honour!"

"Oh no" came the quick reply. "Just a stopgap, I can assure you. Thank you again for your time." As Mr. Quelch opened the door he noticed that a parcel had been left on the edge of his desk.

"A moment, Sir Oliver. You have left your package." Sir Oliver turned and with a final smile shook his head: "That is a present to you Mr. Quelch, from David."

For once Mr. Quelch failed to reply.

"Please let me find my own way down, I prefer to have a few moments to myself."

The door closed and the latest benefactor of Greyfriars had left. The Remove master, more than a little disconcerted, went over to the window and was just in time to see his recent guest making his slow way around the building. He seemed in no hurry to leave. The upright figure stood motionless for a full two minutes looking around him. Quelch realised that this man really did have an affinity with the school, and yet a feeling of irritation lingered. There were certain things about the conversation with Sir Oliver that had produced an unsettling effect. While he had pointed out the credit side of the Oxford appointment with some conviction, he had taken great care not to give one single reason why Quelch should stay on at Greyfriars, even though Sir Oliver himself was all in favour of creating something that would help the school and its pupils for some years to come. He had even suggested that he could still keep to his plans for the Bursary in which he wanted Mr. Quelch to participate whether or not he decided to re-embrace university life. All very irritating to say the least. There seemed to be something missing and the Remove master could not put his finger on the root cause of his feelings.

Returning to his desk he first of all took up the documents that Sir Oliver had left. He re-read the instructions and the terms of the bursary. It was well set out with a precision that he would have expected. The cheque, for a considerable amount, was

drawn on the Merchant Bank of Carstairs & Tollett. Gathering the details together he deposited them in his desk drawer. This would very shortly have to be brought to the notice of Dr. Locke but, meanwhile there were more pressing matters.

The package which still sat on the corner of the desk then took the form master's attention. The contents consisted of two books. The first Mr. Quelch recognised as the book of Latin verse which he had given to young Carstairs. To his surprise and gratification it appeared well thumbed, two paper markers stood proud and, after he had glanced at the verses marked, the thought went through the master's mind that perhaps his work with his pupils really did bear fruit. At this the tension of the day seemed to subside somewhat. The second volume was a greater surprise, however - a slim new volume bearing the title "Verses of Youth" by Flight Lt. David Carstairs. The biggest surprise was that of the dedication page which read 'To H.H. S. Quelch - Master and Friend'. The silence of the room seemed to be magnified, and it was sometime before Quelch could bring himself to turn the page. At last he started to read, and it was a considerable time later that the last page was turned and the book closed. Whatever his faults or virtues it cannot be said that Mr. Quelch was an emotional man, but he was deeply moved at this moment. He turned again to the dedication page and sat silently, lost in thought.

It was some half an hour later that the Remove master might have been seen striding along the path beside the river towards Courtfield. He liked walking and on this fine summer afternoon no one would have been in the least surprised to see him. The reason behind his sudden desire to walk, however, was an overwhelming feeling that he wanted to get away from the school to think. He walked, not at his usual energetic pace, but with a slow deliberation which allowed him to take in his surroundings and to think clearly and objectively. His steps took him from the school, through Popper's wood and along the path direct to Courtfield. When he arrived in Courtfield he made for Chunkleys where he partook of afternoon tea. He felt in need of sustenance, taking his time and enjoying a meal which most of the removities would have envied.

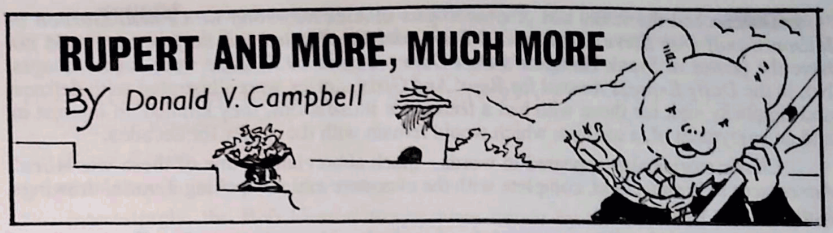
He was indulging himself, and finding the experience most enjoyable. Later, his walk back to Greyfriars was equally enjoyable. There was a spring in his step and he had the air of a man who knew exactly where he was going, in every sense.

It was very late that evening. A light was burning in the Remove master's study. He had written a short letter to Sir Oliver Carstairs which was not on the subject of the suggested bursary, important though that matter was, but of a very personal nature.

The second letter he wrote was to the Master of his old college at Oxford. As he penned the letter he felt a relief that the matter had been resolved to his complete satisfaction. He could not help remembering Sir Oliver's banter and the mention of paying the ferryman. After all, it was purely a matter of conscience in the long run, combined of course with a real sense of personal well-being. If he accepted the Oxford lectureship, he would miss not only Greyfriars but, it appeared, many friends. There was silence in the study save for the scratch of pen on paper as he wrote "I fear that I find myself unable to accept....". When he had finished, he sat back, placed the letter ready for posting, and smiled contentedly. The episode had ended as it had started, yet there was now for Mr. Quelch a real feeling of a decision well made: almost, he convinced himself, a feeling of coming home. As he prepared to leave, his eye lighted upon the manuscript of his History, of Greyfriars. Perhaps it might be a good idea to set about arranging its publication? With this thought in mind he turned out the light and quietly closed the door....

RUPERT AND MORE, MUCH MORE

BY Donald V. Campbell



Will nostalgia be as nostalgic and wonderful in the future as it is now? A look at the children's annuals of today can be depressing for us "oldies". They are full of hype, glitz, photos, fashion, the pop-scene, tv and super-nintendo. Where are the artists, where are the writers, where is the quality? - The exaggeration is just an excuse to do some nostalgic wallowing!

However, the nostalgic eye and the nostalgic mind peer backwards with heavily tinted rose-coloured spectacles. Or do they?

The Daily Express Annuals of the late thirties were large, boldly printed on heavy pulp paper - not unlike the pages of later *Holiday Annuals* - and managed a couple of colour plates in each issue. The rest was black and white with the occasional splash of red for Rupert and other odd items. Some excellent photo features added a touch of the modern and there were classic stories and (heaven preserve us) some picture strips!

The child of those times was not aware of the heavy editing that went on - a couple of examples: *"The Last of the Mohicans"* appeared as a picture-story in twenty two pictures! *"The Three Musketeers"* was despatched in only twenty frames. The picture-strip artists were not heavily into comic book, comic-strip style - that was to come later.

Stories of
SCOTT
of the
ANTARCTIC

IN SEARCH
of the
SOUTH
POLE

They lacked the visual and graphic impact of *Alex Raymond with* ***Flash Gordon*** *or Milton Caniff with* ***Steve Canyon and Terry and the Pirates*** and they certainly did not have the power of Frank Hampson's ***Dan Dare*** - but, in 1937 these were future images. No, in the *Daily Express Annual for Boys' And Girls'* stories were illustrated with deftness and simplicity and, for those who had a feeling for illustrations, they kindled an interest in, and an enjoyment of, a medium which would remain with the reader for decades.

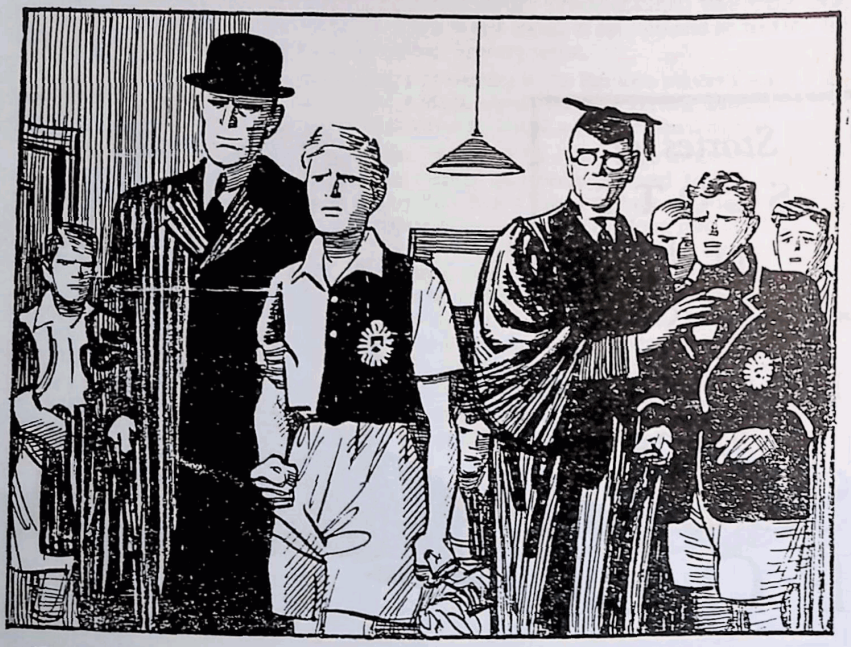
Classic stories also appeared in words - much abbreviated - one of these was *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* complete with the evocative and compelling *Tenniel* drawings. *Black Beauty* was another.

What made the Express stand head and shoulders above many "budgets" and "annuals" of the time was the breadth of the contents:

Classic stories and classic picture stories, new stories, nature studies, cookery, games, mechanical toys that anyone could make (or, possibly, anyone's Dad or Mum), scientific marvels of the day.....and more, much more, as well as Rupert.

The *Express Annual* was a quality production that gave the reader something to enjoy, things to do and things to think about. By today's standards of preparation and exploration *Scott of the Antarctic* may be seen as foolhardy but, from the pages of the *Express Annual,* he leapt out as a brave leader and a strong man to be looked up to. Some of us might never have moved on to Apsley Cherry-Garrard's incredible *"Worst Journey in the World"* without that initial stimulus - unfortunately Cherry-Garrard's book didn't have pictures!

Long before *Blue Peter* here was the "pièce de resistance" of elastic bands, sewing bobbins, cardboard boxes and the like, only missing out, in those days, with sticky-backed plastic. Here were opportunities to make an elastic-band powered "table-top" steamer, to build your very own bird table and bath, to cook ginger-bread men and sew dolly some fetching clothes.



Bob Morton Schoolboy Detective
Sets a Thief Trap

But the basis of the books was to tell stories. They may not have been of the type or the standard of Frank Richards' but they dwelt in the memory for many a year:

Pirates of the Main

The Linking Ray - a peep into the future (to 1949)

Alice in Wonderland

Black Beauty

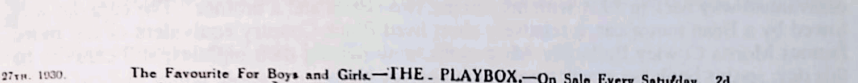
Bob Morton, schoolboy detective

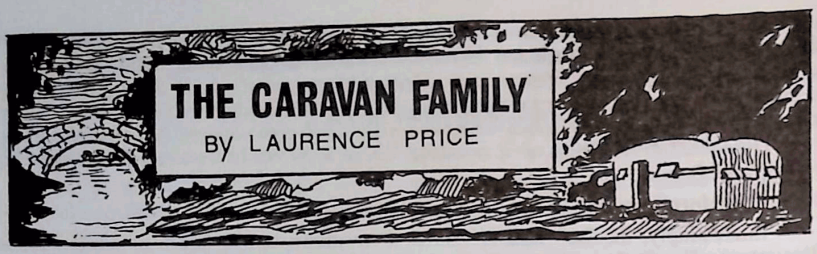
Interestingly, the Bob Morton stories were drawn by the doyen of Sexton Blake illustrators - Eric Parker.

An oddity that was difficult to understand, even then, was the series of stories about Cubby the Lion. Why have another anthropomorphic animal in the same books as Rupert? And, in any event, the stories were very poorly illustrated (apologies to Robin Hale). The contrast to those pictures was the quality and precision of Alfred Bestall and his development of the image of Rupert - moving it on and away from the inadequacies of Mary Tourtel (but bless her for originating Rupert whether in a blue or a red jersey!).

It seems that the *Express Annuals* died because of the outbreak of the second world war, to be replaced with the probably more profitable and saleable *Rupert Annuals*.

Today the likes of Super Mario can leap and spin and slide and revolve to their heart's content so long as they are not in sight or sound as, far better, this "oldie" settles down for a few reminiscences with a much pored over and rather battered, grubby and worn *Daily Express Annual for Boys' And Girls'*. Which one shall it be? - 1937 - yes! another haul on the sledges with *Scott of the Antarctic*.





It is always a pleasure to discover an unusual old book or annual and this was my experience when I purchased a children's book this summer in Sherborne, Dorset, called "The Caravan Family" and written by M.D. Hillyard.

The book has a delightful cover showing the family in an early thirties maroon car towing a cream and green caravan over a rustic stone bridge, somewhere deep in the English countryside. A shepherd drives his flock of sheep behind them, a little boy stops fishing to wave, a dog barks excitedly and a scared chicken scampers away. The book is full of evocative colour plates and good line drawings chronicling their adventures in the caravan, all the work of Raymond Shepherd.

"The Caravan Family" is a real slice of nostalgic, Arcadian romance - a paean to the then novelty and joys of motoring and caravanning on the open road, written in that gentle, optimistic and rose coloured style so typical of the period. There are certain adventures that the children have which would strike fear into the heart of the average 'nineties parent, but such was the more innocent world that children inhabited in the thirties, and even the fifties too. Theirs is a safe world people with kindly, caring adults from all strata of society, examples of which will become self evident as the story progresses.

As a child I caravanned with my parents and sister in the sixties, and my father caravanned way back in 1931 with his parents, two sisters and a brother. The caravan was towed by a Bean motor car, a relatively short lived Black Country equivalent of the more famous Morris Cowley Bullnose. My parents, now nearing their eighties, still caravan to this day, so this book has struck a particular chord with me.

Time now to meet the Caravan family and to discover what adventures befall them. There are three children, Patsy, the oldest, Tony in the middle, and Paul the youngest.

"It really is the most awful shame:" cries Patsy one sunny August morning, "Poor Daddy has not been away for a single holiday for more than three years and Mrs. Harris can't let the family have a cottage by the sea after all." So they won't be going anywhere because Daddy's old shares won't pay. This suggests it's 1932 or '33, three or four years after the great Wall Street stock market crash leading to the world slump, the Depression and the high unemployment that reached its peak in England in 1932. 3 million out of a total work force of 12.5 million were out of work, and perhaps Daddy is one of the unlucky one in four.

But very good news arrives in the form of Mrs. Reed, bursting into the room with a letter. "Oh, children, Daddy's actually sold his book - and sold it most awfully well too!" Patsy feels that the money must go in the bank but Mr. Reed assures the children they're going on a real holiday - "at least a month wherever you like, so long as it's in England of course, and not too ruinous."

For the children it's like a fairy tale - a chance to go to the sea, or the moor, and see old buildings, bridges and thatched cottages.

Mr. Reed confirms they can take out the car licence again and Tony suggests that they go in a trailer caravan. Mr. Reed gladly agrees that to hire a four berth one, and he can sleep in the car with one of the front seats turned around. And, of course, Colin the shaggy white puppy, half Sealyham, half fox terrier, can come too.

"It's going to be a Magic Carpet - a real one for once," Paul says solemnly.

A brief interlude to indulge in a flight of fancy regarding the 'old car'. Despite some recent financial problems the family give the impression of being quite well-heeled and in comfortable, middle class circumstances. The lovely maroon saloon on the cover and many of the illustrations in the book suggests the car to be based on a Riley, a definite step up from an Austin, Morris or Ford. Attach a 'glorious green and white caravan' with a lantern roof - probably a popular Eccles, and the Caravan family are all set for a series of adventures.

On a sunny Monday morning the fairy tale has come true and they are off to an unknown destination, the "Magic Carpet" towed behind. After some hours of travelling they come to a great moor and, surrounded by gorse, heather and loneliness, decide to stop on a little lawn by the water's edge. Colin sets off rabbit hunting. The children can't decide whether to pick heather or whortleberries but in the end decide on a paddle, while Mr. Reed sleeps on the turf and Mrs. Reed gets the lunch. And what a lunch it is. Cold chicken, salad, pasties, jelly, tartlets, raspberries and cream, lemonade too and cider for Mr. Reed.

But where is the rabbit hunting Colin? Nowhere to be seen. So begins the first adventure of the Caravan family.

Mr. and Mrs. Reed decide the family must all go off in different directions to find Colin. The youngest, Paul, sets off alone and comes across a gypsy caravan. The gypsy family have not seen any dog like Colin, but the mother is genuinely concerned that Paul may be lost. He tarries long enough to see the caravan, packed with old clothes, broken toys, birds in cages, pots and pans and 'babies and small children in all kinds of odd places'. Paul thoroughly enjoys himself making friends with the gypsies' horses and five or six dogs, when he hears his family calling his name. He hurriedly thanks the gypsies for their hospitality and runs off in the direction of the voices to learn that Colin has been found ages before, asleep in the caravan.

All's well that ends well, but how sadly different might be the story today. They settle in the caravan for the first night, one curtain left open to show the moon shining above a patch of fir trees on the moor. There is the sound of owls far off and the tinkling river nearby.

"Sea or town next," asks Mr. Reed, "or more country?"

They are going along a narrow lane between high hedges smothered in flowers and ferns, tall mallows and ragwort. Through every gate they see the corn being cut and Mr. Reed points out the very latest 'self-binder' for gathering sheaves of corn. It is still horse-drawn but he proclaims how wonderful neatly the corn is cut and tied as it used to be such a long job in 'the old days'.

They seem to be somewhere in Devon and as they approach the coastal town of 'Dalmouth' they see a small quay and a jumble of brown-sailed fishing boats spread before them, and beyond that mile upon mile of red cliffs and yellow sand. They find a caravan resting place in a sunny thyme scented field above the cliffs. Mrs. Reed has already remarked of Dalmouth that it's still unspoilt. (So unspoilt, in fact, that in those pioneering motoring and caravanning days they can choose to pitch almost anywhere they wish unrestricted by the onerous regulations of today, necessary as these have become to stem the mushrooming of "shanty" sites as increasing numbers of mobile urban families have sought holiday arcadias.)

The Caravan family decide to stay for three weeks at Dalmouth, spending the time fishing, visiting caves, shrimping, collecting shells and seaweed, and sailing and rowing. There are expeditions inland too, visiting farms and villages, helping with harvesting, milking the cows and butter making. And Mr. Reed also has time to half finish another book. Eventually they move on towards the city of Salchester where there is to be a big fair, and where there is a huge cathedral and some flying to see. As they travel a thunderstorm looms and they shelter in the hayloft of a barn where they are joined by a tall young man called Andrew Carew who is walking to Salchester. He reveals that he is a pilot with a private monoplane and, in return for a lift, promises to take up the children from the aerodrome at Salchester.

The next day is one to remember for Patsy, Tony and Paul, as each enjoys a three minute flight: then they explore the town, with a visit to the fair in the evening.

All too soon, it is time to go home after their memorable holiday in the "Magic Carpet".

An 'interlude' of three poems follows, including a little piece of whimsy where one of the children imagines what could happen if the car and caravan could fly. The last verse refers to visiting "Grey Owl" and his beaver friends...." (Grey Owl of course was really an Englishman named Archie Belaney, who was 'adopted' as a young man by the Ojibway Indians of Canada because of his expertise and deep understanding of tracking and the ways of the Wilderness and its lore. He was to become renowned as a beaver conservationist and, although certain aspects of his life were both romanticised and controversial, he did a great deal to further the cause of wild life conservation decades before this became the norm. It is as that romanticised but remarkable 'Red Indian' that he is portrayed in the poem, some years before his tragically early death at the age of fifty in 1938.

Later on, in the Autumn, the children are longing for another caravan holiday when Mr. Reed announces that there's been a fire at their school leaving it too damaged for the pupils to return for sometime. (One wonders exactly how often this particular event has been portrayed in children's fiction to allow for adventures in termtime! All is set, therefore, for a ten day autumn holiday.

So the Caravan family set off into the countryside past golden red lines of fallen beech leaves and gleaming yellow birches dazzling amongst the dark firs. They come to the Downs and soon see the tower of a lovely church with a thousand year old yew in the churchyard. They spend a happy time looking at the Norman doorway, the old carved seats, lancet windows and great black Jacobean pulpit. Tony asks to go up the tower while the family continue looking at the outside of the church.

Then they see two caravans, one just like their own, and another, a little white caravanette, tiny but very smart and expensive looking. The front caravan slows, almost to a halt, and the family notice its door is ajar.

To their dismay, young Tony, having finished climbing the church tower, runs towards it and jumps inside the caravan which now speeds off and disappears. The family run to their car and prepare to unhitch the caravan so that Mr. Reed can follow quickly in pursuit.

"Can I help?" asks a familiar voice.

It is their rich airman friend calling from the white caravan.

The situation is hastily explained and with Mr. Reed as passenger, Mr. Carew sets off to chase the caravan carrying Tony. All is soon happily resolved as they return with Tony who has not, in fact, been abducted. He explains that he soon knew he'd got into the wrong caravan and, as it went up a hill, slower and slower, he simply got out and started walking back down the road, singing and looking for blackberries.

It is decided that Mr. Carew will travel with them, firstly to Hurstable for the carnival and then on to Danton for a Pony Fair.

They all decide to enter a float in the Carnival, for which they use the car and caravans, covered over and disguised as an immensely large and superb dragon. Proud Patsy receives the special visitor's prize for the most original entry.

When they get to the Pony Fair the children decide to buy a birthday present for Mr. Carew which turns out to be a lame pony they have bought for fifteen shillings from a gypsy. Fortunately Mr. Carew is delighted, assuring them that his groom can get rid of the pony's stiffness and that it will be wonderful for his nephew to ride it when he comes to visit.

Next day, the family set off in advance of Mr. Carew in the pouring rain. The rain lasts all day and the going is difficult. In the evening they take shelter in a farmer's field, sheltering under some chestnut trees. The rain stops at last and they see a river shining through the trees. Later on there is a flooding, with water up to the Caravan's Wheels, and

the children are evacuated on horseback to a warm and friendly farmhouse. Another treat is in store when they have to go home by steam train, while the car and caravan are being dried out. So ends the autumn caravan holiday!

* * * * * * *

Christmas passes: it is Spring, and the best surprise of all is revealed. Mr. Reed has has bought the caravan so it is now their permanent property. Once again they set off with the "Magic Carpet", hoping for excitement and adventure. They make a list.

One. Kidnapped. Two. Starvation or nearly. Three. Chased by wild animals. Four. Lost on a desert island. Five? They can't think of anything.

Mr. Reed recalls a snowstorm in May, when the snow covered the laburnum and lilacs and weighed all the branches to the ground.

Number five, 'Snowstorm' writes Peter.

Their father tells them to watch and listen for birds. Chaffinches, blue tits, linnets, golden crested wrens and swallows with red waistcoats.

They stop in woodland and the children set off to pick primroses. Some way into the woods they see a village across the fields and remember they need to buy Mrs. Reed a birthday present. Perhaps they can get something for her at the village shop?

They eventually reach the village and find a shop run by an elderly woman where they buy pencils and some notepaper. But they have lost their way back. The shopkeeper realises that they've come from Maple Wood and gets her son to guide them safely back. Meanwhile; of course, their parents are anxiously searching for them.

They spend a happy week in the woods, awoken by a cuckoo every morning, after which they decide to travel to Penkerry Beacon and to visit Mr. Carew who lives in Penkerry Count nearby.

Half a mile from the top of the Beacon they park the car and caravan and walk to the summit. but the weather seems unseasonably cold, more like February. Then a large speck of white falls.

"Snow!" exclaims everyone at once, and the flakes begin to fall thick and fast. They run for the shelter of the caravan, the snow storm develops into a blizzard and by the next morning the family are almost snowed in. However they put on their gumboots, clear the snow from the door and walk to Penkerry Court where they are warmly greeted by Mr. Carew.

The children quickly make friends with his nephew, Harry. While the car and caravan are being dug out the children meet Billy the pony, now fit and strong and no longer lame; and pet rabbits and peacocks too. And there is till time for one last adventure as they find secret passages in the house and dress up as highwaymen and huntsmen from old clothes found in the little west turret room. And it is agreed that Harry will travel in the caravan too, and stay with the family for a few days.

This book of delights ends in this way:

'Paul knelt up on the seat and looked at the caravan coming along so smoothly behind them.

"Our own for ever and ever," he said.

And so, through woods full of new leaves and lanes full of new flowers, the Caravan family made its way home once more.'

Christmas Greetings

and

Best Wishes

for 1995

to all readers

of the C.D. and Annual

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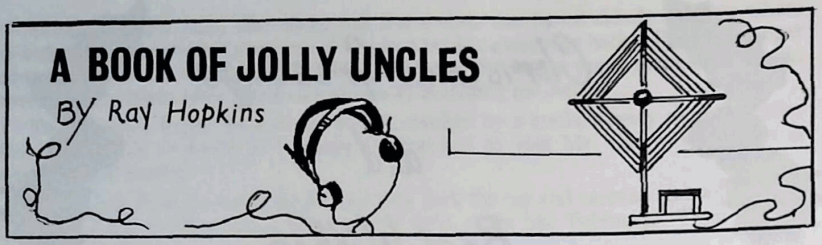

"*Jolly* Uncles!" you exclaim. "We must be back in the light-hearted twenties!"

As indeed we are. Jolly? Well, listen to this, the opening blast from "Keep on Smiling", by Uncle Joe from Birmingham. "Hullo boys! Ha! Ha! and likewise He! He! - not to say Ho! Ho! As we say at the end of a strenuous rehearsal, wiping perspiration from manly brow, "That's that!" So it is; but there's a lot in it - in laughter, I mean."

And how about this for a "narrative hook" which creative writing instructors impress on hopeful would-be's: "I wonder whether you would like to hear about a big "leg-pull" by wireless? You would? Right!"

That is how Uncle Jim opens his story and goes on to tell of an entirely imaginary dinner with speeches and guests including a titled person, the Mayor of the non-existent town of Purchall and a special guest of honour, the invented Nawab of Pingh. The Purchall Improvement Society was the venue for the dinner and the sound effects as of a crowd at table conversing and with the occasional gust of laughter were supplied by the rest of the Newcastle studio staff. The totally fictional broadcast was entirely successful though the whole thing was given away next morning by the daily papers. Sounds like a good item for the front page on the First of April. And perhaps it was.

But what is this bloomin' book, you ask? I haven't said have I? Perhaps that's my narrative hook. Bite on it!

These jolly Uncles are the authors of the stories and articles which appear in HULLO BOYS! published courtesy of the B.B.C. by Cecil Palmer, 49 Chandos Street, W.C.2., and has a copyright date of 1924 on the reverse side of the title page but not on the cover where the year usually appears on Annuals. Which leads me to think it may be a "one-off" rather than an annual Annual, although the cover is embossed in gold lettering "The Wireless Uncles' Annual" as well as an illustration showing two boys in short trousers enjoying something they are listening to through what we used to call "ear-phones". The conjunction of the year with B.B.C. surprises me because that must have been about the time when my Dad was having a glorious time building his Cossor Melody Maker which, with separate round-shaped loud speaker to stand on the top, supplanted his previous favourite toy, a "Crystal Set". Into this ingenious gadget he plugged ear-phones and, as he twiddled the knobs, the rest of us would hear glad cries of "Hilversum", "Dortmund", Daventry", and other exotic sounding place names. When the knob found the London transmitter he would cry, "2.L.O.". The surprise on my part was that I was not expecting to read in this volume that it was already the British Broadcasting Company in 1924. I was tempted to ask him, if 2.L.O. meant London, where then was ONE L.O.? But I thought better of it not wanting to see the shame in his eyes at his beloved child suddenly transforming into an imbecile.

Each story and article in this annual contains the photograph of the Uncle/Author, two of them being shown in their Great War uniforms, and giving the location of the wireless stations where they worked. A surprising number of locations come to light. The following cities are named (the numbers are the Uncles involved): Birmingham (3), Bournemouth (1), Cardiff (1), Edinburgh (1), Glasgow (2), Hull (1), Liverpool (1), London (5), Manchester (1), Newcastle (3), Plymouth (1) and Sheffield (1). So, by 1924 the bounds of the BBC were well and truly spread.

Addressing readers as "Kiddies" and the use of print size found today in the Ulverscroft Large Print books in public libraries indicates that the book was aimed at what are now called "pre-teens". Perhaps this is why some of the contents are instructive rather than fictional. Thus we find in "How Broadcasting Started", by Uncle Caractacus from London revealing that broadcasting began in the U.S.A. about 1920 but in an entirely haphazard fashion. The transmitting stations were all over the country and all on one wavelength so the transmissions interfered with each other and nobody could hear anything properly. From the untutored beginnings in America, British engineers were able to learn valuable lessons and resolve the three main problems. British listeners-in were thus provided with a much better service. One company only should control the transmissions; all listeners had to pay to listen, and a range of wavelengths was used so that no one program could interfere with the reception of another.

"Keep on Smiling", mentioned at the beginning of this article, urges that "a sense of humour will help toward a sense of duty ...don't worry too much about dignity, boys. Get on with the job, and smile!" says Uncle Joe of Birmingham.

Uncle Herbert, Sheffield in "Play the Game", begins (quote) "All you kiddies have heard of cricket. Well, cricket is, no doubt, the cleanest game we have in England today. Men who play cricket are generally of that clean type of sportsmen that we all worship as "Heroes". They all play the game just for the love of it, and a dirty action is unknown. That is why at college, when someone wishes to do an unkind action, we sometimes say, "That's not cricket" or "Play the game". A well-rolled pitch, the spotless flannels, and healthy look of the players seem to instil a spirit of pure sportsmanship such as no other game can. The playing fields of this dear old country of ours have seen the making of many a man who has gone out to play the game of life, and because of his training on these fields has sacrificed his most valuable possession - his very life - in order that you children should be able to say "He played the game". Do you "play the game?" Think! There are so many little things you may do in the course of a day that are not "cricket". (end quote).

An interesting, educational point is made by Uncle Jeff of London, one which I learned early on after leaving school at age 14 and being flung into the grimly earnest adult world of Johnson & Phillips, Electrical Engineers of Charlton. He says writing something down you want to remember will make you recall it much more efficiently than just listening and making a mental note. Here's how he puts it: "How many of you, wanting to remember a "footer" fixture, write the date in your book, and do not refer to the book

again, but still remember the match? You have written it, and your brain has made a little photograph of the page. So it seems that the eye is a better medium than the ear for communicating events to the brain."

"Rabbit", by Uncle Leslie, Hull, using the tale of two school friends, points the moral "You can do anything if you try hard enough." They both aspire to be great runners but Goggles always beats Rabbit, until one time they are chased off a farmer's land by a savage dog. Fear lends him wings and Rabbit manages to crash to safety through the hedge ahead of his friend.

The fact that wireless was available in 1924 is brought into the story "The Willow Copse", by another Uncle Leslie from Edinburgh, a school story where Dibs and Guy are "whole-hearted devotees of wireless, and spoke glibly of wavelengths, valves, condensers ... much to the gratification of their science master ... small sets of all shapes and sizes were made by the boys in their spare time." Out of bounds, Guy and Dibs see a man acting in what they believe to be a suspicious manner carrying a black bag. They lose sight of him briefly as he enters a willow copse and as he leaves they see he no longer has the bag. Forbidden to use the home-made wireless sets outside of prescribed hours, they listen-in surreptitiously and hear that their headmaster's safe has been broken into and a large sum of money stolen. Though they are condemning themselves in two areas, being out of bounds and listening to the wireless at a time when they shouldn't, they realise they must tell the Head what they know. The Police later find the bag of stolen money hidden in the copse and keep watch to capture the thief when he returns to retrieve it. there is a reward for information but sadly for the boys, the reward does not go to them but is donated to the local hospital. Gross disobedience to one's headmaster, even though being the means of recovering the stolen money, cannot be condoned, much less rewarded.

HULLO BOYS! unusually for an annual, is printed in photogravure and colour by The Sun Engraving Company of Watford, the words in several different colours: blue, green, rust and brown, and the paper is that hard-to-turn type resembling blotting paper. It contains the work of many illustrators among whom are Arch Webb, C.E. Montford, Frank Crozier and Richard Ogle. Will Dyson contributes some amusing full-page-in-colour paintings.

The obligatory letter from the Editor appears on the back of the title page addressed as follows: "Hullo Nephews!" and closes "Cheerio! and keep smiling, Your Step-Uncle, The Editor." There is also a P.S. which states, "Have a peep at your sister's copy of "Hullo Girls!" which the Aunties have written. Some say it is a better volume than this. But don't you believe it."

An unusually divertingly different annual with a wider range of features than those which most of us remember with affection containing fictional stories of favourite characters from weekly story papers.

THE MAGNET Various issues wanted from 43 to 989. Condition vg (no guillotining, no sellotaping).

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INTRODUCTION TO FRANK RICHARDS' SILVERWINGS STORIES

by Una Hamilton Wright

Uncle Charley, as I think of Frank Richards, lived with my family when I was young and it was natural for him to undertake the bed-time story for the baby, in other words, me. Having read and re-read all the traditional fairy stories - *Little Red Riding Hood* was a great favourite - he then started to make up stories featuring the fairy Silverwings who divided her time between Fairyland and the Great Green Forest here on earth. The author was very fond of trees - the park where he used to take me for outings had a wealth of them. I used to picture all the stories set in this park or else on Hampstead Heath which was adjacent to it.

The Silverwings stories started when I was five and *Silverwings and the Grey Wolf* was an early one. Although I loved *Little Red Riding Hood* I was terrified of the wolf. I think Uncle's original idea with this Silverwings story was to try to humanise the wolf and make him less frightening. I leave it to the reader to judge whether he was entirely successful.

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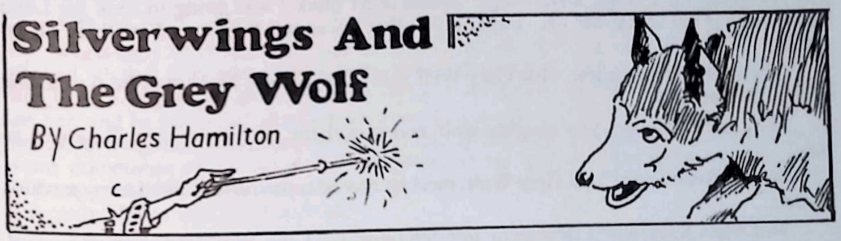

One morning when Silverwings had finished brushing the queen's hair, she said to the Queen of the Fairies:

"I should like to fly down to the Earth today, and visit the nice old woodman who lives in the house in the forest."

So the Queen of the Fairies said:

"Very well, Silverwings, but be sure that you are home by sunset."

So Silverwings asked Fairy Appleblossom to look after her kitten while she was gone, and to be sure to give it its milk. And then she took her fairy wand, and flew down to the Earth. It was a fine autumn day, and the leaves of the trees in the forest were turning a beautiful brown, and Silverwings thought that the Earth was as beautiful as Fairy Land. But all of a sudden she saw Grey Wolf come out of his den in the thicket, and walk very quietly along a path in the forest, and Grey Wolf had a very wicked look in his eyes. So Silverwings stopped to speak to him, and stood in the path and said:

"Good morning, Grey Wolf."

"Good morning, Silverwings," answered Grey Wolf, as politely as possible, for he was afraid of fairies, because he was a bad wolf.

"Where are you going, Grey Wolf?" asked Silverwings.

Now Grey Wolf was going to look for Little Red Riding-Hood, who was taking a parcel of nice things to her grandmother who lived in a cottage near the wood. Grey Wolf thought that Little Red Riding-Hood would make a nice breakfast. But he did not dare to tell Silverwings so, and he told her a story.

"I am going to pick some flowers in the forest for my friend the Brown Bear," he answered. "I am going to take him a bunch of primroses."

Silverwings laughed.

"But primroses don't grow in the autumn," she said. "They grow in the spring. There are no primroses in the forest at this time of the year."

"Oh!" said Grey Wolf. "I... I... I mean buttercups. I wonder what made me say primroses."

"But there are no buttercups," said Silverwings. "Buttercups grow in the summer, and now it is autumn, and will soon be winter."

"Oh dear!" said Grey Wolf. "Are you sure, Silverwings?"

"Quite sure!" said Silverwings.

"Then I think I had better go home!" said Grey Wolf, and he turned round and went into the wood.

But he did not go far, because he did not really mean to go home. He lay down in a thicket, and watched until Silverwings had gone away. Then he came out again, and whisked along the path to look for Little Red Riding-Hood. But Silverwings was watching him from a tree-top, and all of a sudden she flew down, and said:

"Why, where are you going, Grey Wolf? This is not your way home."

"Oh dear!" said Grey Wolf, feeling that Silverwings had caught him out. "I... I... I was just going for a walk, Silverwings. Please don't think I was going to look for Little Red Riding-Hood to eat her up. I assure you that I was not thinking of anything of the sort."

Then Silverwings knew what Grey Wolf was after, for she knew that he was telling stories. So she said:

"Go home at once, you naughty wolf, and stay there, or something will happen to you."

"Yes, Silverwings," said Grey Wolf, meekly, and he turned and walked away towards his den.

But when Silverwings flew away into the trees, the Grey Wolf turned around again, and started at a very quick run to look for Little Red Riding-Hood.

Then Silverwings made herself invisible, and came down into the path, without Grey Wolf seeing her. And Grey Wolf grinned like anything when he thought he was quite alone, thinking that Silverwings had gone back to Fairy Land. But she was close beside him all the time, though he could not see her or hear her moving.

Silverwings stretched out her wand, and touched Grey Wolf on the tip of his long sharp nose.

Grey Wolf jumped.

"Oh dear!" he exclaimed. "What is that tickling my nose?"

He could not see anything, and he could not make out what it was. He passed his paw over his nose to brush it off, whatever it was, and Silverwings touched his nose again and tickled it with her wand, and Grey Wolf gave a roar. He scratched his nose with his paw, thinking it must be an ant or a fly that was tickling him, and scratched so hard that a piece of skin came off the tip of his nose, and he gave another roar.

Then Silverwings stepped back and watched him, trying not to laugh, because she did not want Grey Wolf to hear her, and find out that she was there.

Grey Wolf rubbed his nose into the earth, and it felt all right again, so he said "Bother that fly! I've got rid of that wretched fly at last! And now for my breakfast."

He trotted on again to look for Little Red Riding-Hood. Silverwings reached out with her wand, and ticked his left front foot.

"Oh dear!" howled Grey Wolf. "There is that wretched fly again, and now he is tickling my foot. Ow! Ow! I never knew there were so many flies in this forest. Wow!"

He lifted his foot from the ground, and ran along on three legs. Then Silverwings tickled his right hind leg, and Grey Wolf yelled.

"Oh dear! There is another beastly fly, and now he is tickling my back leg! Oh! Ow!".

He lifted his right back leg from the ground, and now he was hopping along on two legs. Then Silverwings tickled his other fore-foot, and Grey Wolf lifted that from the ground too, and being only on one leg now, he fell right over, and rolled into the ditch beside the path. In the ditch there were a lot of stinging-nettles, and as Grey Wolf rolled into them he roared so loud that the forest was filled with echoes. Silverwings could hardly help laughing, but she kept silent, so that Grey Wolf should not hear her.

Grey Wolf scrambled out of the ditch at last, and glared round him, but he could not see the flies that he thought had been tickling him. So he started off again. Then Silverwings reached out with her wand, and ticked the tip of his long shaggy tail. Grey Wolf jumped right up into the air, and roared in a fearful rage.

"Oh dear! Oh, my word! That horrid fly has come back, and now he is tickling my tail!"

Grey Wolf turned round and tired to get at the end of his tail, to bite off the fly. But he could not quite reach his tail with his teeth, and he went round and round and round like a roundabout, chasing his tail, but never quite catching it. He went round faster and faster and faster, snapping at his tail with his teeth. He looked so funny that Silverwings could no longer help laughing, and she laughed out quite suddenly and loud.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Then Grey Wolf heard her, and he stopped all of a sudden, and howled: "It isn't a fly after all, it's that fairy Silverwings all the time. I'll bite her." He was in such a bad temper now that he forgot that he was afraid of fairies. As Silverwings was invisible he could not see her, and he ran about snapping with his great teeth, hoping to catch her and bite her. But Silverwings easily kept out of his way, and all the time she tickled Grey Wolf with her wand, sometimes on his nose, and sometimes on his feet, till Grey Wolf was quite wild with rage. And at last he was so tired with jumping about that he lay down in the grass and panted for breath, and cried out:

"Oh, leave off, leave off! Do leave off! I'll be a good wolf ... I'll be a very good wolf ... I'll be an awfully good wolf ... I'll be the best wolf that ever was, if you will only leave off! Oh dear! Please leave off! Kindly leave off! For goodness sake, leave off! I'll be such a good wolf if you'll only leave off!"

Then Silverwings left off tickling him with her wand, and said:

"Go home to your den, and be a very, very good wolf, and remember that I shall keep an eye on you. Go to your den at once, and don't dare to look round."

So Grey Wolf crawled away. But when he had gone a little way, he looked round to see if Silverwings was still there. And as soon as he turned, the wand tickled his nose again, and Grey Wolf gave a yell.

"Oh leave off! I'm going! I'm going as fast as I can! Can't you see I'm going?"

And then he ran off as fast as his legs could carry him, and never stopped till he was safe in his den.

(Copyright Una Hamilton Wright)

We the collectors & readers of the C.D. monthly & Annual Wish you Mary, our Editor — "The Compliments of the Season", and our undying thanks!

BUNTER'S DIAGNOSIS

by Donald V. Campbell

(After Dr. Nandu Thalange, with permission)

Endocrinology (the study of the endocrine glands and their secretions) is not a part of my regular round - unlike that of Dr. Nandu Thalange. However, endocrinology became an exciting issue when Nandu applied it to the fat and fulsome frame of William George Bunter. I wonder; do we agree with Nandu's proposition that he had managed to:

> *"Diagnose Bunter's medical problem and find the cause and reasons for his behaviour. He is obviously suffering from a classic case of...?"*

These ideas were backed up with the presentation of his clinical findings on an autumnal evening in Leeds. The group of Old Boys (and Girls) were rapt and attentive (if partly bemused) and enthralled throughout. This note is an attempt to summate as simply and as lightly as possible his final diagnosis.

It should be mentioned that it is not a new idea to apply medical research to the condition of historical figures. Napoleon, Abraham Lincoln and one Adolf Hitler have all been "done". Lincoln, apparently, would have died from Marfan's Syndrome had the assassin's bullet not got him first. Technically speaking he would have suffered "dissection of the aorta" or (for us medical philistines) a burst heart!

Charles Hamilton knew of medical research and developments; he once wrote:

> *Medical research never stands still, dreadful diseases unknown to our simple forefathers have been discovered, not to say invented, and brought within reach of the poorest. Progress continues."*

What we do not know is if he was aware of the possible medical reasons for Bunter's traits:

> *His endless and devoted pursuit of food.*
> *His short sightedness.*
> *His ventriloquial skills.*
> *His unusual squeaky voice.*
> *The imbalance between his short height and his wide frame.*
> *And, his pathological need to lie.*

All of these features can be used to support the medical opinion that he was suffering from... something. But what? There are clues to Bunter's condition that are there for all to see.

Charles Hamilton admitted that Bunter was an amalgam of at least three people. Despite the mixed sources it is the whole figure of the boy that is not only well rounded but capable of providing information about his clinical condition.

Bunter's growth and shape are immediately suspect. His measurements are given in more than one place but certainly appear in "GREYFRIARS - A PROSPECTUS"/J.S. BUTCHER/1965: *Bunter: 15yrs 1 month 4'9"(145cm) 14st 12.5ozs(97kg)*

When measured against his obvious girth and his weight of nearly fifteen stones we have a picture that reflects stunted or abnormal growth. When checked against the standard medical growth charts he was, and is, overweight and off the scale for his age. When compared to the average expected weight for this age group he weights in at fifty per cent more than the "normal" boy. He is also way off the height scale being under-height for his age by some nine inches.

Nandu suggested a number of possibilities and syndromes from which Bunter might be suffering:

Hypothroidism which Bunter might be thought to match must be thrown out as, however foolish, silly or slow Bunter is, he is certainly not a cretin. Cretin is the technical term for the least advantaged, uneducable and simple minded. The native guile that Bunter constantly demonstrates (living so well in the rafters of Wharton Lodge for example in *The Mystery of Wharton Lodge*) is hardly cretinous behaviour. We can add to this rejection the fact that however fat Bunter may be he has not got a goitre!

Laurence-Moon and the related Bardet-Beidl syndrome (polydactilism) have to be rejected because Billy may have acquisitive "paws" but they don't boast extra fingers.

Other syndromes and conditions rejected for various good reasons included: Carpenter's Syndrome, Biemond's Syndrome and Bjorson-Forsman-Lehmann Syndrome. The latter identifies, for good measure, a small head, an abnormal face, drooping and "bobbing eyes". Bobbing for Apples comes to mind, particularly at Christmas, but - bobbing eyes? A thought - could this be Bunter's "owl-like blinking"?

What Bunter is suffering from was only identified in 1956 yet the ever-prescient Charles Hamilton has amalgamated sufficient of the identifiable traits for us to be able to agree with Nandu that he suffered from *Prader-Willi* syndrome. Yes, I know, but it's true - Prader-Willi syndrome is the culprit. The Swiss professor who identified it is still alive and finding syndromes even as I write.

A standard text on Prader-Willi syndrome offers this drawing of a typical boy sufferer

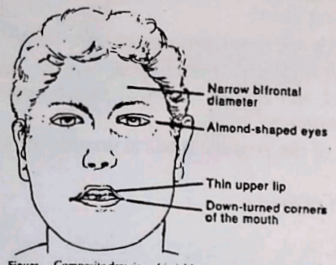

Figure. Composite drawing of facial features in Prader-Willi syndrome.

400 PRADER-WILLI SYNDROME

William George Bunter??

Bunter normally has slicked-down hair - so it is darker than the reality and, of course, there are his "goggles". I have altered the second picture only to the extent of changing hair and adding glasses and his wobbly chin. You must decide if we have a "fair" likeness of the fat bounder. For myself (but I am biased) I suggest the answer is yes! Narrowing of the forehead matches nicely the references to Bunter's "Bullet-Head" but there are better and more persuasive connections to be made.

To identify a Prader-Willi sufferer there is a checklist of points to match to a candidate. The major of these score 1 point each. The minor score a halfpoint. A total of 6 points is sufficient to identify positively a sufferer. We shall find that Bunter amasses 7 or more!

Major (I have starred those that seem to match Bunter)

The argument goes something like this:

* *Late changes of puberty including delayed voice breaking.* Billy has a high-pitched voice.

* *Learning disabilities.* There is nothing more certain than that Bunter has a loathing for education which manifests itself in any and every dodge possible to get out of anything resembling work. His spelling is *'atroshus'* and *'skool'* is not enjoyed half as much as the hols.

Characteristic facial features. Perhaps the argument here is a little weaker but even if we deduct the point for his *"Bullet-Head"* the total score will still "prove" the case.

* *Food-related behaviour problems.* Here we are on the safest ground of all. Compulsive eating is Bunter's forte. Day and night, it is all the same to him. He does not go so far as the worst of the PWS sufferers who will scavenge in dustbins to assuage their compulsion. But has he got food-related behaviour problems? *Has he not!*

Minor

* *Stubbornness, manipulativeness.* What ho! The will with which he can "see through to the end" what he wants, is like the Rock of Gibraltar. As for manipulation - he invariably gets his holiday at someone's expense.

* *Stealing, lying.* 'Nuff said?

* *Daytime sleeping.* Often found in odd corners with possible evidence of the next item sticking to his face.

* *Thick viscous saliva.* This rather gruesome idea is made worse by the further requirement of: *...the saliva is seen to harden and encrust the edges of the mouth...* It seems that Bunter might (just) fit into this category when observed sleeping with evidence of jam, cream and other comestibles clinging to and hardening round his mouth.

* *Short stature.* There is little doubt abut this - even in 1910 a fat fifteen year old boy of only 4'9" would have been regarded as short. Moreover, Bunter's height and weight are typical of a Prader-Willi sufferer. This can be seen from the growth and height chart for the condition.

15 YEAR OLD MALES: NORMAL WEIGHT RANGE		15 YEAR OLD MALES: PRADER-WILLI WEIGHT RANGE	
		TOP	15ST 10OZ
BUNTER	14ST 12OZ	BUNTER	14ST 12OZ
TOP	12ST	MID	12ST
MID	8ST 14OZ		
LOW	6ST 6OZ	LOW	6ST 6OZ

NORMAL HEIGHT RANGE		PRADER-WILLI HEIGHT RANGE	
TOP	5'11"		
MID	5'5"	TOP	5'5"
LOW	4'11"	MID	4'11"
BUNTER	4'9"	BUNTER	4'9"
		LOW	4'5"

Small hands and feet. The evidence here is that Bunter often gets his paws, sticky or otherwise, on to things. For this record we shall assume that "paws" are small things.

* *Eye abnormalities.* His myopia is noted world-wide along with his famous spectacles. Comments on both his shortsightedness and his "owl-like blinking" abound.

* *Speech abnormalities.* This could be coupled to the interesting fact that PWS sufferers have certain unusual skills to do with motor co-ordination. Often they are very good at jigsaw puzzles! Bunter not only has his odd pitched voice but he can also adapt it to good purpose for his ventriloquial capers. Harry Wharton has on occasion commented on the ventriloquism along the lines of *"It must be a gift. If it needed brains he couldn't do it."* Also: *"Bunter's faculty for imitating voices was really marvellous. But his weird gifts earned him more kicks than halfpence, so to speak, in the Greyfriars Remove." (Holiday Annual, 1941).*

To return to the medical and another double barrelled term: Pallister-Hall Syndrome. A side question: Why is it that these medical chappies run in packs or two or three? Protection? Uncertainty? Or, perhaps and more likely, the cachet of a long name - and foreign at that - memorable but difficult to remember? "Bloggs" disease has not got much of a ring to it. To return to Pallister-Hall and their syndrome. The characteristic and major event with this is death in infancy.

Bunter may demonstrate that he has infantile propensities but he is not yet dead. At least one author has written stories of him well beyond his schooldays.

An original talk given by Nandu predated his presentation to the Northern O.B.B.C. by a few months. It was given before an august audience of medical practitioners in Manchester in December 1993.

The audience was cunningly led into total agreement that the patient under scrutiny (the unnamed William George Bunter) was an obvious case of Prader-Willi syndrome. The denouement came when Nandu put up a slide of Bunter. The audience collapsed into agreeable laughter and retired to Sticky Buns and Cakes in time-honoured fashion.

To conclude. A final and more literary connection to Bunter's condition is that mentioned in a tome of great profundity: *"Smith's Recognizable Patterns of Human Malformation" published by Saunders/1988.* I quote from page 170 (*Unusual Brain And/Or Neuromuscular Findings*):

> *"Charles Dickens, in the Pickwick Papers, described:*
>
> *'a fat and red-faced boy in a state of somnolency. The boy was subsequently addressed as 'young dropsy', 'young opium eater' and 'boa constrictor', no doubt in reference to his obesity, somnolence and excessive appetite, respectively. This may have been the first reported instance of Prader-Willi syndrome."*

This received wisdom suggests that The Fat Boy - the original model for the "Pickwickian Syndrome" was not even suffering from his own named condition. He had, what else but the Prader-Willi syndrome?

\- JUST LIKE BUNTER!

The case rests.

Happy Christmas and New Year 1995 to Everyone! Join the Friars Club! Meetings - Magazines - Dinner. (£7.50 Membership from 1st January 1995 - 31st December 1995. Pay before early April and costs only £7.00 p.a.) Contact: C.V. COLE (Secretary), 271 Firs Lane, Palmers Green, London, N13 5QH. P.O.'s and cheques payable to "The Friars Club".

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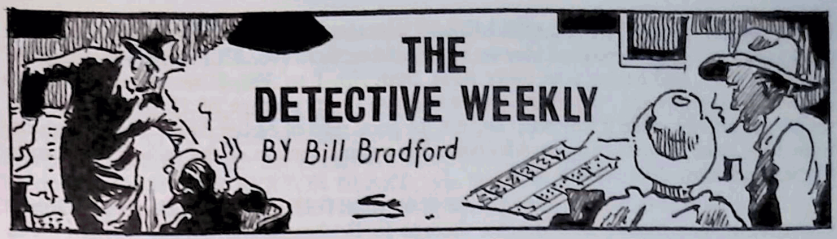


On the 18th February 1933, the UNION JACK, after a run of over 39 years, announced that hence-forth it would be published as DETECTIVE WEEKLY. The Editor, H.W. Twyman promised that this would be bigger, better and up-to-date and that favourite authors and illustrators would continue to contribute.

No. 1 duly appeared, on Thursday, 25th February, a quarter larger than the Union Jack, being 11 inches by 8 inches with a black design on a lemon background. Priced 2d., as were nearly all Amalgamated Press 'weeklies', it comprised 24 pages, and the cover and many of the inside illustrations were by Eric Parker, the leading Sexton Blake artist, who was to draw over half the covers, and much within during the next 7 years.

This issue contained a free gift, being a leather-grained wallet of 4½ x 3½ inches. In No. 2 there was a Minora razor blade, another indication that the paper was aimed at the older youth rather than the schoolboy, most of us leaving school at 15 in that decade. I have never seen either of these gifts, nor can I trace any others over the years, only prizes for competitions.

Initially each week there was a 20 page Blake story, plus a serial. The Editor was still H.W. Twyman, but he left a year or so later and was succeeded by Leonard Berry, with whom Norman Wright has recently corresponded. In 1935, a new editor took over, namely J.D.S. Humt. It was about this time that the cover of our subject changed to blue on lemon and, after No. 130, no further Sexton Blake story appeared until No. 251. No explanation was ever offered and this has always been a source of much criticism. Personally, as one who enjoys crime fiction in general, I think that some of the stories of the non-Blake period were amongst the best in the life of the paper; indeed, escaping from the Baker Street background and characters seemed to give the authors more scope.

Blake was duly restored to the pages of DETECTIVE WEEKLY, but of the last 129 issues all save a few were reprints or rewrites of earlier

OUR NEW DRESS—

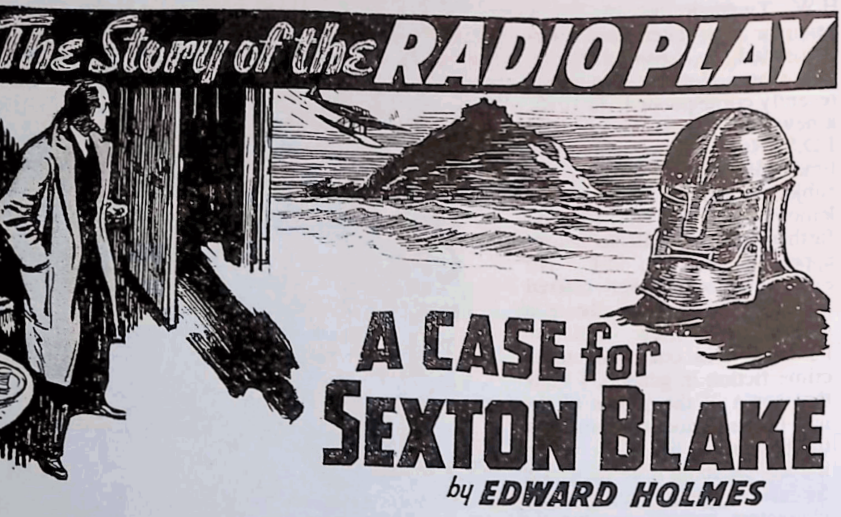
This is Next Week's Cover—the first of Sexton Blake's Own Paper in its future form ; better, bigger, still only 2d. It's printed in Black on vivid Yellow. There's a Free Gift—So Order Now !

UNION JACK or SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY stories. Despite a new-look attempt, by changing to a change to red and blue on white covers, from No. 310, there was a marked decline in sales, and having read every issue, from No. 1 to 379, I can understand why! Apart from reprints etc., the main story was down to an average of 12 pages, and odd serials and articles made it feel 'bitty' and not the good read of earlier days. The last editor, from 1939, was Edward Holmes, who wrote his paper's version of the radio play 'A case for Sexton Blake'. More of this later.

The most prolific writers during these years were G.H. Teed, Rex Hardinge, Gilbert Chester, Anthony Skene, E.S. Brooks, George E. Rochester and Gerald Verner. The latter also used the pseudonym of Donald Stuart and there has been some controversy as to his real name. As the TELEGRAPH obituary on 17.9.1989 identifies him as Gerald Verner, and I hold personal correspondence signed 'Carol and Gerald' there is little doubt in my mind. Anyway, these authors, between them, wrote for over half the 379 issues.

We must not forget the serials, which, to me, were one of the main attractions and have a noteworthy place in our hobby. In 1935/6 Harrap published 'THE CASE OF THE ANTLERED MAN' and 'THE GROUSER INVESTIGATES' both by E.S. Brooks, and these were serialised in the paper in 1939. Another serial by Brooks, 'MR. NEMESIS' was rewritten, by Brooks, and published by Collins in 1939 as 'FOOTSTEPS OF DEATH', the first 'Ironsides' story under the pseudonym of Victor Gunn. Rochester wrote 7 excellent serials, 3 under his real name and 7 as Jeffrey Gaunt, of which THE HAUNTED MAN was published by Eldon in 1951.

My personal favourite, Gerald Verner, contributed 7 serials, of which 6 were published by Wright and Brown as hardbacks. THE HUNTSMAN, which ran for 6 exciting weeks carried an offer, initially, of 35 Verner autographed novels to the reader with the first and most correct answers to 6 questions. Alas I did not win and have never come across any signed copy, so could someone still hold this wonderful prize? Certainly I would have never parted with one!



We should not forget other notable contributors over the years who included Barry erowne, who wrote the Raffles stories after Hornung, Hugh Clevely of Gangsmasher me (B.B.C. radio serial), Ernest Dudley who created Sid Walker, the junk man from londay Night at 7' (B.B.C.), Carrol John Daly who first wrote of 'Race Williams' a ivate eye, in BLACK MASK, an American pulp magazine. Leslie Charteris gave us HITE RIDER in the first 17 issues and a Peter Cheyney novel POISON IVY, featuring

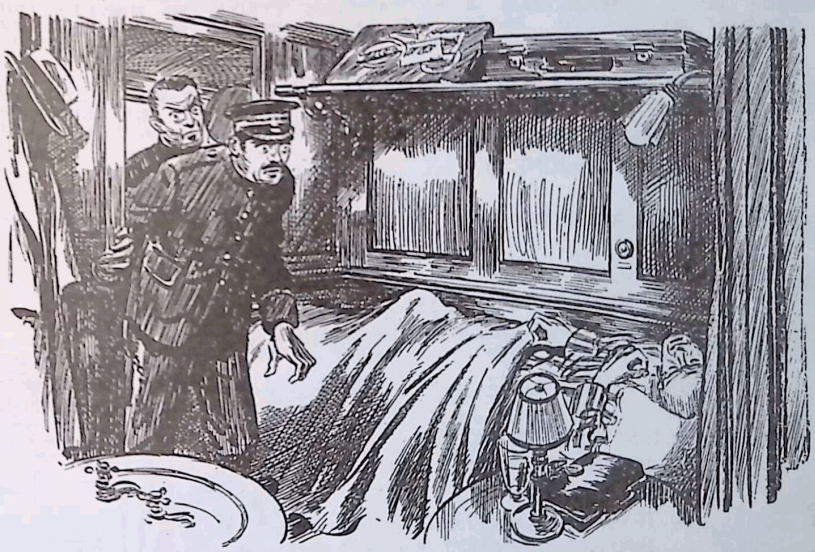
Lemmy Caution was serialised in 1937, the year of publication by Collins. MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS by Agatha Christie ran for 6 weeks, followed by a 'Clubfoot' serial by Valentine Williams.

Two other serials were adapted from B.B.C. serials. The first, ENTER SEXTON BLAKE, ran for 12 weeks and appeared two days after the broadcast. I recall rushing home from school to get my homework done before the programme commenced. The second, A CASE FOR SEXTON BLAKE, was broadcast in four weekly episodes, each appearing two weeks later in DETECTIVE WEEKLY. This programme began in March 1940, the first winter of war, and having recently started work following the death of my Mother, it was one of the few things I was able to anticipate and enjoy.

I should acknowledge the illustrators, who contributed so much to the paper's popularity. As mentioned previously there was Eric Parker and Arthur Jones, Harry Lane, Fred Bennett, J.H. Valda, A.E. Lang, Ernest Hubbard and Cecil Glossop also brought so many characters and events to life.

Finally, there were the true crime articles which appeared in many guises. Generally international, as this was the 1930s, the U.S.A., G.Men and Sing Sing were well to the fore. One such, in 1934, covered Bonnie and Clyde, destined to become famous 40 years later, thanks to the cinema. The Dusseldorf Ripper and the Brighton Trunk Murder were typical material for coverage. Basically factual, if somewhat dramatised, the numerous photographs of personalities and locations added a touch of authenticity. One long running item called MEET THE MAN FROM THE YARD featured an ex. Det. Inspector

HERCULE POIROT FACES A TANGLE OF MYSTERY



In the dead of night Ratchett, alias Cassetti, arch-crook and kidnapper, has been killed viciously, mysteriously — and the killer is among those on the Istanbul-Calais coach! Who is he — or she? What is the grim and baffling secret behind the . . . .

MURDER on the ORIENT EXPRESS

Brust who answered reader's questions. We also had TINKER'S CASEBOOK which comprised a crime mystery which the reader had to solve from an illustration revealing a relevant clue. On similar lines, there was FIND THE CLUES WITH INSPECTOR HORNLEIGH a fictional detective who was, like Ernest Dudley's Sid Walker, also from 'Monday night at 7' on B.B.C. radio.

In conclusion I must say that I have always considered DETECTIVE WEEKLY very underrated and much more readable than the UNION JACK - heresy, I know! I started to buy it in 1937 and in latter years, thanks largely to the late and much-missed Norman Shaw, have acquired a complete run, all of which I have read. Few papers had such a wonderful selection of authors and illustrators, although I must agree with those who think there was a lack of 'magic' in the last two years. Whether this was due to the reprinted stories or the difference in composition is debatable. Anyway, it was a sad day for many of us when on the 25th May 1940 we learned that issue No. 379 would be the last, owing to wartime paper shortage. With the march of time and generations of readers/collectors born since 1940, many pre-war publications are less avidly sought, yet crime fiction from the 1930s is still very popular and I think that, together with the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY, the THRILLER and UNION JACK, the DETECTIVE WEEKLY will have a following for the foreseeable future.

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1959 NUMBER 1158

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A POSTSCRIPT TO A SPECIAL PROJECT

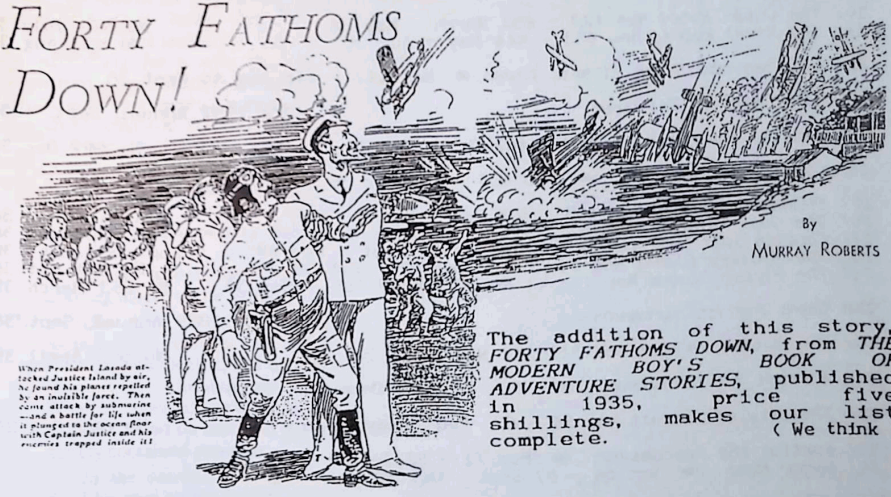
by Ian Bennett and Ronald Hibbert

OF COURSE it had to happen. After almost sixty years in the making, the final distillation of Captain Justice lore, *JUSTICE ISLAND REVISITED*, was published in the *1992 COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL*. One page was taken up by a 'COMPLETE' listing of all the stories in the saga. What we didn't know then, but have found out since was that there was yet another story.

THANKS to Bill Lofts our attention was drawn to the 1935 *MODERN BOY'S BOOK OF ADVENTURE STORIES* which, we had been told, was made up of tales of true adventure. But Bill Lofts thought that one of them, called *FORTY FATHOMS DOWN*, was a Captain Justice story.

A FELLOW C.J. FAN, Roderick Lewis, diligently pursued the matter at the British Library and obtained both text and illustrations of *FORTY FATHOMS DOWN* and it *was* about Captain Justice. We now believe that the final definitive listing of all Captain Justice stories is now complete.

IN the new list the stories from the *MODERN BOY'S BOOK OF ADVENTURE STORIES* and the 1937 and 1939 *MODERN BOY'S ANNUALS* have been put in the same chronological order as the other stories in the series. They are numbered 17b, 22b and 29b.



The addition of this story, *FORTY FATHOMS DOWN*, from *THE MODERN BOY'S BOOK OF ADVENTURE STORIES*, published in 1935, price five shillings, makes our list complete. (We think)

THE CAPTAIN JUSTICE STORIES

Apart from three short stories written for *The Modern Boy's Book of Adventure Stories* and *The Modern Boy's Annuals* of 1937 and 1939 all the Captain Justice stories first appeared in the weekly paper *The Modern Boy*. Most of them were in serial form and 24 of them were reprinted as complete stories in *The Boys' Friend Library*. This list of *The Captain Justice Stories* is taken from Ian Bennett's *Complete Listing* (1992). ✱ against a title indicates that R. Hibbert has given the story a title because it wasn't reprinted in *The Boys' Friend Library*.

THE MODERN BOY	BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY
1/ *Captain Justice* Nos 146 to 154 Nov 1930 - Jan 1931	
- *Modern Pirate*	No. 405 Nov 1933
2/ *The Ocean Outlaw* Nos 178 - 185 July - Aug 31	No. 446 Sept 34
3/ *Hunted Down* ✱ Nos 200 - 209 Dec 31 - Feb 32	
4/ *Soldiers of Fortune* Nos 210 - 218 Feb - April 32	No 457 Dec 34
5/ *Revolution in San Librador* ✱ Nos 219 - 227 April - June 32	
6/ *The Flying Cloud* ✱ Nos 243 - 248 Oct - Nov 32	
7/ *The Earthquake Maker* Nos 271 - 276 April - May 33	No 465 Nov 35
8/ *The Rocketeers* Nos 282 - 301 July - Nov 33	No 477 May 35
9/ *The Secret Kingdom* Nos 302 - 311 Nov 33 - Jan 34	No 485 July 35
10/ *The Sea Eagles* Nos 312 - 323 Jan - April 34	No 529 June 36
11/ *The World in Darkness* Nos 324 - 334 April - June 34	No 505 Dec 35
12/ *The Jungle Castaways* Nos 335 - 346 July - Sept 34	No 533 July 36
13/ *The Weed Men* Nos 347 - 359 Nov - Dec 34	No 541 Sept 36
14/ *The Ghost of Lowten Manor* ✱ No 360 29th December 1934	
15/ *The Hidden Land* Nos 369 - 379 March - May 35	No 549 Nov 36
16/ *Captain Justice* Nos 380 - 389 May - July 35	
on Secret Service	No 565 March 37
17/ *Captain Justice at Bay* Nos 390 - 398 July - Sept 35	No 570 April 37
17b *Forty Fathoms Down*	B'k of Adventure Stories , Sept.'35
18/ *Raiders of Robot City* Nos 399 - 411 Nov - Dec 35	No 573 May 37
19/ *Midge & Co. make Merry* ✱ No 412 28th December 1935	
20/ *The Ocean Robot* Nos 423 - 432 March - May 36	No 629 July 38
21/ *The Rival Robots* Nos 433 - 444 May - Aug 36	No 633 Aug 38
22/ *The Man who Stole Titanic Tower* ✱ Nos 447 - 448 Aug to Sept 36	
22b *The Tiger of Tai-Lung*	M.B's 1937 Annual, Sept. 1936
23/ *Land of Monsters* Nos 452 - 462 Oct - Dec 36	No 697 Dec 39
24/ *Christmas Cracksman* ✱ Nos 463 - 465 Dec 36 - Jan 37	
25/ *Thunder Mountain* Nos 466 - 475 Jan - March 37	No 622 May 38
26/ *The Gold Raiders* Nos 487 - 496 June - Aug 37	No 626 June 38
27/ *Captain Justice's Airway* Nos 503 - 512 Sept - Nov 37	No 637 Sept 38
28/ *The Mystery Planet* Nos 513 - 523 Dec 37 - Feb 38	No 641 Oct 38
29/ *The Flying Globes* Nos 1 - 14 New Style MB Feb - May 38	No 663 March 39
29b *Cap'n Justice Surrenders*	MB's 1939 Annual, Sept.'38
30/ *The Outlaw Raiders* Nos 31 - 42 Nov - Dec 38	No 665 April 39
31/ *A Robot for Christmas* ✱ Nos 43 - 46 December, 1938	
32/ *The City of Secrets* Nos 54 - 67 Feb - May 39	No 689 Oct 39
33/ *Justice the Peacemaker* ✱ Nos 71 - 82 June - Sept 39	
34/ *Space Bomb* ✱ Nos 84 - 87 Sept - Oct 39	

Mr Quelch At A Disadvantage

By Roger M. Jenkins

Henry Samuel Quelch was undoubtedly Charles Hamilton's most accomplished portrait of a schoolmaster. Even an occasional reader of the Magnet could not have failed to be impressed by the Remove master, with his gimlet eye, his Gorgon-like appearance, and the voice that was deep but not loud. His ability to maintain perfect order in his form, coupled with his strong sense of morality and justice were all exemplified on countless occasions throughout the Magnet's run - and yet there were occasions when his dignity was impaired, and many of these incidents are quite fascinating.

Charles Hamilton seemed to model his schools on the semi-monastic style formerly adopted by the old universities. In times past, the Master of an Oxford or Cambridge college might be married, but all the other academic staff were bachelors. In Magnet 407, "The Jape of the Season", it was stated that Mr. Quelch had not married because he had been crossed in love many years ago. He sent Bob Cherry to the Friardale Gazette office with an advertisement for a stableman. Skinner offered to take the letter, and he changed the advertisement section, so that Mr. Quelch was advertising for a wife (he was of "pleasing personal appearance, affectionate disposition"). Skinner then induced Alonzo Todd to take the advertisement to the newspaper. A number of eccentric middle-aged women arrived in Quelch's study to take up the offer of marriage, and the Remove master had quite a harassing afternoon. This was the sort of trick that would be played on an unpopular master at St. Jim's or Rookwood, and it seemed out of place at Greyfriars, though there is no denying the amusing nature of the story.

The first Wharton the Rebel series contained a number of clashes between Wharton and Quelch, and the form-master was certainly at a disadvantage when in No. 886 Wharton appealed to the Head when a cigarette box was found on him, and it turned out that it merely contained pen-nibs:-

In the corridor Mr. Quelch paused and fixed his eyes on the junior.

"Wharton, this was deliberate on your part. You intentionally misled me."

"Do you think so, sir?"

"I am assured of it. Do you deny it?"

"I have nothing to say, sir," answered Wharton calmly. "I was accused of smoking and I appealed to the Head. The Head found me not guilty."

Mr. Quelch trembled with anger.

"If you had told me that the box did not contain cigarettes, but something else, I should have examined its contents, as you are very well aware, Wharton."

"I did tell you I had no cigarettes, sir, which comes to the same thing."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

He realised he was defeated, that the rebel of the Remove had deliberately made a fool of him, and could not be punished without the appearance, at least, of injustice.

Mr. Quelch was similarly deluded by Vernon-Smith in Magnet 1007, when he sent the Bounder to the Head with a playing-card carton, which turned out to contain merely the principal parts of Latin conjugations written out on pieces of cardboard.

Probably the greatest indignity that befell Mr. Quelch was to be summarily dismissed in No. 1043. Skinner had obtained a hand-written section of the History of Greyfriars, containing a reference to the Head being arbitrary and tyrannical, and he contrived to place this in the Head's hands, with the result that Dr. Locke assumed it was a criticism of himself. There was a bit of skating over thin ice when the author tried to convince us that the Head felt unable to explain to Quelch precisely why he was being dismissed. Nevertheless, the acid exchange between the two former friends in the following issue was superb, and in it we were informed that Mr. Quelch had no home to retire to. His holidays were spent in the homes of friends, at the seaside, or in Switzerland, and he always regarded Greyfriars as his home, and he never failed to look forward keenly to each new term. Nevertheless, he was a saving man, and he wondered about setting up a new school at High Oaks. In the event, Mauleverer bought the premises before Mr. Quelch had a chance to do so, but in the end the Remove master did in

fact come to run the rival school in that institution before matters were resolved. This was a compelling series, albeit based on a slender thread.

Mr. Quelch's embarrassment in No. 1086, "The Form-Master's Feud" was only temporary, and came about as a result of Bunter imitating his voice to Mr. Hacker. The Staff Room, while deprecating the feud, found it an absorbing topic:-

To hear no more of it for a few days was actually exhilarating.

Quelch did not enjoy being the subject of Common-Room gossip, but fortunately, it was only for a short time. Bunter received a summons to the Head's study and arrived under the impression that he was being invited to tea, but instead retribution awaited him for his voice imitations behind a locked door.

Since this trouble had arisen between Hacker and Quelch, Mr. Prout had not told one story of his youthful days as a mighty hunter. He had talked about this trouble instead. That alone made life more worth living in the Common Room. Mr. Twigg, too, who bored his colleagues almost to weeping with his tales of strenuous life in the Second Form, of the rebelliousness of the fags, and his - Twigg's - herculean firmness in dealing with them - even Mr. Twigg gave his old, old subject a rest and bit into the Hacker-Quelch row instead. Capper of the fourth - a mild gentleman with rather watery eyes - fastened on the Hacker-Quelch feud like a dog on a bone, and said no more - for the happy present - of his Oxford days. In his Oxford days - unless memory deceived him - Capper had been much of a buck, and had heard the chimes at midnight; though nobody, looking at the mild gentleman now, would have thought so. All Common-Room knew Capper's Oxford life by heart, and could almost have recited it.

The second Rebel series offered Charles Hamilton considerable scope for portraying Mr. Quelch in awkward situations. Perhaps the most telling episode of all was when Wharton cut detention in Magnet 1289, but managed to save Sir Hilton Popper whose horse was bolting under him, and he had lost the reins. Mr. Quelch heard Bunter recommending Wharton to tell a more convincing lie, and the form-master was astounded when Wharton repeated his excuse to Dr. Locke. The arrival of Sir Hilton and his confirmation of the accuracy of Wharton's statement meant that Mr. Quelch's humiliation was complete:-

"Quite, quite! Mr. Quelch, you are this brave boy's form-master, I believe - yes, yes! You should be proud of him, sir! He does you credit, sir. I congratulate you, sir, on your Form, which includes such boys as - as Wharton. He reflects credit on your training, Mr. Squelch - that is, Welsh - he is a boy to be proud to be proud of, Mr. Welsh!"

An inarticulate sound came from Mr. Quelch. Wharton hardly dared to look at him at that moment.

Later in the same number, the differences between the attitudes of Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch were made quite clear:-

In some respects he lacked the serene wisdom of the Head; but he was a much keener and sharper gentleman; and he knew very well that Wharton had been leading him on, 'drawing' him, in fact, making a fool of him.

An interesting incidental circumstance of the two Rebel series is that Bunter played a not insignificant part in each, but the change in his character from detestable young rogue to likeable rascal meant that his contributions were markedly different. In the first series he intercepted a telegram and thus prevented a reconciliation between Wharton and his friends during the holiday time. In the second series he was even trying to help Wharton at times, and his tricks on the telephone certainly brought about a reconciliation at Christmas.

The Stacey series constitutes the last of the trio in which Wharton was opposed to Mr. Quelch and, though some of the confrontations were as bitter as before, the series itself was set in a slightly different key. Stacey, who was Wharton's double, had a shady side to his character that he kept hidden so well that Mr. Quelch made him Head Boy, since he was convinced that it was always Wharton who was being seen in questionable circumstances. Wharton retained the friendship with the other members of the Famous Five, and - even more importantly - Vernon-Smith backed him, and the Bounder's unscrupulous tricks were to prove valuable to Wharton.

Mr. Quelch was not spared his embarrassments in this series. In No. 1426 he took Wharton to the Head to be expelled because Wharton's raincoat had been found in the Three Fishers. It had been borrowed by someone else, and fortunately Wharton's alibi was watertight. The following week, Mr. Quelch followed Wharton to the Three Fishers. Wharton hid in the hawthorns and then rowed back to Greyfriars to establish another alibi. When the Head asked him to explain his behaviour, he declared it was done in order to make a fool of Mr. Quelch:-

Dr. Locke coughed. It was some time before he spoke. When he did, his kind voice had a rather acid tone.

"My dear Quelch," he said quietly, "it is clear that what this boy has stated is true. And, disrespectful as his conduct has been, allowances must be made for a lad feeling himself unjustly suspected. Are you sure, Quelch - are you quite sure - that Wharton is deserving of these doubts you feel regarding him?"

Mr. Quelch almost choked.

He was sure - quite sure - more than ever, in fact, since he had been made to feel and look such an unmitigated fool! His feelings towards that disrespectful junior were intensely bitter.

"I have no doubt, sir," he gasped - "no doubt at all that it was the young rascal's intention to break bounds! But it seems that he did, indeed, discover that my eye was upon him, and he decided to play his insolent and disrespectful trick, instead!"

"If that is the case, the boy has certainly changed very much for the worse," said the Head, "and undoubtedly you must continue to keep him under observation. As for the present matter, I advise letting it drop entirely. Such a recurrence of mistakes is calculated to bring authority into contempt. The sooner this episode is forgotten, the better."

Wharton had a black eye and, when Stacey was caught out of bounds, he used ink from his fountain pen to make an imitation black eye, and the Bounder did the same, and got caned by Quelch for fighting, in order to be able to prove that counterfeit black eyes could deceive observant people. Needless to say, there was more chagrin for Mr. Quelch.

It is pleasing to record, at this stage, that Quelch seemed to regain his trust in Wharton by the end of the Stacey series, and in the very last Magnet of all he re-iterated that trust:

"There was an occasion, once, when I lost my trust in you, partly owing to an unfortunate misunderstanding, partly to your own stubborn temper. This misunderstanding was cleared up, and I resolved at that time never to be misled in the same way again."

Despite the fact that appearances were against Wharton in Magnet 1683, it is pleasing to note that Mr. Quelch did trust Wharton, notwithstanding that appearances were against him.

The pages of the Magnet are full of mishaps that befell Mr. Quelch: booby traps, sometimes intended, sometimes accidental; his chimney blocked up; locked in the punishment room; papers in his study covered in ink or gum; catapulted; chloroformed; even lost in the snow near Wharton Lodge at the close of a winter's afternoon ("If you are a Christian, come to my aid!" - fortunately, Valentine did); and being in receipt of repeated telephone calls from Bunter, hoping to ingratiate himself with Quelch at a safe distance, as in the Whiffles Circus series when, after a series of calls from the Fat Owl, Mr. Quelch answered the next call with the words "You impudent rascal!" only to

discover to his mortification that this time it was the local vicar.

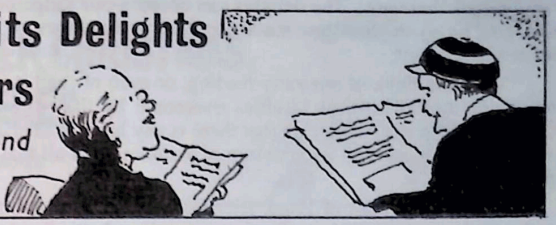
Perhaps the most amusing of all Mr. Quelch's embarrassments was on the half-holiday when he was enjoying his work on the never-to-be-completed History of Greyfriars, only to be perpetually interrupted by Skinner & Co. who took it in turns to knock on his study door and run away. His concentration completely disturbed, Quelch became so incensed that he grasped his trusty cane and stood by the study door, ready to catch the boy responsible for the prank. Of course, Bunter was the next one to knock, ready with some facile excuse for not having done an imposition. To Bunter's surprise, the door was flung open and Quelch rushed out and lashed Bunter with a cane. Bunter went round telling everyone that Quelch was mad, lurking behind his study door and springing out like a tiger. He even asked Dr. Locke for protection from Mr. Quelch. On this occasion, the Head was most sympathetic towards the Remove master, and condoled with him on having such an obtuse boy as Bunter in his form. This no doubt smoothed Quelch's ruffled feathers, but did little to assuage Bunter's aches and pains.

Of course, the incidents referred to in this article constitute the exception, rather than the rule, and because they are rather uncommon in the volumes of the Magnet, they stand out even more prominently. None of them turned out to be of any lasting significance, and in our imagination Quelch is still at the height of his dignity, ruling his form with a rod of iron, typing out his History, and detecting culprits with unerring accuracy. He would most certainly merit the schoolboy's reluctant encomium, "A beast, but a just beast."

"The young rascal! The disreputable young rascal!" said Mr. Quelch. "Wharton's entered the Inn! There's no doubt now—not a shadow of doubt! Upon my word!" That Wharton had taken cover in the hawthorns, within a few feet of him, deliberately to give him that impression, was not likely to occur to Mr. Quelch!

Nostalgia- its Delights and Dangers

BY E.G. Hammond



When I first thought of writing this little piece, it occurred to me that it might be wise to look up the definition of nostalgia in a dictionary. I was most surprised when I read the following in The Concise Oxford Dictionary: "NOSTALGIA - Home-sickness as a disease. From the Greek, NOSTOS - return home, and the Greek, ALGOS - pain". I know that ours is a living language and the meaning has changed perceptibly over the years. Because the OED definition is certainly not what I feel when I am under the influence of nostalgia.

I concede that any private feelings must, by their very nature, be subjective but I suspect that the warm feeling of nostalgia is similar for all of us. I did suggest in a previous article that in the main, with obvious exceptions, the ladies do not seem as susceptible to its charms as men. As no storm of protest followed, I assume that my suggestion was not without foundation. It was based upon my observations with my wife, daughters and their female friends. I have not detected any interest in things nostalgic from any of them. Certainly not a large enough cross section to draw any firm conclusions, but significant never-the-less.

Why should that be? I am not sure. Could it be that they are more practical and even realistic, and do not feel the need to look back to the past for comfort? Perhaps the present and future provide enough. I saw recently a definition of "optimistic" that has a certain aptness. Its was defined as being nostalgic about the future!

The delights are so obvious, it seems almost superfluous for me to enumerate them. I imagine the feeling is universal for most of us, but still difficult to describe. For me, it is a warm comfortable feeling that conjures up a cosy picture of the past. It excludes unpleasantness and pain that was more than likely present at the time. The last war gives an example of what I mean. There were many times when it was far from pleasant. There were acute shortages, extreme dangers and interminable periods of boredom. None of these memories comes to the surface when I am reading or looking at boys' papers or comics of the time. I remember reading them in the relative discomfort of an Anderson shelter at the height of the blitz. Yet they are remembered with great warmth. Other things that they are associated with are the smell of mother's cooking, the music of the period and the setting. All these are conjured up by the magic of nostalgia.

What pleasant memories. The comforting glow of a coal fire on a cold and frosty winter's night. The cosiness of our tiny living room. The sight of my younger brother playing with his lead soldiers on the highly polished linoleum floor. I can still conjure up the smell of the polish.

A hundred and one things can trigger off the feeling. As I have already mentioned, music is a powerful reminder of days gone by. Many a time a snippet of music will transport me back to my youth. Sometimes as I have said a smell, but the strongest reminder is the childhood reading.

I think the strangest phenomenon I have noticed is that younger enthusiasts in our hobby experience nostalgia about the past that was before their own time. I suppose one can be influenced by a feeling of atmosphere for times past, but it does not always work for me. Dickens is probably the only author who can paint his times, especially Christmas, in a manner that makes me feel I was present or would like to have been. So much for the delights. Can there be dangers?

I think there are. The delights can obscure our judgement. Many false assessments, weeping to say the least, are made about current authors and illustrators when comparing ıem with the past.

When we think of our early reading, or even re-read it, are we really judging it on its ıerits, or are our critical faculties overcome by that mysterious warm feeling we call ostalgia? I am not suggesting that there is any harm in cherishing our childhood interests, s long as we do not fall into the trap of assuming that all that is past is good, and all of the resent is bad.

I think the works of Frank Richards and Richmal Crompton have a timeless quality nd will always be excellent. By the same token, I am afraid that when I read some Sexton ılake authors I find them poor by comparison. I have not read many of W.E. Johns' ′orks since reaching adulthood, but do remember how I loved the early Biggles books efore the war. I recently read one of his late Biggles book and found it mediocre. The ːory was far fetched and bordered on the ridiculous. It was hard to believe that a man ′ith any knowledge of things aeronautical could have penned such a story, containing ːtions that were beyond the powers of credulity. I wonder if I would feel the same if I ad read that story when young?

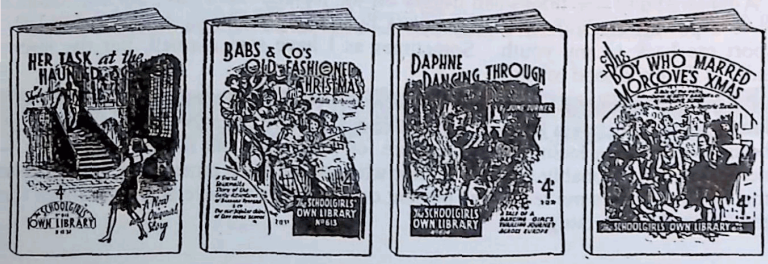
The same applies to illustrations. I think we accept certain illustrators and revere ıem beyond their true worth, because we loved them when young. Many times I have ːard contemporary illustrators compared unfavourably with the past. In many cases it is ′tally unfair. The work of Peter Brookes, a current illustrator, will I am sure stand the st of time. His originality, sense of humour and draughtsmanship can be compared with ıy of the past greats. Others spring to mind, Paul Cox, James Marsh, Ken Lilly and John urningham to name but a few.

No one will deny the merits of the past greats; Roy Wilson, the Brocks and Dudley ′atkins jump to mind, and of course many others. If we are completely honest, some of e D.C. Thomson illustrators, especially the story paper ones, left much to be desired.

I think a recent incident that happened to me illustrated my point. I was selling a ′mic stripset, penned by one of the more obscure illustrators of the past, who shall main nameless, and it was shown to a gentleman for whose knowledge and judgement of ings artistic I have the greatest respect. It was no surprise when he assessed the work as tremely poor. It was the answer I expected. What amuses and somewhat puzzles me is at the same gentleman happens to collect and presumably to like the artwork from the ːrald Swan comic publications. To my untrained eye most of the Swan artwork was ːadful and I never even liked it when young. In fact I thought it so bad then that I never ught a Swan Comic! My views have not changed.

I can only assume the gentleman's judgement is marred by nostalgia, unless I do him injustice and he collects it knowing it bad, but for the nicer memories he associates with Even so it still illustrates the dangers of nostalgia.

Having put forward the opposing views, I am prepared to accept the dangers for the ːer delights we all share.



HULLO! FATHER CHRISTMAS, ARE YOU THERE?

By Margery Woods

When starting to wander down nostalgia's delightful trail most book-lovers will recall memories of Christmases past, especially those of childhood, of the tense, sleepless anticipation of Father Christmas's hoped for visit. What would the stocking --- or the pillow case! --- yield up at the dawn of Christmas morning? Sadly, quite a percentage of that yield would be broken, eaten or discarded (with true William expressions of disgust!) before the Day was out, and inevitably a few Christmas memories will hold disappointment, recalling how the dearly longed for book or annual failed to emerge from that star-sprinkled wrapping paper, or worse, the book that did emerge proved to be something utterly unwanted, babyish, or even worse, Improving of the Mind!

But if Santa had got his faxes right and noted all those pleas up chimneys, ventilators, or boiler pipes, letters to the Greenland Post Office, or telephone calls to Lapland, then Christmas Morning would bring a special joy, one that could be recaptured down through the years, perhaps on a miserable summer day after a treat was cancelled, or far on into adulthood when a long overdue clean-out of that attic would suddenly reveal the beloved hoard of annuals, storypapers or comics, and time would stand still as the echoes of those happy days made past and present one.

Fame and that modern phenomenon, the cult status, has marked several of our childhood favourites with something close to immortality. Greyfriars, Rupert Bear, William, and to a lesser extent, Tiger Tim, are if anything more famous now than in the earlier days of their creation. A few years ago grown men would leave their offices early on certain afternoons in order to get home in time to watch Magic Roundabout, and a certain building society still receives letters from all over the world addressed to a certain Mr. Sherlock Holmes at 221 Baker Street, London. In his book, Holmes Of The Movies, David Stuart Davies tells of a letter from a teenage "sensible and quite sane schoolgirl" who countered a possible query as to why she should be writing to Mr. Holmes with the answer: "Because you are immortal".

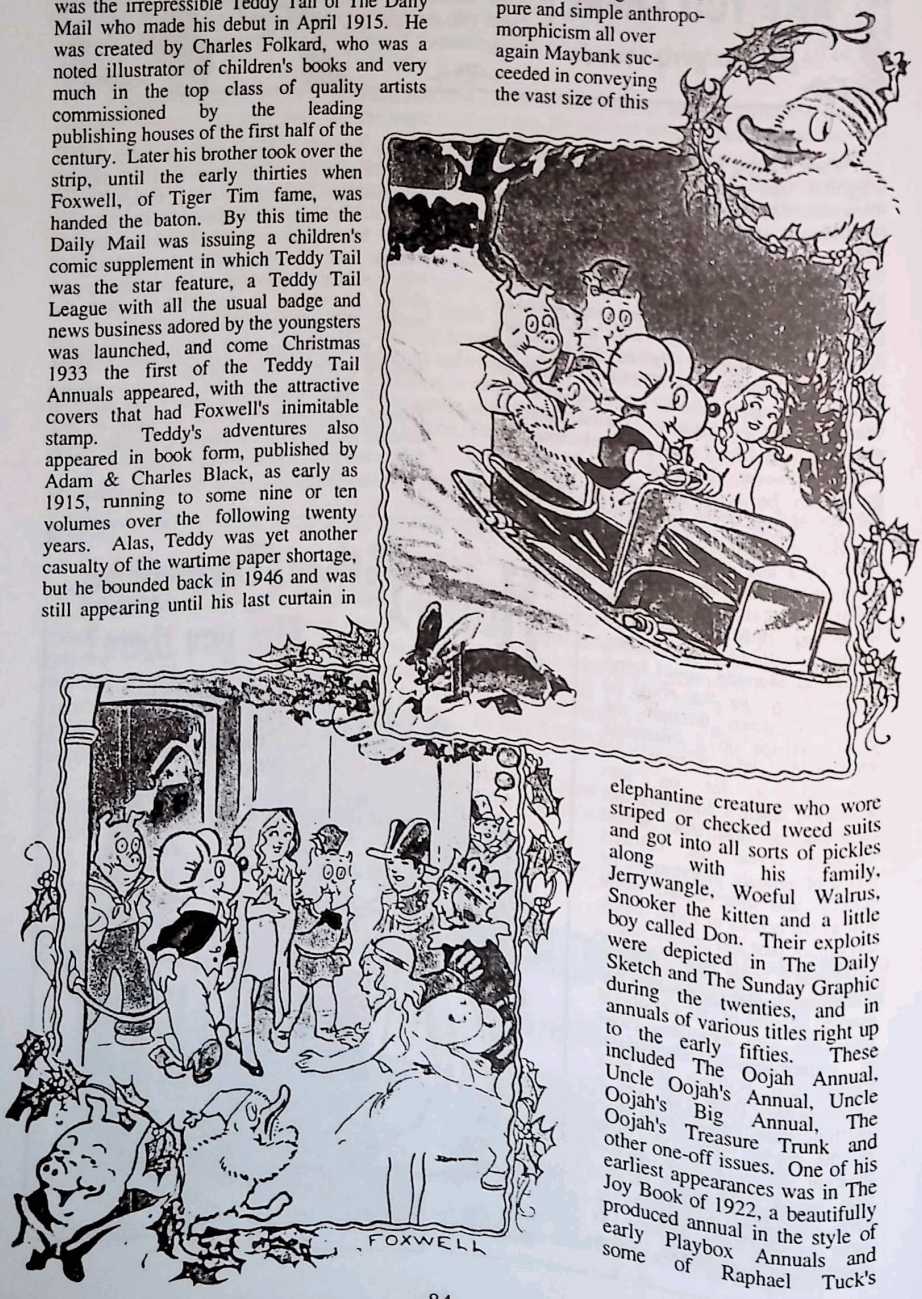
A potent example of the strange alchemy wielded by the writers of fiction.

But there were many others, not quite so famous, who were followed lovingly as they brought great joy on Christmas Days and all the less celebrated days down our years.

Long before Rupert Bear claimed the

supreme crown of newspaper strip fame (and before another immortal character of the cartoon screen) there was a mouse who became the first cartoon character to have his own strip daily in a leading national newspaper. This was the irrepressible Teddy Tail of The Daily Mail who made his debut in April 1915. He was created by Charles Folkard, who was a noted illustrator of children's books and very much in the top class of quality artists commissioned by the leading publishing houses of the first half of the century. Later his brother took over the strip, until the early thirties when Foxwell, of Tiger Tim fame, was handed the baton. By this time the Daily Mail was issuing a children's comic supplement in which Teddy Tail was the star feature, a Teddy Tail League with all the usual badge and news business adored by the youngsters was launched, and come Christmas 1933 the first of the Teddy Tail Annuals appeared, with the attractive covers that had Foxwell's inimitable stamp. Teddy's adventures also appeared in book form, published by Adam & Charles Black, as early as 1915, running to some nine or ten volumes over the following twenty years. Alas, Teddy was yet another casualty of the wartime paper shortage, but he bounded back in 1946 and was still appearing until his last curtain in 1960.

Another endearing strip character who is surely due for a select if small cult revival is Thomas Maybank's marvellous creation, Uncle Oojah. Although this was pure and simple anthropomorphicism all over again Maybank succeeded in conveying the vast size of this elephantine creature who wore striped or checked tweed suits and got into all sorts of pickles along with his family, Jerrywangle, Woeful Walrus, Snooker the kitten and a little boy called Don. Their exploits were depicted in The Daily Sketch and The Sunday Graphic during the twenties, and in annuals of various titles right up to the early fifties. These included The Oojah Annual, Uncle Oojah's Annual, Uncle Oojah's Big Annual, The Oojah's Treasure Trunk and other one-off issues. One of his earliest appearances was in The Joy Book of 1922, a beautifully produced annual in the style of early Playbox Annuals and some of Raphael Tuck's



charming books for young children. A.P. had some very stiff competition during the twenties and thirties.

There was no shortage of choice for the older child. There was William, and there was William's rival for sheer lawlessness; Miss Jane Turpin, created by Evadne Price.

Jane had a tremendous following, although she has never attained quite the degree of immortality that William has won. But, like those of William, her Christmases were hilarious and strewn with the disasters suffered by the unfortunate adults within her radius. She possessed a stronger streak of ruthlessness than William when she set out in pursuit of a particular aim, and surely had all the makings of a thoroughly militant feminist long before the species reached its present day attainment.

HE HAD JUST SLIPPED A PRESENT INTO A LADY'S BAG WITHOUT HER KNOWING

One of Jane's memorable Christmases happened at the time of the Great Presentation to the Vicar. Mrs. Turpin and Marjorie are shopping-bound to choose the present and Jane has inveigled herself into the expedition in the hopes of collecting a present from Father Christmas in the Toy Department. Her opportunity to escape the parental eye comes while Mrs. Turpin and Marjorie are being salestalked into buying a silver monstrosity that has been cluttering up the shop for over ten years, during which no bargain sale has ever succeeded in unloading it. It is then that Mrs. Turpin discovers they have been robbed and Marjorie swears that it happened while they were hauling Jane out of the Toy Department. Now Jane has vanished again, but there is no difficulty in finding her!

Jane is highly annoyed and has made an enemy out of the store's Father Christmas because he refused to give her a present as she was unaccompanied by a parent. Now she is watching him with baleful eye, noting how he is apparently slipping freebies into the pockets of Miss Baldock, Lady Medway and other shoppers. Then her mother and sister arrive, distraught, into an agitated outcry of ladies who have been robbed. In high dudgeon, Jane follows them into the manager's office to make her complaint about Father Christmas, which makes the store detective's eyes light up. The Santa thief is hauled off after being relieved of

"WELL, THE OLD CHEAT!" GASPED JANE

a nice little haul of money and jewellery, and glowers at this awful child who is responsible for his downfall. He says bitterly that he has her to thank for all this.

"Well, you should have given me that present," said Jane.

"I wish to Gawd I 'ad!"

So Jane becomes the heroine of the day, is promised a big Christmas parcel by the manager of Whittakers, is driven home in state in Lady Medway's Rolls-Royce, and only with an effort restrains herself from hitting the chauffeur over the head with her balloon --- just

to see if it makes him crash the car!

The Christmas number of Modern Boy, 1930 contains a story of a Christmas that is a bit different. Entitled The Lost Christmas, by Alfred Edgar, it tells how two young cadets have managed to get themselves into the front line one Christmas during the first world war, where Corporal Charlton recounts the strange story of his own lost Christmas dinner the previous year through being blown up at Arras.

They had decorated the dug-out with paper chains made of blue tissue used for wrapping artillery fuses, they'd had a turkey and Christmas pudding, oranges and nuts, and even a piece of mistletoe --- though not for kissing the sergeant! Then word had come that Jerry was about to blow and they shot out of the dugout just as the lot, turkey and all, went up. The two boys soon get involved in action with the tunnelling company, trying to foil the enemy as he attempts to tunnel under a certain ridge, and meeting Jerry in combat in one of the tunnels. Suddenly they find themselves in a big, deserted dug-out where a table is laid for a grand officer's meal with all kinds of goodies, even a bunch of artificial flowers for decorations. So the boys and the Corporal capture the feast and survive to celebrate Christmas dinner when the action is over and the Germans have been taken prisoner, and Corporal Charlton gets his belated grand meal at last. This Christmas number also contains an interesting article by W.E. Johns, illustrated by his own sketches.

No storypaper Christmas is complete without the tried and tested ingredients of ye ancient house, ye ancient mystery, and all ye ancient trimmings. In the Christmas series in Nelson Lee, 1925, Edwy Searles Brooks pens a heart-warming and entertaining festive tale set against the grand and gothic Dorrimore Castle.

The plot threads are laid before the St. Frank's chums break up for the hols. The two Handforth brothers play leading roles, especially young Willy, whose harmlessly intended jape had far reaching consequences undreamed of by this young rascal.

In the first story, The Uninvited Guests, Handforth major is arrayed like a second edition of Archie Glenthorne, so immaculate and dazzling the sight strains the eyesight of the irreverent Willy. The Removites are bound for Moor View School and a breaking up party given by the girls. Willy and his two cronies have not been invited but this does not deter them from gatecrashing the party and homing for the eatables, a pleasant state of affairs which is short-lived. Nipper is inclined to be easy-going but the Removites, with big bossy sister Ena Handforth, soon sling the hapless trio out into the bitter cold midwinter.

Handforth can now relax and show off his expertise on the dance floor, but soon comes to grief, or rather his partner and the pianist come to grief. Miss Halliday, the young mistress playing the piano, is very sporting about being knocked flying off the piano stool but is distressed when her pendant is found

broken on the floor, revealing the miniature picture it holds of a young attractive man. The girls speculate over this. They know that Miss Halliday is actually a widow whose husband had been killed in a car crash in Italy two years previously, but Irene has seen a photograph of the late Mr. Thornton and knows it is not of the same man as the one within the pendant.

Meanwhile, Willy and his pals are yearning for revenge. They are spending Christmas at Cubby's home in the Peak District not far from Dorrimore Castle, home of the millionaire friend of the St. Frank's lads, and it is here that Willy has the brainwave for the jape of the century. The castle is closed up while Lord Dorrimore is abroad, so why not send telegrams to all the people Willy considers deserve them and bring them on a futile journey to spend Christmas at the castle?

The jape succeeds beyond even Willy's expectations. Unfortunately Willy had not allowed for the possibility of one of Derbyshire's worst snowstorms happening on Christmas Eve and bringing all transport to a standstill. Willy's sixteen victims are stranded, outside a castle dark and barred, and with no accommodation available for miles. There are the six girls in the party, so the only solution is to break into the castle and camp there for the night, trusting that the elements will have relented by the next morning. But by the morning the weather is worse than ever, and there does not appear to be a single bite to eat anywhere; Fatty Little is on the verge of expiring. Admittedly the heating is still on, but no electricity, and there are bedrooms galore, but the kitchen is bare.

Archie has brought his valet, Phipps, who volunteers to set off in search of the nearest dwelling to try to buy food, and then the mystery begins. A sonorous gong booms out and the banqueting hall, bare and deserted only half an hour before, is suddenly a picture of splendour, leaping log fire, table groaning with sumptuous festive fare and a glorious aroma of food and coffee emanating from it all. The boys know that Phipp is quite an Admirable Crichton, but not a miracle worker, and he is quite hurt when he struggles back through the snow to find the company replete. The miracle is repeated at lunchtime, and teatime, and with a splendid feast of a Christmas Dinner in the evening, after each of which the banqueting hall returns to its bare state, all apparently achieved without the touch of human hands.

Of course this kind of mystery cannot be sustained for very long, not when the great Handforth starts to investigate. They are taken through a locked door to the source of all the largesse, and meet Mr. Yates, the butler, who tells them a very strange tale.

Ten years previously a young friend of Lord Dorrimore was to be married and the reception held at the castle on Christmas Day, but at the last minute the bride's parents refused to let her be married and insisted that she accepted the proposal of another man. In a strange parody of Miss Faversham, the broken-hearted groom had come each year to the castle, to re-enact the banquet alone, with his ghostly memories of his bride to be and their guests. Lord Dorrimore had given instructions about this to the servants, and that Henry Bruce's solitude must be respected. Hence the banquet, and hence the total unobtrusiveness of the staff. But this Christmas Henry Bruce has been delayed and is late in arriving. By this time the girls have discovered a photograph of the bride-to-be and recognised their Miss Halliday.

Gradually the story is pieced together, how an Italian report had mistakenly said that Muriel Thornton (as she was then) had been killed in the crash that killed her husband. So Henry Bruce now believes her to be dead, not knowing how bitterly unhappy her marriage had been, nor that she had reverted to her maiden name when she took up teaching to support herself.

Now the story becomes hilarious when the boys and girls decide that this tragic state of affairs must be remedied. Unfortunately they do not concert their efforts but secretly concoct at least four separate plans unknown to each other. Nipper and Co, Archie and Phipps, Handforth and his close pals, and the Moor View girls each plan to bring Muriel Halliday back to the castle so that the broken-hearted lovers are re-united. When Muriel starts receiving telegrams summoning her to different places in Derbyshire, where the senders plan to meet her (the weather having cleared up by then), she decides the world must have gone mad and ignores them all. But William Napoleon Browne and Willy Handforth succeed with a really audacious plan.

They set off for London, hire a car, and kidnap the bewildered woman. Back at the castle the girls are waiting to work a transformation on Miss Halliday, who has deliberately adopted a plain-jane appearance in order to seem older and more authoritative, and from their administrations emerges a beautiful, fashionable girl looking younger then her twenty-seven years.

By now the party has got its act together, the reunion happens ecstatically, and Lord Dorrimore turns up to host the rest of the holiday festivities.

E.S.B. is brilliant. He handles humour, mystery, drama, dialogue and pathos with the surest of touch, and the hint of romance is treated with tenderness. Browne's and Willy's analyses of the psychology of feminine nature

are hilarious, as is their totally incompatible partnership when they kidnap Muriel, while the Jeeves/Wooster act of Archie and Phipps is a joy to read.

A Christmas tale as enjoyable today as it must have been to parents or grandparents all those years ago. Happy, happy journeying down nostalgia's trail.

ANSWERS TO PICTURE PUZZLE ON ROOKWOOD

No. 1 Stephen **Catesby**, prefect, Sixth Form Modern.

No. 2 Reginald **Muffin** (Tubby), Fourth Form Classical, Study No. 2.

No. 3 Frank **Bohun** M.A., B.Sc., Third Form Master.

No. 4 Ronald **Frampton**, prefect, Sixth Form Modern.

No. 5 Walter **Dickinson**, prefect Sixth Form Classical
Sidney **Dickinson**, Fourth Form Classical, younger brother of above, Study No. 1.

No. 6 Cuthbert **Gower**, Fourth Form Classical Study No. 5.

No. 7 Harold **Bull**, B.A., Maths Master.

HOWARD BAKER FACSIMILES

Appearing for the first time this year, this new guide and catalogue to all Howard Baker Facsimile Editions lists every one of the MAGNET, GEM and other reprint volumes published by Howard Baker. They are all here: MAGNET volumes, GEM volumes, Greyfriars Press reprints, Book Club Editions, Annuals and Pies. The book is fully indexed and includes an up-to-date price guide to all volumes. With over 200 reference illustrations.

Each entry gives the volume number, ISBN and details of the contents, with an outline or synopsis of the stories. There's also a list of the issues of the MAGNET which were *not* reprinted. If you're interested in the work of Frank Richards, you'll want this book!

MAGNET AND GEM FACSIMILE EDITIONS by George Beal. A5 size, 84pp. paperback. Two-colour cover. Price £5.00 (£1 extra overseas) inc. post-age and packing from QUATERMAIN PUBLICATIONS, 48 Kings Drive, Surbiton, Surrey KT5 8NQ

The Birth Of The Magnet

(THE BACKGROUND TO BILLY BUNTER'S ARRIVAL)

BY Una Hamilton Wright

THE MAGNET, the vehicle for Billy Bunter, was born in 1908, a year after its sister paper the GEM. The latter was doing so well that the publishers felt that the market had room for another similar weekly and Charles Hamilton was asked to write the main story for it. For this story he created his name 'Frank Richards'. Frank was his favourite boy's name, and with 'Richards' an 's' was added to his brother Dick's first name. Little did he realise that he was inventing a name which was to be famous for 90 years or more.

He had no idea that he was taking part in an epoch-making event. The new school. Greyfriars, and the preceding one, St. Jim's, took their place in the queue of all the work commitments he had accumulated against the claims of an increasingly busy private life.

The years from 1900 onwards had been traumatic for his family. His brother Richard, already working in Coventry and coming home most week-ends, married a Coventry girl in 1900 and so he ceased to be a member of his mother's household. This left Charles, his youngest brother, Douglas, and his youngest sister, Dolly, an opera student at the Royal Academy of Music.

They lived in an elegant small house in Avenue Road, Mill Hill Park, Acton - a pretty tree-lined road in the nicest part of Acton, not far from Ealing where their mother's family lived and from where their Uncle Steve called weekly to keep an eye on his widowed sister and the younger members of her family. After a stormy and troubled childhood the last three young Hamiltons were really happy in this house that they had lived in for eleven years. This was one of the happiest periods of my grandmother's life.

Then the first blow fell, Douglas suddenly became ill with T.B. and was dead within a year. He died in November 1902. All three survivors were shattered. Charles, always concerned about health and the risk of infection, and realising that his good income from writing depended on his keeping well and strong, agitated for a house move. Finally, his mother gave in and she regretfully left her pretty home and in 1902 moved to a larger, more imposing house in the Chiswick High Road. It had steps up to a porch with columns and Charles was delighted with it - in spite of his claiming not to be bothered about property and *things*. My mother noticed that her mother seemed downcast and overwhelmed and attributed this to grieving for her son. But later she came to realise that her mother felt the new house was unnecessarily large and too big for her to manage.

So, while Charles was away in the summer of 1904 on holiday in Devon, his mother, who was never without a suitor, remarried. Dolly remonstrated with her, 'Oh, mother you can't, not while Charlie's away!' Her mother replied, 'I can' and she did.

Dolly telegraphed to her brother to come home at once, which he did, but not in time to delay the nuptials. He was devastated and furious. He thought his mother too old to be interested in courtship and marriage, (she was 57) and I think he had fancied the idea of taking over from his Uncle Steve the role of her support and protector. His elder brother Alex and his growing family moved into the house when his mother left, but Charlie and Dolly kept it as their base until they took a service flat together in January 1907 at 7 Dorset Square, Upper Baker Street, where the Magnet was born. A service flat in those days was somewhat different from the modern concept. The flat consisted of the first floor of a terraced house which provided a Drawing Room, Dining Room and two bedrooms. All meals were provided so that a kitchen was not required. Brother and sister were extremely comfortable there and stayed until November 1908.

In the meantime their newly-acquired stepfather had died after just over a year of marriage. But my grandmother did not return to housekeep for her last two children, she enjoyed her retirement from responsibility - after all, Charles and Dolly were 29 and 25, and could look after themselves.

Charles still felt rather rootless and became a frequent visitor at his brother Alex's home, first at Leigh-on-Sea and then at Canvey Island where Alex bought a bungalow. Charles became very fond of Alex's three children and *he* bought a bungalow on Canvey Island to be near them and yet have his own workspace. Dolly spent some holidays down there and his mother came and found a housekeeper for him.

Dolly had developed a liking for travel and in 1905 went to Switzerland, to Grindelwald, and in 1907 she visited Norway. But it was not until 1909 that Charles became seriously interested in Continental travel. Before that date Dolly had got him across the Channel on a few short trips, but nothing more. She also took him to the Isle of Man where she met Percy Harrison whom she was to marry in 1911. Percy was a musician. The son of an artist, he could also draw very well, having worked in the Art Department of the Manchester Guardian.

Percy and Charles took to each other as soon as they met. Charles was interested in writing songs - he had already collaborated with Dolly, he writing the words and she supplying the tunes and harmonising the accompaniment. But Percy could even handle the orchestration and produce band parts. The trio wrote many letters to each other during this period, discussing ideas for songs and how to protect copyrights and how to register publishing companies. They started a company called 'Stanfords' with offices in Berners Street in London's West End.

Along with all this musical interest there was another topic in common between Charles and Percy - art. Charles had been to art school and learned pendrawing, for black and white illustrations - a second string to his bow. Finding that Percy was a very good draughtsman and could produce extremely professional illustrations, Charles got him introductions to editors so that his art could keep the pot boiling while he was getting known as a songwriter.

(There is no doubt that Percy supplied inspiration at a time in Charles' life when the relentless grind of producing copy to a strict deadline against a background of family traumas was beginning to get the author down. Percy and his interests began to draw Charles away from the narrow environment of his family, none of whom, excepting Dolly, was particularly adventurous. Percy made Art Galleries come alive for Charles and, together with Dolly, stimulated his interest in Opera.)

In 1907 Charles had time to attend 27 Opera performances, in 1908 only 8, - he spent a lot of time at his bungalow on Canvey Island that year with his little nieces and nephew - in 1909 there were 7 theatre visits on the Continent and a Christmas amateur play in which he took part at his hotel in Nice. It was written up in the Swiss & Nice Times. Dolly, meanwhile, had become a successful teacher of opera singers and there was an article on her views on voice production in the Gentleman's Journal in September 1907.

In November 1908 Charles and Dolly took a flat in Belsize Park, Hampstead. It was larger than the service flat so that they could put up visitors. One of the little nieces from Canvey Island came for a long stay. Family problems did not go away but they were now more distanced from Charles Hamilton. He could see them in perspective. However, he did get into trouble with his mother for taking his sixteen-year old niece to Paris. His mother thought it was not proper and summoned the girl's father, Alex, and ordered him to go to Paris straight away and bring Rosie home. This Alex did, although he had never been abroad before. He and Charles had a terrific row but were reconciled and, to cement it, went to a French Revue together.

During this period Charles had a kind of love-hate relationship with his brother Alex. Billy Bunter's Postal Order stemmed from Alex who was always expecting a cheque which never came. He was always keen for an advance to tide him over. He had the gift of charm, unlike Billy Bunter, and could always manage to raise the necessary loan. But his unpredictable finances took their toll on his family and Charles believed one shouldn't bring

children into the world unless one was sure of being able to support them at a certain level. So he both disapproved of Alex and helped him at the same time, reserving the right to give his elder brother moral lectures and to get into fearful tempers with him, making the most scathing remarks. This produced a quantity of friction, seeing that it was originally Alex's suggestion that Charles should send one of his stories up to a publisher when the author was seventeen. Poor Charles was in the invidious position of having to be grateful for a helping hand from someone he came to despise. If Charles had never had a story published he would never have had a deep pocket in which to dip his hand to help his brother Alex.

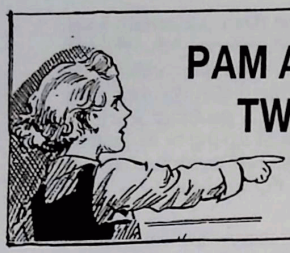
Charles' other continuing pastime was Chess. He played regularly with Dolly and by post with cousins and friends. He found the game most absorbing and soothing when stressed by work or family worries. His well-known addiction to gambling had not yet taken hold of him - that developed on the Continent where the Casinos beckoned. But the frustration, almost despair, which fuelled his gambling fever were developing and it was only a matter of time before he should try to find a way out of his situation - being chained to his work like an oarsman in a Roman galley. He longed to be freelance, to have time to follow up his interests, to take a day off without falling foul of an alarmed editor. He would dream of impossible wins on the roulette table which would free him of all necessity to work.

He had a curious habit of going out of his way to take on responsibilities - Alex and Alex's children - and there were others to come later - and then groaning under the burden. In the few shorts years of the Edwardian period he suffered most of the problems that are sent to try us and thereby enriched his stock of human knowledge and sympathy, all of which was on tap to be drawn on to make the GEM and the MAGNET the rich tapestries which they were. 1909 was the year that he really 'bit' the Continent and in all the first years of the century up to then he had not fallen in love nor been tempted into matrimony - he preferred moral rather than legal responsibilities. Dolly's efforts in introducing him to her Academy friends were, alas, all in vain. Had she succeeded, perhaps the MAGNET and GEM would not have been the out and out successes that they so obviously were.

To my chums all over the world:—

A Happy Christmas and a Bright and Prosperous New Year.

From
Yours sincerely,
FRANK RICHARDS.



PAM AND PAT - TWO SPIRITED GIRLS

by Dennis L. Bird

There were many memorable personalities at Morcove School. They took their tone from their headmistress, the firm but kindly Miss Esther Somerfield - whose much racier brother, the aviator Jack Somerfield, added a spark of adventure from time to time. There was the formidable Miss Massingham, friendly Miss Redgrave, the weak but likeable Miss Everard. And there were the skilfully-differentiated pupils that one remembers best: Betty Barton, the thoughtful and dependable working-class Lancashire lass; hot-tempered Polly Linton, languid Paula Creel, impish Naomer Nakara, the scheming, detestable Ursula Wade.

The Morcove saga began in the "Schoolgirls' Own" weekly in February 1921, but it was not until much later that readers met two girls whose characters transcended all the rest: Pam Willoughby and Pat Lawrence.

Pam first appeared in March 1928, and was to become the favourite creation of the author "Marjorie Stanton" (Horace Phillips). It is not exaggeration to say that he fell in love with her - just as Dorothy L. Sayers had done with Lord Peter Wimsey. But whereas Miss Sayers turned herself into Harriet Vane and in fantasy married her detective hero, matrimony - even in fiction - was out of the question for Mr. Phillips. Pam, after all, was not yet fifteen. But over the years he lavished on her a wealth of affectionate description unique in the Morcove annals.

PAM

Pam was the only child of a wealthy Devonshire J.P., John Willoughby, and his wife - another Pamela, many of whose personality traits were inherited by her daughter. They lived 20 miles from Morcove, at Swanlake, a stately home replete with every luxury.

News of Pam's impending arrival spread rapidly through the Fourth Form. "They say she is wonderful at most things," said Cora Grandways. "She's good at hockey, plays lacrosse, goes in for golf" and swimming - and she won a medal for the piano.

"Dweadful, dweadful," lamented Paula Creel (who always had trouble with her "r's"). "Sounds like a pwodigy." A prodigy Pam Willoughby certainly was - but not a show-off. She arrived in a fur coat, in a smart limousine driven by a liveried chauffeur, but in manner "the girl was quite unaffected." She soon made an impact. "Some quality in Pam Willoughby was causing her to be regarded by many with a kind of awe."

She was to share Study No. 10 with Madge Minden the musician and Tess Trelawney the artist. And very soon a rift developed between Pam and Madge, over music. Pam tactlessly criticised Madge's performance of a Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody. "*I* usually play that thing from memory."

Through the machinations of the Form sneak Ursula Wade, relations rapidly worsened. Madge, normally mild-mannered, was stirred to anger when she was blamed for tearing up Pam's manuscript music (the real culprit of course being Ursula). The normally serene Pam was confronted by "the other girl's storm-darkened face," and in turn lost her temper.

The rivalry intensified during the rest of the tale of *"When Pam Came to Morcove"* (re-issued in November 1937 as No. 611 of the Schoolgirls' Own Library). Pam was technically as good a pianist as Madge - and possibly a more complete performer because of her greater depth of character. Eventually the two girls entered for the same music examination. It would have been interesting to know who came out on top - but the contest never took place. Again Ursula intervened, planting stolen exam papers in Pam's bureau. They were discovered by Miss Redgrave; Pam was blamed - and expelled. The kind-hearted teacher was distressed, but accusingly said

"You don't care!"

"I don't care to show how I care," said Pam calmly. That was one of the keys to her nature: a well-bred girl who had learned to hide her feelings.

This first story gave no details of her initial encounter with Betty Barton, but the chums of study No. 12 soon came under her spell. "Pam's got a way" with her, said Polly. But they turned against Pam when it seemed she had plotted against Madge. Polly again: "She's a perfect mischief-maker."

The real plotter, Ursula, had originally tried to ingratiate herself with Pam; it was the latter's cool brush-off which incited Ursula's spite. She exacted a fierce revenge - but before she achieved Pam's expulsion there were some bitter scenes between them.

"How would you like to be me, Ursula... being everlastingly disgraced, hit at - shunned?... I haven't squealed, but I've been hurt. There's a lot owing to me, a bill that I ought to send in for someone to pay - and that someone is you, Ursula!" But Ursula did not pay - then, and Pam left Morcove an object of scorn.

However, Horace Phillips could not bear to leave his heroine in her plight, and the very next week, in May 1928, he contrived her return (republished in SGOL No. 627, March 1938, as *"Called Back to Morcove"*). He had to resort to some complex manoeuvres to do so. He invented an elder sister for Ursula - a totally different, wholly admirable girl called Maggie Wade, who sought a post at Swanlake as Mrs. Willoughby's secretary.

In support of her sister, Ursula wrote to Pam, and in doing so inadvertently gave herself away over Pam's expulsion. Eventually the Fourth came to hear of it: "It certainly did look as though Pam had been very grievously wronged, and it was like Morcove to want to put that right." The result was a petition to Miss Somerfield seeking Pam's re-instatement - and with heavy irony the Form insisted that the first signature should be Ursula's. How much trouble, incidentally, the Morcovians could have saved themselves, both then and in the future, if they had completely exposed Ursula's infamy and had her expelled instead! But that would have lowered them to the level of the sneak herself; chivalry prevailed, and the headmistress was not told of Ursula's conduct.

Miss Somerfield accepted the petition, and wrote to Mr. Willoughby inviting Pam to return. "Peace with honour," Pam laughed and shrugged. (That phrase was soon to have a new meaning when Neville Chamberlain returned from Munich in September 1938!)

So Pam returned to Morcove having survived the worst crisis of her young life,

"through her own strength of character and generous way of thinking... She had needed no one to counsel her." She was now restored to the affections of Study No. 12, and for the remaining decade of Morcoviana she remained (mainly) in their good graces. Even so, there were times when the friendship came under strain, principally because of her independent spirit and her cool determination to make her own decisions.

The next critical period came in August 1929 (later published as SGOL No. 685, June 1939, *"When Pam Made Morcove Wonder"*). Pam received a letter whose contents were not at first revealed to the reader. Etta Hargrove then sought Pam's help in finding work at Swanlake for "a very deserving pair," an unemployed brother and sister. Pam inquired their names - Tom and Edna Morgan - and was uncharacteristically unsympathetic. "Yes, well" (her usual phrase) " - I don't think there is anything I can do."

What she did not tell her Form-mates was that these were two ne'er-do-wells who had a record of poaching and swindling. They had a younger sister, Leila, who (like Maggie Wade in the earlier story) was of exemplary character; she had written to warn Pam about Tom and Edna, who were hoping to sponge on Morcove's goodwill. Pam went to see Miss Somerfield, who thought how Pam "was the very quintessence of what a Morcove girl should be. Bright, candid-looking, full of girlish grace, altogether promising."

Nevertheless it was Pam herself who was soon in trouble, thanks to Edna Morgan. Edna managed to throw suspicion on Pam as a cigarette smoker - almost a hanging offence in high-class girls' schools in the 1920s. Deeply concerned, Miss Somerfield interviewed Pam, who bore up well. "Spirited she was, unable to help showing her inborn dignity. But anything like insolent defiance was foreign to her nature."

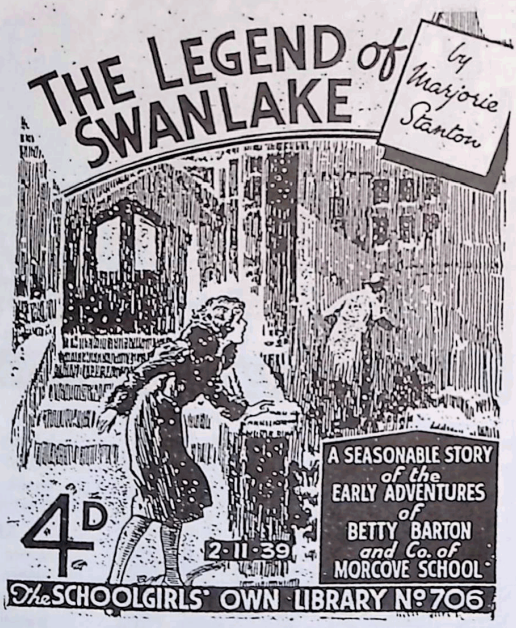
The plot thickened when Tom Morgan tried to burgle the house where blameless Leila worked as a nursemaid. Then Edna tampered with Pam's bicycle, as a result of which Pam had an accident and was soon at death's door (rather sentimental, all this).

Here Horace Phillips broke off his Morgan sequence and introduced an entirely new sub-plot involving Pam's friend Lionel Derwent, a coveted examination for the Belfort Prize, and an unpleasant rival named Philip Wade (yes, another Ursula relation, this time a brother). Lionel, desperately worried by Pam's illness, was not in a suitable frame of mind to sit the exam - but Pam miraculously turned the corner to recovery, Polly Linton dashed over to Lionel's school to tell him the good news, and he duly won the prize. A likely story!

Pam now convalesced, "a little thinner than she used to be, her face so delicately lovely, her smile so charming calm and quiet... Pam never had been boisterous, only full of spirit; virile, in a well-bred, always dignified way." "Virile" is a most unusual word to apply to a schoolgirl. A dictionary definition is "having or indicating masculine vigour or strength." Horace Phillips had been carried away a little too far by his fascinating heroine.

She eventually triumphed over the Morgans, saving Edna from a disastrous fire. Edna and Tom emigrated to Canada, and Pam's courage was recognised by the inscription of her name on the Honours Board at Morcove School.

At Christmas 1929 Pam was the main character in one of Horace Phillips' very best stories (as "The Legend of Swanlake," it re-appeared in November 1939 as SGOL No. 706). Pam and several of her Morcove chums and their parents went to the Willoughby's' splendid home for the holidays; so did Polly's brother Jack Linton and some of his friends including Lionel Derwent. Pam told of the family tradition, of how an earlier Willoughby



had sent away a plague victim, a man dressed all in grey. That previous master of Swanlake vanished next Christmas Night, and

When 'tween the trees Grey Man is seen
Wo to Swanlake on Christmas E'en.

The Morcove girls arrived at Swanlake in deep snow - and Pam alone saw "the greyish figure of a man, running between the trees."

Horace Phillips now changed his technique. In all his previous stories about Pam, he had been careful to keep the reader fully acquainted with her thoughts, fears, and motivation. Now, however, he brought down a blank curtain and Pam's behaviour become more and more puzzling.

A mysterious waif was found in the grounds, christened "Little Miss Mistletoe" by Pam (well-read, she perhaps had in mind "Little Father Time" in Thomas Hardy's "Jude the Obscure"). The waif was given shelter for the night - and disappeared. So did Pam.

The daughter of Swanlake was missing for a night and a day. And then, just as mysteriously, she re-appeared with no explanation. "Merry Christmas, all!" Suddenly she lost that calm smile. "Mother - Dad!... I-I'm sorry for the worry it's caused you. I - you - oh, dear, I didn't want to appear upset - ...I promise to tell you all - after Christmas."

Pam, normally so harmoniously in tune with her parents, was for once at odds with them. Whatever could have happened to this cool, self-possessed girl, comfortably at home amidst her own family and friends? Horace Phillips gradually screwed up the tension, and then (as master-stroke) he relaxed temporarily to describe the half-hour comedy "The Haunted Inn," put on by Pam and the others to entertain the house-party. The description occupied less than four pages of SGOL No. 706, but it is one of the funniest episodes in all the Amalgamated Press's output.

This single shaft of wintry sunlight soon gave way to sombre clouds again. The re-appearance of the waif, in suspicious circumstances, led Mr. Willoughby to call in the police. After many more adventures, the complexities gradually unravelled. "Grey Man" was revealed as Mr. Willoughby's scoundrelly, long-lost brother Charles; the waif was Charles's daughter - Pam's unknown cousin. Pam's absence had been caused by her uncle holding her against her will in a secret room. Finally, all was forgiven, and Pam told her friends "When next Christmas comes.. I think you'll find 'Grey Man' about the place... and 'Little Miss Mistletoe'."

Pam's character was developed over many more stories after that; she even became Form captain briefly ("Schoolgirls' Own," September 1934). Nor was she always involved in high drama. She had a delicious sense of fun, as she had already shown in the "Haunted Inn" sketch, and was to show again in her parody of "The Morcove Peeress" (Schoolgirls' Own, September 1930, and SGOL No. 701, October 1939). She always remained herself: composed, friendly but a little detached, sure in her own mind of what she was doing. Wise beyond her years, and thoroughly charming!

*****

Having established Pam as one of the Betty Barton circle, Horace Phillips took a considerable risk in March 1930: he created a similar character in Pat Lawrence. The orphan protégé of a doting and wealthy aunt, she had a powerful and magnetic personality as well as a grudge against life. Form captain in her previous school, she had been expelled - "blamed for what others had done... Too careless; too easy-going and trustful in those days. Never again!"

At Morcove it amused her to see the influence she soon had over her school fellows. Horace Phillips pointed up the obvious comparison: "Another Pam Willoughby? Something like, perhaps; there was the same sort of air about her. But whereas Pam was a thoroughly good sort, (this girl) could, if she chose, be just the opposite." One of her acolytes, Ella Elgood, thought she was "Nice - but I doubt if she has much heart." And the descriptions of her, though vivid, are less flattering than those of Pam: "Eyes with their hard brilliance... thin red lips." Etta and Ella were both impressed and yet "rather afraid of Pat". No honest girl ever feared Pam Willoughby.

Pat took a dislike to Betty Barton & Co., although their actual meeting was not narrated. Nor, curiously enough, did "Marjorie Stanton" describe the scene where Pat and Pam first spoke. This was certainly an opportunity missed. Pam was merely mentioned as one of a group who crowded round Pat. Pam, indeed, made few appearances in the story, yet the reader was always conscious of her presence. For Pam was the one girl in the form with whom Pat felt any affinity. "How alike in manner they were!... The inevitability of this gravitation to each other" was obvious.

Pat's advent, augmented by the scheming of Ursula Wade, soon divided the Form. It was indeed *"Study Against Study"* (the title of the reprint, SGOL 693, in August 1939). A new election for captain was forced on Betty, leading to allegations of underhand vote-bargaining against Polly - and Betty lost by 7

PAT

PAM

votes to Pat's 15. Pam's last-minute vote for Betty was just too late - out of time! (an unnecessary touch of melodrama).

But Ursula Wade, the despicable architect of all this confusion, overplayed her hand. Pat discovered that she had gained her victory only through Ursula's trickery - and, high-and-mighty, hard, yet thoroughly honourable girl that she was, she resigned instantly and Betty was restored to her rightful place.

Pat and Pam played the last scene in the story. Pam hoped that she could mediate between Pat and Study No. 12.

"I don't think so, Pam... They are really not my sort. You are, but they're not. I'm sorry." Would another word from Pat have kept the Swanlake girl with her? Perhaps! And for that very reason, perhaps, Pat had remained mute... With a sudden regretful sigh, Pam Willoughby moved away to the door. "I'm sorry too," she said.

*****

This article is entitled "Pam and Pat," but it has been 80% about Pam and not much about Pat. That is because Horace Phillips, the author who had splendidly brought them both to life, must have realised how difficult it would be to sustain interest in two such similar girls. And yet he could have explored the differences.

Pat, it is true, had much in common with Pam, but there was a harsh, high-handed streak in her which also made her akin to Diana Royston-Clarke, John Wheway's overbearing Cliff House virago.

For whatever reason, Pat Lawrence's character was never developed further. After that one gripping tale, she became a peripheral figure in future, leaving centre-stage to the gleaming lady of Swanlake, Pam Willoughby.

1936 - NAZI GERMANY WELCOMES BIGGLES

By D.J. O'Leary

The translation of THE CAMELS ARE COMING was published in Germany in 1936 by Wilhelm Goldman, one of Germany's leading publishers, under the title FEINDLICHE FLIEGER IN SICHT (ENEMY FLYERS IN SIGHT) translated by Hans Herdegen. Published in Leipzig, it consisted of 215 pages, with dustwrapper, and was illustrated with 16 black and white photographs. These photos, mostly from a photographic agency, three from a private collection, show scenes of the German Air Force in various aspects, planes, anti-aircraft weapons, observation balloons, reconnaissance photos of the devastated landscape of the Western Front, etcetera. Noteworthy are shots of von Richtofen's triple-decker Fokker as well as his fighter squadron - the Germans never used the term "circus" - which incidentally was taken over at his death in 1918 by another famous "ace", a certain Herman Goering.

The volume's stories are generally given a straightforward translation but there are a number of interesting omissions and additions.

Most striking change is the fact that two of the original stories are missing. These are J9982 and THE ZONE CALL. The reason is perhaps not too difficult to deduce. Both are stores of treacherous tricks by Germans to deceive British forces.

In J9982 a German pilot in a captured Camel shoots down unsuspecting British pilots while in THE ZONE CALL an apparently inadvertent "leak" from a captured German pilot turns out to be an attempt to divert British planes from an imminent attack. Biggles destroys the false Camel and also foils the German attack.

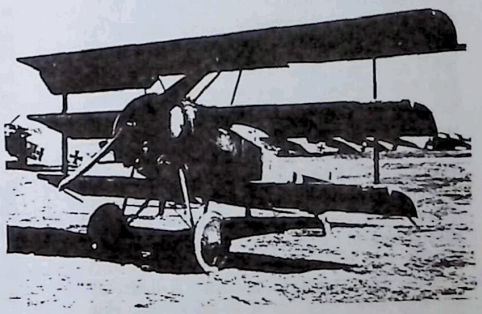
The shocked reaction of Biggles and Major Mullen is significant. "I can't believe a German pilot (in J9982) would do such a dastardly thing," said the Major, shaking his head.

"No ordinary officer would, of course," agreed Biggles. "I'll bet you anything you like he is in no regular squadron. None of the Richtofen Staffel would stand for that stuff any more than we would. But you'll find skunks in every mob if you look for 'em."

On the other hand, in THE DECOY, although an angry Biggles shoots down the Rumpler aircraft which has lured his friend into an ambush, these decoys are described as "an old menace", for unwary pilots and we are told that "such death-traps were fairly common."

The story appears unchanged in the German which suggests that both Johns and the translator were prepared to accept this behaviour on the German part.

Richtofen's squadron



Richtofen's own plane

Likewise, THE WHITE FOKKER has Biggles' squadron losing a young pilot to the unexpected attack by an enemy fighter on planes coming in for a landing. Major Mullen, trying to calm his flyers' anger, says: "From some points of view it was a low down trick: from others it was a smart piece of work: anyway, the fellow was within his rights." Again, this story was translated unchanged.

We can see, then, that a code of honour was observed by both sides. When Johns tells of indefensible acts of treachery the German translation solves the problem by not including them! There will be quite a number of such examples where imputations of German brutality, cowardice or any other aspect which might reflect badly on them is removed or changed.

The "Foreword" gives us our first illustration of this. It is perhaps not surprising that "Hun" and "boche" are never used in the German (although Johns explains that "Hun" was used in the familiar sense, rather than in the derogatory, even citing "hun" as R.F.C. slang for a pupil at flying school). Anyway, these terms were too derogatory to be used in Germany, obviously!

Also excised is Johns' story of a British pilot brought down among the troops he had just been "strafing" who finds that his "erstwhile victims proceeded to amuse themselves by battering him to pulp with their rifle butts, a comparatively tame pursuit from which they were only compelled to desist by the arrival of a senior officer."

There is no trace of this in Herr Herdegen's version! Among other examples of sensitivity leading to censorship and exclusion are THE BLUE DEVIL reference to a prisoner bragging "like a boche will when he's had a few beers"; the description of a Fokker triple-decker fighter as looking like a "venetian blind" (FOG); the incident in THE LAST SHOW when Biggles, shot down, is "kicked viciously in the side" and called "Schweinhund flieger" until rescued by an officer.

The respect for upper ranks extends to British officers too. In FOG Biggles thinks of a spy's risks and says, "God... I wouldn't have that fellow's job for a million a year and a thousand V.C.'s!" Evidently officers are not supposed even to *think* of money - only the thousand V.C.'s are mentioned! And when in THE LAST SHOW Biggles is contemptuous of armour plate in planes and thinks he knows the reason for it. "Why? I'll tell you. Some brass-hat's got hit in the pants and that's the result." The German speaks of "high ranking officers nervous when attacked" although it does say that they have their hearts in their boots (the German phrase is "in their trousers") so it could be a slip on the translator's part here.

One other omission is rather different. In the note of farewell that Marie Janis leaves for Biggles she writes, "I shall pray for you... we shall meet again, if not in this world then in the next, so I will not say goodbye." This sentence is missing. Why? Could it be a result of Hitler's well-known hatred of Christianity?

Before dealing with the rather more interesting things *added* to the German text, let's look at the *titles* of the stories.

AFFAIRE DE COEUR becomes simply MARIE JANIS, perhaps because the title in French might puzzle readers (remember, there are no explanatory footnotes in the German version) and SPADS AND SPANDAUS is re-titled AMERICAN CARELESSNESS, perhaps because of a common European sense of superiority with regard to Americans. Finally, the arrival of Algy in Biggles' squadron is recounted in a story now bearing the more respectful label THE BEGINNER, rather the THE BOOB.

Alterations from the English text to protect German sensibilities are understandable. In ON LEAVE Biggles is surprised when the seaplane he is pursuing away from Ramsgate lands on the sea without returning his fire. He later learns that the pilot had panicked and that his furious officer-gunner had been too busy giving his nervous fellow-aviator a pair of black eyes to return his attacker's fire! No mention of such shenanigans in the German airforce appear in Herr Herdegen's version! He simply states that the gunner's weapon had jammed!

Similarly in THE BALLOONATICS where the drifting German balloon crew stay put and resign themselves to capture, the translation explains that they had been destroying all their maps and that is why they had not parachuted down!

Some changes result from phrase or references which would need long footnotes to explain. Examples include "keep the home fires burning", "to sign the pledge" and the reason for "Wat" Tyler's nickname. And when in THE BLUE DEVIL Biggles remarks that: "Blue Devils go pop at the end, if I remember my fireworks, "the German has to say simply that the "Blue Devil" is not immortal.

But why in THE CARRIER have the Uhlans galloping to capture Biggles' aircraft been changed into infantrymen? Publishers RED FOX even chose this German cavalry charge as the cover illustration of their 1993 edition of THE CAMELS ARE COMING. Perhaps in 1936 it was felt that cavalry presented too old-fashioned an image for the new, expanding Nazi army?

And why is Biggles described as dodging unexpected flak "like a startled snipe" turned

into "a startled *crow*" in the German version of CAMOUFLAGE? What, too, is the significance of Algy's proud boast of having destroyed in his retaliatory raid in THE BATTLE OF FLOWERS the lettuce patch belonging to the German pilots, only to have his claim transferred to the destruction of their climbing roses! An unimportant change, no doubt, but if so, why make it? Unless roses are a more dignified plant for officers to cultivate than lettuces?

One way in which German, like French and other languages does score over English, is its possession of two words for "you". This means that the use of the intimate "Du" rather than the formal "Sie" gives an added dimension to conversations and letters, for example.

Thus, when Algy greets his cousin on arrival at the squadron he calls him "Biggles" and, in German uses the friendly "Du". The rebuke he receives is likewise harsher: "Mein Name ist Captain Bigglesworth. Sie sind mir direkt unterstellt. (You are directly under my orders.)"

In the same way, when Biggles accepts Algy as a friend and comrade he adds to the right to call him "Biggles" permission to use "Du" when talking to him. A double acceptance for Algy!

You can imagine how much closer the growing intimacy between Marie Janis and her "Biegles" would seem to a German reader as they progress from "Sie" to "Du". And Marie's farewell letter is couched in the same warm mode.

Herr Herdegen scores another success in finding an exactly similar drinking song to that roared out by the British pilots in their mess, "Hurrah for the next man who dies." The German version is so obviously an equivalent traditional drinking song and mirrors - but does not slavishly translate - the cheerfully morbid sentiments of the British song that I would call it an example of an ideal bit of translation.

Looking at the translation as a whole two things struck me: how generally accurate but pedestrian it was and what a difficult task Johns sets any translator. The original stories are so vivid, direct and colloquial and so peppered with authentic detail that we should be grateful for any attempt to convey this excitement to another nation's readers, particularly those of the - usually - honourable former enemy.

The absence of footnotes forces a drastic simplification of vocabulary. Now there is no explanation of types of aeroplane, Spads, DH4's; equipment, Sidcot suits, Pyrene, British warm (overcoat), etcetera. Even the title of Biggles' romance must change from AFFAIRE DE COEUR to simply MARIE JANIS.

We should realise that the inclusion of all these technical details is not mere "padding". They, like the examples of airforce slang which are also explained in footnotes, create an atmosphere of wartime authenticity which lends much to the stories' impact.

Two essential elements of Johns' style which are disastrously "flattened" by the translation are first, his fine descriptions of the sky and clouds as planes fly through the peace of nature on their deadly missions. Whether on the dawn patrol or lost in dense fog, the word-pictures are excellent. The translator tries hard. In THE BOMBER he has "DH9's appearing suddenly near him like great glow-worms in the rays of the rising sun". Not bad. But compare this to the original. "They (the DH9's) gleamed suddenly near him like jewels on velvet as the rays of the sun flashed on their varnished wings."

The other aspect "flattened" is his vivid and exuberant use of slangy expressions. Pity the poor translator who has to find a way of conveying the range of Biggles' exclamations, the "Hells Bells", "damn it!", "Holy mackerels" that escape his lips. The most frequent German equivalents seem more limited with "Zum Kuckuck" and "Donnerwetter!" and even more difficult are the racy, vernacular expressions put into our hero's mouth. When nearly destroyed by a burst of fire from "The Bomber" Biggles gasps, "Phew! My God! That'll stop me laughing in church in the future!" The German translation has: "Zum Kuckuck !...das war kein Spass!" ("Golly! That was no joke!").

After kissing Marie Janis, whom he had met through a faulty magneto, Biggles' exclamation, "my own mag. was nearly shorting then", is just omitted and therefore loses in the German the relaxation of tension as they admit their so far unspoken affection in half-humorous fashion.

Still, let's look at it more fairly. When all's said and done, a collection of war stories where the Germans always lose to a heroic enemy seems an odd choice for Hitler's Germany. The translation too, despite my criticisms, is generally accurate. If the situation had been reversed and Britain defeated in the First World War, would we have been ready to accept stories about our airmen constantly defeated and outsmarted by a von Richtofen figure?

Why did the Nazis allow this translation then? Some reasons might have been: the general admiration for the flyers on both sides who generally behaved chivalrously; Hitler's regard for Britain - at least up to 1940 and perhaps later - combined with his hope that we would not interfere with his unchanging intention to move east into Russia; and last but not least, let's not forget, these are excellent

action stories exalting the martial virtues of courage and loyalty, always heavily stressed in Nazi propaganda. (With regard to this last point it's worth noting, however, that Biggles' growing war-weariness is unchanged in the translation.) One last thought. In 1936 the Olympic Games were held in Berlin. Enormous propaganda efforts were organised to glorify the "new" Germany. Maybe the apparent openness claimed by the regime had one good result, some young Nazis had encountered a *real* hero!

MORE GREYFRIARS VIGNETTES

BY TED BALDOCK

DISTANT LAUGHTER

"Well, if you fellows don't believe me ... hooted Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha."

The idea of believing Bunter seemed to impress the Famous Five as comic.

No. 1 study echoed with merriment.

Bunter the Caravanner

No one I believe has attempted to compute the number of "Ha, ha, ha's" recorded in the long Greyfriars odyssey. Why should they? Would it not be an entirely useless and futile exercise? Or what real use could it possibly be to the advancement of knowledge of the 'Magnet' saga? Except the production of one more statistic, of which surely we have an over abundance already. None - possibly - yet it would record the jolly atmosphere in which the stories are set. Laughter is never far away. Greyfriars has its fair complement of conscious and unconscious 'comedians' who are always ready, intentionally or otherwise, to generate mirth. Two classic examples which spring immediately to mind are those of Horace Coker and William George Bunter. The mere mention of Horace Coker of the fifth form invariably raises a smile, or, more likely, a roar of laughter. Coker is one of those characters who, the more serious they become, the more humorous they appear. It was a gift of inestimable value, a heaven sent ability to dispel gloom and replace greyness with the bright sunshine of laughter.

Sport that wrinkled care derides,
And laughter holding both his sides.

Laughter that instant and never failing panacea for dispelling gloom and despondency. Surely old Coker merits a decoration for his (albeit not deliberate) facility in the mirth provoking line.

Coker shared this gift with William George Bunter of the Remove. Limitless fatuity was much in evidence in the Owl's make-up which, had it not been leavened with a gift for raising laughter, could have been tedious in the extreme. Bunter has been written off a thousand times as a 'fat ass', a 'piffling porker', a 'podgy villain' and countless other uncomplimentary epithets, but it may be said with confidence that any 'man' capable - as was Bunter - of raising a smile on practically any occasion must be worth his salt. Even his fat cackles of 'He, he, he', although lacking the fullness of a genuine laugh (and which so often proved such an irritation to other fellows) can lighten the reader's mood. One feels that Democritus of old - who was well acquainted with the value of laughter - would have appreciated Bunters cachinnatory efforts. No fellow who is able to provoke laughter on a dull day should be thoughtlessly written off. Just so long as youthful glee continues to echo down the corridors of time all will be well.

Byron has said, "Oh, mirth and innocence, Oh milk and water, Ye happy mixture of more happy days." A sentiment with which few would disagree.

The 'Magnet' over the years gave us much mirth and laughter, for which alone it

deservedly holds a very special place in our memories. Not forgetting that great figure, Frank Richards, the founder of it all smiling indulgently in the background.

"Blow your doughnuts, blow your jam, I never had your jam. It was only a measly pound pot, too - fat lot to make a fuss about..."

"Ha, ha, ha."

"Oh cackle." A fat face peered cautiously round the doorway.

"I say, you fellows, that looks jolly good cake....."

Happy days!

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GREYFRIARS IN TIME

It seems to me the little events that go to make one's school life are of far greater importance, and have more to do with influencing a fellow's future, than people imagine."

Harold Avery, *The Dormitory Flag*.

Constantly in his plays, both dramas and comedies, the Bard of Avon alludes to 'The inaudible foot of time'. Thomas Gray in his 'Elegy' avers that we are rich with the spoils of time', and Lowell speaks of '... the thorny stem of time'. All are intrigued with this ever-moving and invisible phenomenon which finally wears everything mortal into oblivion.

Man in his wisdom separates time into a series of fragments - minutes, hours, days, months and years. It approaches and comes silently upon us, is abreast for an instant and is gone, moving imperceptibly into that dimension which, for lack of a more suitable term we call the 'past'. For a fleeting moment it is 'now' before the start of that eternal receding process which in most memories becomes ever more shadowy and dim. Herein lies the great importance and necessity of making and preserving records, something tangible which the future historian may study and, hopefully, interpret aright.

It is with such thoughts that one must approach those very real - and for the most part - loveable characters created by Charles Hamilton in the 'Magnet'. There are, of course, Harry Wharton and Co - known to posterity as "The Famous Five", William George Bunter, Herbert Vernon Smith and a host of other no less important figures. We must particular remember Henry Samuel Quelch, the Master of the Remove, renowned for his 'gimlet eye' and apparent ability of seeing what is occurring behind his back, and who has an uncanny - and dismaying - insight into a boy's mind. These and a host of other Hamiltonian characters who were 'at school' with us and, in a certain sense, are still keeping pace with us today. Such was the impression they made upon our receptive young minds, such is the impact they continue to make. One is prompted to attempt to re-create the atmosphere of the Greyfriars era for one's personal satisfaction and, hopefully, to give a modicum of pleasure further afield in a world which is becoming increasingly more alien to its precepts.

To capture and convey that atmosphere one can draw upon the impressions of the memory. We know our Greyfriars, we lived in its ambience week by week throughout our boyhood. To us it was THE school. We came to know all the fellows intimately, the masters, even the august (yet benevolent figure) of Dr. Locke himself; and Gosling the ancient porter, an almost historical appendage to the Greyfriars saga whose firm belief - frequently reiterated - was that "all boys should be drownded at birth"; Mrs. Mimble, whose imprint on the mind is that of a comely dame presiding in motherly fashion behind the counter of the tuckshop, skilfully and with the experience of long practice 'heading off' demands for credit, the impatience of hungry 'fags' and, probably most taxing of all the appeals of Billy Bunter relating to his long expected postal order.

On the outer fringes of the canvas we see the wiry figure of Sir Hilton Popper - a governor of the school no less - whose choleric temperament has provided many stirring episodes. Trotter the page, a veritable mine of information not easily available from other sources, and countless others, all moving and having their being in the ethereal world of Greyfriars.

The old quadrangle has echoed to the sound of many feet and many voices, echoes of which, could they be recaptured, would provide a fascinating record. The quiet, stealthy footfalls of Gerald Loder of the sixth form returning from one of his periodic forays to the 'Green Man' or the 'Three Fishers' would impinge, scarcely detectably, upon the ear.

We can still hear the sharp intake of breath at the slightest sound, being translated though an over-wrought imagination into immediate menace by a fellow only too well aware of the consequences of discovery. There is a rustling of the ancient ivy festooning the crumbling walls of the cloisters at that point much favoured by Vernon Smith and others of similar inclination as a means of egress and ingress for night excursions. There have been occasions, however, when this secluded exit has been used for nobler and less selfish purposes, when other

fellows - Harry Wharton and Tom Redwing spring to mind - have availed themselves of it to break bounds in order to warn some back-sliding chum of impending danger. It is all in the day's - or rather the night's - work at Greyfriars.

An old boy, now an officer in the army, returns to his Alma Mater from the war with honours thick upon him and is mobbed and cheered to the echo by admiring fellows, the seniors secretly deploring their ill-luck (as they would have it) at being just too young to seek a similar glory..... We hear the Head's speech of welcome and congratulations in 'Big Hall'; the central figure in uniform sits with the masters at the high table with becoming modesty, secretly wishing to heaven that it was all over, that he might escape and explore once more his old haunts and re-visit his old study to chat with the present inmates. Another memory, one of so many, recorded on an invisible tape for us to ponder in the present.

Surely there must be innumerable sound-waves still reverberating in the recesses and archways of the old school buildings? Vibrations capable of being detected and recorded only with the most sensitive of instruments. Distant roars and howls of Billy Bunter suffering - quite justly - for one of his many indiscretions, his acts of pilfering tuck (and *only* tuck. Be it noted that the fat Owl is fully aware of the clear distinction of meum and teum beyond that point). There is cheering from 'Big Side' as Wingate brings off another splendid 'six'. The sharp staccato snapping of Mr. Hacker in his most acid and sarcastic mood; the boomings of Mr. Prout and the twitterings of little Mr. Twigg, the cawing of the old rooks in the elms..... All these sounds must be as much a part although invisible) of the Greyfriars scene as the ancient clock tower, the ruined cloisters or the fountain in the quadrangle.

These many facets were meticulously built up and described time and again in our lives through the medium of the 'Magnet'. Memories which have become indelibly etched in our minds. It has been said - *bis pueri senes* - may it remain ever so.

The playing fields seemed greener then,
The elms of mightier girth,
We cheered 'school' to the echo when
They showed their sterling worth.

To retain the spirit of youth in these modern days with their curious standards of conduct and expression is becoming increasingly desirable. In so many ways do we regard the Greyfriars legend as the epitome of that which - though now generally lost - we try, in our individual way, to perpetuate.

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MIDNIGHT MARAUDER

I stirred uneasy in my bed,
The dorm was quiet and dark,
I'm sure I heard a stealthy tread
And thought - hallo - a lark.
The trail led on to Smithy's den.
The word had drifted round,
And reached our Bunter, how and when?
His ear was to the ground.
Drawing near with noiseless step
I peered in through the door
I had a fat fish in my net
But, oh the wreck I saw!
There were the remnants of a pie
The crumbs were scattered round,
It drew from me a heart-felt sigh,
When came the strangest sound.
A champing jaw, a grunt, a sign,
The clinking of a plate,
T'was midnight and I wondered why
These sounds were heard so late.
There stood the Owl in Dressing gown
With pockets stuffed with cake,
Upon his face a thoughtful frown
His eye gleamed wide awake.
Goodbye hamper, farewell tuck,
We'll not see you again.
Smithy lad you're out of luck,
Now who will take the blame?
The stilly night was dark with gloom,
With shadows black and deep
When Smithy's hamper met its doom
With Greyfriars wrapt in sleep.

The Coming of Archie

BY E Grant – McPherson

Our story starts, with a flood, at the 'Old School'. This has weakened the structure, and so the sleeping capacity has been reduced but, instead of sending some of the boys to other Schools or home for a period, Nipper comes up with the idea of reforming the Cadet Corps, and whilst still attending classes at St. Frank's they spend the balance of their time, under canvas, on 'Williards Island' only a short distance away.

The Powers that Be, agree to this, and all is well, until a rumour is circulated, that there is a hoard of treasure hidden on the Island.

A distant relative of old Mr. Willard arranges with a Mr. Giddy, who is agent to Col. Glenthorne (who owns the island), to make the juniors leave the their camp, and vacate the island. Realising the true situation, as well as of course, wishing to return to the island, Nipper decides to visit Col. Glenthorne and ask him if the cadets may use their camp again. So he and Tommy Watson approach Nelson Lee, who gives them permission to see the Col. over the matter.

Upon their arriving at the Manor, the butler opens the door, and tells them that the whole family is away, with the exception of Master Archibald. The way the butler mentions the name gives Nipper an odd feeling; however, he asked if they could see him. "Kindly step this way" said the butler smoothly, and ushered them across the hall and opened a door for them to enter, smiling as he did so.

The following conversation is rendered 'in extenso' as Edwy's version of Archie's vocabulary is not really suitable for condensation.

As we entered, he seized the door handle, and closed the door behind us. We found ourselves in an apartment which was of a peculiar nature. It was magnificently furnished, with lounge chairs and a soft pile carpet. But round the walls there were maps, like a schoolroom At first the apartment seemed to be quite empty. Then I observed a pair of legs protruding towards the fireplace from the depths of a big armchair. The legs were encased in fearfully coloured silk pyjamas, and the edge of a brilliant red dressing-gown was in evidence.

Then, suddenly, Master Archibald appeared. Or, perhaps it would be better to say he appeared gradually. He raised himself out of the chair in much the same style as an old man of ninety might have done. At last he stood upright, and gazed over towards us. He was a well-set-up young fellow of about sixteen—certainly not more. He had surprisingly fair hair, and a face that was as fresh as a girl's. And his features were quite aristocratic in their cast. His grey eyes regarded us languidly and indifferently.

"Oh, there you are, then!" he observed. "That is, I mean to say, what?"

"I'm sorry to trouble you, Master Archibald," I began. "We didn't know that you were still in a state of deshabille——"

"Don't mention it, old fruit!" exclaimed Archie. "Don't even breathe it, and all that rot. How perfectly priceless for you to drop in. I mean to say, I'm overwhelmed. Absolutely. Totally unexpected, and so forth. Fairly off my feet, in a way of speaking."

"We hope you don't mind——"

"Not at all!" said Archie generously. "Sit down. I mean to say, take a couple of chairs. Make yourself at home, and what not. Don't take any notice of me. Just stagger about and admire the views. Absolutely. Deucedly decent of you to drop in. I mean to say—that, is, you, or, to put it more plainly, I—— Of course! You quite understand, my dear old sportsmen?"

Tommy Watson looked at me blankly. I was nearly grinning, but only my inborn politeness forbade me from doing so. Master Archibald was evidently a Johnny of the most priceless order—one of the sort you read about, but hardly ever meet. He sank back into his chair, and seemed to doze off. He was apparently quite content to let us remain in the room without even troubling to ask our business. But I marched across to the fireplace and touched his knee.

He opened his eyes, and regarded me in a friendly way.

"Oh, so there you are again!" he remarked. "I mean to say, jolly decent of you to wake me up! You wouldn't care to take a stroll in the jolly old grounds? Rich pasture land, and so forth. Perfectly priceless view, don't you know. Green trees and rippling brooks, and all that kind of piffle. Absolutely charming. I mean to say, what?"

"I'm sorry to disturb you, but we came here with a special object," I said firmly. "That object wasn't to admire the views, or to bother you, Master Archibald. We want your help."

Archibald sat up.

"Is that so?" he asked, interestedly. "Deucedly sporting of you, and all that kind of thing. Help? Well, rather! That's just in my line, old tulip! I'm the chappy who invented the stuff! Anything you like. Absolutely! I mean to say, you've just got to tell me what's wrong, and there you are. To be quite frank, there you absolutely are!"

Tommy, who was behind the chair, touched his head significantly. But I certainly did not think that Archie was mad. He was simply too lazy to take much interest in the proceedings. And this was merely his manner of speaking.

"Splendid!" I said. "We come from St. Frank's——"

"My gratitude is appalling. That is to say, frightful!" interrupted Archie. "Eh? From St. Frank's, old onion? Of course. Ferris mentioned something about it. Deucedly smart chappy, Ferris. Knows everything. Wonderful how he finds things out—perfectly wonderful. From St. Frank's? How absolutely topping! Take another couple of chairs. Try the old lounge. Go to sleep!"

"We don't want to go to sleep," I said. "We came here to talk to you about a man named Giddy. I think he's your father's estate manager."

"Oh, good—topbole!" exclaimed Archie, clapping his hands. "How perfectly priceless! How positively stunning! And how are you feeling, old haricot? Pretty fit, and so forth? By Jove, and gadzooks! First time I noticed it! A school chappy? Pity the old pater is staggering round. Please him no end and what not. He'd fairly go into raptures. That is to say, he'd give you the glad hand, so to speak. Frightfully keen on school chappies, don't you know. Absolutely. And you've come about old Giddy? Topping!"

"I'm afraid we're wasting your time," I said. "You see, Mr. Giddy has turned us off Willard's Island——"

"Naturally," said Archie, nodding. "Mr. Giddy would turn a hair off a bald head! A wonderful man—that is to say, providing you can call him a man. And you've been turned off? Frightfully exciting, and all that sort of rot. Wish I'd been there, old fruit! Fearfully sporting to see Giddy on his hind legs, don't you know. Almost reminds me of a tub of butter."

"I think it will be far better if you listen, without making any comments," I said pointedly. "I'll tell you all about it, and then explain what I want you to do. Do you mind listening?"

"Not at all," said Archie, obligingly. "Go ahead! Bring out the flow as rapidly as you like. Listening is my favourite amusement. Could listen for hours, and all that kind of thing. Perfectly priceless of you to come and talk to me. Observe my gratitude, old bean. I'm simply pale with it. Go ahead. No interruptions. Not even one. If I open my mouth, shut it! Do what you like. Just amuse yourself to your heart's content!"

"Thanks," I said. "Well, these are the facts."

"Good!" said Archie, clapping his hands again. "Jolly rich, and so forth, what? I'll do any bally thing I can——"

"But I haven't told you anything yet," I interrupted.

"No? That's strange!" said Archie, wonderingly. "Deucedly strange, in fact. I might even say that it's—— Well, you know, and all that kind of rot. Chilly wind blowing and so forth. Don't think I'm grumbling. Don't think so for a minute. But the fire, what? Airy pyjamas, don't you know!"

"Oh, I'm sorry!" I grinned, realising that I had been shielding him from the fire. "I didn't notice it——"

Archie held up his hand.

"Don't!" he said firmly. "Don't apologise. It's quite all right, old fruit. In fact, it's perfectly serene. No offence. None whatever. Absolutely. That is to say, absolutely not. We're pals—we're priceless sportsmen!"

"I hope so," I smiled. "Now, do listen, for goodness sake!"

"I'm all attention," said Archie. "I'm listening with both ears at once. Proceed with the jolly old narrative. I mean to say, let it rip, don't you know. If I interrupt, assassinate me."

He did his best to look attentive, and I rapidly explained the trouble that we had had. I told him all about it. How we had camped on Willard's Island; how Handforth had accidentally knocked Mr. Giddy down in Bannington High Street, and how Mr. Giddy, as an act of revenge, had turned us off the island.

Archie regarded us with puckered brow.

"Well, I mean to say, it's jolly rough," he observed. "One might even say it's positively jagged. Frightfully hard Stilton, and so forth. You have my sympathy, old walnuts!"

"You agree that Mr. Giddy was arbitrary?" I asked.

"Absolutely!"

"You think he exceeded his duty?"

"Absolutely!"

"And you'll do what you can to help us?"

"Absolutely three times!" said Archie. "What I mean is, my eyes are opened. My temper is up—positively up! I'm burning with indignation, and so forth. I mean to say, what?"

"That's all very well," I exclaimed. "Your temper may be up—although I can't see much sign of it—but how is that going to help us? Is it possibly going to reverse Mr. Giddy's decision?"

Archie frowned.

"Now you're asking me," he said. "I mean to say, you're positively putting it to me straight from the shoulder, so to speak. And talking about reversing reminds me that I'm deucedly slow at the game. It's all very well to waltz in one direction, but when it comes to reversing——"

"We're not talking of waltzing!" I interrupted.

"No, of course not," said Archie hastily. "Not at all. Absolutely and finally, we're not talking about waltzing. Let me make that quite clear and distinct. Under no circumstances must waltzing be referred to. I'm firm on that point—that is to say, unbending!"

"I'm glad to hear it," I said. "Now, about this Mr. Giddy——"

"Exactly," said Archie. "About him? I mean to say, there's such a lot about him that a chappie doesn't know where to start. A priceless error of nature, of course. One of life's horrid bloaters, in fact. If I've asked the pater once, I've asked him at least twice, to take Mr. Giddy and obliterate him. But somehow, the blighter sticks round. A most pestilential nuisance—but smart, mind you. Absolutely! Deucedly smart and what not. Most reliable chappie, but he labours under the delusion that he's not only It, but That as well!"

"I got that impression, too," I said. "Is Mr. Giddy authorised to have complete control of the estate during your pater's absence?"

"Well, rather," said Archie. "Sort of Commander-in-Chief, and all that sort of rot. Giddy's word is a kind of law. Feudal business, extra quality. Rules with a rod of iron. The terror of Bannington, and so forth."

"Then it looks pretty bad," I remarked. "If Mr. Giddy is in complete control like that, I don't see that we can do anything. Even if we get back on the island, he'll only turn us off again."

"Well, I mean to say, that would be rather fruity, what?" asked Archie. "The fact is, I'd like to help you, my dear old sportsman. The dream of my life is to be useful to somebody. And you come from St. Frank's? Now, that's perfectly priceless, don't you know. I'm staggered. What I mean is, I'm fairly bowled. Middle stump, to put it plainly."

"Well?" I asked.

"My dear old tulip!" protested Archie. "I mean to say, what? My pater was keen—positively babbling—with the idea of my going to St. Frank's. Begged of me, don't you know. Kneeling business, and so forth. But I was firm—nothing doing whatever. I put the bar up, and padlocked it!"

"In other words, you objected to being sent to St. Frank's?"

"Absolutely!" replied Archie, brightly.

"But for what reason?"

"Well, really. Delicate birth, and all that sort of thing," explained our host, vaguely. "A rose among thorns, don't you know. An orchid in a bed of nettles, as it were. I was keen on living. Frightfully painful thing to see a hopeful young life blighted."

"Why, have you got an idea that St. Frank's is a training establishment for hooligans?" I grinned.

"To be quite frank, I have," said Archie. "That is to say, I had! But I'm a chappie who is open to conviction. Absolutely. And I'm impressed—I might even say, I'm overwhelmed. I don't mind admitting that my impression was not only twisted, but suffering from convulsions!"

"You were, in fact, labouring under a delusion?" I asked.

Archie shuddered.

"I mean to say, that word!" he protested. "'Labouring!' Reminds me of work, and using a chappie's energy. Trickly feeling down the spine, and so forth, don't you know. Pray be careful, old fruit!"

"Don't you like work?" I asked.

"Work?" replied Archie, "has a blighting effect on me. I get up in the morning, bright, cheerful, and all that, and then—zip! Work! Energy goes—interest in life vanishes. Fairly vacates the premises. Empty void, and so forth."

"But surely you've been to College?" asked Tommy Watson.

Archie stared dreamily into the fire.

"I have a vague and appalling recollection of early days at school," he murmured. "What I mean to say is, nightmare visions, and what not. It gives me a pain to think about it. I'm taking a rest cure, don't you know. Frightfully boring, and all that sort of thing."

"I gather that you are under a private tutor?" I said, glancing round.

Archie nodded.

"Absolutely!" he agreed. "Your gathering apparatus is in full working order, although somewhat rusty. Well, rather! Deucedly rusty, in fact. I mean to say I had a tutor. But the poor chappie is down and out. At least, he probably will be before long. Shockingly sad case, and all that."

"I suppose you were too energetic for him?" asked Watson, sarcastically.

"That is to say, no!" replied Archie. "Smither—that's the chappie's name, you know—Smither was what one might call a five hundred volt battery. Absolutely bursting with juice, don't you know. Energy flashing out on all sides, and so forth. In other words a live wire. But the poor fellow's name blighted him. A chappie called Smither couldn't possibly exist for long. He was doomed from his first day on earth."

"What actually happened to him?" I enquired.

"Oh, what happened?" asked Archie. "Now you've got me! Now, to be perfectly honest, you have fairly placed me in the jolly old corner! That's just the question—what did happen? Something, I might say, went 'zing' in the poor chappie's interior. He crumbled. He faded out. He ceased to enjoy life!"

"You don't mean that he pegged out?"

"Absolutely—what I mean is, absolutely not!" said our host. "Smither—the name makes me feel queer—was one of those frightfully clever chappies. Reeking with knowledge, don't you know. Absolutely disgustingly clever. Knowledge by the yard, oozing out of him. Absolutely out of every pore. A perfectly priceless individual. In other words, a walking encyclopædia. But I must be just. Honesty compels me to be fair. Smither was one of the best. Absolutely!"

"But even now we don't know what happened to him——"

"But, my dear old walnut, I've explained!" protested Archie. "He faded out. He developed something horrible called appendicitis. Naturally, he asked for it. I warned him—I saw it coming. Work was the cause of his downfall, and only yesterday he was carried away with an ambulance. And I was carried away with grief, don't you know."

"You look it," I remarked. "I believe you're jolly glad. It simply means that you've got nothing to do now. And this, I suppose, is the place where you worked?"

"What I mean is, it's the place where Smither worked," explained Archie. "A most painstaking fellow—always trying to get me on the job. And always failing, don't you know. But we're straying. We're wandering away from the subject. In fact, we're absolutely sidetracked."

"And we shall have to be going," I said.

"How appalling!" sighed Archie. "I mean to say, what? Enjoyment comes only at intervals. This, as it were, is one of them. Decidedly and distinctly, it is one of them. You chappies are the best—absolutely. In other words, the richest in cream. I like you—I shall wither away after you've gone."

Archie suddenly sat forward, with a look of almost intelligence in his eyes.

"A brain wave!" he announced. "A positively priceless idea! A scheme with gilt edges and bronze knobs on it! Absolutely! You—er—that is to say, I—or, in other words—we——. No, I'm getting mixed! Let me hasten to add, I'm getting mixed! I didn't mean to say that at all!"

"What's the priceless idea?" I asked, grinning.

"Well, that's it!" said Archie brilliantly. "Absolutely it! You're here—not only on the spot, but all over it! Rooms empty by the dozen and at your disposal. Stay here, and make life worth living. Remain with me, and save a derelict soul from straying into the jolly old wilderness. You catch on, what?"

"I'm afraid it's impossible," I said, with a chuckle. "We can't stay, Archibald——"

"Certainly not!" chuckled Watson.

"The darkness has fallen," said Archie, with a sigh. "My dream is over—the skies have clouded with murk——"

"Never mind the sky," I interrupted. "Not long ago you said that you'd like to help us. I'm talking about old Giddy now, and Willard's Island. Your pater is away, and Mr. Giddy is in control of the estate. Do you think it will be possible for us to get back on the island?"

"Not if Giddy is already there!" replied Archie, solemnly. "I mean to say, a chappie must have some room! One Giddy—one island, so to speak. But don't despair—don't let the mellow light of hope fade from your optical vision. Keep smiling, and so forth. Do the cheering stuff, and all that sort of rot. By this afternoon I will get on the job. Absolutely and positively. I will stir myself. And before the day is over you will hear from me."

"You mean that you will see Mr. Giddy, and do what you can?" I asked.

"In other words, not at all!" replied Archie. "Seeing Mr. Giddy is not what a chappie could call a pleasure. Personally, I'd rather see a funeral. Much more cheering, and so forth! But there are other ways. Once I start, I—I—Well, what I mean is, I start! I commence—I absolutely plunge! Stopping wild horses is child's play in comparison! Leave it to me, my dear old bears, and the world will revolve again."

"Thanks very much!" I said heartily. "I know you'll do all you can."

"More than that!" said Archie, generously. "Twice as much, old fruit!"

"Well, we'll be going," I said. "And we'll expect to hear something from you before the evening."

"That," replied Archie, "is absolutely it. But must you go? Must you trickle away? Must you bring sadness upon a young life? Why stagger forth, and emerge into the cold world when luxury and comfort surround you?"

"Thanks all the same, but we must go really," I said. "Do what you can, Archie; get a real hustle on, and——"

"You've said it!" interrupted Archie, dramatically. "I mean to say, absolutely! You've choked up the jolly old word! Hustle! That's me! I'm the chappie who manufactured the word."

And Archie, to show us what a keen hustler he was, lounged back in his chair and dreamily closed his eyes. He waved a feeble hand to us as we retreated towards the door, and by the time we passed out he was snoring musically. And when we finally found ourselves on the drive, wheeling our bicycles towards the big gates, we looked at one another enquiringly.

"Well?" said Tommy Watson.

"I'm blessed if I know what to say?" I grinned. "The chap's a knut—one of the special three star brand. I don't think I've ever met such a complete example of the Piccadilly Johnnie."

"He's a hopeless ass!" said Watson. "A blithering chump!"

"I'm not quite so sure about that," I remarked thoughtfully. "And you can say what you like, he's as amusing as a giddy comedian! And at the back of all his priceless talk, there's a grain of commonsense."

"A jolly small grain!" growled Watson. "I couldn't spot it."

"We've got to forgive him a lot of things!" I said. "He's a kind of hothouse plant. He's never been to a proper school—always had a private tutor, by what I could make out, and he'd be like a fish out of water at St. Frank's. It would be rather decent if we could have him there, though. He'd be a shining ornament to the Ancient House."

And we mounted our bicycles—and hoped for the best.

Subsequently Archibald turns up at St. Frank's, and talks the Headmaster into allowing him to remain at the school. When the removites find that is actually at the college, they decided to take the law into their own hands, and return to Willards island, and turn off the two men who were left as caretakers.

As they suspected, it is not very long before Mr. Giddy turns up accompanied by a number of his men, and also the local policeman.

(Once again, it seems appropriate to use E.S.B.'s language.)

The agent halts opposite the island, and shouts across to the juniors "How dare you flout my orders, and turn my men off the island". "Good evening, I replied, if you will let us explain, I think you will find that we were fully justified in our actions". "Rubbish!" said Mr. Giddy, "If you don't leave immediately, I shall have you thrown off by force".

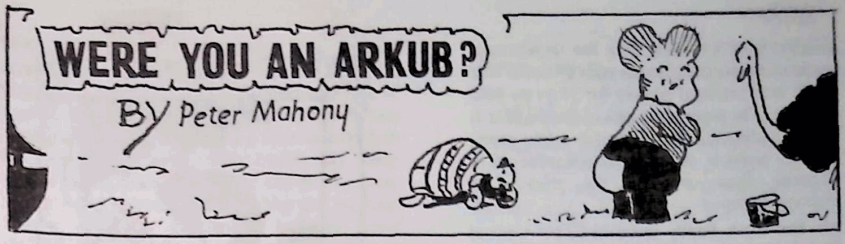
"If you would care to come to the island, we can talk more easily" I said. After an assurance that he would not be harmed, we sent a boat over to collect him. "Now what have you to say" he began. "We have permission to stay, and camp on the island" I replied, "Do not lie to me, he snorted, I, am in complete charge of this island!" "Well; well;" said Archie appearing on the scene. "What have we here, so to speak, and where has this elephant come from; why! it's the old Giddy lad". Mr. Giddy took a pace back, thoroughly astounded.

"What are you doing here? Master Archibald. These young ruffians are trespassing upon your Father's island". Archie turned to us and said, "This old Lads is where I shine, don't you know". "Take my advice, Master Archibald, and leave this island, and these young hooligans just as soon as you can". "That's a bit strong, Mr. Giddy, replied Archie, you are talking of my pals, take my advice and trickle gently away". "Bow look here, Master Archibald, " raved the agent," I'm not going to be dictated to by you". "Say on; say on; old scout" observed Archie, "your remarks are quite to the point, about these priceless chappies". "They are a set of young 'Blackguards," ---"Enough!" interposed Archie thrusting his head forward; "Observe the flashing eye etc."

"I have had enough of this nonsense" cried Mr. Giddy harshly" these boys are trespassing". "Stop" said Archie, raising his hand. "These chappies are here as my guests, don't you know". "YOU" "YOU!". "Now, now" reproved Archie, "Watch, the temper" "I will not be insulted, by you, you young dolt, you brainless young idiot", with that he moved forward and almost struck Archie, he then pulled himself up with a jerk. "I lost my temper" he said. "Take him away, lads" said Archie, plaintively "What, have I done to deserve this"

Giddy stood there a moment and then asked to taken across the river, and felt very lucky, when he reached Terra Firma, without being thrown in.

And so, the one and only Archibald, joined St. Frank's College as one of its most popular removites.



I was. Back in the 'Thirties, an important part of my childhood was devoted to following the adventures of "Japhet and Happy". My parents enrolled me as a member of the "Grand United Order of Arkubs". I still have their rule book, which contains details of the "Arkub Greeting", secret signs and an Arkub secret code. Heady stuff for a five year old!

The rules required Arkubs to:

1) Keep smiling! (I wonder if Jimmy Silver was an Arkub?)

2) Be truthful. (Japhet, the Order's Chief Executive Officer did not always set a good example!)

3) Help others.

4) Be kind to animals.

Their maxim: "A happy smile at breakfast-time will mean a smiling day" was recommended to all age groups.

Members were expected to follow the adventures of the Noah family in the "News Chronicle" daily. There were regular competitions; a "Japhet's Post Box" for members' letter; and prizes for enrolling new Arkubs. 6 new Arkubs won you a "Japhet Breakfast Set" - cup, saucer and plate, with pictures of the characters. 12 new members made you a "Master Arkub". I got the breakfast set (having an indulgent father who was also a school-teacher made it easy to acquire the new members!), but I never rose to Master Arkub rank.

Membership also entitled you to Birthday and Christmas cards from the Noahs. I still have 8 birthday cards, covering the years 1933 - 1940, and a couple of Christmas cards. This pleasant practice died - as did so many other things - with World War II. They were postcard size; the early ones in green/grey, signed "Japhet"; the later ones in red/black, signed "From all at the Ark". Each consisted of attractive pictures of various inhabitants of the Ark - with amusing "in" comments about each one's well-known foibles.

At this late date, I hope to be excused if I reveal the ARKUB CODE. Its 26 symbols were:

Y P D H L T Q * E I M U X B F Z J N V W S + C G O R.

A coded message, based on the above, also included the letters AK at the start and end of each word. (Try to decode the message at the end of this article.)

Being an Arkub in those pre-war days was fun - and the stories were excellent, pitched at exactly the right level for a child who had just learned to read. They moved me on from the picture comics like "Rainbow" and filled the period before I graduated to the more serious "Puck" and "Magnet".

All of which brings us to the Noah stories. What were they about? The brain-child

MR. NOAH

MRS. NOAH

(children?) of J.F. Horrabin, the Noah saga began a few months after the end of World War I 919) and continued happily for 21 years (end of 1940). The paper shortages of World War Ii gave it a chequered existence for a few years, but it revived strongly afterwards when Kathleen Starr provided the stories for Horrabin to depict.

The Noah family lived in "The Ark" at "No. 1 Ararat Avenue". It consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Noah, Shem, Ham, Japhet, Selina and Matilda. (The first five names are biblical: the two girls I have doubts about!) Mr. Noah was much-put-upon: it was a harassing business maintaining such a large family. Mrs. Noah, though generally capable and organised, was given to fainting at times of crisis - which, of course made matters worse! She was also inclined to be wimpish and fussy - climbing a gang plank on to a liner was beyond her, for example. Poor old Noah! No wonder he was worried - especially when we consider Japhet, his hopeful third son.

Shem and Ham were occasional characters, making up the number. So was Matilda, their younger sister; but Selina, the older girl, appeared more often - usually in an organising capacity, which Japhet, a delicate flower, detested.

Japhet, with Happy (the small Bear, of whom more anon), was the mainstay of the stories. Japhet was idle, greedy, devious, complaining, cowardly, stupid - and much misunderstood. (It sounds like a character sketch of William George Bunter!) He was always evolving schemes for dodging work and invariably coming to grief. Like Bunter, he was short-sighted and endowed with an extravagantly high opinion of himself. He looked down on the animals as belonging to an inferior order and was always being outsmarted by them. Consequently, his escapades provided most of the gentle humour of the cartoon strip.

JAPHET

HAPPY, THE LAUGHING CAVALIER

Happy, Japhet's opposite number, possessed most of the saga's positive qualities. He epitomised those Arkub requirements of truth, kindness and pleasant behaviour. He had his problems - usually through following Japhet's lead - but he always bounced back, smiling. Happy was the typical, cuddly teddy-bear which still looms large in the lives of young children. He was also a lot cleverer than Japhet.

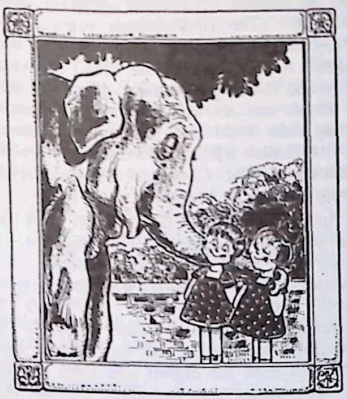
The other animals formed a curious collection. There was Oswald, the tortoise - a Galopagos one judging by the drawings! He was Happy's chief henchman, slow, steady and reliable. Rather disconcertingly, he would slump into winter hibernation - a process which came on gradually and required the rest of the family to keep working him up whenever he sank into somnolence in an inevitable spot. Once, Oswald was arrested by the local policeman for leaning on a lamp-post, "asleep and incapable". The problem was to keep him awake long enough to join in the Christmas festivities. On Boxing Day he would be installed in the bottom of the airing - cupboard and left till Spring arrived.

The Ark's animal-delinquent was Gerald, the goat. Obstinate, hot-headed and inordinately greedy, he had to be constantly watched. Garden plants were not safe from him, particularly Mrs. Noah's prized GOLOBOSH tree. (The GOLOBOSHES, which looked like giant, purple strawberries, were a regular source of temptation. Japhet swiped a particularly succulent one, only for Gerald to eat it before the dear lad could stop him. The petulant woe displayed by Japhet gave him away to Mr. Noah, who visited condign punishment on his sorrowing son. shades of Bunter, again!)

The feminine animals were Adelaide, the ostrich, and Muriel, a ring-tailed

MALAGAZOOK! Adelaide was fashion conscious, dignified, and just a little bit pompous - fair game for the mischievous side of Japhet. She frequently lost her temper with him - exit running, not easy with a furious ostrich in hot pursuit! Muriel, who could only sleep upside down, hanging by her tail from a tree, was a timid animal, painfully shy and retiring. Happy, a noble gentleman, suffered many difficulties in protecting her from the imagined fears of her hypersensitive nature. Nevertheless, these contrasting females added a serious dimension to the stories. Incidentally, has anyone considered the implications of a sore throat for an ostrich? Adelaide's sufferings in an English winter were pitiful to behold. Virtually every scarf in the Ark had to be impounded to wrap her up against the elements.

Which brings us to James' bedsocks! James, the elephant, was strong. Capable, good-tempered, patient and very kind natured - but he suffered from cold feet. Knitting his winter socks occupied Mrs. Noah and the girls for most of September each year. One year they were late on the job - and an elephant with chilblains is not a happy sight! This problem apart, James was pretty good at keeping order among the animals - even Gerald respected him.



SELINA AND MATILDA AND JAMES

The rest of the menagerie made fleeting appearances. Some of them had Greek names (difficult for 5-year-olds to read!) There was Archimedes (Archie) the donkey, a frivolous character; Polixenes (Polly) a bad tempered, occasionally foul-mouthed, parrot (the swearing took the form of asterisks and exclamation marks); and Diogenes (Dio), a frisky, intelligent dog. He looked like a dachshund (short legs) but not quite. Egbert, a wise, taciturn owl, more or less completed the animal cast.

There were other humans, however. Jerry an ex-sailor, was employed as odd-job man at the Ark. He attended to the practical needs of the animals and was an accomplished do-it-yourself man. Mr. Cheery, a neighbour, was kindly and generous, often dispelling the gloomier views of Mr. Noah. And then there was the PANJANDRUM of ANDAMALUMBO, an island potentate who regularly exchanged visits with the Noahs. He only spoke ANDAMALUMBESE (I acquired a smattering of this language before I went to school! WAMBLETY OO-LA?= HOW DO YOU DO?) It was hot in Andamalumbo, where the main crop seemed to be Goloboshes. The Ark cast spent several summer vacations there - sojourns which were happily recorded in the excellent, colourful Japhet and Happy Annuals published each Christmas. Some of Horralin's coloured plates in these annuals are beautifully artistic and a joy to look at nearly 60 years on.

The Panjandrum, a fat, prosperous coloured gentleman, had an equally stout wife - the Panjandra. His right-hand man was Bom, captain of the Palace guard. Bom found the visits to England cold and bleak, but he generally managed to inconvenience Japhet at some stage of each trip. His stern discipline complete with spear! had a hint of Henry Samuel Quelch about it.

There was also Captain Puffin, master of the S.S. Arethusa, who conveyed the family on their holiday voyages. Apart from Andamalumbo, the Noahs visited San Jabango - a Central American Community where a lot of skulduggery took place.

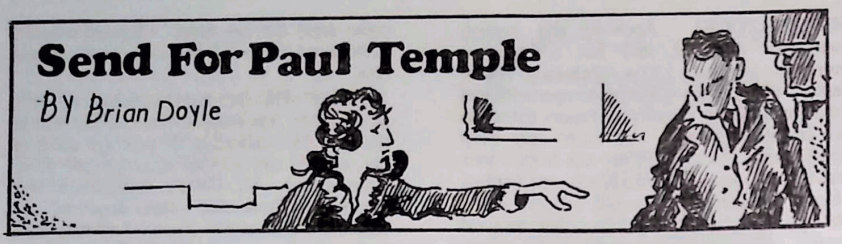
All in all, Ararat Avenue was a happy place. The cartoon strips were a daily treat; the Annuals a joy. Horrabin was a great benefactor to small children. He seemed to understand what would make them laugh. Even now, the humour jumps out at you - particularly when Japhet, obviously heading for disaster, is the only one who cannot see the danger.

Finally, there was an "Arkubs Roll of Honour". Diplomas were given for brave deeds. I never qualified for one, but (since my membership number was 177836) there must have been a few dished out among approximately 200,000 members. I wonder if any C.D. readers earned one? Don't forget to solve the code:

AKXLNNOAK AKD*NEVWXYV AK AKYNMSPVAK.

Send For Paul Temple

BY Brian Doyle



In which BRIAN DOYLE takes an affectionate look-back at BBC Radio's first - and most famous and popular - detective.

It was 1937. The 25-year-old one-time Birmingham University student had just caught the London train from New Street station, Birmingham with a minute to spare. As he settled down into his seat he glanced across at the man sitting opposite him in the railway carriage. He gave him a second glance, then a third.

For the young man was a promising writer. He had sold a few short stories and plays to BBC Radio and become friendly with a senior BBC producer named Martyn C. Webster, based in Birmingham, who had produced his biggest project to date, a play called "Promotion", about life in a large department store; it had been based partly on the experiences he had heard his father talking about in his job as an executive with the Woolworth's chain. That was broadcast in 1933, but things hadn't been moving since then as the young writer would have liked. He was thinking of writing a new play, or even a series, about a detective of some kind, but was having trouble in visualising his potential hero. Now he found himself sitting opposite him!

Francis Durbridge - for our young writer was none other - gazed at his travelling companion with interest. He was around his mid-thirties, looked very English, intelligent, handsome, cool, urbane and charming. Strong too, and with a touch of humour about his face. A man you would like to know perhaps. A man you'd like at your side in a crisis. This was exactly the sort of character Durbridge had in mind.

The two men never exchanged a word, or even a look, and Durbridge's fellow traveller soon left the train at Leamington Spa. Durbridge made a mental note or two, then fell into a reverie. He had found his fictional detective. The name, by the way, came out of the blue. Durbridge and Martyn C. Webster had been discussing the detective play or series for weeks and been trying to think of a suitable name. Then Durbridge telephoned Webster one morning at one o'clock. "What about Paul Temple," he asked without any preliminary chat. Durbridge at once knew what he was talking about. "Sounds fine" he answered sleepily. And a radio legend was born.

Paul Temple was officially 'born' on BBC Radio in the Spring of 1938. That year was notable for several things, as well as the birth of Paul Temple. Leaving politics and world affairs aside, Graham Greene's "Brighton Rock" was published; so were Daphne du Maurier's "Rebecca" and Evelyn Waugh's "Scoop". "Snow White" opened in Britain. So did Hitchcock's "The Lady Vanishes". "Picture Post Magazine" made its first appearance. The ball-point pen was invented. A feature film was shown for the first time on television - it was "A Student of Prague" starring Anton Walbrook. The first British regular BBC Radio comedy series was born - it was "Band Wagon" making overnight stars of Arthur Askey and Richard Murdoch. The first BBC TV serial was shown - "Ann and Harold" starring Ann Todd and William Hutchinson. The first British BBC Radio drama series was broadcast - "The Count of Monte Cristo", starring Terence de Marney.

And the first-ever BBC Radio detective serial was born on April 8, 1938, when the first episode of "Send For Paul Temple" was broadcast. Hugh Morton was the original Temple and Steve Trent (the girl he subsequently married) was played by Bernadette Hodgson. All the actors were anonymous until the eighth and final episode when their names were revealed. In what was to become a tradition, the identity of the mysterious master-criminal was also revealed in that last episode when Paul Temple disclosed to a stunned Sir Graham Forbes (the top Scotland Yard man, played by Lester Mudditt) that his own right-hand man, Chief Inspector Dale, was in reality 'The Knave', an identity-puzzle that had had radio listeners throughout the country on tenterhooks throughout the serial. The cast were also in the dark as to this surprise ending, right up to the final 'read-through' on the day of the broadcast; they even had a sweepstake as to who the villain might be (it was satisfyingly apt that the winner of that

first sweep turned out to be the very actor in question - the man who played 'The Knave'!)

The producer of that very first Paul Temple serial was, of course, Martyn C. Webster (the man who had originally discovered Francis Durbridge when he was writing revue sketches for Birmingham University shows) and who produced every Paul Temple serial for the next thirty years. The rousing signature tune, incidentally, was the stirring 'hunting theme' from Rimsky-Korsakov's "Sheherazade" (later replaced in the late-1940s by Vivian Ellis's tuneful 'Coronation Scot').

That first Paul Temple serial created a new fan-mail record for a BBC programme (over 7,000 appreciative letters arrived) and firmly established Francis Durbridge as a top-flight radio writer; he also became the first radio-playwright to turn his own serial into a novel, which had the same title and was published later in 1938.

Before we go any further, let's explain to the uninitiated just who Paul Temple was. In the first place, he wasn't really a detective at all. He came of a good family (his father was an Army General) and he was educated at Rugby and Oxford. He wrote and published his first detective novel when only in his early-20s and went on to write many more, establishing a highly-successful career as a popular and best-selling writer and man-about-town. His interest in criminology led to him helping Scotland Yard (in particular Sir Graham Forbes, the Chief Commissioner of Police) to investigate several crimes. During one, he met an attractive Fleet Street journalist named Louise Harvey, who wrote under the name Steve Trent. They fell in love and were married in London, later living in Evesham and a London flat. Temple's hobby was book-collecting, especially First Editions. Later they lived in Mayfair, on the Chelsea Embankment, and had a cottage in the Cotswolds. Their domestic help varied in the early years, but throughout later series it usually consisted of Charlie, their manservant or 'houseboy', a helpful and chatty, but at times irritating, Cockney 'character'.

This set-up of a handsome, debonair, successful and wealthy husband and his attractive, cheerful and resilient wife, who mutually adore one another and have a joke or light-hearted remark, and a drink, for almost every occasion, was nothing new, of course. Hollywood movies of the 1930s, especially the B-pictures, favoured it. Some people may recall the successful "Thin Man" comedy-thrillers starring William Powell and Myrna Loy as Nick and Nora Charles (not forgetting Asta the dog!). There were others including, in more recent times, the "Hart to Hart" TV series with Robert Wagner and Stefanie Powers (not forgetting Lionel Stander, their hoarse-voiced manservant). I recall, with some affection, a short-lived British TV series of the 1970s, called "The Wilde Alliance", starring John Stride and Julia Foster, which was very much in this genre. Mr. and Mrs. Wilde were amusing and entertaining, but obviously too good to last on British TV! There were many detective novels of this kind too, including Agatha Christie's 'Tommy and Tuppence Beresford' series, about a married sleuthing team.

What of the man who created Paul Temple aurally in that initial series? Hugh Morton was a very versatile actor; he made over 3,000 broadcasts, including playing the lead in "Meet the Rev." - who was the Reverend Simon Cherry, D.S.O., probably radio's first clerical sleuth (apart from 'Father Brown' perhaps) in a series which ran on BBC Radio in the late-1940s. He may also be remembered by the older generation for his many hilarious portrayals in the long-running ITMA radio series starring Tommy Handley during the 1940s; one of them was 'Paul Tremble', based naughtily on the famous character he had created on the air! Morton, who was a cousin of one-time British Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden, died in 1984 at the age of 81. Bernadette Hodgson, the first 'Steve' was a BBC Midlands Region radio announcer in the 1930s and 1940s, as well as working as an actress. She played Steve just for this first serial (and the 4th (Paul Temple Intervenes)) being replaced for the second serial, "Paul Temple and the Front-Page Men" later in 1938, by Marjorie Westbury (who, curiously enough, had played Rosie, a barmaid, in the original serial!) Marjorie Westbury played Steve regularly from then onwards, over the next thirty years - but with these exceptions. In October, 1941, a one-hour 'potted' version of "Send For Paul Temple" was broadcast, this time with Carl Bernard as Temple and Thea Holme as Steve (even Lester Mudditt was knocked off his regular perch as Sir Graham Forbes in this one-off and somewhat odd enterprise, the role being played by Cecil Trouncer). And in "Paul Temple Intervenes" Hodgson returned as Steve.

For the record and for all those Paul Temple fans out there (and they do exist in quite large numbers, I know) and to settle all those arguments about who played what and when, here is the complete run-down of the BBC Radio Paul Temple serials..... (acknowledgements to DENIS GIFFORD for some details in this list).

"Send For Paul Temple" (Hugh Morton as Paul Temple. Bernadette Hodgson as Steve). (Broadcast April - May, 1938.)

"Paul Temple and the Front-Page Men" (Hugh Morton as Temple, Marjorie Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Nov - Dec. 1938.)

"News of Paul Temple" (Hugh Morton as Temple, Marjorie Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Nov. - Dec. 1939.)

"Send For Paul Temple" (Carl Bernard as Temple, Thea Holme as Steve). (One-hour, one-off abridged version, broadcast Oct. 1941).

"Paul Temple Intervenes" (Carl Bernard as Temple, Bernadette Hodgson back again as Steve - with Westbury curiously playing one 'Dolly Fraser!'. (Broadcast Oct. - Dec. 1942.)

"Send For Paul Temple Again" (Barry Morse as Temple, Westbury as Steve. (Broadcast Sept. - Oct. 1945.)

"A Case For Paul Temple" (Howard Marion-Crawford as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Feb. - Mar. 1946.)

"Paul Temple and the Gregory Affair" (Kim Peacock as Temple, Westbury as Steve) (Broadcast Oct. - Dec. 1946.)

"Paul Temple and Steve" (Kim Peacock as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Mar. - May, 1947.)

"Mr. and Mrs. Paul Temple" (Kim Peacock as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (45 minute one-off play - broadcast Nov. 1947.)

"Paul Temple and the Sullivan Mystery" (Kim Peacock as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Dec. 47 - Jan. 48.)

"Paul Temple and the Curzon Case" (Kim Peacock as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Dec. 48 - Jan. 49.)

"Paul Temple and the Madison Mystery" (Kim Peacock as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Oct. - Nov. 1949.)

"Paul Temple and the Vandyke Affair" (Kim Peacock as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Oct. - Dec. 1950.)

"Paul Temple and the Jonathan Mystery" (Kim Peacock as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast May - June, 1951.)

"Paul Temple and Steve Again" (Km Peacock as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (One-hour, one-off play - broadcast Apr. 1953.)

"Paul Temple and the Gilbert Case" (Peter Coke in debut as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Mar. - May, 1954.)

"Paul Temple and the Lawrence Affair" (Peter Coke as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Apr. - June, 1956.)

"Paul Temple and the Spencer Affair" (Peter Coke as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Nov. - Dec. 1957.)

"Paul Temple and Conrad Case" (Peter Coke as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Mar. - Apr. 1959.)

"Paul Temple and the Margo Mystery" (Peter Coke as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Jan. - Feb. 1961.)

"Paul Temple and the Geneva Mystery" (Peter Coke as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Apr. - may, 1965.)

"Paul Temple and the Alex Affair" (Peter Coke as Temple, Westbury as Steve). (Broadcast Feb. - Apr. 1968.) (The Final Serial.)

Peter Coke (pronounced 'Cook', by the way) also appeared in new productions of four earlier serials. They were: "Paul Temple and the Madison Mystery" (new production June-July, 1955); "Paul Temple and the Vandyke Affair" (new production Jan - Feb. 1959); "Paul Temple and the Gilbert Case" (new production Nov. 1959 - Jan. 1960) and the Silver Anniversary new production of "Paul Temple and the Jonathan Mystery" (Oct. - Dec. 1963). Marjorie Westbury repeated her portrayal of Steve in all these. There have also been numerous recorded repeats of many of the above list of productions over the years, the most recent one being of "Paul Temple and the Spencer Affair" (with Coke and Westbury) in Oct. - Dec. 1992, broadcast specially to mark the 80th birthday of author Francis Durbridge. He is still alive at 82, but no longer writing, so far as I know. There were, in all, a total of 20 Paul Temple radio serials, plus 3 one off Temple plays.

'Paul Temple and wife motoring to Aberdeen tomorrow morning . . . Imperative that they do not reach there . . . Z4.'

The mysterious Z4 shows his true colours in the third episode of *News of Paul Temple*, to be broadcast this evening at 6.15.

There was one diverting curiosity broadcast in December 1949 (and repeated in March 1950): this was an hour-long mystery play by Edward J. Mason (co-writer of the original "Dick Barton - Special Agent" and "The Archers" series) featuring Paul Temple, together with such popular BBC radio

characters as Dick Barton, Dr. and Mrs. Dale, The Man in Black, Philip Odell and P.C. 49. Temple and Steve were played on this occasion by Kim Peacock and Marjorie Westbury.

It is also perhaps worth noting that Paul Temple was played by Bernard Braden, when a young actor in Vancouver, Canada, in the early-1940s, for the Canadian Broadcasting Company - and with an English accent! Braden, of course, with his wife, Barbara Kelly, later became popular radio and TV personalities in Britain, throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

In every Temple radio serial, the same members of the talented BBC Drama Repertory Company tended to crop up on a regular basis (and none the worse for that - it was rather like a big happy family....) Regular 'suspects' included Richard Williams, Ralph Truman, Grizelda Harvey, Cyril Gardiner and Olaf Olssen (who was invariably a heavily-accented European and was forever saying "But Mistair Temple, I hop you do not think that I....! I'm innocent, I tell you, innocent...." A sort of radio Peter Lorre....)

Looking back on the Paul Temple radio serials gives one a warm glow of nostalgia. For one thing, they were so marvellously predictable. Nearly every story contained slight variations on recurring themes and incidents. Temple and Steve would return late at night to their flat and Temple would discover a dead body inside. "No, no, Steve - don't look," he'd tell her. But, curious woman that she was, she always did - and always said "Oh, no, Paul - it's horrible - horrible....." Or Mr. and Mrs. T. (as they were called by their one-time Cockney 'house-boy', Charlie) would be driving home when Steve would notice that they were being followed by another car. "Hold tight, darling," Temple would say as he increased speed. Then the pursuing car would try to force them off the road, Steve would be heard screaming "Oh, no, Paul, I think we're going to.....", followed by the sound of the best car-crash the sound effects department could muster. Silence. Then slowly Temple would recover consciousness and say urgently "Steve....Steve - are you all right?" Agonising pause. Then: "Yes - yes, I think so, Paul, - are **you** all right?" "Yes, I think so.....the swine, I'd just like to get my hands on them, just for a minute or two....."

Another recurring trick was to have a villain impersonating Temple's voice on the telephone to Steve. "But, darling, he sounded just like you," she'd say later. "Oh, yes, he was clever all right," he'd reply grimly. You could almost hear him squeezing her hand reassuringly.

The most famous tradition, as I've already mentioned, was for Temple to unmask the mysterious master-crook in the final five minutes of the serial. The listener's reaction would be either an incredulous "Well, that's amazing - whoever would have thought it!" or a smug "There, I told you so all along." Perhaps the most incredible (and unintentionally hilarious) unmasking occurred in "News of Paul Temple", when Temple revealed a motherly, buxom, apple-checked middle-aged lady who ran an hotel in Scotland, as the villain, with the words: "Permit me to introduce you to the leader of the greatest espionage organisation in Europe - Z.4!" Chief Commissioner Sir Graham Forbes was suitably 'stunned' (his usual reaction to Temple's revelations, when he wasn't expressing testy irritation at Temple's Theories). Another classic un-masking was that of the elusive 'Marquis' in "Paul Temple Intervenes". The villain turned out to be a pleasant , cheerful and well-off young man named Roger Storey - but he eluded final justice by jumping to his death through a plate-glass window several floors up (But that's another Storey, I'm tempted to quip - but I won't....).

This last incident led to some lively debate in my Form at school the following morning, I remember (the Paul Temple serials were always eagerly discussed at school - no TV in those days, my children.....) "Well, I don't see how he could have just jumped through a big plate-glass window," said a form-mate, "that's very strong, toughened glass - he would just have bounced off and knocked himself out....!" "Yes, but p'raps he threw a heavy ash-tray or something at it first," said someone else. And so it would go on. Temple usually created listener reaction...

The Paul Temple serials and 'one-off' plays have been heard all over the globe, via the BBC World Service, and have been particularly popular in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and several European countries, where Temple sometimes has a different name. In Holland, for example, he is Paul Vlaanderen.

And what of the six actors who played Paul Temple on BBC Radio? Kim Peacock notched up the most 'appearances' with 9 (7 serials and 2 'one-off' plays). He was a busy actor, also writing and producing stage plays. He served as a Lt. Commander in the Royal Navy during World War II. He once said that he received many letters from listeners asking him to solve their own personal problems and mysteries!

Peter Coke had 7 originals "Temples" to his credit, plus 4 new productions of 'rivals' of earlier serials. He has probably been heard most as Temple because it seems to be his serials that have been repeated frequently. He was handsome enough to have portrayed

Temple on the screen. In the film version of Francis Durbridge's TV serial "The Broken Horseshoe" he played the Det. Insp. brother-in-law of the hero (Robert Beatty) and this was probably where he first met the Paul Temple producer, Martyn C. Webster, for it was Webster who directed the film - and Coke made his radio bow as Temple the following year (1954)! Coke was a highly-experienced stage and screen actor and also the author of several plays, including the comedy "Breath of Spring", which ran for more than a year in London's West End and, in 1960, was filmed as "Make Mine Mink" starring Terry-Thomas.

Hugh Morton played Temple three times and I've already written about him. Carl Bernard did one serial and one single Temple play. He did a lot of theatre work, including musicals and revues, as well as plays, and much radio. Howard Marion-Crawford (one Temple serial) was one of BBC Radio's busiest actors and, in the mid-1950s, won the 'Daily Mail' National Radio Award as the year's most Outstanding Actor. He was a well-built, bluff, moustachioed military-looking man and familiar in many British films and TV productions. He was the grandson of popular Victorian novelist F. Marion-Crawford, who wrote numerous historical romances, one of the best-known being "A Cigarette-Maker's Romance" in the 1890s. Barry Morse (one Temple serial) was another actor handsome enough to have played Temple in films or television. He appeared in numerous stage productions in London and Canada, and in films and TV. He was probably best-known for his leading role in the American TV series "The Fugitive", in which he played the police chief pursuing the man he thought had murdered his wife (it was recently filmed starring Harrison Ford).

Some years ago, in the course of my work in films, I had the pleasure of meeting both Howard Marion-Crawford and Barry Morse, and, naturally, I brought up the subject of Paul Temple! They both spoke of the character warmly, but seemed genuinely puzzled that a radio role they had played so many years ago and which had taken a mere two or three weeks of their career to do, was so well remembered. "How old were you when you heard my Temple serial?" asked Morse, I remember. When I told him about 14, he laughed and said "Well, there you are, it's because you heard it an an impressionable age! Things make much more impact on people of that age....." I suppose he had a point.

Martyn C. Webster, top BBC Radio producer responsible for all the Paul Temple radio serials and 'one-off' plays over 30 years, was a BBC stalwart of around 40 years standing. He also produced such programmes as "Appointment with Fear" (featuring the sinister storyteller 'The man in Black', played memorably by Valentine Dyall), the 'Philip Odell (Robert Beatty) mystery series, and countless other series and single plays. He once said he thought the secret of Paul Temple's success on radio was that, apart from the fact that Temple was **the** original radio detective, Francis Durbridge could be persuaded to write only one (occasionally two) Temple serials a year; so that listeners could never become bored with him. Also that the plays had a marvellous team of actors and actresses (not to mention the production team) working closely and enthusiastically together. All this, allied to a wonderful friendly, almost a family, atmosphere in the studio.

And we mustn't forget the long-serving 'Steve' of so many serials, Marjorie Westbury. She was a leading member of the BBC Drama Repertory Company for many years and once said she had played over 3,000 different parts on radio! She was an accomplished singer too. Plump and comfortable-looking, she was only 4 feet 10 inches in height and often had to stand on a stool or box to reach the studio microphone! She was famous for her non-stop knitting during studio breaks; a fellow-actor once said of her affectionately: "When dear Marjorie finally departs this world she won't die, she'll just unravel....!" She sadly did that in 1989 at the age of 84.

Bradford-born and educated Francis Durbridge wrote many popular radio series in the 1940s, under this own name and under such pseudonyms as 'Nicholas Vane' and 'Lewis Middleton Harvey'. They included (all on BBC Radio) "The Man From Washington", "The Girl at the Hibiscus", "Farewell, Leicester Square" and "Johnny Washington Esq."; also "Michael Starr Investigates", a weekly 'detection problem' in the popular "Monday Night at Night" (Starr was played by Henry Oscar).

In 1969, the year after Paul Temple ended his radio career, he moved over to BBC Television for a new series titled simply "Paul Temple"; its first credit-line read 'Created by Francis Durbridge' though 'the Master' didn't actually write any episodes himself. There were several different scriptwriters and a script editor, though naturally 'F.D.' kept a close eye on their work and had to approve everything. "Who Dies Next?" by Peter Miller was the first episode.

This first series was in colour and ran for 13 episodes (Nov. 1969 - Feb. 1970). (Second series of 13 - Apr - July, 1970; third series of 13 Jan-Apr. 1971; and the fourth and final series of 13 - June-Sept. 1971). A grand total of 52 50 minute colour episodes. Ron Grainer wrote the catchy theme music.

This brand-new Paul Temple drove a Rolls Royce Silver Shadow, lived with his wife, the adorable Steve, of course, in a Chelsea flat with (in the first series anyway) a general factotum, manservant or 'sidekick' named Eric, who was good at serving drinks if nothing else; he disappeared mysteriously after the first series (a little mystery that Temple didn't seem inclined to follow up for some reason). The new Temple was still turning out his successful mystery novels (they must have been major best-sellers because he was obviously quite wealthy). There was little or no violence. As one of the programme's producers, Peter Bryant, once said: "Paul Temple hits people sometimes, but when he does, he gets his knuckles cut and it hurts." The 'Radio Times' of the period, in a preview article, described Temple, somewhat ominously, as 'a latter-day Sherlock Holmes with 007 overtones.'

But wait..... I haven't yet said who was playing Paul Temple in his very first television incarnation. It was Francis Matthews, well-known as a light romantic comedy actor, though he had made his first impact on the public playing opposite Ava Gardner, in quite a dramatic role, in the MGM blockbuster movie "Bhowani Junction" in 1956; in the same year he had appeared in one of Durbridge's TV serials "My Friend Charles" and in 1961, in the Temple author's TV serial "The World of Tim Frazer". He had also appeared in over 200 TV plays or serials, and in more than 40 films. Matthews came to worship at the Temple soon after his dramatic triumph in supplying the expressive voice for 'Captain Scarlet' in the very popular puppet adventure TV series, first shown in 1967, and coming from the same stable as "Thunderbirds".

Francis Matthews was a charmer as TV's Paul Temple - he had always played suave, elegant charmers in movies, TV and in the theatre - and his impression of Cary Grant was a legend in the show business world. Of his role as Temple, he said: "I'm more or less playing myself." He was indeed and quite acceptable it was. Rather like Nigel Havers playing Sexton Blake, and none the worse for that. I think.

Ros Drinkwater played Steve and she was competent enough, but no one's idea of Steve. Ms. D. was akin to a willowy, dark-haired 'Vogue' model. A 'femme fatale' who did the murder with her manicure-file, if you like. But not our Steve. Our Ros hailed from Glasgow, where she had been born and trained for the stage. She had, we were informed, began her career as a Las Vegas show dancer! Then she made appearances on British TV as an actress before landing the plum role of Steve. After her last appearance as Steve in 1971, Ros seemed to disappear. Perhaps she went back to Las Vegas.

But it was good to see our old friend George Sewell (a one-time regular member of the London Old Boys' Book Club) turning up in the TV series from time-to-time, as Sammy Carson, an ex-con now gone straight, who helped Temple out now and then with his recourse to somewhat shady underworld contracts.

Sadly, I understand that no episodes of the Paul Temple TV series can ever be repeated. According to Francis Matthews himself, talking in a recent radio interview, all 52 master-tapes of the entire series were sold to German TV - then they were subsequently, and for some unknown reason, all destroyed. But you never know, there might be a few duplicates lying around in someone's attic somewhere (like the old 'Steptoe and Son' tapes, thought lost, rediscovered in a scriptwriter's garage....).

Francis Durbridge also wrote a Temple strip-cartoon, which was in the London Evening News' in the 1950s, five Paul Temple novels, and much later, several thrillers 'by Paul Temple' (a pseudonym which covered the identities of Durbridge and Douglas Rutherford). For the record, those original Temple novels were: "Send For Paul Temple" (1938), "Paul Temple and the Front-Page Men" (1939), "News of Paul Temple" (1940), "Paul Temple Intervenes" (1944) and "Send For Paul Temple Again" (1948). All were based on the original BBC Radio serials. Durbridge later wrote a further 24 novels, mostly based on his other radio plays and serials and on his TV serials.

Which brings us to the fact that Durbridge established another precedent when he wrote the first mystery serial to be produced on British television. This was "The Broken Horseshoe" in 1952. (It was later filmed, directed by Martyn C. Webster). Durbridge subsequently became the most successful TV playwright in Europe, with serials such as "Portrait of Alison", "The Teckman Biography", "The Scarf", "The World of Tim Frazer", "Melissa" and "Bat Out of Hell". They were shown throughout Europe and were especially popular in Germany and Holland, where, it was said, the streets were deserted while 'the new Durbridge' was being shown....

The prolific F.D. also wrote several successful mystery plays which were presented in London's West End, and elsewhere. They included "Suddenly at Home", "The Gentle Hook", "Deadly Nightcap" and "Sweet Revenge".

It was inevitable, of course, that Paul Temple would make his way on to the cinema screen. The first of four Temple films was "Send For Paul Temple" in 1946. It starred

Anthony Hulme as Temple and Joy Shelton as Steve. "Calling Paul Temple" (1948) had John Bentley as Temple and Dinah Sheridan as Steve. "Paul Temple Triumphs" (1950) again had Bentley and Sheridan, while the fourth picture "Paul Temple Returns" (1952) had Bentley returning as the eponymous hero, with Patricia Dainton as Steve. Durbridge wrote or co-wrote the screenplays for three of these. Mention is made, in some books, of a film titled "Paul Temple and the Canterbury Case"; this later became "Calling Paul Temple", in fact, part of which is set in Canterbury. All the films were Butchers/Nettlefold Productions and were British 'B' (or supporting) pictures, usually running for around 80-90 minutes.

John Bentley (the 'triple-Temple' film actor) was born in 1916, dark-haired and handsome. In whatever role he played (and there were many in British 'B' pictures) he invariably wore a gleaming white raincoat which never seemed to get dirty, no matter how many chases or fights he was involved in. In my circle of friends in my youthful cinema going days, he was always referred to as John 'White Raincoat' Bentley! He also played the title-role of John Creasey's elegant gentleman-sleuth-adventurer 'The Toff' (the Hon. Richard Rollison) in two films: "Salute the Toff" and "Hammer the Toff", both released in 1952. Bentley seemed to 'fade out' in the 1960s, but he re-emerged famously in the 1970s in the popular TV 'soap' "Crossroads", as 'Hugh Mortimer', who married the series' best-known character, Meg (Noel Gordon); their 'wedding' in Birmingham Cathedral before over 300 extras and fans was the TV event of 1975. Bentley's character, Hugh, was later kidnapped by international terrorists (quite a place that 'Crossroads Motel') and died of a heart attack amidst all the excitement, four years later. His white raincoat was no doubt buried with him.

Unlike Paul Temple. I don't think *he'll* ever really die. He's still fondly remembered by many, even the younger generation who have heard the repeats, which as I've said, can still be heard now and then. They're still enjoyable, but they can appear somewhat 'dated' at times. Everyone calls our hero, 'Temple', even friends such as Sir Graham Forbes who have known him for years. Temple himself comes across as a touch arrogant, or even irritable as well. The general air of 'nouveau riche' and Home Counties snobbery is there too. And there is one too many coincidences.

But everything's all right really. Temple fans wouldn't have it any other way. Paul Temple Land is rather like Greyfriars. It's always the same and nothing ever changes. It's all rather reassuring and cosy. Keats once referred to 'the very Temple of delight'. So, doubtless, would Steve. Paul Temple himself (using his favourite expletive) may say: "By Timothy! Steve, don't overdo it, darling....!"

My Perfect Christmas

Greyfriars Celebrities Give Their Own Ideas of An Ideal Christmas.

THE HEADMASTER: My ideal Christmas would be a quiet gathering at which were all the friends I have ever known since my schooldays long ago. The only drawback to this is the fact that I should be obliged to hire the Royal Albert Hall or Olympia in which to entertain, for I am glad to say that they number many hundreds.

Mr. PROUT: I should like very much to spend the festive season in a lovely house surrounded by pheasants, partridges, grizzly bears, and other ferocious creatures. Although I am not, I trust, a bloodthirsty man, I should spread havoc and dismay through their ranks, and they would fall before my gun like chaff before the reaper. In the evenings I should wish to have a little chat of five or six hours with my host before retiring to my well-earned rest. Such a Christmas, I venture to say, would be unprecedented. (Or even unparalleled.—Ed.)

Mr. QUELCH: My ideal Christmas would be spent with my typewriter and my "History of Greyfriars" in a secluded spot where Bunters cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

GOSLING, THE PORTER, says this here: "Which my ideal Christmas would be at a first-class hotel at the seaside, where I could drink my Christmas dinner in comfort and look out of the window to see all young nips in the country being marched off the pier and drowned."

FISHER T. FISH: I guess my ideal Christmas would be passed in the State of Iowa—sure!

LORD MAULEVERER: I guess my ideal Christmas would be passed in a State of Coma—snore!

HARRY WHARTON: I could spend a perfect Christmas anywhere as long as it was more than 10,000 miles away from Bunter.

SQUIFF: A hot day, a cold turkey, and a real good cricket match. That's Christmas in Australia.

BILLY BUNTER: You couldn't have a perfeckter Crissmus than we have at Bunter Court. As the poet puts it:

And kings and princes you kan meet
In twos and threes on every seat,
Indulging in a race to eat
Their various provishuns!

Awl my titled rellatives are there, shoosering postel-orders on their favorite servese. For dinner, which lasts from 6 a.m. to midnight, we have a dozen turkeys, ten geese, a covey of chickens, a flock of pheasants and a herd of grice—which is the plooral of "grouse." Then for meat we have a Bore's Head and a nox roasted hole, in addishun to a hunch of vennison—(The rest of this menu will be published in seven attractively bound volumes at £5 each. Order yours now.—Ed.)

HAROLD SKINNER: Me for Monte Carlo. After winning a fortune at the tables, I should go home with a fat cigar and play banker and nap for £5 points. A man could have a really fine Christmas at Monte. (But suppose a man LOST a fortune at the tables instead of winning one?—Ed.)

WILLIAM WIBLEY: The ideal way to spend Christmas is to perform a pantomime for your guests. You can leave guzzling and gorging to pigs like Bunter. Grease-paints and wigs are the things to give you a Merry Christmas.

BOB CHERRY: Have six hours sleep, rise at seven, take a six-mile walk and a seven-course dinner—and you'll never be at sixes and sevens.

CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE: A fellow needs a long vac. at Christmas to recover from the shock of his presents. If a fellow's aunts give him purple socks and lilac waistcoats, a fellow is naturally in a state of nervous exhaustion until they've been burned, and even then a fellow dreams about them at nights. My ideal Christmas is for a fellow to be allowed to choose his own Christmas presents—what?

TOM DUTTON'S only reply to our question was: "Hear, hear!" We wish he would.

UNION JACK

Special Christmas Number.

The Affair of the BLACK CAROL

A seasonable story of detective adventure, animated throughout by the gladsome spirit of Christmastide. Complete, and introducing: Sexton Blake, Tinker, Ruff Hanson, Splash Page and Mrs. Bardell.

No. 1,260. EVERY THURSDAY. December 10th, 1927.

THE GREYFRIARS CLUB which was founded 18 years ago (C.D Annual 1991 and C.D Jan. 1991) once again has very great pleasure in extending the HEARTIEST CHRISTMAS GREETINGS to all hobby connoisseurs of goodwill and integrity everywhere, and in particular our C.D Editors past and present Eric and Mary ,also their excellent publishers and all those club members who have written to us with their news throughout the past year and invited us into their homes - and indeed the past 30 years!

What a pleasure it is once again to visit some of those on the other side of the world in response to their invitations, as well as those in England, for while you are reading this we shall once again (d.v) be in the far east via Singapore and HongKong where we shall once again spend a week or two before arriving in Australia. There we shall visit Friars Rev. Jack and Shirley Hughes in Townsville and John Bartholomew in Rockhampton. Jack and Shirley gave us a wonderful time the last time we saw them(see report 1992 C.D.A.) and after leaving them we shall carry on to see John (see ref.CDA 92 3rd para) who has also invited us. After leaving John we fly down to Brisbane and the Gold coast for five days to visit our son Robert and Margaret's house; they have invited us to stay there in their absence for they will be in San Francisco, where Robert has just taken a contract. After Brisbane and the Gold Coast then down to Sydney to renew our friendship with our other friends Ron & Enid at Manley Beach and Ross & Barbara at Collaray both of whom we have met through our church and who have visited us here in Stevenage and other friends in Sidney. Then once more to Auckland in N.Z. to revisit our Nelson Lee man Jim Cook who has twice visited us in our homes here and who we visited in Auckland in Jan '92 (report C.D. May 92 p.5 ref N.L.).

From Auckland we move once again to Ken King country into the South Seas to Fiji for another week before flying on to Los Angeles and then once again travelling up to San Francisco where we hope to meet another Friar, our son Robert and his brand new wife Margaret,and spend the rest of our two months away with them, again hiring a car to get us around. In the circumstances Friars will understand why letters are not answered while we are away, although our second son Roger (Who, incidentally, has just been made a Fellow of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants) and his wife Sheila will be occupying the house while we are away and will take any messages.

We were delighted to welcome Una Hamilton Wright and her husband Brian at our Stevenage address and, as when she and Brian first visited us at Kingsgate Castle in October 1989, we had a grand chat about the hobby followed by high tea,as the snaps will show hereunder. The film taken of us all at the castle was all on video. We are looking forward in due course to accepting an invitation from Una in her last letter to visit them at their home. Another Frank Richards wonderful Christmas to you all, and - God Bless.R.F.A.Chairman/Sec.

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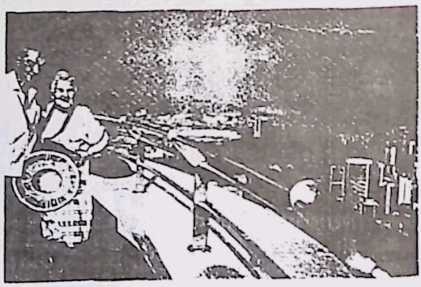
Another study tea with Una and Brian.

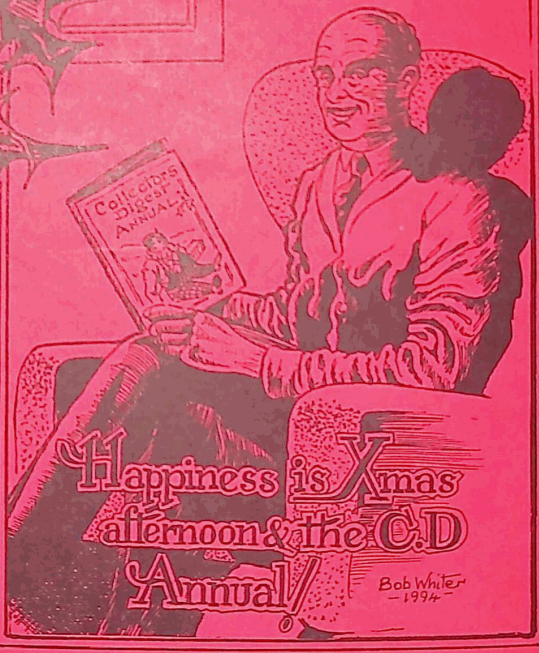
Your hosts on Victoria Peak, Hong Kong.



Your hosts approaching Beachcomber Island from Fiji.

Brian and Una about to leave.

Happiness was Xmas morning & the Holiday Annual!



Printed in 1994 by Quacks the Booklet Printer, 7 Grape Lane, Petergate, York, YO1 2HU. Tel. (01904) 635967

Grand Christmas Number

THE
Schoolgirl
INCORPORATING "SCHOOLGIRLS OWN" No 387 VOL 15 WEEK ENDING DEC 26TH 1936
EVERY SATURDAY
2D

Christmas Dinner at Mistletoe Manor

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

Hilda Richards

And the other contributors to "The Schoolgirl" wish you one and all

A Very Happy Christmas