

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 50

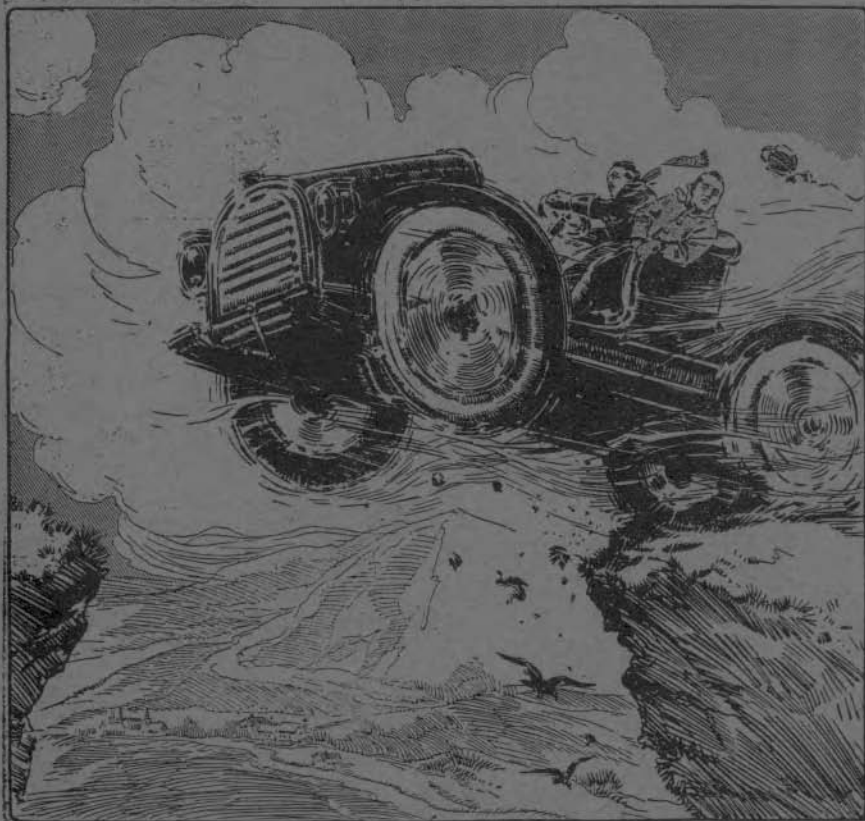
No. 591

MARCH 1996



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FEBRUARY 12, 1908.





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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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THE EDITOR'S CHAT



SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE

Readers will notice that this month's DO YOU REMEMBER? feature is the two hundred and fiftieth of this extremely interesting and popular series from Roger Jenkins. This is surely an outstanding achievement. Roger began writing for the COLLECTORS' DIGEST from its earliest issues and, during its long run, has made an

enormous contribution to the historical study and critical analysis of Charles Hamilton's stories. He has also, of course, played a big part in the London Old Boys Book Club. As well as being its Chairman for several periods he has given many talks, arranged quizzes and run the lending Hamilton Library for several decades. It is good to take this opportunity of thanking him for all that he has done and continues to do for the hobby.

Something else which we should celebrate is the completion and publication of a Master of Arts dissertation on the Greyfriars stories of 'Frank Richards'. This is the work of Dr. Peter McCall (whose *Greyfriars Guide*, published by Howard Baker in 1982, will be remembered by many readers), and it is reviewed by me elsewhere in this issue of the C.D. As well as being

very interesting in its own right, this thesis is, of course, valuable in that it brings the world of Greyfriars to the serious attention of the academic and educational fraternity who are often, one feels, too ready to dismiss wholesalesly as trash or hack-writing whatever has been published in weekly papers rather than in hard-back books.

You will see from his advertisement on page 24 that Ron Hibbert is continuing to reprint the exciting adventures of Captain Justice. Full details of the availability of these can be had from Mr. Hibbert at the address shown: I have been enjoying Series 4, SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE and Series 12, THE JUNGLE CASTAWAYS. Ron Hibbert describes SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE as 'a mixture of the everlasting vengeance of Lord Hagar Griffin and the best bits of P.C. Wren'. Of JUNGLE CASTAWAYS he says: 'It's a tale of how five true Brits armed with only a rusty penknife survive in the trackless African jungle. Baden-Powell would have approved. It's not politically correct by today's standards, but what 1930s adventure story is?'

Happy reading to you all.

MARY CADOGAN



ROGER M. JENKINS

No. 250 - MAGNETS 1209-1219 - LANCASTER SERIES

Coming as it did at the height of the Magnet's Golden Age, the Lancaster series should have had everything going for it, and never once did it fail to live up to expectations. Even the season was propitious, for it began at the end of the Easter holidays, in a glorious early summer, and the first two numbers were set at Wharton Lodge and its neighbourhood, with Coker, Potter and Greene on a cycling holiday, and a handsome young man, Dick Lancaster, staying at the Bunch of Grapes Inn, reading Livy for pleasure.

The plot was developed with so many twists and turns that the series can well repay extended scrutiny - without, however, spoiling the story for those who have not yet read it. Colonel Wharton had known Lancaster's father in the trenches before he was killed in battle, and he was puzzled by Lancaster's apparent prosperity, since Colonel Wharton knew that Lancaster's father scarcely had two pennies to rub together. It was made clear to the reader in the very first issue that Lancaster was an expert safe-cracker, known as the Wizard, and he was seen talking to a shady character known as the Weasel. Later on he was staying at Popper Court, though Sir Hilton was far from civil to the guest he was sponsoring for the Sixth Form at Greyfriars. The evil genius behind all this was in fact Slimy Sugden, a moneylender in whose toils the hapless baronet was enmeshed.

Lancaster as a character bears a resemblance to two predecessors. The first is Talbot at St. Jim's, though Talbot remained a permanent member of the Shell. It is obvious that a cracksmen of Lancaster's age is far more believable than a junior boy like Talbot. The other character is the famous Raffles. Raffles used to be invited to country houses for cricket weeks, because of his outstanding skill at that game, and he had no hesitation in robbing his hosts because he claimed he was invited merely for his cricketing skills and not for himself as a person: if they wished to exploit him, he would exploit them. Before the Lancaster series began, there was a cricket week at Tranby Croft; Lancaster was present, and a robbery occurred. (Tranby Croft is an obvious corruption of Danby Croft, the scene of a famous scandal about cheating at cards, a house party attended by Edward VII, but that is another story.)

Shakespeare's tragic heroes were generally at war with themselves and with society at large. Lancaster fulfilled this role perfectly: the influence of Greyfriars made him come to detest his occupation, all the more so as his prowess as a cricketer brought him great acclaim; and he was at war with a succession of people who came to suspect him for what he was. Coker's suspicions ended when Lancaster saved his life; Loder was blackmailed into silence; but Harry Wharton was neither a fool nor a rogue, and he had to be dealt with differently. At the same time, Lancaster was beginning to distrust his associates, for Slimy Sugden assured him that Greyfriars would not be robbed, but then sent the Weasel to commit the burglary. The Wizard's problems were beginning to accelerate at an alarming rate.

A number of scenes took place at Highcliffe, which always added spice to a Greyfriars story. We learnt that Dr. Voysey possessed a Rembrandt in his study, and used to gaze for long periods at what the boys thought was a dusky smudge. He had paid £800 for it many years ago, and it was now worth £3000. Dick Lancaster was an expert cracksmen with a bag of tools, but it hardly needed his skills to cut Dr. Voysey's Rembrandt from its frame. In addition, it would be difficult to sell a famous painting that had been stolen, and any sale would not have realised a tithe of its true value, if a buyer could be found. This was perhaps the least credible episode in the series, but the robbery was foiled in any case. Much more convincing was the robbery at Hogben Grange.

Mr. Quelch played some unusual roles in this series. On one occasion he was catapulted by Ponsonby, an action which was to have far-reaching consequences. When Lancaster was playing in the Rookwood match, Mr. Quelch walked down to Big Side to watch him batting. The Remove Master's usual connection with sport consisted in listening to pleas to allow a detained boy to play in a match. The presence of masters at a cricket match was intended to emphasise the tremendous esteem in which Lancaster was held. The contrast between appearance and reality was ever present in this series.

The great problem Hamilton had to face was how to resolve the situation so convincingly presented. He could not allow criminals to go unpunished: on the other hand, Lancaster had been corrupted in early upbringing by a crooked uncle and then by Slimy Sugden, and it was made clear throughout the series that he was trying to escape from his situation. Ferrers Locke was called in, and his investigations led to decisive results. How the matter was concluded to the reader's satisfaction can be discovered by reading this series for yourself, but it can be stated that this unusual Sixth-form based series did not end with Lancaster remaining at the school to overshadow Wingate and the other prominent Sixth-formers. Hamilton avoided the mistake he made with Talbot in the Gem.

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THE GOOD THE BAD AND THE UGLY by Donald V. Campbell

I am just burning to tell you this! Why that should be you can see later. A visit to Chris Beetles' Gallery in Ryder Street, St. James, London gave me the opportunity to obtain four catalogues on the British Illustrator's art. Each of these had many illustrations and plenty of informative history and analysis. As many of you may know (or might surmise) illustrators continue to give me much pleasure - continually adding to the discovery of this kind of book illustrator in my younger days.

Reading fresh information on the Brock Brothers I found that they had, in their home in Cambridge, one of the largest "museums" of historical dress in existence. This museum they used to ensure accuracy in their drawings and paintings.

I was reminded then of one of my favourite books from the long-gone days of 1944.

True as Steel by Herbert Strang was my much-read and re-read book that linked three adventures of the young hero, Robert Courtney. They were stories of what we might now call novella length - dreadful word but it gives the picture. On pictures - the illustrations were by Charles Brock in his inimitable style (although his two brothers had a similar "house style" - if I may call it that). The stories were of high adventure and mystery in the nineteenth century.

How strange then to fall across two *Herbert Strang Annuals* not ten days after my visit to the gallery. Two-thirds of the book *True as Steel* is featured in these *Annuals*. Both volumes are in nice condition - from 1920 and 1921 respectively. Presumably the third story is in the annual for 1922.

I have never understood the "vanishing" of 'Herbert Strang' (actually the combined writing and editing team of George Herbert Ely and James L'Estrange). His books, in the Second World War years and after, filled the shelves, alongside John and Percy F. Westerman, W.E. Johns and Richmal Crompton. Why, then, do they now appear so infrequently in bookshops and at fairs? Strang (both of he!) produced good adventure stories many of them of the historical variety. They were packed full of characters and incidents. They also often benefited from illustrations by one or other of the Brock Brothers - sounds like a circus act!

Re-reading *True as Steel* today (or at least the two available stories) I think they benefit from their historical settings. I believe that the Westermans suffer now from "period" and our lack of modern understanding of the mores and the temper of those times.



"HE PUSHED ON WITH SCANT CONSIDERATION FOR THE FOOT-FARRERS."

They are rattling good adventure stories nevertheless (a hasty placation of Westerman fans everywhere).



By Herbert Strang

For me "period" does not affect the historical story quite so much. Historical fiction is already set for us in period and we expect certain attitudes and ideas to come out. The "modern" boys' stories from the twenties and thirties contain what we might now see as unfavourable attitudes engendered by their times.

Herbert Strang did write "modern" adventures rather redolent of "Empire" but both then and now I view his output as best when in true historical dress. His stories do have their quota of "Zounds", "Gads" and "Forsooths" but they manage to steer clear of the excesses of Jeffery Farnol in his use of extreme "period" language.

In the nineteen forties the logical step for a boy moving on and into adult fare was to take on board the works of Farnol. These pleased me for a while but became unnecessarily tiresome in the end because of the language usage.

If we return for a moment to the Herbert Strang Annuals, mainly adventure-story oriented, these have a peculiar and particular charm of their own. Not least of which is the use of page borders utilising a remnant of art-nouveau style as decorative headings. This style was also carried over into the annuals of Mrs. Herbert Strang - shock, horror - was she consorting with two men at the same time? Only the nineteen nineties could make such a suggestion! (Editor's Note: Mrs. Strang's Annuals for Girls are beautifully illustrated and packaged. They merit an article of their own in the C.D. some day.)

Herbert Strang's Annuals are distinctly male-oriented. *Mountaineering, Jungle Safaris, Warplanes, Steam Trains, Tea Clippers and Tramp Steamers* are the staple diet away from the adventure tales. One of my household, if I may call my wife that, on seeing the books gave forth with "What child would read such stuff now?" The only answer had to be: "This one!"

Nostalgia, in which we all participate, must lie in the eye of the beholder. If we look back at a fondly remembered past - or even a past to which we would have liked to have belonged - at least we, more or less, know what we are getting. Today's children, though, still have our old adventure of discovery to amuse and excite them. Just the other day I was handed a charming class for an English "supply" lesson. They were studying and reading a science-fiction adventure novel called "Brother in the Land" by Robert Swindells.

As they worked I began to skim through the novel. It so caught my attention that I had to slow down and start to read it properly. The children (fourteen year olds) all said it was a good read. Only a few were not working and reading. It was, they said, Exciting. It was also Interesting, Believable, Frightening, Horrible and Good.

Any book that could evoke such a range of expressions needed more than a skim. Later that day I put it down and wondered. It was all of the things they had said and yet... What they *had not said* was that it was depressing. Perhaps it wasn't depressing to them in their modern worldly-wise ways. Who knows?

The book, set in a lightly disguised Bradford and Shipley (Branford and Skipley), ranges through "after-the-holocaust" cannibalism, radiation poisoning, slow-death, underground living, aggressive and dictatorial leaders, a bitter-sweet romance between the two teenage protagonists, the death of a younger brother (the "Brother in the Land" of the title) and a final journeying to Iona - the journey left uncompleted and uncertain. It would be wrong to suggest that there was an inevitable hopelessness about the book but it seemed to me that the role models (if that is what they were) were all wrong.

If Frank Richards and Herbert Strang and E.S. Brooks and others were giving children a world of fantasy it was never a world of fear and hopelessness. There were good and bad (possibly a bit sharply and simplistically etched) nice and nasty, and the loveable and the hateful. But there was also some kind of aspiration, and moral suggestion - and why not?

I am glad that I read "Brother in the Land" but I am much happier to have purchased two battered Herbert Strang Annuals. Oh, and by the way, I also picked up another Odhams' "annual" - "The Boys' and Girls' Adventure Book - The Wonder Volume of Thrilling Stories". It is from 1935 - and in a pristine dust-wrapper. With stories by the likes of J.S. Fletcher, Sydney Horler, Arthur Groom and R.A.H. Goodyear, this, and the Herbert Strang, will keep me happy enough through my future holocausts.

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THE ST. FRANK'S WEEKLY



The MYSTERY of STUDY 20

By
Edwy Searles
Brooks



Ezra Quirke, the new arrival at St. Frank's, has created a big sensation by his magical powers. His superstitious belief in signs and portents are ridiculed and held in open contempt by his schoolfellows, but it is noticed that whenever Quirke's warnings are disregarded his scoffers invariably suffer some misfortune soon afterwards. Whether these evil consequences are directly due to Quirke's influence or trickery, he has certainly aroused a great stir throughout the school. More about the strange happenings at St. Frank's attributed to Quirke is related in this week's grand long story.

Another Packet of Assorted Foreign Stamps is GIVEN AWAY with this copy of *THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY*.

THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

NEWS OF GREAT IMPORT.

WALTER CHURCH, of the Remove, dashed headlong into the Ancient House, and nearly came into violent collision with a tall, thin junior, who was absent-mindedly running his lean fingers through his mop of sandy, curly hair.

"Heard the news, Trotty?" gasped Church, pulling up abruptly.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the thin one mildly. "Really, my dear Church! You quite startled me. Is it essential to hurry yourself indoors with such force? These shocks, you know—"

"Don't be an ass!" interrupted Church. "The news is enough to make anybody excited. Haven't you heard? Considering you're in the team, you ought to be more interested than anybody."

Church was labouring under the delusion that Nicodemus Trotwood faced him. As a matter of fact, the thin one was Cornelius—Nick's junior by an hour or so. The Trotwood twins were always causing these little confusions. The celebrated West House pair were as alike as two peas.

"Really, I fail—" began Cornelius.

"It's about football, Nick, you fathead," said Church. "I've got the London evening paper here, and there can't be any mistake."

"Of course I am," said Trotwood junior firmly.

"Of course you are what?"

"Awake," said Cornelius. "It is ridiculous to state that I am not awake—"

"My only hat!" groaned Church. "I thought you were Nick—and you're that deaf idiot of a Corny! You can go and eat coke!"



BADDIES AND BEARDS

by J.E.M.

Remember how the bad guys in old Western films always wore black hats? According to Colin Watson in his entertaining books, *Snobbery With Violence*, written some years ago, villains in early crime stories also displayed clear signs of their nastiness. Thin lips (usually curled in a sneer) and cruel eyes were common attributes of the ungodly. But, says Watson, the surest indicator of villainy was a beard. Back in the heyday of Edgar Wallace, Sidney Horler, 'Sapper' and the rest, the principal bad lad was easily spotted; he was "*The one with the beard*". Even when the bewhiskered were not criminals or anarchists, they were generally undesirables of some sort: bohemians, cranks and unwashed layabouts. In the novels of writers like 'Sapper' and Leslie Charteris, the unshaven of whatever kind regularly evoked epithets like "fungus face" from heroic chaps like Bulldog Drummond and the 'Saint'.

After reading Watson's light-hearted analysis, I looked through my files for early whisker-wearing adversaries of Sexton Blake. I soon came up with three prize examples. You can't go much further back in Twentieth Century Thrillerdom than George Marsden Plummer who, if Eric Parker's portraits were accurate, sported a very luxurious 'beaver'. Surely, no crooks in the case-book were more hirsute; certainly few were more villainous! He is followed by another ruthless character, Dr. Huxton Rymer whose beard, at least judging from Parker's illustrations, was of the pointed kind - an 'imperial' as compared with Plummer's 'spade'. Third comes Sir Phillip Champion, leading member of the Criminals' Confederation, and nobody could have belonged to a more villainous gang than that. It's true that in the end Champion joined up with the law but he must surely be best remembered as a crook. Like Plummer's, Champion's beard was of the more luxuriant kind.

So far, the case for the bearded baddie looks pretty impressive. But, hold on, what about chaps like Mr. Reece, boss of the afore-mentioned Crim. Con? Not only was he bald as a coot but clean-shaven as well and so ugly that a bit of face fungus might have been a helpful cosmetic. His predecessor, John Smith, was also smooth-faced. Now, they don't come nastier than Messrs. Reece and Smith, so the bearded-villain theory starts to lose some of its force.

Another criminal organisation Sexton Blake did battle with, The Double Four, were also enthusiasts of the close shave, from its leader, King Karl, down to Lou Lamont (who, as a female impersonator, naturally had to use a very sharp razor). Then, of course, among the lone operators there was the smooth-jawed Monsieur Zenith and Rupert Waldo who sported a small Twenties-style moustache but drew a firm line at a beard. And so I could go on.

The only evidence for the bearded-nasty theory is of a rather negative kind. While the baddies were sometimes bearded and sometimes clean-shaven, the guardians of law and order were *invariably* beardless.

A mere glance at Blake himself, not to mention Tinker and allies like Splash Page, Dirk Dolland and Ruff Hanson, leaves no doubt that the goodies were anti-beaver. Scotland yard men like Inspector Coutts often sported military-style moustaches but that was as far as their whiskers went. (Some Blakians are going to say, what about the bearded Sir Richard Losely, Blake's ally in many an African adventure? The short answer is that the amenities for a regular shave simply don't exist in the jungle. On retirement to England, Sir Richard would almost certainly make do with a moustache.)

Nowadays, perhaps, apart from protest marchers and some arty types (and, of course, naval men with their own special traditions), beard-wearers are not too common. So, in fiction as in life, we shall just have to look beyond appearances if we want to identify the villainous. Certainly, Sexton Blake had to!

CATCH 'EM YOUNG!

by Margery Woods

The detective genre is a never failing source of interest to readers and researchers, and rewarding to its devotees. Sexton Blake, Miss Marple, Nelson Lee, Lord Peter Wimsey, Valerie Drew, the great Holmes himself and many others are still analysed, discussed and written about. But what of the others, in particular a very important part of the who-dun-it market, those targeted at the young?

For many readers the fascination of detective fiction began in childhood, fostered by the now long forgotten little stories of schoolboy and schoolgirl detectives, little if any older than the child reader identifying with the characters. Perhaps it was subconscious, perhaps it was a deliberate policy on the part of the publishers who realised that the spells of reading age for a comic or storypaper lasted at the most three or four years before the child graduated to a later age group publication, soon to leave childhood reading behind. Fairy stories, goblins, funny animals and school stories would no longer be sought as a more adult taste in reading took over.

ILLUSTRATED CHIPS



TONY STEELE

THE YOUNG DETECTIVE

This Week's Story:

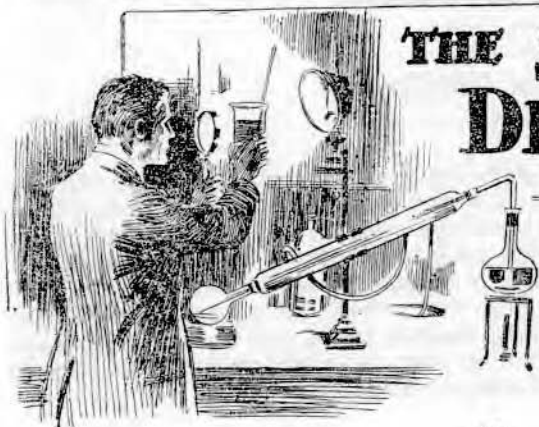
THE BOGUS CONSTABLE.

Admittedly, much pulp fiction for adults, then as now, was based on exactly the same storyline, plot wise, and situations, as a child's story, fleshed out with adult characters and spiced with more violence and sexual interest than was permissible in children's fiction. But there was one exception: the detective story, the one constructed theme that appealed to both sexes and all ages. The observation of character, the deduction of clues, the jigsaw element of piecing it all together and the final confrontation of the evil doer, is basically the same whether it is an irate Bounder tracking down his missing tuck box or the charismatic Holmes working it all out with the wail of his violin. So a child conditioned to detective fiction will probably continue to read it for the rest of his or her life.

The comics began it all. From penny plains to twopence coloured, a long procession of youthful detectives emerged from their pages. MY FAVOURITE ran a weekly picture strip featuring Jack Steele, the Boy Detective. His name upheld one of the old traditions of fiction that the name of the character must evoke a feeling of confidence and strength, plus a sense of friendly normality. For who would follow, say, Eustace Bloggs through thick and thin? Whereas Jack immediately evokes the friendly but manly tone of a chum, while Steele suggests unflinching strength in an ally you could rely on. Jack's cases usually ran for about eight weeks, each instalment of eight frames with captions packing in a skilful amount of story and excitement. The action usually involved a creepy old house with an occupant who was terrified of the mysterious forces opposing him or her. One old lady is afraid of the nurse supposedly caring for her, and in another case an elderly gentleman and his wife are experiencing a reign of terror in a house that has been a very happy home for years. But Jack is more than a match for the villains behind it all.

THE FUNNY WONDER in 1934 had Derek Lawson and his assistant Squib Baxter, not such charismatic names but good characters. They are heavily involved with spies, a revolution in Moldavia and the Princess Zania, a story evocative of a fashionable theme at the time, when no detective or adventurer worthy of his salt could move two steps without becoming embroiled with dark sinister villains and beautiful sultry girls fleeing their pursuers, who have assassinated/imprisoned/dethroned their father/uncle/brother, and usurped country/money/power. But these international shenanigans were child's play to youthful British tecs!

In 1915 THE FAVOURITE COMIC featured Victor Brand & Co., in a series of short stories. One atmospheric example found these Detective & Mystery Experts, as they were billed, saving a would-be suicide from consigning himself to the murky embrace of the Thames. Coincidentally a benevolent gentleman arrives at the same time and insists on taking the wretched man away in his brougham. But Professor Carl proves to be anything but benevolent when he gets the man home, where he drugs him. Next day the victim falls in front of Victor Brand's car and is taken to hospital where he is found to have a cryptic tattoo on his back. He protests that he has never been tattooed in his life. After questioning him Brand sets off for Essex, to an old mill on a desolate marsh. There he finds two more drugged men each with a tattoo on his back. Now Brand knows that a German spy ring is operating from the mill and the vital information is passed by dividing it into three sections and using destitute men, all unknown to one another, as the unwitting couriers after being befriended by Professor Carl, the German master spy. Brand and his assistant have no difficulty in overcoming any resistance and handing the gang over to the



THE SPORTING DETECTIVE

The First Story of a
Magnificent New Series.

- BY -

GEOFFREY GORDON.

(Each Story Complete in Itself.)

police. Perhaps it should be added that Brand's highly efficient assistant, who also drives his car, is a large and powerful gorilla.

During the same year THE BOYS' REALM introduced The Sporting Detective, a schoolboy, Dennis O'Flynn, who is a first rate boxer and sportsman, gifted in science and chemistry and Captain of his school. The first story, by Geoffrey Gordon, sketches in his background as an orphan brought up by a rascally uncle and expected to allow his bullying cousin to win by mainly foul means in matches. Then Dennis discovers the truth, that his supposed uncle is no relation but a crook and forger who had murdered Dennis's father and embezzled everything rightfully belonging to Dennis. He runs away, making a spectacular escape and is befriended by Sir William Mowbray, chairman of the British Sporting Club, whose valuable hound dogs are being poisoned by persons unknown. Dennis's detection talent emerges and he soon solves this mystery, and is rewarded by the offer of the job of private detective to the B.S.C. at any salary he cares to name, in order to keep British sport free of roguery. An so young Dennis becomes the Sporting Detective.

After MY FAVOURITE folded in 1934 it was succeeded by THE SPARKLER, whose young resident detective was Zip Conway, in a complete tale every week. Zip's real name was Peter. He was a cold, hungry, homeless boy when he rescued Rodney Dane, the great detective who was having a spot of difficulty in capturing his latest gang; they had caught him! But young Peter managed to puncture the tyres of the villains' car and leave distinctive mud smears on the vehicle which would identify it, as well as noting the registration number. Rodney Dane is highly impressed, re-christens Peter with the name Zip and appoints him as his assistant.

There was more youthful investigative steel in ILLUSTRATED CHIPS during the twenties when Tony Steele and his faithful hound -- well, small wire-haired terrier --

On Sale Every Wednesday — ILLUSTRATED CHIPS. — The World's Best Comic.



IVOR KLUK THE DETECTIVE



1. "That's our old friend, the dummy man!" says Ivor Klue. "He's taken!"



2. "Here's the dummy man!" says Ivor Klue. "Do you doofy go home!"



3. "Here's the dummy man!" says Ivor Klue. "Do you doofy go home!"



4. "Now, but a loving citizen pushing a dummy into the law of his offspring. Furthermore, said offspring having no further use for his milk-bottle, stung it all out, reasoning justly. 'Have that with me, old sport!' And I had it, and then sat down for a space of ten, looking rather nippy."



5. "And while I was thus engaged along came Basil Baugh, and exhibiting me offering the pavement to get above example of my artist's map-drawing, he took me for one of his lost dumplings, yanked me along to his coat and waistcoat works, and dumped me down on the pavement. By that time—"



6. "I was just coming round, and I was about to chide my old friend when along came the dummy man's son. 'Thought he was going to snuff me, too! But—oh no! 'Twas I that did the snuffing and now this little lad is laughing in a pretty little private room round at the police station.'"

Twink solved their weekly mysteries with great panache, while on the back page Ivor Klue, The Detective, romped *his* hilarious way through a picture story.

A decade later BUTTERFLY's lead story featured Live Wire Larry, a newsman with a penchant for detection, and THE JOKER's resident tees were Tiger Trent and Gloria Gold, lending their slightly more mature skills to the weekly lowering of Britain's crime rate.

Back in 1922 MERRY AND BRIGHT ran a serial, Clues Limited, by Valentine Matten, written in the first person, in rather formal style, complete with detective in rooms, deferential housekeeper, old friend turning up from Indian Army and distinct shades of Holmesian influence.

Totally different was the resident tee in THE JESTER during 1904. This was Bill Baily, Private Detective; His Misadventures. A mirth-mover every Saturday. These were penned in the first person, allowing for a rollicking treatment that managed to combine irony, slang, and much vernacular humour along with the business of running the villains to earth. Perhaps in its way a British style forerunner to the racy American dicks who were to gain such a following in the twenties and thirties. Although this type of writing was not altogether to many readers' taste it had to come as a reaction to the pedantic, measured, essentially English style set by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in his Holmes masterpieces, a style that would exert a lasting influence on detective fiction.

Some forty years later the child detectives were still hooking young readers in TIP TOP AND BUTTERFLY with Bobby Beck, the Schoolboy 'Tec and his assistants Plum and Duff. As the title suggests these were not to be taken too seriously after a few moments of amusements during their perusal.

(To be continued)

"A RICHER VOCABULARY THAN ANYONE ELSE" - CURZON

by Barrie Stark

All readers of Greyfriars will be familiar with the Nabob of Bhanipur, North West India, whose peculiar rendering of English is both attractive and surprising and which always amuses his friends (though in an understanding way).

Always worth listening to, for behind the dusky inscrutability is a perceptive acumen able to halt emotions and wisely offer a solution or suggestion, and stay the rash from immediate action which could afterwards be regretted.

Mook Mookerjee, "the wise moonshie" who so assiduously taught his Nabob the very best of English, would have been pleased with his pupil, for Inky has a suave personality overall, as when, just after one Christmas at Wharton Lodge (Magnet 1140, ch.7), he thanks Wharton's aunt: "The attachfulness, gracious madam", Inky says solemnly, "is terrific and absurd".

An interesting book is "A VICEROY'S INDIA - LEAVES FROM LORD CURZON'S NOTEBOOK" edited by ELIZABETH LONGFORD (1984), which has a section about INSCRIPTIONS and PETITIONS. There is a selection of some peculiar instructions in English embellished by and composed by the local baln or university student who may have possessed a smattering of European or even classical knowledge, and who was appealed to for a scholarly composition of words.

Curzon and his staff kept records and cuttings of all such writings a few of which he quotes. One favourite was a letter in which the writer explained his failure to see Curzon when Curzon visited the writer's town. This letter begins: "I wrote to Mr. A____ to procure me interview with your Sublime Lordship. Although he is very aptitude, theological, polite, susceptible and temporising, yet he didn't fulfil the desire of the Royal Blood. "This

correspondent" says Curzon, had a richer vocabulary than anyone I have ever come across....which would have surprised even the compilers of the New Oxford Dictionary".

Even better is that of a court pleading, too long to quote here, except for one sentence: "He cannot be allowed to raise a castle in the air by beating about the bush" -- just as Inky himself might have said.

REVIEWS

The Quest of the Colour Warriors

by Matthew Humpage & Jeffrey Richards

Published by New Millennium at £7.95. ISBN 1858450292

Most readers of this magazine will be familiar with Jeffrey Richards' non-fiction works on subjects as far ranging as the swashbuckling film, the public school in fiction and almost every aspect of imperialism that one can think of. But here is something entirely different from his busy pen. "The Quest of the Colour Warriors" is a rich adventure fantasy following in the footsteps of Tolkien.

The story centres around a daring group of comrades who set out to restore colour to their country after an evil wizard had put a creeping blanket of blackness across the land. On route they meet with many adventures and an assortment of elves, dragons, gods and wizards. Their courage, loyalty and determination are tested to the full.

This is a thoroughly enjoyable adventure that I am sure will appeal to a wide age group. My fourteen year old daughter found it on my desk and proceeded to read the first three chapters straight off before I could recover it to continue reading myself! The characters are well rounded and suitably diverse and the plot moves at such a pace that it almost leaves one breathless. The authors are obviously well versed in the genre and the whole thing has that authentic atmosphere that is so important with this type of novel. As I read "Quest of the Colour Warriors" I found myself looking out for the little 'in jokes' related to films: "By the black shield of Falworth," yelled Aurik....." and the like.

The book is a quality paperback and the illustrations by Nicholas Roerich add to the general high standard of the production.

My only criticism is that the book seemed too short and all too soon page 196 is reached; the quest is over and the adventurers are back home. Let us hope that the book is a great success as I can't wait for the authors to write a sequel, chronicling the further adventures of Avost and his friends.

Norman Wright

BANG 'EM UP YOUNG: The Institutional World of Greyfriars, by Peter McCall. (Published by the Friars' Library, West Lodge, 47 The Terrace, Wokingham, Berks RG40 1BP at £12.50 (U.K.) and £13.50 (Overseas): these prices include postage costs)

In his Introduction to this dissertation Peter McCall points out that his enforced limit of 20,000 words has resulted in there being 'more gaps than bricks in the wall' of this study of Frank Richard's work. He has therefore confined himself to comparing the 'fictional school, Greyfriars, with total institution as defined by the sociologist, Erving Goffman, in his book, *Asylums*.' This rather modest prefatory note actually heralds an intriguing study of the most famous of Hamilton's schools which can indeed be seen as the world in microcosm. Rich in insights, this thesis performs a great service by examining Hamilton's seminal part in the school story genre in an academic context (without, I hasten to add, any of the patronising air which uninformed critics and academics have sometimes adopted towards stories springing from boys' weeklies).

The slightly curious title is taken from John Mortimer's *Rumpole of the Bailey* who used those expressive words to voice his disgust at the habit of sending children off to boarding-school. The dissertation is divided into four parts. Part one provides an interesting outline of the history and development of the boys' school story. For this Peter McCall draws from magazines as well as books and takes the history up to the start of the *Magnet*. He then discusses the writing of Frank Richards in terms of ethos and influence, and in relation to the nature of total institutions.

Part two is concerned with Greyfriars in depth under the headings 'Home Life', 'Toeing the Line', 'Bow, Bow, Ye Lower Middle Classes', 'Lord of Misrule' and 'Floreat Greyfriars'. As these titles suggest, the themes tackled are the influence of the boys' home life and parents; challenges for the new boy at Greyfriars (initiation rites, rebelliousness and conformity); a study of social class in the Greyfriars context; the character of Bunter, including its development over the years, and, lastly, a summing up of Greyfriars as 'a miniature of the "real" world outside', but also in broader terms which many C.D. readers will appreciate.

Peter McCall ends the main body of this work by saying:

"To judge Hamilton's work in terms of social reality is to misjudge it. Like any art it is, doubtless, "a criticism of life" but it does not portray 'real' life - nor was it meant to. Greyfriars is a true literary creation taking its place at the end of a long list of literary Greats from Virgil through MaloryElizabethan Arcadian novels to the present. Greyfriars is timeless and idealised. It transcends reality and "if life isn't like that, so much the worse for life!"

(The last few words are quoted from Geoffrey Wilde's article in C.D. 183.)

The last two parts of the dissertation comprise appendices (Biographical Notes on Frank Richards, The Pseudonyms of Charles Hamilton, "Substitute" writers in the *Magnet*, Some Foreigners in the *Magnet*) and comprehensive bibliographical information.

To sum up, for C.D. readers there may not be a great deal of new information in BANG 'EM UP YOUNG, but Peter McCall's discerning arguments and conclusions are worthy of exploration. Appropriately, there is plenty of food for thought in this dissertation for old as well as for new readers of Frank Richards.

MARY CADOGAN

THE O.B.B.C. BADGE

Recently several new subscribers have asked me who designed the OBBC badge, and also what its Latin inscription means. The badge was designed in the Club's very early days by Bob Whiter, who remains a member of the London Club and, of course, a regular contributor to the C.D.

I reproduce the badge-design here. "Puer Manebit", as I understand it, means "Boyhood Remains" ('Boyhood Survives' might be a better translation, perhaps).

Bob Whiter has for many years lived in Los Angeles with his wife, Marie, and the Whiters' ever welcoming hospitality to hobby friends is legendary. Bob's brother, Ben, was Secretary of the London Club for decades, and since his passing has been much missed.

Below is a reproduction of the most recent of Bob Whiter's hobby drawings. (M.C.)



Bob Whiter 1935.

FORUM

From REG ANDREWS: Apropos the January issue of the Collectors' Digest, I was very interested in Ray Hopkins' article on BFL 713 "The New York Mystery", about St. Franks. As I read this I said to myself "Ah! This is the BFL that I discovered in a bookshop last Spring whilst enjoying a weekend in Monmouth". Or so I thought... When I checked on my copy I found that it is BFL 439, obviously a 2nd series reprint, dated 05.07.34, and called "St. Franks on Broadway".

Incidentally, the copy I obtained was in incredibly good condition. The spine of the cover is taped but the staples had been removed before too much damage was done and the book itself looks as if it has only been read once or twice, truly remarkable for a book of this type and age.

From GORDON HUDSON: Fans of George Goodchild's popular detective, Inspector Dandy McLean, may be interested to learn that reprints of some of his stories are now available. Thorpe publishers of Leicester, who issue many large-print books for libraries, have recently reprinted six books: The Danger Line, McLean Disposes, The Last Redoubt, Next of King, McLean Investigates, Savage Encounter.

Probably most readers will remember McLean from the many hundreds of short stories which Goodchild wrote for Thomsons' "Weekly News", which was where I first met this hero.

From ERIC HAMMOND: Your mention of Brian White's "Nipper" brought back very pleasant childhood memories. Between the ages of eight and eleven he was a great favourite of mine. His simple mischief and long suffering father were cleverly depicted by White.

I was lucky enough to buy an original strip many years ago, and with the help of our mutual friend, Norman Wright, I managed to buy a copy of the "Daily Mail Nipper Annual 1940" to go with my strip.

It was lovely to be reminded of him. Thank you.

From TONY GLYNN: Yes, I think the illustration (shown in the January C.D.) to "The Sailor Detective" is by Shields. He seemed to produce much work for the penny comics in the thirties.

From J. ASHLEY: I read and enjoyed 'Ranging with the Ranger' by Bill Bradford in the recent C.D. Annual. I bought the Ranger from number one until it ceased publication, then continued with its successor, 'The Pilot' for sometime but I preferred 'The Ranger'.

To me the Ranger's main attraction was 'Baldy's Angels'. When the stories started Baldy Atlee was the principal character, with 'Bill Jim' and the 'War Horse' featuring in the early stories. The arrival of John Henry Dent followed by 'Bud' Atlee (Baldy's nephew) to be joined by Langton Wagstaff saw the trio dominate the stories.

I never knew until the nineteen seventies that Captain Robert Hawke was the pen-name of two people. I read Brian Doyle's 'Who's Who' of 1964 in which he states that 'Hedley O'Mant' was the editor of The Ranger and The Pilot, and many of his popular flying stories featured Baldy's Angels'.

W.O.G. Lofts and D.J. Adley's 'Men Behind Boys Fiction' states that Captain Robert Hawke was the pen-name of G.M. Bowman and was also used at times by Hedley O'Mant. But it is now established that the originator of the pen-name was G.M. Bowman.

'On Secret Service', Boy's Friend Library No. 449 by Hedley Scott, also 'O'Mant, shows the Canadian Flight Commander, 'Skid' Galloway, using expressions so similar to Baldy of Baldy's Angels, that I wondered who indeed did write 'Baldy's Angels'. G.M. Bowman or Hedley O'Mant, or both.

I am sure that someone will enlighten me.

From NAVEED HAQUE: The Rio Kid is my favourite character and I have a great admiration for the stories which I consider to be very well-written indeed.

As such, I can not let Alan Pratt's scathing remarks (C.D. no. 590) on these stories go unchallenged. Of course, I realise that Westerns are not everyone's cup of tea, but Mr. Pratt by his own admission is an enthusiast of the genre. He states that the Rio Kid yarns are 'dull, slow and unbelievable' with 'atrocious Western dialect'. I wonder if he has read all the stories that came out in *The Popular* (1928-1930)? It is inconceivable to me how any person could not fail to be charmed by these wonderfully atmospheric, exciting tales - written in a captivating and concise style. Especially someone who is otherwise an enthusiast of Westerns.

Some of the dialect may not be precisely the way folks of that time expressed themselves, but I would state that for the most part the dialogue rings true, and is authentic.

As for the presumed 'English-ness' of the stories which Alan Pratt abhors I will attempt to find one example that justifies his claim. You know I may be on a wild goose chase, as in actual fact the Rio Kid stories were *pure* Westerns, unlike some of Hamilton's other tales of this portion of the world (such as, for example, Cedar Creek which had a decided English flavour to its stories).

Finally it does not quite follow that since the author was 'dismissive of the genre' (of which I have doubts), he had no understanding of it. We all know that Charles Hamilton was a modest person when it came to his works, and could it be that he was not overly enthusiastic about some of the *other* Westerns on the market at the time? Mr. Pratt would have us believe that the author did not think an awful lot of his own Westerns, and by implication of *The Rio Kid*. But I have proof that the contrary is the case. One has only to read Frank Richard's pleased response in a letter to Eric Fayne, shortly after the latter wrote a praise-worthy article and summary of *The Rio Kid* in the C.D. Annual for 1952.

No, Alan, I'm afraid you are off-side, so much so that if the Kid was the all-time fire-bug they thought him in the stories, he would surely come gunning for you!

But he wasn't - I assure you in case you were not aware of it - so to cure you from your erroneous impressions, I would suggest you re-read the stories once more. Certainly I recommend anyone to read them in *The Popular* and decide for themselves.

Bound volumes of *Marvel*, 1912 - nos. 415 to 440, nos. 441 to 460; 1920 - nos. 832 to 857. Bound volume of *Champions*, 1950 - nos. 1458 to 1509. Sexton Blake Library duplicate, 3rd series (some 2nd series). Boys' Friend Library, few bound volumes, 3 to 7 copies in each, 1st and 2nd series. Various other duplicates. **Offers or prefer to exchange.**

WANTED: Sexton Blake Library, 2nd series, Dixon Hawke Library, 1d and 2d comics. K. TOWNSEND, 7 NORTH CLOSE, WILLINGTON, DERBY, DE65 6EA. Tel. 01283 703305.

Patrick Nicolle 1907 to 1995

An appreciation by Norman Wright

Part Two: Arms, Armour & Adventure Strips

Towards the end of the 1940s Leonard Matthews, innovative editor of a number of top Amalgamated Press comics, was looking for fresh talent to draw for *knockout* and the other comics under his control. He came across a copy of "Robin Hood and His Merry Men" and recognised in Pat's work an illustrator who knew his armour. Leonard contacted Thames Publishing Co., found out Pat's address and had soon added the artist to his stable of talented illustrators who, during the 1950s and '60s, would produce the finest adventure strips ever to appear in British comics. When I spoke to Pat he clearly remembered drawing his very first adventure strip, a short Robin Hood story that eventually appeared in *Knockout* in August 1950. (though it was not his first strip to actually be published in *Knockout*) Robin Hood went on to feature in many of Pat's strips, most notably in three full colour strips published in *Sun* comic. They were "Ivanhoe", "Lord of Sherwood" (a sequel to "Ivanhoe") and "Robin Hood's Quest". The latter two strips were later reprinted in *Thriller Comics Library*, though in the reprints they only appeared in black and white. Pat's "Book of Armour" was eventually published by Puffin in 1954 and was a great success, going into many reprints. The artist's great interest in Medieval weapons led to him becoming one of the founder members of the "Arms and Armour Society", which began with just eight members and now has a world-wide membership.

By this time Pat Nicolle was firmly established as the historical strip artist working for the Amalgamated Press' comics. Further Robin Hood strips from his pen appeared in *Thriller Comics Library* and for *Comet* and *Sun* he drew many splendid historical strips including a memorable version of "The Knights of the Round Table", based on the Robert Taylor film, "The Prisoner of Zenda", based on the MGM film, "Under the Golden Dragon", the story of the Norman Conquest of England, and a string of other finely drawn strips. "Under the Golden Dragon" was later reprinted in both *Thriller Comics Library* and in *Eagle*, and it was for the latter that one of his finest strips, "The Sword of Fate", (mentioned in *Collectors Digest* a few months ago in an article by Jack Adrian) was first drawn.

Pat's longest running strip was "Ginger Tom", which ran in *Knockout* for eighty one weeks from August 1956. Ginger Tom was a medieval squire whose favourite weapon was a pitchfork. Towards the end of the series it was decided to let the character grow up and he became the knight, "Firebrand". As Pat said in one of our conversations

with him. "I knew that as soon as they changed it it would mean the end of the strip", and he was correct for the series finished soon after.

Over the years Pat drew for many of the Amalgamated Press' best known comics including *Buster*, *Lion* and *T.V.Fun*. Old boys' book enthusiasts will spot his work in the 1967 Odhams publication "Billy Bunter's Holiday Annual". Pat said that he got the job of painting a few Bunter illustrations in the book because he was the only artist around with a really old fashioned style! But the truth is that Pat's style transcended the generations and his best strip work is as fresh and exciting today as it was when he first drew it.

From the mid 1960s Pat worked almost exclusively for *Look and Learn* and for this popular periodical he produced some first class work including many covers. In 1966 he drew what was probably his finest adventure strip, a full colour version of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous historical novel "Sir Nigel". It ran for twenty weeks and every one of its forty pages was packed with rich historical detail and excitement. During the 1970s he illustrated many keynote series for the weekly including "The Story of the Gun", "The Defenders", and "After the Legions Left".

Pat painted the cover for the final issue of *Look and Learn* and with the end of the weekly he retired. Soon afterwards he got rid of his paints and brushes and no amount of persuasion on my part would induce him to undertake a private commission to paint a Robin Hood portrait! He enjoyed his retirement in his own quiet way and was always more than happy to see his enthusiastic fans. He became ill towards



'Knights of the Round Table' Comet 1954. Drawn by Patrick Nicolte

the end of 1995 and was forced to leave his 17th century cottage and move in with his son and his family in Leicestershire. He died peacefully in his sleep late on October 30th 1995.

Pat Nicolle had an encyclopaedic knowledge of all things medieval and a lifelong interest in arms and armour. His historical adventure strips are, in my opinion, among the finest ever to appear in comics. He thrilled generations of children with his drawings of Robin Hood, Harold Godwinson, King Arthur and the like. He made history come alive more than any text book or history lesson and his love of history shone through his work in a way that inspired me, and doubtless countless others, to go out and find out more about the fascinating heritage of our past.

BIGGLES & Co.

The W.E. Johns Quarterly Magazine

First published in October 1989, Biggles & Co is a non profit making A5 sized illustrated magazine, in full colour covers, with forty-four pages of articles and stories by and about W.E. Johns, the creator of Biggles. Now in our seventh year, the Winter 1995 edition (number 25) included a complete Biggles story and a non-fiction article by Johns. The Spring 1996 edition will be published during March

UK Annual Subscription (four issues) £12. Single copy Back issues £4.00

Europe Annual Subscription £13.20. Single copy Back issues £4.30

Elsewhere Annual Subscription £17.00. Single copy Back issues £5.25

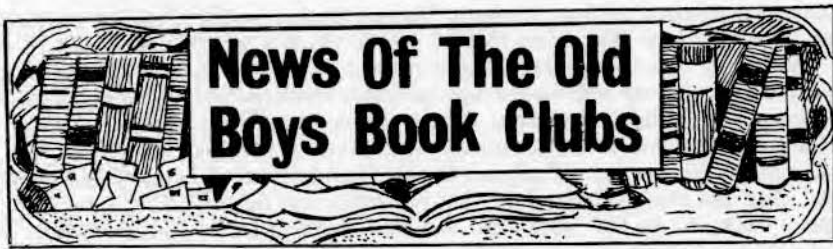
For more details on the magazine please write to:

John Trendler, 4 Ashdene Road, Bayford, Herts.SG13 8PX.

Your Editor says—



It helps the C.D. if readers advertise their WANTS and FOR SALE book and story-paper items, etc. in it. The rates are 4p per word; a boxed, displayed ad. costs £20.00 for a whole page, £10 for a half page or £5 for a quarter page.



LONDON O.B.B.C.

Fairer weather smiled on the meeting at Chingford on 11th February, and 23 members were present, of whom some regularly travel over 100 miles to attend. However, we were sad to learn of the death of Leslie Clay, of Wandsworth, a member for over 30 years and once a frequent visitor to meetings.

The main item of the programme was a most interesting talk by a non-member, Cliff Maddock, of Reading. His subject was cigarette cards, with a slight deviation to his collection of ephemera, illustrated by an extensive display of both interests. As usual, at Chingford, lavish and delicious comestibles were provided by Audrey and Tony Potts.

Later, Chris Harper reported from our sub-committee, formed last year to deal with forward planning and develop new ideas. This was debated and we reached several important decisions. There will be a luncheon in September, again at Buckhurst Hill. Further details in due course, but we would be delighted if any members from the other clubs could join us. Thanks to a very generous offer by Gwen and Roy Parsons, our May meeting will include a buffet lunch at their home near Salisbury.

Next, Norman Wright gave his choice of 5 "desert island" books. It came as no surprise to some that he included 2 Howard Baker volumes, "THE COURTFIELD CRACKSMAN" and "THE GREYFRIARS HIKERS".

Finally, Bill Bradford read our newsletter from March 1976, reporting on the A.G.M. of that year with details of expenditure, some costs quoted, of those days, causing no little mirth.

The next meeting will be at the Eltham home of Dorothy and Peter Mahony, on March 10th, and all meetings from that date will commence at 3.30 p.m. **BILL BRADFORD**

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Congratulations were offered to our 15 year old member, Richard Burgon, on his winning the Leeds Chamber of Commerce public speaking competition for young people. In addition, Richard is among 20 finalists from 30,000 entries submitted by schools for Radio 4's "Fresh Air" competition. As part of his final work, Richard has been given the task of recording 4 - 7 hours of material to be edited to around 7 minutes and to be broadcast. Part of our evening was spent in Richard's interviewing.

We were pleased to welcome members from Derby: Alyson Leslie had travelled down from Scotland that very day.

Our first item was Richard's "Harold Avery - the Forgotten Man of Boys' Fiction". Charles Harold Avery was born in 1867 and had his first story published at 17 in "Young England". "The Triple Alliance" first appeared in "Boy's Own Paper" and was then published in book form. Very patriotic, Avery enlisted in the first world war at the age of 47. He wrote 41 school story books as well as other novels and died in September 1943. His books have moralistic themes but are not patronising. A superb presentation from Richard.

Our second item was Chris Scholey's "Herlock Sholmes". Chris pointed out that these stories appeared in the "Greyfriars Herald" which ran as a separate paper for 18 issues only. Written by Charles Hamilton, they expressed his view on politicians and people in authority in general along with the red tape inevitably involved. In many ways, some of the plots were almost similar to the Goons, though of course pre-dating these.

Chris felt that some of the later stories were written by editors or others.

Our March 9th meeting will present Donald Campbell with "The Floating Double Bed and All That" and Daniel Hanson with "My Adventure into Book Dealing". On April 13th we have "Malcolm Saville" with Cath and Eric Humphrey, and "An Anthology" from Chairman Joan. A warm welcome can be assured to all who come along.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our first meeting in 1996 we gathered at the Cherry Hinton home of Adrian Perkins. After our usual short business meeting, we discussed the plans for our 25th Anniversary meeting on the 2nd June this year to be held at the Old School House, Longstanton.

With a lead provided by the Club's chairman, Vic Hearn, we held a round table discussion on the world of films, or more correctly, cinemas. Childhood experiences, likes and dislikes, effects on our attitudes and the shared schoolboy experiences of cinema admittance regulations and towards 1950's X films of the horror variety (such as the Hammer vampire series).

Tony Cowley then briefly spoke, about the 'OWL and Cambridge OBBC Newsletter' produced weekly in the mid-seventies. These were in the Club's minute books and were an extraordinary feat, lasting about a year.

ADRIAN PERKINS

WANTED URGENTLY so that I can complete my reprinting of Murray Roberts' *Captain Justice* stories. There are thirty-four serial stories - mostly in serial form - and during 1994 and 1995 I reprinted 28 of them. I'm still short of 23 story parts.

MODERN BOY (Old Series) pre-February 19th, 1938. NUMBERS:

227	272	273	276	333
350	355	371	373	385
386	387	391	392	394
395				

and in the NEW style *MODERN BOY* 19/2/1938 to 14/10/1939. NUMBERS:

78	79	80	81	82	84	85
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If you don't want to sell your copies I will pay well for photocopies of the *Captain Justice* story-parts which are in the copies listed above.

R. HIBBERT, 30 ALTON ROAD, ROSS ON WYE,
HEREFORDSHIRE, HR9 5ND. Telephone: (01989) 564512

THE INTRUDER
Concluding 'Bessie at Wharton Lodge'
by A.W. Godfrey

It was the afternoon following Boxing Day at Wharton Lodge. A weak wintry sun made the new fall of snow from the previous evening sparkle, and it shone through the window of Colonel Wharton's study where the old Colonel was busy writing letters. From outside came the distant sound of merry voices. The Famous Five were spending part of the Christmas Holidays at Wharton Lodge. Also staying were William George Bunter and his sister Bessie, through circumstances to say the least, somewhat strange. (See *Collectors' Digest No. 584*).

At that moment the moonlike visage of Miss Bunter peered around the door. "Oh good," she remarked, "I could do with some company. Those boys are all out in the cold and Billy's frowsting in front of the fire, eating nuts."

Colonel Wharton suppressed a sigh and laid down his pen. Politeness had to be shown to a guest, even such a peculiar one as Elizabeth Bunter. "They're all selfish," continued the latter. "It's just the same at Cliff House, even Miss Primrose is selfish - she's a cat! So's Miss Bullivant, the Bull you know!" The Colonel had now become slightly puzzled. "You mean you have a cat and a bull at Cliff House School, Miss Bunter?" he ventured. "Silly," rejoined Miss Bunter wrinkling up her snub little nose. "That's their nick-names, Miss Primrose is the Head and Miss Bulivant's my Form Mistress. She wrote the most horrible end of term report about me to the pater. Made out that I couldn't spell or add up the simplest figures - me you know, the brainiest girl in the class". Colonel Wharton did for a moment wonder about (if Miss Bunter's latter remark was true) the state of the other girls in her form.

"The girls are all jealous of my good looks too," Bessie continued, preening herself. "Marjorie and Clara think that your nephew and Bob Cherry only come over to Cliff House to see them, whereas it is me, you know. Look how Bob follows me around here, trying to catch me under the mistletoe!" The Colonel might have remarked that the reverse appeared to be the case as he had observed Bob Cherry avoiding Miss Bunter politely on every possible occasion. He searched his mind for some tactful remark to bring this extraordinary monologue to a conclusion.

"Really I must get on..." he began, when, to his amazement, Bessie Bunter uttered a terrified scream and pointed a trembling finger towards the study window. "A face," she cried, "A face staring through the window." Colonel Wharton jumped to his feet and at that instant the French windows opened with a crash and, to his surprise, the figure of a strange man leapt into the room and confronted him. "At last, Colonel Wharton, my revenge," he hissed. The Colonel looked dumfounded. "What does this mean, sir. Who are you?" he demanded.

"Does the name Bradshaw mean anything to you Colonel? Henry Bradshaw was my father and he took his own life, thanks to you!" "Good

Heavens!" ejaculated the Colonel. "I remember now, I was for a short time consultant to a firm of bankers and I discovered that your father had been systematically, while in their employ as Chief Cashier, robbing them of thousands of pounds. I had no alternative but to denounce him!"

"Yes, and he took his own life rather than face imprisonment. He swore to me that he then had sufficient means to pay the money back - but he was given no chance, thanks to you. You shall now share his fate. Don't worry. I have a fast car outside and a boat to take me to the Continent, but first!" A revolver appeared as if by magic in Bradshaw's hand and was levelled at the Colonel. The latter, who had faced death many times on the Somme, did not flinch, but Elizabeth Bunter, who had stood open-mouthed through all this, let out a tremendous scream of "save me", then flung herself into the Colonel's arms, bearing them both to the floor. At the same instance a bullet passed through where he had been standing and embedded itself in the wall behind.

Bradshaw had no time for a second shot. The Famous Five poured through the open study window and flung themselves upon him. Frank Nugent kicked the revolver to the far corner of the room. "Are you alright Uncle?" panted Harry Wharton. "Perfectly my boy," replied his Uncle. "Thanks to Miss Bunter here. Really Miss Bunter we are safe now, the miscreant is in good hands".

"Scream! Screech!"

"Wells, would you take Miss Bunter to my sister and ask her to attend to her, and then call the Police to this villain. As the sounds of woe died away in the distance Colonel Wharton turned to the juniors, "You boys, I am very grateful to you for what you did; you might stop those heinous remarks that he is making." John Bull very thoughtfully stuffed a handkerchief in Bradshaw's mouth.

The Colonel continued, "You boys, except Harry and Hurree Singh, are leaving for your own homes tomorrow but in view of the great service that Miss Bunter has, ahem, rather involuntarily rendered me, I shall ask her and her brother to stay here for the remainder of the Christmas holidays. They do not seem keen on visiting their Aunt at Whitstable. I trust that you do not mind, Harry?" "Not at all Uncle," replied his nephew, manfully suppressing his feelings. "After all, I suppose she did save your life." "The savefulness of your most precious and absurd life was truly terrific, honourable sahib," agreed Hurree Singh.

"What's going on here, all this noise?" the fat figure of William George Bunter appeared at the door. Matters were briefly explained to him. The Colonel by now had completely recovered his composure. "Why didn't you call me?" squeaked Bunter, "I'd have tackled him single-handed, his revolver wouldn't have bothered me!"

Bob Cherry winked at his companions. "Oh dear," he shouted, "I think he's getting loose - help wanted here Bunter, quick!"

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter's movements were normally akin to those of a very old and very tired snail, but no arrow discharged from a bow could have moved as fast as he did on this occasion. He fairly bounded from the room and down the passage. There was then a tremendous crash as he collided with the butler, Wells, who unfortunately at that moment was returning from telephoning the Police.

"Get out of the way, Wells, - I'm being murdered," and Bunter hastily picked himself up and vanished up the passage to some distant room where he remained hidden until the reassuring sound of the dinner gong drew him out like a fat rabbit from its burrow.

The stately Wells was not so fortunate, however. He remained for some moments in a not so stately posture, breathless on the floor, uttering a single word "Mooooh!".

**C.F. KERR and THE MYSTERY OF THE BROKEN-BLADED
PENKNIFE** by Ray Hopkins.

George Francis Kerr of the St. Jim's New House is probably another favourite detective to us life-long (it seems like) avid GEM readers. Many a time and oft has he brought to light the real miscreant and thus saved a falsely-accused-through-circumstantial-evidence innocent party. Here is one such case with the leading role played by a character well-loved for his never failing and most admirable uprightness.

Gussy up for a flogging for having vandalised Mr. Lathom's beloved and long-owned volume of Virgil? Impossible! Deep gashes have been found on the thick calf binding of the rare and highly prized book and several pages have been slashed through. Gussy says of course he didn't do it and expects his word to be taken by those in authority and is positively astounded when they won't. All his friends know he didn't do it, but it is his penknife found at the scene of the crime which accuses him. Only, he didn't possess it at the time the book was damaged; he had disposed of it the night before by throwing it out of the study window. But nobody else was present when it sailed out into the night.

Trimble, arguably the most unendearing fat boy in the Hamilton canon, started the whole unpleasant series of events by "giving" Gussy, as "a mark of his esteem, a beautiful silver penknife" worth as Baggy says, ten-and-six and offering it to Gussy for half-a-crown. Not a present after all but "giving it away" at the lower price. Gussy attempts to return it but Trimble puts it into Gussy's pocket and tells him he has "bought" it and he's not going to get away with "sponging" on Trimble. Gussy hurls half-a-crown at him and the penknife remains in his pocket. It is borrowed for the purpose of mocking Gussy by several of the juniors and it isn't long before the large blade has bent and broken, resulting in Gussy's catching his finger on it inside his pocket. Thus the annoyed toss through the window.

Mr. Lathom, egged on by his bosom companion for thirty years (a painful corn which gets especially communicative when rain falls) allows himself uncharacteristically and most unkindly to correct Gussy's pronunciation of Virgil's Latin in which the "r's" are produced, as they would be due to Gussy's speech defect, as "w's". Mr. Lathom normally makes allowances for this, but his corn will not allow him to do so in this case, and Gussy is rewarded by a heavy swish of the cane on both hands. This doesn't satisfy the fiery Mr. Lathom, acting totally out of character on this damp day, and he imposes 200 lines on Gussy as well. Mellish, the next lucky junior to be called upon to construe, receives four cuts!

Gussy agrees, yes, that is his penknife, when confronted by Messrs Railton and Lathom and the damaged Virgil and later by Dr. Holmes himself, but he cannot explain how it should appear in Mr. Lathom's study when he had thrown it out of his study window in exasperation the night before. He is not believed and even his close chums in the two School House Co's feel a worrying niggle that dear old Gussy, in uncharacteristic petulance, may have for once lain aside his very high principles.

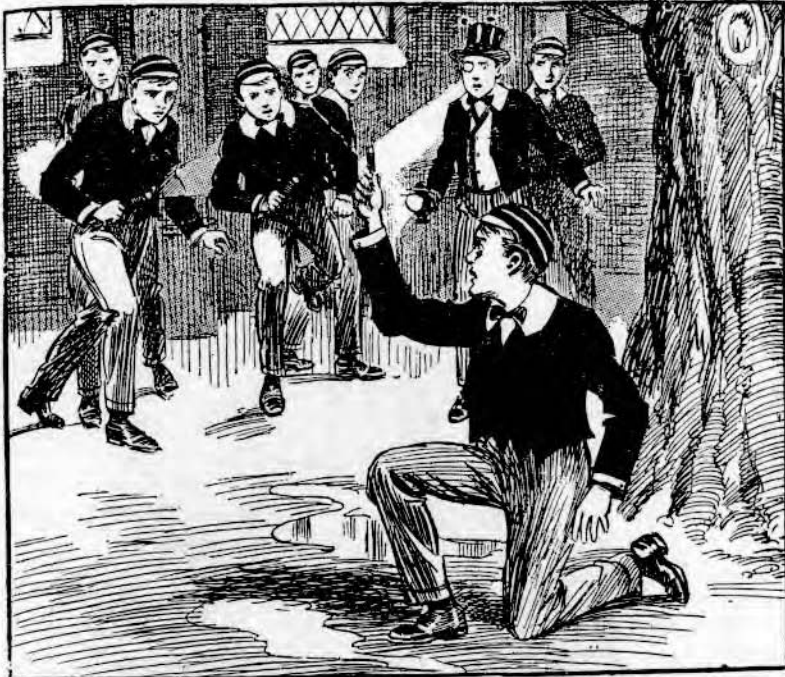
This two-issue series in GEMs 773/774, 2/9 Dec 1922, then rather leads the reader up the garden path. GEM 774 is entitled "Cousin Ethel to the Rescue" thus making one think (totally without suggestion by the author: it's all in the reader's head) that one is about to observe Cousin Ethel in the unusual role of detective. But it is not to be. On one of her frequent visits to Mrs. Holmes she learns that Gussy is to be hoisted for a flogging for doing something she knows would be a total impossibility. She urges her admirer, who has been blessed with the job of seeing her safely to the school from Rylcombe Station, and I refer, of course, to Figgins (did I need to spell out his name?) to entreat his sagacious chum Kerr to put his mind to the problem and save Gussy from the unfair flogging.

Kerr's first thought is that the penknife shown to Gussy and agreed by him to be his, because of the broken blade, may not, in fact, have been his but one similar to it with the blade deliberately broken to resemble it. Gussy had reported hearing a cry as the penknife flew out of the window but did not wait to see who had been struck in case it may have been a master. Kerr's objective is to find out who was struck, and whether the person in question had retrieved that with which he was struck. With the juniors turning into a group of latter-day Baker Street Irregulars, it doesn't take long to discover that Reggie Manners had been struck and the important fact that he didn't stop in the dark long enough to retrieve the missile.

There is only fifteen minutes left before Gussy is due to be flogged. Kerr and Co. and the Third Formers circle the area in the front of Gussy's study window and in a puddle a penknife is found! Trimble as supplier informs the Head that the same type of "beautiful silver penknife" as the one he gave to Gussy can also be obtained from a shop in Wayland. Learning that Gussy was not the only castigatee (this having been decided as the reason for the damage done to Mr. Lathom's prized Virgil) that fateful rainy morning in class, Dr.

Holmes sends for Mellish. That junior's look of terror at being told that a visit to the Wayland shop would identify the purchaser of the second penknife reveals him to be the Virgil maltreater. Mellish thus becomes the floggee.

Arthur Augustus, with very great respect indeed, addresses a speechless Dr. Holmes, thus: "I twust, sir, that on another occasion, you will take a fellow's word." Kildare ejects him, rough hand on collar, from the Head's study, before Gussy again falls foul of those in charge!



The circle of searchers carefully examined the path, then two or three puddles were tested with searching fingers. Suddenly there was a yell from Lavson of the Fourth. "Here you are!" he cried. He held up a muddy hand that had been groping in the puddle. In the muddy fingers was held a broken penknife.

DONALD CAMPBELL WRITES: The mention of BBC Radio in two separate places in SPCD 590 gives me warm feelings and perhaps I can extend to the authors my thanks and add some information that might be of interest. Arthur F.G. Edwards remembers with fondness much earlier days of Children's Hour than I have been allowed but he can re-visit those exciting days in Wallace Grevatt's splendid book "BBC Children's Hour" - a celebration of those Magical Years. (Book Guild, 1988). It is a both a history and a kind of love affair that will touch chords for many of us as well as Arthur.

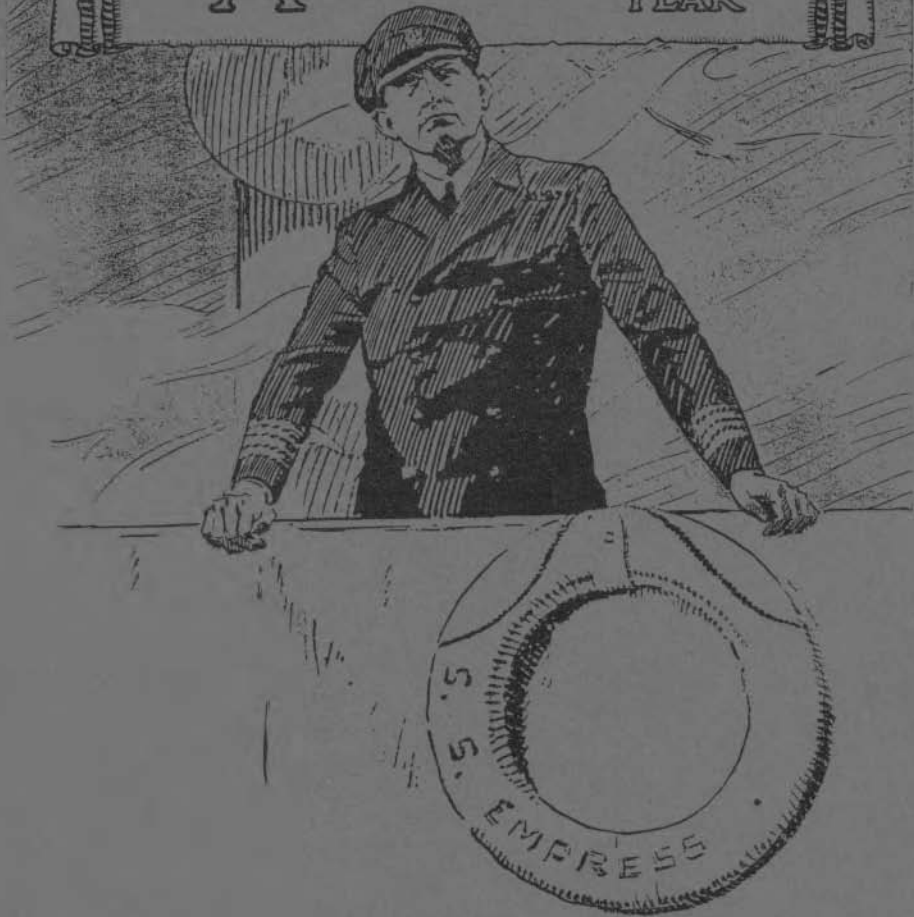
Norman Wright looked perspicaciously at the recent "Thriller" series from BBC, and, in particular, at the two Norman Conquest plays. His plea for more of the same will probably fall on deaf ears but I must add my own support to his appeal. My own view is that the BBC lets us down when it comes to thrillers and detectives of the "old school" - perhaps we can prevail on them to change their habits.

Mrs STRANG'S ANNUAL for GIRLS



HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON

HERBERT STRANG'S ANNUAL 17TH YEAR



I am seeking to purchase Greyfriars Book Club Volume No. 76 entitled "Billy Bunter's Uncle". Prepared to offer good price, plus TWO similar books.
C. COLE, 271 FIRS LANE, PALMERS GREEN, LONDON, N13 5QH.

"Had you tea, old chap?" asked Bunter.

"No - yes. Don't bother!"

Bunter blinked at him in astonishment. Wharton's reply seemed to indicate that he did not care whether he had his tea or not. That, to Billy Bunter's mind, was simply inexplicable, and seemed to border on lunacy. If a fellow did not care about meals, Bunter would have liked to know what there was in the wide world to care about. *MAGNET 1255*

..... Even Tubby Muffin joined in the scrap. Tubby Muffin was not a warrior, but he was equal to sitting on anybody who was down, and he sat on Hansom when that war-like youth was floored.

And when Tubby Muffin sat on a person, that person was *hors de combat*. There was no arguing with Tubby's *avoirdupois*. *SOL 308*

"You think you're going to beat us at cricket?" asked Fatty.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Not even a spot of doubt about it?" inquired Fatty, with gentle sarcasm.

"In the cires., no deah boy" explained Arthur Augustus. "Tom Mewwy has agweed to let me open the innings for the School House. A good start means a lot in cwicket, you know! I may not put up a centuwy --"

"Oh!" gasped Fatty. "No, you mayn't."

"But fifty or sixty will be vewy encouwagin' to the othahs, and, of course I shall top the centuwy if I can."

"I can see you doing it!" gurgled Fatty. "Why, I shall be bowling the first over for our House."

Fatty Wynn was the champion junior bowler of St. Jim's. If Arthur Augustus was opening for the rival House, Fatty regarded the first School House wicket as in his pocket already! But that did not seem to be the view of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Vewy glad to heah it, deah boy," he answered amiably. "You're about the best of the New House bunch, and it will be vewy encouwagin' to the othah fellows to see your bowlin' knocked all ovah the shop!" *GEM 1637*

..... Air-raids were thrilling, but sosses and chips were filling; and Billy Bunter would rather have been filled than thrilled. *MAGNET 1563*

"Drake's elected junior captain of St. Winny's!" said Daubeny. "I congratulate you Drake. I won't ask you to remember me when you're makin' up your eleven --"

"You needn't, old top!" answered Drake laughing. "Your name goes down first of all."

"What about mine?" asked Tuckey Toodles. "Remember, I'm in your study --"

"You can stay there while we play cricket, Tuckey." *GEM 1634*

"Jever hear or dream of such a frabjous ass?" murmured Potter.

Greene shook his head.

"Never!"

"If we didn't see Coker every day, Greeney, I shouldn't believe in him...."

MAGNET 760

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